

A translation follows of roughly two-thirds of Yuan's editorial, including his criticism of lingering leftist tendencies in China and his call for deeper political reform:

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BY Yuan Weishi (袁)

Professor of History, Sun-Yatsen University [retired]

Fifteen years ago, Deng Xiaoping's southern speeches [during his "southern tour"] set into motion major changes in China. In what direction would China head in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, under the impact of dramatic change in many countries in Eastern Europe, combined with the aftershocks of the 89 storm? Public sentiment was diverse and confused. Xiaoping, with his prestige and wisdom, brought clarity to the ideological chaos, helping leaders grab a historic opportunity ...

This important moment in history passed down to us a valuable lesson: historic opportunities are transient; only by taking a broad view of history can we bear our torches into the darkness, only with the minds of strategists can prompt decisions be made, and demands for reform be translated into reality. As for Xiaoping's specific opinions [of that time], our experience over the past 15 years has possibly already outgrown them. But his method of approaching problems, his vision and intelligence will ever inspire us.

Behind the Controversy Over Globalization and the Market Economy

Participating in the WTO, joining the tide of globalization, "handling affairs in accord with international conventions", represents a healthy road toward fully building a market economic system and a prosperous nation and people. The resolution of no economic problem should mean retreating from this path. This is a precious lesson Xiaoping passed down to us.

For all the insistence on "not inviting controversy" the 20-plus years of economic reforms [in China] have in fact seen constant controversy. Sum up the issues on either sides and you have nothing more than: are globalization and the market economy monsters, or necessary paths to modernization?

Those who describe globalization and marketization as monsters are troubled primarily by two things. The first is that [China's] national security could be jeopardized. The second is that China will through this process [of globalization and marketization] become colonized by capital. In accord with these [fears], they strive to make non-peaceful change the core task, or one of the core

tasks, of the country. As China's international influence grows daily in stride with the rapid economic growth that comes with the economic reform process, impartial observers have to admit these two anxieties [about national security and colonization by capital] are phantasms.

Where Do These Mirages Come From?

Firstly, there is the deeply rooted stigma of a philosophy of contention [in China]. [NOTE: This is a reference to Mao Zedong's notion of progress being rooted in contention and opposition]. Their heads writhe with [the notion of] "victimization at the hands of imperialism" (帝国主义亡我之心不死), and they forget that interaction in the modern world is built on economic foundations. The basic motivating factor of Chinese and foreign corporations is the maximization of profit. The governments and political forces of various countries may in fact strive for involvement in the process of corporate profit-seeking, but this is only local in nature and does not change the fact that the basic character of international economic relations is corporate commercial behavior.

Secondly, there is the failure to break through the shackles of the Soviet model and Western leftist theory. The revolution and building of Soviet Russia is a rare case in human history of a solemn and stirring quest by idealists. But we should not shrink from observing that it was, in its finale, a cruel and drawn-out tragedy, whether in political, economic or cultural and ideological terms. It left those that came after with so many lessons to ponder. A number of those who oppose economic reforms [in China] look on this [Russian experience] without clear heads. Intentionally or unintentionally, they mistake their faulty brush strokes for golden principles that must be followed. In international relations, for example, they oppose "cosmopolitanism" in favor of a parochial brand of nationalism ... In the economic arena, [they are in favor of] economic planning and oppose market economics, the government directly running enterprises and monopolizing the market. They rob academic work, thought and speech freedoms. They rashly criticize and rashly deal with people [these oppose] – and they regard these as the foundation of Socialism.

A number of New Leftists who have come back from stints of study overseas are the disciples of American leftists. The criticisms launched by their teachers against politicians in developed countries are marked with a resistance to cavalier political and economic power [the tone here is NOT critical of these Western thinkers in their own contexts]; they bear these theories back to China whole and intact, so they become crude and ridiculous imitations.

Deng Xiaoping's observations and analysis are of such a stature and perspicuity that they could never hope to match them.

How do we look at the world? The opportunities China has let slip by are so numerous. We won't speak of the more distant examples. After the Second World War, Japan and Germany rose from the ashes. In the 1960s we set into motion the "destruction of the Four Olds", "clamored for revolution" [the Cultural Revolution] and "comprehensive civil war"; [meanwhile] the four Asian tigers focused on developing their economies, with achievements that turned the heads of the world. All of these opportunities we missed out on. With the sincerest of wishes, Deng Xiaoping said: "Right now, a number of neighboring countries and regions are developing faster than we are. If we do not develop, or do not develop fast enough, then no matter how the ordinary people [of China] compare

themselves, there will be trouble". [The question of] whether to "seize the opportunity and develop oneself" became once again a serious question facing the Chinese people.

Where is the road out? Answering this question requires using the proper intellectual tools. "This is a different age. No problem can be solved through rigidity of thought or inflexible methods. Inflexibility will bring opposition. Both sides in opposition must consider the interests of the other side. They cannot resort to one-sided wishes" (Chronological Life of Deng Xiaoping, p. 1313-1314). Economic globalization is an indisputable historical trend. "Closing the country to international concourse is not the way ... Opening without resolve and determination is not the way". We must "handle affairs in accord with international conventions", build a market economic system and integrate China with the world. Looking at the depths of history, this [lesson of Deng Xiaoping's] is a conclusion to the tragic lesson of Chinese ignorance of global trends ever since the 17th century, its opposition to globalization, its opposition to the market economy, its repeated brushing with and wasting of opportunities...

"Leftist tendencies are still rooted [in our society]. A number of theorists and politicians take up their big hats and intimidate others; they are not on the right, but on the left" ... Things that are good and beneficial they do away with in one fell swoop". (Collected Sayings of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 3, p. 367).

Fifteen years have gone by. Arguments made brazenly and openly against the market economy and integration with the world are rare. But misguided trends in thought are still with us. At the first sign of trouble, those who "take up their big hats and intimidate others" can be found everywhere. Corporate mergers, repairing of rail lines, which country's technology will be used for a nuclear power station, etc, etc., all are inundated with politics – treachery, patriotism, the hats fly up into the air. Faced with the growing gap between rich and poor, the severity of the Three Rural Problems ... what measures should we take to deal with these? The planned economy [the Leftists say], that old road we know so well.

We should affirm without hesitation: participating in the WTO, joining the tide of globalization, "handling affairs in accord with international conventions", building a market economic system, is a healthy road to a prosperous nation looking after the interests of the people. In resolving any economic problem, we should not veer from this overall path. This is a precious legacy handed down to us from [Deng] Xiaoping.

Rule of Law Demands Strategic Vision, Courage and Resourcefulness

The greatest task Xiaoping left to later generations is the reform of the political system. As early as 1986 he said: "Now each time we take a step forward in our economic reforms, we feel deeply the necessity of reforms to the political system" (Collected Sayings of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 3, p. 176). Twenty years have passed, and this great task is staring us in the face. Official corruption, a market in partial chaos, a growing gap between rich and poor, a poor capacity for innovation – how we solve these four major questions will determine the complexion of China's future. These

problems cannot be solved simply by piling on the internal measures of the original system. Reform calls for studying the vision and courage of Deng Xiaoping in those years. The heart of reforms is pushing forward with a system of constitutional governance.

One major point of progress in this area over the last 15 years has been that the concepts of constitutional governance and constitutional law have been elevated to the mainstream. [The ideas of] "a nation of laws", "a country that respects and protects human rights", "protects the legal rights and interests of personal economic activity, private enterprise and other non-state economic entities", and protects private property, etc., etc., have been written into the constitution. One after another, national leaders have spoken about the importance of constitutional governance and constitutional law. [President] Hu Jintao said: "Ruling the nation by law means first ruling the nation by the constitution, and governing according to the law means first governing according to the constitution". [Premier] Wen Jiabao said: "Those who govern the nation must govern according to the law". One must feel great admiration for the clarity and accuracy of such expressions.

The Roots of Constitutional Governance Are Now Developing in China

The core of constitutional governance is protecting the rights and freedom of citizens; rule of law is the basic path toward protecting the rights and interests of citizens. The knowledge of citizen rights and interests is awakening, and the avenues for safeguarding one's own rights and interests are gradually opening. Cases of rights violations can be found everywhere. But the victims are no longer silent. They seek out lawyers. They seek out the media. They seek out the courts, the people's congresses, Political Consultative Congress [representatives] and government offices. The criticisms, revelatory speech and petitions show us a game of strategies (博弈) between rule of law and unlawful governance.

A citizen society – civic organizations are indispensable domains in which citizens may voice their wishes. Fifteen years ago, they were still places where scholars could discuss the classics and talk about things that were taboo in their actual lives. Today they are developing uninhibited in many areas [of society].

Without systems in place to check violations of the constitution there can be no true constitutional governance. If constitutional law cannot be realized in the legal system, then violations of the constitution cannot be dealt with in a regularized fashion. Calls for a system to dissolve conflict and protect the rights and interests of the people are echoing and reechoing, and the emergence of such a system cannot again be pushed off.

It has already been 100 years since the Qing Dynasty declared in 1906 that it was "preparing to implement constitutionalism". The establishment and improvement of a system of constitutional governance is, in any nation, a two-sided process of interaction between leaders and the people. To move ahead [with building a constitutional system] we need people who care about the fate of their nation and who will each do their part, working diligently. We also need historic vision and minds like that of Deng Xiaoping ...

[Posted by David Bandurski, January 30, 2007, 2:30pm]

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