

# JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

January 2011, Volume 22, Number 1 \$12.00



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## Liu Xiaobo on China's Quest for Democracy: An Introduction

On October 8, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2010 was being awarded to imprisoned Chinese writer and dissident Liu Xiaobo “for his long and nonviolent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.” The author of eleven books and hundreds of essays, Liu has been a key figure in the Chinese democracy movement since the events leading up to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. He was jailed in 1989–91 and again in 1996–99. His activities over the past decade included serving as president of the Independent Chinese PEN Center and as editor of *Democratic China* magazine. He was a principal drafter and a prominent signatory of Charter 08, a document—modeled on Czechoslovakia’s Charter 77—calling for democracy and respect for human rights in China. (Substantial excerpts from Charter 08, in an English translation by Human Rights in China, were published in the “Documents on Democracy” section of the April 2009 issue of the *Journal*.)

Shortly before the Charter was officially released in December 2008, Liu was detained by the Beijing Public Security Bureau. On 23 June 2009, he was formally arrested on charges of “inciting subversion of state power.” Brought to trial in December, he was found guilty and sentenced to eleven years of imprisonment. He is currently serving his term at Jinzhou Prison in Liaoning Province, where his wife Liu Xia was able to visit him and to convey the news that he had won the Nobel Prize. Since then, however, the Chinese government, which has vigorously denounced the award to Liu, has kept Liu Xia under house arrest and is seeking to prevent her or any of Liu’s other relatives or friends from leaving China for the prize ceremony, which is scheduled to take place in Oslo, Norway, on December 10. It is not known whether Liu will be able to issue any statement accepting the prize.

In the pages that follow, we present two of Liu’s most eloquent essays. Both were originally written in 2006 and posted in Chinese on the website [www.observechina.net](http://www.observechina.net). They both were translated into English by Human Rights in China and published in issue no. 1, 2010, of its quarterly journal *China Rights Forum*, along with other writings and statements by Liu and a great deal of useful information about him and his career. Interested readers can find this issue, entitled “Freedom of Expression on Trial in China,” at [www.hrchina.org/public/contents/category?cid=173549](http://www.hrchina.org/public/contents/category?cid=173549). We are most grateful to Human Rights in China for permission to reprint these essays, which appear here with very minor stylistic changes.

The first of these essays, entitled “Can It Be That the Chinese People

Deserve Only ‘Party-Led Democracy’?” was written in response to the publication by the Information Office of the State Council on 19 October 2005 of “Building of Democratic Politics in China”—the first white paper on democracy-building ever issued by the Communist government of China. Liu shows that this document “is not so much an announcement of the ‘Building of Democratic Politics in China’ as it is a public defense of ‘protecting the dictatorial system of the supremacy of Party authority.’” He laments China’s long history of imperial and dictatorial rule, blaming the “indifference of the populace” even more than repression by the authorities. He ends by saying that “the emergence of a free China” will come not from new policies on the part of those in power but from the “continuous expansion” of power among the people.

The second essay published here, “Changing the Regime by Changing Society,” elaborates on the theme with which the first essay concludes. Liu recognizes that civil society in China is still weak and that it lacks both the capacity and the readiness to change the country’s political system. But he remains hopeful about the future, noting how much the Communist Party’s totalitarian grip on society has loosened since the days of Mao. “An enormous transformation toward pluralism in society has already taken place,” he argues, “and official authority is no longer able to fully control the whole society.” He calls for reliance on “bottom-up gradual improvement” rather than top-down or revolutionary change, and sets forth some of the key elements of such a strategy: a nonviolent movement in defense of human rights; a focus on “putting freedom into practice in everyday life”; efforts by individuals to live honestly and with dignity; and an unfailing commitment to liberal values and to tolerance, but without “sinking into the quagmire of absolute relativism.”

As of this writing, we do not know what will transpire at the December 10 ceremony, much less what Liu’s fate will be in the months and years to come. It may be that the Chinese government will decide that the least hazardous course is to try to send him into exile—a strategy toward dissidents that Liu has analyzed in another essay (also translated by Human Rights in China) entitled “The Many Aspects of CCP Dictatorship”:

When the regime cracks down on famous people holding different political views, it makes every effort to avoid creating popular heroes of inspiring moral stature and international reputation. It has learned that by forcing famous dissidents into exile it kills two birds with one stone: It gives the dissidents a way out and wins favor with the international community; it also gets rid of direct political opponents, and belittles the moral image of dissidents within the country, thereby weakening the social cohesive and mobilizing power of civic opposition forces. Except for the crazy policy decisions made in extraordinary circumstances or out of fear of excessive power, the regime is ever less inclined to rely on open political

movements; instead, it increasingly employs covert and intricate, at times even hard to detect, methods to purge opponents. It employs every secret, destructive trick hoping to quietly nip any popular challenge in the bud, and it goes to great lengths to reduce the negative impact of repression by blocking access to information. As a result, a number of famous mainland Chinese dissidents find themselves in the paradoxical position of a backyard bush that blooms on the neighbor's side of the wall—enjoying great international fame but not recognized by the general public in their own country, known only within a small circle of people.

It has been reported that the Chinese government already has offered to send Liu into exile but that he has refused. And while China has been doing its best to suppress any internal news about Liu, his receipt of the Nobel Prize makes it very unlikely that his life and work will continue to bloom unseen by his fellow countrymen.

—*The Editors, 8 December 2010*

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## Can It Be That the Chinese People Deserve Only “Party-Led Democracy”?

*Liu Xiaobo*

*Translation by Human Rights in China*

On 19 October 2005, the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China released the white paper, “Building of Democratic Politics in China.” Although this was the first white paper on democracy-building issued by the Communist government since it came to power, except for the fact that it was published, it broke no new ground in terms of content.

At the core of the white paper were arguments regarding the “theory of national conditions,” “theory of [Chinese Communist] Party [(CCP)] authority,” and “theory of the wisdom of the [CCP].”

The “theory of national conditions” in the white paper no longer stresses China's economic backwardness and the substandard quality of the population, but rather emphasizes that the central leadership position of the CCP was both a historical choice and the voluntary choice of the Chinese people—that is, it was created by history rather than the will imposed by the CCP on the people. Clearly, the purpose of the “theory of national conditions” is to refute the universal nature of democracy and to conceal the problems of legitimacy of the current CCP regime by invoking special national conditions.

The “theory of Party authority” publicly affirms China's current system of the supreme authority of the Party. Whether it is the abstract idea

of democratic construction of popular sovereignty or the protection of human rights and specific human rights written into the Constitution, whether it is the institution of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the political consultative system or the so-called democratic centralism with Chinese Communist characteristics, whether the grassroots democracy process or rule by law—all of these must follow the guidance of the CCP authority and have nothing to do with popular sovereignty.

The purpose of the “theory of the wisdom of the CCP” is to declare that the credit for all of China's current achievements is due to the CCP, going as far as to defend a string of failures as great accomplishments. Similarly, whatever little democratic achievement there has been in China since the reforms is also all attributable to the wise leadership of the CCP and is most certainly not the result of spontaneous efforts of the people.

As a result, the white paper is tantamount to a declaration to the entire world: Above the democracy of people's sovereignty, the CCP authority is an even higher authority, and this Party authority is supreme, which is to say that “the Party is in charge of the people” and “the Party is in charge of democracy,” and that the NPC is the puppet of the Party authority, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is its ornament, the judiciary is its tool, and the vocabulary of human rights, democracy, and so on is just its window dressing. Like the white paper on human rights released by the CCP authorities, this white paper on democracy is full of lies. For example, the white paper states: “All power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people.” But China's 1.3 billion people are a flock of sheep herded by the Party authority and have no opportunity to participate in the election of the country's president. Another example is that the white paper proclaims “development of democracy within the Party.” Yet the great majority of the 68 million Party members are no more than Party slaves and, likewise, have no opportunity to elect the Party boss.

This is the “Building of Democratic Politics in China” flaunted by the white paper!

So this white paper is not so much an announcement of the “Building of Democratic Politics in China” as it is a public defense of “protecting the dictatorial system of the supremacy of Party authority.”

On 1 October 1949, after Mao Zedong ascended Tiananmen Gate, the chorus of “He is the great savior of the people” swept through the country—an enduring song that has to this day remained a nostalgic tool used by the people to vent their dissatisfaction. On 1 October 1984, after Deng Xiaoping descended from Tiananmen to review the troops and accepted the heartfelt support [expressed in the simple greeting of] “Hello Xiaoping,” with one wave of his hand, the “chief architect” bestowed upon the little people the opportunity to make a dash for the small comforts of everyday life, to “let some people get rich first,” and achieved

limited economic emancipation. On 1 October 1999, after Jiang Zemin reviewed the troops, despite widespread attacks from all quarters, he was still secure in the key position as the “leading figure in inheriting the revolutionary cause and carrying it into the future.” He embarked on yet another theoretical innovation of vast and mighty imperial largesse and let the capitalists who had amassed great fortunes join the CCP and be politically emancipated by royal decree, so that they were no longer just the United Front partners and political ornaments of the NPC and CPPCC but had become members of the ruling party. I do not know when the new Party boss Hu Jintao plans to ascend Tiananmen to review the troops and mold an image for his own “dear people.”

I do not deny that within the CCP clique currently in power there could be high-ranking officials, such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, who treat the people well and possess an awareness of modern politics. When they were in office, they did make quite a few good policy decisions and took risks to advance political reform. But even when this was the case, people had to wait for their rights and benefits as if they were charities bestowed from above, not to mention that such good officials could not survive for long under the CCP system.

Let us take ten-thousand steps back: If our countrymen could come across an enlightened ruler often, or if the imperial bestowing of favors was not incidental behavior but, rather, occurred every now and then, then the national inertia of waiting for these favors, although an insult to human dignity, could be excused because of the tangible benefits received. Sadly, however, our countrymen endured great suffering and endless waiting only to encounter a wise sovereign by chance or an exceedingly miserly show of mercy. What they receive are always meager compensations and pathetic consolations that arrive too late, so why is it that they are still only capable of looking up to the crown? Moreover, throughout China’s cyclical dynastic history, every act of the vast and mighty imperial benevolence has occurred either at the beginning of a new dynasty, when everything left undone by the previous regime is taken up, or during the crisis-ridden final years of a reign, and never for the well-being of the people but out of political necessity, to consolidate or maintain political power or save the regime. Our countrymen are still like infants who depend entirely on adult care and who know only how to wait for a wise ruler to appear. Can it be that Chinese people will never really grow up, that their character is forever deformed and weak, and that they are only fit, as if predestined by the stars, to pray for and accept imperial mercy on their knees?!

There is absolutely no doubt that on the post-Mao mainland, compared with the Mao era, our countrymen have gained tangible benefits in terms of food and shelter and an extremely limited space for personal choices. The pragmatic “cat theory” initiated by Deng Xiaoping,<sup>1</sup> compared with Mao’s ideology, which stressed class struggle, had a

nimble and soft flexibility. However, none of these changes have fundamentally altered the basic mode of existence of our countrymen; the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in this land has been the same throughout the ages, and has been handed down unchanged to this day. Namely, the power to initiate and make decisions about the

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*When have our countrymen tasted the genuine liberation that comes with being the master of one's own affairs?*

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rights and interests of the people, the fate of the country, any progress in society, and any improvements to the lives of the common people is firmly held in the hands of the dictators. [All improvements] are charity granted from above, requiring the subjects to shout the triple "Long live!" salute to show their loyalty and gratitude to the rulers,

requiring famous public figures to play the part of critics who share their goals, and requiring hack writers with skillful pens to defend and praise them, in order to demonstrate the wisdom and virtues of the sovereign.

Even though there have been improvements in civil-rights defense movements in recent years, we must also look at the grim reality facing the cause of civil-rights defense. If not used by the treacherous dictators as a tool to seize power and establish a new dynasty, the bottom-up movement to win human dignity and personal rights and interests gets completely wiped out by the brutal autocratic machine, and there is no way that a succession of large-scale movements of popular disobedience, be they the traditional violent rebellions for dynastic change or the modern political opposition movements of peaceful resistance, can arise to shake the foundations of the authoritarian system and the slavish culture.

What is the reason for this?

Repression by the dictatorial authorities is, admittedly, one of the reasons, but the indifference of the populace is an even greater cause. In the minds of ignorant, cowardly, and blind people, being used is no different from being liberated and given a new life. As to the cowardly but smart cynics, being repressed means being subjugated, and thus becoming an accomplice, a lackey, or, at the very least, a silent, docile subject. When have our countrymen tasted the genuine liberation that comes with being the master of one's own affairs? When has China ever broken out of the vicious historical cycle of order and chaos under authoritarian dynastic rule?

For generations, up until this very day of CCP rule, expressions like "after liberation," "since the founding of the country," and "after the new China was established," and excuses such as "without the Communist Party there would be no new China," have become the most basic common understanding of history and a linguistic habit that has settled

deeply into the nation's collective memory, universally used in people's speech and writing. Even the intellectuals and liberals within the Party who know the CCP's history like the back of their hands habitually use these terms for historical reference when exposing the countless crimes committed after the CCP took power.

Likewise, when common people today bring up the 1989 Movement and the June Fourth [Tiananmen] Massacre, the vast majority still casually toss around the words "turmoil" or "rebellion." Even the Beijing residents who personally experienced the great peaceful marches and the bloody massacre by and large use the vocabulary set by the government. And although the authorities have already quietly changed "turmoil" and "rebellion" to "political disturbances" in the public media, the people's language has not changed much accordingly. Since Jiang Zemin's regime persecuted the Falun Gong in 1999, the word "cult" has also entered the vernacular, spreading particularly fast among college, high-school, and elementary-school students. A few years ago, every time I heard acquaintances use the word "turmoil" to talk about the 1989 Movement, I wanted to refute it and correct them. These corrections were at first made angrily, then gravely, and, finally, with resignation. As time went on, I began to let them go. Forceful ideological indoctrination of minds that have been enslaved for a prolonged period inevitably hardens memory and language.

Linguistic philosophy's sacred monster Ludwig Wittgenstein maintained that language is not a tool of expression in the traditional sense but action itself, and that the way one chooses to express oneself linguistically is the way one chooses to think, [while] the way one chooses to think is the way one chooses to live. Therefore, by extension, if one habitually uses linguistic expressions of deep gratitude, one inevitably creates the savior mentality; the savior mentality inevitably leads to the slavish way of life of waiting for top-down charity and the fear that without the savior one will end up in a situation more desperate and pitiful than that of a homeless dog.

Time and time again, people have pinned their hopes for top-down political reform on those who have newly assumed office, but they end up disappointed each time. The most absurd part is that disappointment after disappointment still has not extinguished what little hope people have in the CCP-initiated reforms. Why? The usual response is that the national conditions make it so. Some people say that such a large country can only be controlled and governed by an authoritarian system. Others say that the CCP is too powerful and that it has too many monopolies on resources, so that unless it transforms itself no other force can challenge it. Some say that opposition groups in popular politics in many ways do not even measure up to the CCP, and that if they came to power they would be even worse than the CCP. Others say that economic development comes before political reform; to ensure high economic growth



one must maintain social stability, and only with the CCP in power can stability be maintained. Still others say that the mainland population is too large, inferior, and ignorant, only fit to receive charitable guidance from the elites, and only capable of carrying out top-down reforms, et cetera. All of these arguments just go to prove: Without the CCP, or if the CCP were to step down, who could effectively rule China in its place? Do not democracy activists and people who hold divergent political views in China and abroad constantly run up against this question? And that is why waiting for the gift of happiness to be bestowed from above is the common people's only option.

At a time when our countrymen do not fight, not even preparing to become their own masters, at a time when they have abandoned all efforts even before the struggle for their personal rights and interests has started in earnest, people can universally concoct a subconscious assumption that without the current rulers the country would slide into chaos. This type of assumption stems from the long-enforced ideological indoctrination of the CCP, as well as the slavish nature of our countrymen, which remains unchanged to this day. There is a reason why dictators disregard historical facts and raise this type of assumption. That is because every policy decision they make and everything they say have only one ultimate purpose—maintaining absolute power. But there is absolutely no reason for the people to believe in this assumption, because the system that this assumption supports is precisely a system that does not treat people as humans. Once our countrymen forget historical facts and believe in this assumption, they would have no qualms in waiting for the pie to fall from the sky and would look for a wise ruler or a virtuous master even if they have to die nine times looking for one; they would view all bottom-up popular opposition movements and those that fight for personal rights and interests as more of a hindrance than help that only “add to chaos,” and would defend those in power, who have done one insignificant small good and 99 great ills, using that one percent of good policy to defend that 99 percent of bad government. Even when being massacred, starved, imprisoned, exiled, deprived, and discriminated against, the little people still feel eternally indebted and grateful and consider the dictators “great, honorable, and infallible.”

A poem by Bai Juyi<sup>2</sup> says: “Wildfire never quite destroys them—They grow again in the spring wind.” In mainland China, this eternal, celebrated verse is decidedly not an apt description of people who have the courage to stand up straight and tall, but rather an exquisite portrayal of our countrymen accustomed to kneeling ever so gracefully. Under the imperial throne, civil and military officials neatly fall to their knees as one and shout the salute, “Long live! Long, long live!” three times. Atop Tiananmen, the dictator waves his hand and the largest square in the world becomes a sea of subjects hailing their savior. Since the collapse of the Qing Dynasty [in 1911] and especially since the CCP came to power, even

though our countrymen no longer kowtow physically like the people of old, they kneel in their souls even more so than the ancients.

An admonition on how to be an upright person says: “Man is born free and equal.” Universal enslavement and inequality are never caused by the ruler’s excessive power or wisdom, but because those who are ruled kneel down. Can it be that today, more than a hundred years after the era of imperial power based on triple kowtowing and nine-fold kneeling has been abolished, our countrymen are still humiliating themselves and finding all sorts of justifications to defend their kneeling position? Can it be that the mere favors of a good standard of living and allowing the wealthy to join the Party have made our countrymen capable only of falling to their knees and kowtowing in gratitude for the magnanimity and grace of the dictators?

For the emergence of a free China, placing hope in “new policies” of those in power is far worse than placing hope in the continuous expansion of the “new power” among the people. The day when the dignity of the people is conceptually and legally established is the day when the human rights of our countrymen will gain institutional protections.

#### TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

1. When Deng Xiaoping returned to power in the mid-1970s, after the Cultural Revolution, he famously declared, “I do not care whether a cat is black or white. As long as it catches mice, it is a good cat,” to signal that he intended to put stress on pragmatism rather than ideology. This landed him in new trouble, and he was once again purged from all his official posts by Mao Zedong. However, after Mao’s death Deng’s position won the day, and set off decades of China’s economic reform and opening to the outside world.

2. Bai Juyi (772–846 C.E.), one of the most celebrated Tang Dynasty poets, used elegantly simple verse to protest the social evils of his day, including corruption and militarism.

## Changing the Regime by Changing Society

*Liu Xiaobo*

*Translation by Human Rights in China*

We have had over twenty years of reform, but due to the selfish arrogation of political power by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the scattering of civic forces, in the short term I do not see any kind of political force capable of changing the regime, or any liberal-minded force within the circle of official authorities, like a Gorbachev<sup>1</sup> or a Chiang Ching-kuo,<sup>2</sup> nor any way for civil society to build up political power sufficient to rival official authorities. And so, China’s course of

transformation into a modern, free society is bound to be gradual and full of twists and turns. The length of time it will take may surpass even the most conservative estimates.

At the same time, in terms of opposition to the might of the CCP regime, civil society remains weak, civic courage inadequate, and civic wisdom immature; civil society is still in the earliest stages of development, and consequently there is no way to cultivate in a short time a political force adequate to the task of replacing the Communist regime. In such a situation, change in China's political system and its current regime—any plan, program or even action seeking instant success—can be no more than castles in the air.

Yet this does not mean that there is absolutely no hope for a future free China. The sky of Chinese politics in the post-Mao era can no longer be single-handedly obscured by a totalitarian ruler; rather, it has assumed two hues: darkness and light. Likewise, the relationship between the officials and the people is no longer such that no one dares to speak out, except to shout "Long live the emperor!" Rather, the political rigidity of the authorities and the people's awakening to their rights, and official suppression and civil resistance exist side-by-side at the same time. The system is autocratic as before, but the society is no longer ignorant; the officials are tyrannical as before, but the civil-rights defense movements continue to arise; the terror of literary inquisition is still there, but it can no longer produce the deterrent of "killing one to scare the rest"; the regime's "enemy awareness" is unchanged, but "politically sensitive individuals" are no longer a terrifying "pestilence" shunned by everyone.

In the Maoist era, for personal totalitarian control to be established, four major conditions had to be met at the same time:

*Comprehensive nationalization*, leading to no personal economic autonomy whatsoever, turning the regime into an all-powerful nanny of our countrymen, and making them economically dependent on the regime from cradle to grave;

*All-pervasive organization*, leading to the complete loss of personal freedom, turning the organization into the sole authenticator of legal status for our countrymen, who can hardly take a single step if they leave the organization, and making them personally dependent on the regime to the extent that without the shelter of the organization they have no social license;

*Rigid tyranny of the machinery of violent dictatorship imposed on the entire social body*; a dictatorial atmosphere created by an extreme rule of one man and by an "enemy" mentality, where every citizen is made a soldier; all-pervasive vigilance and ubiquitous monitoring, to the extent that every pair of eyes is turned into surveillance equipment and every person is under surveillance by his or her work unit, neighborhood [committee], neighbors, and even relatives and friends.

*Mental tyranny imposed on the entire nation by an ideology of formidable cohesive power and power to inspire*, and by large-scale mass movements, where the extreme personality cult and leadership authority create a kind of mind-control with one brain deciding what everybody thinks, and where artificially created “dissidents” are not just persecuted economically, politically, and in terms of social status, but are also made to suffer humiliation of character, dignity, and spirit—the so-called “criticism until they drop and stink,” which is in fact a dual tyranny that is both physical and mental to the extent that the great majority of the victims succumbing to this mental tyranny engage in endless public self-humiliation.

Yet, in the post-Mao era, the society entirely based on official authority no longer exists. An enormous transformation toward pluralism in society has already taken place, and official authority is no longer able to fully control the whole society. The continuous growth of private capital is nibbling away at the regime’s economic foundation, the increasingly disintegrated value system is challenging its ideology, persistently expanding civil-rights protections are increasing the challenges to the strength of the arbitrary authority of government officials, and steadily increasing civic courage is making the effectiveness of political terror wither by the day.

Since June Fourth [1989] especially, three of the four major pillars necessary for the establishment of personal totalitarian rule have been in various stages of decay and even collapse. Personal economic dependence [on the regime] has gradually been replaced by personal independence, and the living made through one’s own efforts has given individuals the material base for autonomous choices, while bringing a plurality of interests to the society. Personal dependence on organizations has gradually been replaced by a smattering of personal freedom: The Chinese people need no longer live in organizations for lack of alternatives; the time when they could hardly take a step if they left the organization is gone, never to return. Chinese society is gradually moving toward freedom of movement, mobility, and career choice.

In the ideological sphere, the awakening of individual consciousness and awareness of one’s rights have led to the collapse of the one great unified official ideology, and the diversification in the system of values is forcing the government to look for excuses for the passive adjustments of its ideology. A civic value system independent of the bureaucratic value system is gradually taking shape, and although indoctrination with lies and speech control continues, [the government’s] persuasive power has significantly declined. The information revolution ushered in by the Internet in particular has multiplied and diversified the channels of information access and civic discourse, causing the fundamental failure of the means of control used by government authorities to block information and prohibit political discussion.

Of the four pillars of totalitarian rule, only political centralization and its blunt repression remain. However, because a social pattern where righteousness and justice reside with civil society while power resides with the authorities has gradually taken shape, the twofold tyranny of the Maoist era—persecution of the flesh and trampling of the spirit—is no more, and there has been a significant decline in the effectiveness of political terrorism. As for [the] government[’s] persecution of its victims, it no longer has the twofold effect of using prison to deprive them of personal freedom and also using mass criticism to debase their integrity and dignity. Political persecution may cause its victims to suffer economic losses, may strip them of personal freedom, but it is unable to damage their social reputation, and even less able to place them under the siege of social isolation; and therefore it cannot destroy their integrity, dignity, or spirit. On the contrary, it has gradually turned into a vehicle for advancing the moral stature of its victims, garnering them honors for being the “civic conscience” or “heroes of truth,” while the government’s hired thugs have become instruments that “do the dirty work.” Not only do the majority of those persecuted no longer beg forgiveness from the organization through endless self-criticism or undertake public self-humiliation; on the contrary, most are able to inspire reverence with their devotion to justice as they defend themselves in the dock under great organizational pressure, putting the Communist Party organization and courts into the moral position of defendants.

Meanwhile, following the collapse of the communist-totalitarian Soviet Union and Eastern bloc, the global trend toward liberalization and democratization has been gaining strength by the day. Pressure from the human-rights diplomacy of mainstream nations and from international human-rights organizations is making the cost of maintaining a system of dictatorship and terror politics increasingly high, while the effectiveness and the deterrent capacity of official persecution continue to decline, forcing the current Chinese Communist regime to put on a big “Human Rights Show” and “Democracy Show,” both in its domestic governance and in its foreign response.

In other words, whether it is the everlasting practice of nonviolent resistance, or the prediction that the liberal system will be the “end of history,”<sup>3</sup> all these [theories] ultimately appeal to the spiritual aspect of human nature. Humans exist not only physically, but also spiritually, possessing a moral sense, the core of which is the dignity of being human. Our high regard for dignity is the natural source of our sense of justice. When a system or a country allows everyone to live with dignity, it can gain spontaneous approval from the people, which is how St. Thomas Aquinas understood political virtue: Virtuous good governance lies not only in maintaining order, but [even] more in establishing human dignity. [If it acts] otherwise, [a government] will provoke various forms of resistance, with conscientious objection among the principal

forms. The reason why the liberal system can gradually replace dictatorship, and the end of the Cold War can be seen as the end of history, lies in the fact that the former [the liberal system] acknowledges and respects human dignity, while the latter [dictatorship] does not recognize human dignity and discredits it by dragging it in the dust.

The greatness of nonviolent resistance is that even as man is faced with forceful tyranny and the resulting suffering, the victim responds to hate with love, to prejudice with tolerance, to arrogance with humility, to humiliation with dignity, and to violence with reason. That is, the victim, with love that is humble and dignified, takes the initiative to invite the victimizer to return to the rules of reason, peace, and compassion, thereby transcending the vicious cycle of “replacing one tyranny with another.”

Bottom-up reform requires self-consciousness among the people, and self-initiated, persistent, and continuously expanding civil-disobedience movements or rights-defense movements among the people.

In an unfree society ruled by a dictatorship, under the premise of a temporary absence of power that can change the dictatorial nature of the regime, the civic ways that I know of for promoting the transformation of Chinese society from the bottom up are as follows:

The nonviolent rights-defense movement does not aim to seize political power, but is committed to building a humane society wherein one can live with dignity. That is, it strives to expand an independent civil society by changing the way people live—the lifestyle of ignorance, cowardice, and willing enslavement—by first endeavoring to expand the space and resources for civil society in areas where the control by government authorities is weak. This is followed by sustained nonviolent resistance to compress the social space controlled by government authorities, and then by increasing the price the dictatorial government has to pay in order to control the civic sphere, shaping a pattern of gradual inch-by-inch progress of civil liberties at the expense of the contracting power of government authorities.

The nonviolent rights-defense movement need not pursue a grand goal of complete transformation. Instead, it is committed to putting freedom into practice in everyday life through initiation of ideas, expression of opinions, and rights-defense actions; particularly through the continuous accumulation of each and every rights-defense case, it accrues moral and justice resources, organizational resources, and maneuvering experience in the civic sector. When civic forces are not yet strong enough to change the macropolitical environment at large, they can at least rely on personal conscience and small-group cooperation to change the small, micropolitical environment within their reach. For instance, the fact that the rebellion of senior newsmen such as Lu Yuegang and Li Datong against the official news system achieved definite results was ultimately a function of the soundness of the small milieu within the *China Youth Daily*.

Regardless of how great the freedom-denying power of a regime and its institutions is, every individual should still fight to the best of his or her ability to live as a free person—that is, make every effort to live

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an honest life with dignity. In any society ruled by dictatorship, when those who pursue freedom publicly disclose it and practice what they preach, as long as they manage to be fearless in the small details of everyday life, what they say and do in everyday life will become the fundamental force that will topple the system of enslavement. If you believe that you possess a basic human conscience and if you heed its

call, then display it and let it shine in the sunlight of public opinion, let the people see it and, especially, let the dictators see it.

One should unflinchingly commit to liberal values, pursue the principle of tolerance, and promote multilateral dialogue, particularly when different voices and different choices arise among the people; and one should treat low-profile dealings as a supplement to high-profile resistance, rather than regarding oneself as an absolute hero and unreasonably assigning blame. Because even though enforced morality is different from enforced politics, it is still quite far from the tolerance that liberalism calls for. That a person is willing to pay a great price for the ideals he or she chooses does not constitute justification for forcing others to make comparable sacrifices for ideals.

Whether an insider or an outsider of the system, whether working from the top down or the bottom up, each should respect the other's right to speak. Even the statements and actions of people attached to the government, as long as they do not force constraints on independent discourse among the people and the rights-defense movement, should be regarded as a useful exploration of transformational strategies, and their right of speech should be fully respected. Those who advocate transformation from the top down should maintain adequate respect for the explorations of those working from the bottom up among the people. With the premise of mutual respect and equal treatment, the contention and dialogue between proponents of the top-down and the bottom-up positions will make a more useful contribution to shaping a popular consensus on the trajectory for transformation. This is the meaning of the saying, "All roads lead to Rome." Tolerance, however, does not mean tacit consent to tyranny, nor does it mean sinking into the quagmire of absolute relativism. The bottom line for the liberal nongovernmental position is, specifically, firm opposition by force of the words and deeds of the people to any government repres-

sion, whatever form this repression may take—intimidation, bribery, rectification, expulsion, prohibition, arrest, or legislation.

Institutional common sense on how to confront rather than evade an ever-present dictatorial power: [One must] take into one's own hands the initiative for improving the status of the population without rights, rather than pinning hope on the arrival of some enlightened master or benevolent ruler. In the strategic maneuvering between civil society and the government, regardless of how official policies may change, the most important thing is to encourage and assist the civil-rights defense movement and to hold fast to the independent position of civil society. Especially in a situation where one is alone in confronting bad governance amid a chorus of praise singers, one must be committed to the criticism of and opposition to the dictatorial regime from the position of an outsider. When the government's policy decisions are stiff, one must force them to become flexible; when the government's attitude loosens, one must take advantage of it to expand civic resources and space. While supporting enlightened policy making within the system, one must still hold fast to one's position as an outsider and persevere in one's criticism.

In sum, China's course toward [becoming] a free society will mainly rely on bottom-up gradual improvement and not on a top-down "Chiang Ching-kuo-style" revolution.<sup>4</sup> Bottom-up reform requires self-consciousness among the people, and self-initiated, persistent, and continuously expanding civil-disobedience movements or rights-defense movements among the people. In other words, pursue [the building of] free and democratic forces among the people; do not pursue the rebuilding of society through radical regime change, but instead use gradual social change to compel regime change. That is, rely on a continuously growing civil society to reform a regime that lacks legitimacy.

#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev (b. 1931) was the second-to-last general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, serving from 1985 until 1991, and the last head of state of the USSR, serving from 1988 until its collapse in 1991.

2. Chiang Ching-kuo (1910–88) was the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist) politician and leader. The son of Chiang Kai-shek, he was first the premier (1972–78) of the Republic of China (ROC), and then its president from 1978 until his death in 1988. Under his tenure, the ROC government, while authoritarian, became more open and tolerant of political dissent. Toward the end of his life, Chiang relaxed government controls on the media and speech.

3. See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

4. In 1987, President Chiang Ching-kuo ended martial law in Taiwan and began a gradual process of political liberalization, allowing opposition groups to form.