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PUBLIC LECTURE

POLITICAL REFORM IN EAST ASIA
— CHINA, TAIWAN AND THE SOVIET UNION —

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Intrinsic contradictions in the democratization process

Depressing atmosphere in socialist countries, especially, their chronic stagnant economies seem to be establishing a general consensus among the socialists that any economic vitalization measures will be in vain unless they go with a political reform or democratization. Earlier signs of this transmutation of Socialism were the movement by Czechoslovakians known as 'the spring of Prague' in 1968 and the uprising of the Solidarity in Poland in 1980. Although the waves of socialist democracy of these two countries have been quiesced temporarily, the new initiative of the Soviet Union, 'perestroika,' inspired by General Secretary Gorbachev, is an unprecedented downright reform in the socialist bloc, and is apparently triggering one change after another in the Soviet social organism, despite the number of difficulties involved.

Meanwhile, Taiwan, South Korea and two more Asian NIEs, which are on the heels of economic nation Japan, have seen a certain political growth, led by the distinguished achievements in the economic and social development, so that a switchover from authoritarian rule to democratic government is now under way.

In this international environment, how to grasp the recent reformism in China is critical, not only to speculate the future course of the reform and open-door policies, but to examine a sort of national goal, the 'modernization.'

Here is one thing to be noted in this context, that even the political reform under Deng Xiaoping's leadership of the time is characterized by the inherent nature of the Chinese politics. In short, the process of restructuring political systems in recent years premises fundamental self-criticisms against the charismatic autocracy of the Mao era. It is the path of de-Maoization for putting an end to the stagnation, or to fix the social splits, brought by Mao Zedong's socialist rule for more than thirty years, particularly, by the Cultural Revolution which spanned the last decade of that rule.

So, an epoch from the late 1970s to early 1980s was the time of decline for Hua Guofeng and other Maoist cadres of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), whereas it was the time of rehabilitation and rollback for Deng Xiaoping and his pragmatist members who had held power under Liu Shaoqi's general-secretaryship before the revolution. These old powerholders proposed various reform plans in their revival age, including Deng's *Zong Gang Lun* (On the General Reform)

in 1975 and the *Gengshen* Reform in 1980.

Those calls for political reform and democratization based on the ideas of such new social beneficiaries as intellectuals or technocrats who expected a substantial change of the Maoist-model party apparatus, and this tide toward political reform continued backing up Deng's leadership.

There were, however, some big problems in that reformism. The first one was the fatal defect of Chinese politics in which a political reform at any rate is subject to an intra-party conflict between reformists and conservatives (or fundamentalists). For example, Deng continued to put strong emphasis on democratization during the process of establishing his leadership, however, once his influence was ensured, he turned toward depressing democratism, as symbolized by two cases of his reactions against anti-establishment movement.

The first surge of anti-establishment occurred when the intellectuals of the April Fifth Forum and the Exploration groups, as well as the members of dissident factions, made claims for de-Maoization, encouraged by Deng's own reform plan. This surge reached the peak in the fall of 1978, as the so-called *minzhuqian*

(Wall of Democracy) created large repercussions in the society, so Deng faced a dilemma to contain such moves after he regained power at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978 because the claims of Wei Jingsheng and other anti-establishment intellectuals were too radical.

In these circumstances, the CCP decided to take collective leadership at its 12th National Congress in 1982, aimed at a change from the Maoist-style mobilization control machine to a systematic power control organism in which the authority of the chairman is decentralized.

This new course of the CCP, however, involuntarily stimulated the democratic moves which had been set back once. Symbolic of the renewed upheaval of democratism were the fierce student demonstrations staged toward the end of 1986. Although the tide of democratization itself set in with the calls for democracy or liberalism by such opinion leaders as Fang Lizhi, who was the central intellectual belonging to the reformist faction and was the vice president of the University of Science and Technology, Wang Ruowang, the deputy editor-in-chief of the *People's Daily*, and Liu Binyan, a writer, the strength of the democratization drive came to expand surprisingly this time.

What became at issue in the process of responding to these intensified demands for democracy was a suspected commitment by the then general secretary, Hu Yaobang. He had been considered rather sympathetic with the student movement or democratization movement than other constituents of the Deng leadership, but he began to be doubted of his using these movements to push back the criticisms directed to himself not to touch Deng Xiaoping. Antagonisms against such to-and-fro leverage of control were so strong among both reformists and conservatives in the party, then these oppositions

came to appear as a dramatic dismissal of Hu Yaobang in January 1987. It was Deng Xiaoping himself who played the final role in this ouster, as if he offered Hu Yaobang as a scape goat to defend his leadership. There was never a country like China in which domestic democratization was so closely connected with a policy line struggle or an inter-factional conflict within the party. This must be counted as one self-contradiction of the Chinese politics in process of getting away from the Maoist system.

Brittle economic substructure and Confucian authoritarianism

The second feature unique to China is the unchanged fragile substructure of the economy, symbolized by a low per-capita GNP of 250 US dollars, the level of minor developing countries in the socialist bloc. Although the 'wind of the West' coming in response to Deng's reform and open-door policies had caught students and intellectuals of China, this new situation of the society did not successfully link to the nation's economic restructuring efforts. After all, China remains retarded economically and, since the mass-scale poverty has yet dissolved there, it is very doubtful whether democratization could work in reality.

Looking back on the process of growth of many other developing countries, they came to face the need of democratizing the society when their figures of per-capita GNP reached around 2,000 dollars and, because of this need, they had to restructure their political systems, either. As is typified by South Korea or Taiwan, transformation from

autocracy or authoritarianism to democracy is essential to both of economic and social maturities.

Yet being behind the economic level of such developing countries, Chinese leaders tried to make up various democratization programs and carried some of them into effect as an experiment of separating the government from the party. This attempt first turned up in the form of a declaration of expanded State Council functions, or strengthened government institutions versus weakened party organs, in the new CCP platform as well as in the new constitution. However, in contrast with these efforts on the part of leadership, the Chinese society continues to be too immature to take the chance of democratization. Under these social conditions, democratism may proceed as long as economy operates smoothly. But once the economic system is confused, all moves toward modernization will stop immediately with close inquiries set off to accuse the personnel responsible for the confusion. Herein lies probably the reason why the Deng leadership has become reluctant to stress political reforms.

As the third bottleneck, I would like to point out the inherent charismatic depotism in China's power structure, which can be referred to as Confucian-style authoritarian system. Even a leader as Deng Xiaoping, who maintained really tough political mind in the bitter experience of becoming a victim of Mao Zedong's dictatorship, carries one-man politics, as is understandable at a glance over China of today. Although Deng has been promoting the rejuvenization policy to respond to the demand for departure from gerontocracy which came out of the

aspirations for democratization, this conduct of his, I must say, is a big contradiction to himself, for he remains as the de-facto top power in China despite his age of 84.

In China's political system these days, Deng Xiaoping is neither the general secretary of the Party nor the premier of the State Council. He merely occupies the position as chairman of the Central Military Commission which supervises the military and its associated matters. Nevertheless, he acts to present final views on the Chinese side when foreign leaders comes to have inter-governmental or inter-party talks over various affairs at national and international levels. This was seen even at the Sino-American summit held when the new US president, Mr. George Bush, visited Beijing requite recently and will probably be so at the Sino-Soviet summit scheduled for the middle of coming May. Thinking of this reality that Deng's one-man control continues in China, the course of 'taking off' from Maoist-style authoritarianism seems to contain a number of illogics, since Deng himself could not discard the inheritance of that system.

These are what I mentioned three big problems of China's political reform or bottlenecks to democratization. How to solve these problems is a task of primary importance assigned to China for the time being.

Economic deadlock and perspectives for political reform

Now let's think of possible solutions to remove the three bottlenecks. In respect to the economic deadlock, we must first

question whether China's national goal of today, the Four Modernizations, will proceed smoothly. The Four Modernizations are aimed at modernizing industry, agriculture, national defense, and science/technology. More precisely, they are a program to increase the per-capita GNP to 1,000 dollars during the period from 1980 to the end of this century by means of a policy of quadrupling the national income. However, although the Chinese economy has been growing at the rate of a two-digit number recently, there is not the slightest increase in the per-capita GNP nor in the national income.

This situation is ascribed, on one hand, to the serious population growth of 15 millions a year, yet dissolved despite the slogan of *yitaihua* (one child per couple), and on the other to the reality that the living standard at the grass roots has been impeded to upgrade by the small national income distributed as against the national income produced, that is, the widening gulf between rich and poor. Moreover, because of the situation where economic disorder or such social evils as unfair money-making practices, prevailing corruptions, etc. are prevailing, the propensity to consume has been strengthened remarkably as if it were stimulated by the materialism of the West. These conditions, coupled with the shortage of goods, have brought about an inflation of, reportedly, about 20-odd percent on the average. Some commodity prices are twofold, and some others are threefold, compared with the level a year ago. So, the public has generally failed to receive the benefits of the reform and open-door policies. Enjoying instead are

only a part of cadres, the people of the classes engaged or somehow involved in contacting overseas, and such wealthy farmers symbolized by *wanyuanhu* (ten-thousand yuan household).

Eventually the 13th CCP Central Committee, at its Third Plenary Session held in Beijing in September 26 to 30, 1988, had to decide a policy of economic restraint to strive for adjusting the economic environment or restoring economic order during at least the next two years, with particular emphasis put on slowing down inflation. In the communique announced at the end of this plenary session, there was no reference to the Coastal Areas Economic Development strategy, which General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and his supporters had been advocating since the 13th Party Congress in 1987. Even the International Large Circular Flow economic strategy (to develop China's agriculture and heavy industry within a large circular flow of economic system by linking domestic economy with international economy, particularly with Asian NIEs) has faded away, although it drew much attention in early 1988 as an idea of Wang Jian, a 32-years-old fresh brain for Zhao Ziyang serving as junior research fellow of the Economic Institute under the State Planning Commission.

Now, I should say, is a critical moment for the leadership of Zhao Ziyang who continued pushing the reform and the opening of doors.

As part of the restraint policy, Kang Hua Development Corporation, a new enterprise belonging directly to the State Council and having close relationship with Japan, was forced to stop import and export businesses besides cutting down on the number of economic

activities in the middle of October 1988, according to the decisions of the central party apparatus and the State Council. This was a very symbolic event, because the corporation had long been criticized of

Guang Dao (utilizing an established back-scratching alliance with government to sell controlled goods through illegal channels or exercise other privileges). Thus, China's open economy has already encountered the need of readjustment.

Chinese leaders came to know in these passages that the initial goal of Four Modernizations would not be achieved by the end of this century. And what has come out of their dilemma is the theory of 'Initial-phase Socialism.'

The Initial-phase Socialism theory, which first appeared in the report of Zhao Ziyang approved in the 13th Party Congress in the fall of 1987, is so to speak a long-range national strategy that Chinese leaders has selected passively and reluctantly. It says that China is to remain in the initial phase of socialist development until its 100th anniversary of 2049, therefore, it has to admit the principles of market economy or other capitalistic vestiges to see an improvement in economic figures in that period. After all, Chinese leaders can no longer explain the extremely low economic level of today unless they authorize it by the Initial-phase Socialism theory.

In a sense they could have demonstrated the better living standard of today than that of before the liberation or a success of progressing social construction after the revolution. However, they seem to have hated to make such vertical comparisons with the past

because all those peripheral active NIEs are, what we may call, 'Confucian countries' which had received the influence of Chinese culture a very long time ago. But it is the Chinese mainland at present that has to receive the influence of the remarkable economic growth of such neighbors as Hongkong, Taiwan (which China has been claiming as its own territory), South Korea, and Singapore. In the situation where the gap with these peripheral Confucian economies is widening, China must use the Initial-phase Socialism theory as a sort of excuse to explain its low economic level rationally. This also makes me feel a considerable anxiety about the future of Chinese economy.

It will be perhaps in the middle of the 21st century that China's GNP can reach the level of 2,000 dollars. At that time the principle that economic maturity is to change politics will become effective for China. From this point of view, we have to wait until then to see the true solution of the problems.

As shown by the fact that this perspective of mine was also admitted in the recent report by the Study Group on the Domestic Situation of Academy of Science of the PRC, entitled "Survival and Development" (*Beijing Daily*, February 20, 1989), Chinese leaders including Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng have come to offer self-criticisms these days. They say, although China's socialist construction continued to be successful by around the middle of 1950s, the 30-year Chinese politics from the 1957 Hundred Flowers movement turned to an anti-rightist struggle, through the 1958 People's Commune

Promotion policy, to the end of the Cultural Revolution started in the mid-1960s gave a substantial blow to the socialist construction. This is exactly what I have been pointing out since 1964 when my maiden work *On Contemporary China: Ideology and Politics* was published. The period of 30 years under Maoist socialism not only stalemated China's economy but produced splits in its society, and to make matters worse, it left a number of negative properties, which China requires another ten-odd years to shake off.

On the contrary, the change of socialist mind proceeded at a high speed at the grass roots in the Chinese society. People often talk of the Four Modernizations cynically that they are the Shenzhen-/Hongkong-ization of the special economic zones adjacent to Hongkong, the Taiwanization of Hainan, the overall Shenzhenization of Guangdong, then the Guangdongization of entire China. This may not be a mere black humor, but an unexpected fortune-telling about the consequence of those policies adopted by Zhao Ziyang and other reformists under the pressures of deadlocked society and economic chaos.

Criticisms will naturally come up to the fore if such interpretations spread. Today the premier of the State Council, Li Peng, as well as Yao Yilin and other Politburo members are regarded as the leaders of those fundamentalists who favor the economic course designed by Chen Yun, the chairman of the Central Advisory Commission, in line with the socialist orthodoxy of contractive balanced economy, rather than the expansive balanced economy of the Deng Xiaoping model.

Although Chen Yun is aged and physically weak, he is the only

leader favorably comparable with Deng Xiaoping, and whenever the economic guideline of Deng Xiaoping became unoperable temporarily, Chen Yun's economic line used to come into focus. Therefore, this line struggle between the reformists and fundamentalists is likely to persist in the near future. In this sense, too, the problem of self-contradiction is to continue as long as China cannot escape from the line struggle, that is, another inheritance from the past politics.

As to the last one of the three contradictions, namely, Deng's authoritarianism or one-man control, the solution depends on the length of his life.

When thinking the matter over, the fact that the future of political reform in China will be determined by the physical conditions of one-and-only leader indicate, in itself, the existence of a large trap ahead of China. There is an undeniable possibility that if Deng Xiaoping continues the current one-man system, criticisms against Deng Xiaoping may burst out when he dies, for even a charismatic leader as Mao Zedong who could maintain overwhelming support during his lifetime was criticized continuously after his death. In the Soviet Union today, the earlier Brezhnev leadership is being criticized. Looking at these histories, criticism against a passed leader is unavoidable in a movement for democratizing socialist societies.

Shadow of Taiwan approaching to China

Part of Chinese intellectuals these days has very radical

views on democratization. For example, in the middle of February this year 方励之 who is called a 'Sakharov of China' announced a China Democratization Declaration in New York, together with Chinese intellectuals in Taiwan, Hongkong and other countries abroad, and assumed the position of head of the China Democratization Liaison Committee. Some say that Chinese-particular systems will not change unless China itself is dismissed, or some others like Bo Yang, an anti-establishment writer in Taiwan, claim that such an opinion itself is an expression of inherent flunkyism of the Chinese. Not only these criticisms against Chinese-particular characters but discontent with the current domestic situation is strengthening, while there are rapidly increasing concerns and expectations toward Taiwan which sees continued stride in the political reform despite the commonness of being a Chinese society.

On my visit to China last summer, and even during these few months, I had chances to exchange views with leading scholars of Academy of Social Sciences of China. The topic of our talks was Taiwan's surprising performance of growing, like a perfect model of political reform, from the autocracy during the Chiang Kai-shek era to authoritarianism under Chiang Ching-kuo, then to democracy under the new president Lee Tung-hui. All such things as the abolition of martial law, the virtual acceptance of multiple-party system, the expansion of personal, cultural and academic exchanges with the mainland, etc. seemed to necessarily change the physical constitution and power base of the Kuomintang (KMT).

These changes in Taiwan's politics are of course at one with the outstanding success in its economy. The GNP of Taiwan is already higher than 6,000 US dollars per capita -- the amount 20 times as large as that of the mainland -- and its foreign trade in 1988 totalled more than 110 billion US dollars, the level higher than South Korea's to become a quarter of Japan's. The per-capita foreign reserves were above that of Japan, making Taiwan come to the top in the world. Taking all these successes into account, it cannot be ignored that Taiwan is approaching step by step to the complete change of autocracy to a real democracy.

In these circumstances, Taiwan is getting to be positioned as one of lighthouses for China's modernization, instead of the reactionary target to defeat as it was at the age of Chiang Kai-shek. This recognition is certainly spreading at least at the grass roots on the Chinese mainland, and among the intellectuals, ideas to learn the successful 'Taiwan model' of economy in earnest have started to expand, although those moves are little known by the outside peoples. Japanese, either, have yet been fully aware of such new concept forming up about Taiwan's development, despite the appearance of occasional reports on the good reputations of Taiwan novels, motion pictures, motorcycles, and electric appliances being received in China. In fact, adoring for Taiwan products is increasing in Guangzhou and its peripheries.

As to the legalized 'family reunion' program initiated in the fall of 1987 to allow Taiwanese trips to the mainland to visit their

family members and relatives, it is the tendency nowadays that a great number of Taiwanese come to Hongkong at one time to enter China through Shenzhen, owing partly to the relaxed attitude of Taiwan toward Beijing. Some of these visitors go down to even inconvenient inner areas. Those incoming Taiwanese peoples have already reached 400 thousands in total, and they are creating significant repercussions among the mainlanders because, through the communication networks unique to the 'horizontally-structured' Chinese societies, various information about the economic and social development of Taiwan is being input at the bottom of China's social pyramid.

When I asked several ordinary Chinese persons on the mainland about their impressions of the new leader of Taiwan, Lee Tung-hui, I was surprised at their good knowledge of him and even more, his picture in their minds was very favorable. The leaders of China have also begun to evaluate the current regime of Lee Tung-hui as a good model of democratization from the authoritarian system, or of a switchover from dependent economy to independent economy, which China itself must follow.

Lee Tung-hui, who undertook a relatively smooth succession to generalissimo after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in January last year, was formally elected president at the 13th National Party Congress in July. Since then, his power base has been strengthening. Being a very liberal statesman with rich experience and academic knowledge, he is one of the first-class political leaders in Asia and is beginning to liberalize the money market and privatize the state-run businesses for

internationalizing the domestic society, strengthening Taiwan's presence as 'an area' in the opened Asian-Pacific age, and vitalizing the national economy further. It is necessary to keep an eye with much interest on how the marked economic and social performance of this opened new Taiwan will affect the political and economic reforms of China in the future. The success and growth of Taiwan, I believe, are to impact not only on the coastal areas of the mainland but on the entire sphere of China.

One more impact on China: the *perestroika*

One more significant factor expected to exert strong influence on China's political reform is no doubt the *perestroika* of the Soviet Union. As to *perestroika*, there are various views in Japan as well as in other countries. The Japanese government, foreign ministry, and Kremlinologists are mostly incredulous about this policy. So, dominant in the domestic circles are also the assertions that *perestroika* is a mere pretense since the 'take-off' from the Brezhnev-style bureaucracy is impossible on the account of the characters of contemporary Soviet politics or the arguments that the *glasnost* is so to speak a 'carrot' offered by the Soviet authorities before beating the public with a 'stick.'

However, I continue to think differently from the very beginning of the Gorbachev administration. In my understanding, it is because of the stiffened Soviet socialist system that Gorbachev is so

keen on getting away from it.

As is clear from the approval of a draft amendment for the Constitution at the All-Union Congress of Soviets in July and at the Supreme Soviet Presidium in November 1988, the Soviet Union has been carrying out a considerably brave political reform under the leadership of Gorbachev. Seen there is a strong will to promote political the restructuring of political systems under the potent leadership and solve the social rigidity by a breakthrough from top.

This revised course of the Soviet Union may have come out, on the diplomatic scene, as the so-called New Thinking policies of finding a way out of the discord with the United States, improving relations with China, establishing close ties and interdependence with the countries of the Western bloc (except Japan), and walking up from military buildup to the arms cut. Although the new Soviet diplomacy is attracting a great deal of attention in the world, it must be originated in the need for vitalizing the Soviet economy by reducing the military spendings.

When I took part in the 6th Japano-Russian Round Table meeting in November last year, I could confirm that the *perestroik* was, first of all, to liberalize ideology by admitting expression of different ideas and opinions, or to expand freedom in the superstructure of the Soviet hierarchies. So, the social and economic institutions of the hard-set Soviet socialism are unlikely to be relaxed at once.

Nevertheless, in the sense that by *perestroika* the

Soviet bureaucracies are trying to re-evaluate the political, ideological and historical courses of their predecessors, including the incident of the Katyn forest and relations with other socialist countries, for the purpose of reconstructing domestic and foreign policies, their steering process can be said as containing possibilities different from those of the Chinese-style forced and passive political reforms which tend to collapse in the middle.

This difference in possibility is due to the fundamental contrast in existence as a nation that the Soviet Union is an advanced, industrial socialist country whereas China is far below that status. Although China's socialism is soft-structured and its flexibility and vitality are superficially uncomparable with the hard-structured socialism of the Soviet Union, breaking away from the chains of the domestic conventions would be much more difficult for China than for the Soviet Union, besides the tough work of putting an end to the economic stalemate. For these reasons, I should say, the Soviet Union holds a lead over China in terms of basic reforms.

The fact that the Soviet Union is positively tackling the political reform as a means to resolve the sufferings and distress would provide a good lesson to China which were forced to step out to the political reform.

There are many complementary and interdependent linkings between an advanced industrial nation, the Soviet Union, and a developing country, China, of the Socialist bloc. Sino-Soviet rapprochement is not merely an improvement in bilateral relations: as the second phase,

the reorganization of their own systems and the formation of a 'loosely-coupled alliance' between them will be involved for the survival or reform of the entire socialist bloc. In that case, the influence of the Soviet Union will grow over China.

After all, the key point comes to how China would be letting its economy out of the current situation to soar on an air current, or how it would make the society free from the conventional fetters. But since neither of the two processes is easy, China's political reform in the meantime has to go zigzagging, given at least it will not suffer a setback any longer.

Japan, while staring at that course of China, must set to substantial and effective dialogue with China, not only maintaining the friendly atmosphere alone. For this purpose, the Japanese government first needs to stop the repetitions of being overawed by the decidedness of Chinese negotiators. It may more positively offer its views and ideas even about the economic and political reforms on the part of China.