

ASSESSING THE NEW POLICIES

DENG XIAOPING: "BUILD SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS"

This excerpt is from a talk with the Japanese delegation to the second session of the council of Sino-Japanese nongovernmental figures, June 30, 1984. Although he did not always hold top positions in the party or government, Deng Xiaoping clearly led the nation from the late seventies to the late eighties. As the regime adopted more and more capitalist-style practices over that period, however, it was forced into an ideological corner. How could the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduce capitalist practices? It looked back to a more orthodox theory of development from capitalism to socialism to provide it with an ideological fig leaf. Since socialist revolution, according to this theory, could take place only in an advanced capitalist country, it was the task of the CCP to build up the forces of production that would eventually serve as the premise and basis for socialism.

People may ask, If China had taken the capitalist instead of the socialist road, could the Chinese people have liberated themselves and could China have finally stood up? The Nationalists took that road for more than twenty years and proved that it does not work. By contrast, the Chinese Communists, by adhering to Marxism and integrating Marxism with actual conditions in China in accordance with Mao Zedong Thought, took their own road and succeeded in the revolution by encircling the cities from the countryside. Conversely, if we had not been Marxists, or if we had not integrated Marxism with Chinese conditions and followed our own road, China would have remained fragmented, with neither independence nor unity. China simply had to adhere to

Marxism. If we had not fully believed in Marxism, the Chinese revolution would never have succeeded. That belief was the motive force. After the founding of the People's Republic, if we had taken the capitalist rather than the socialist road, we would not have ended the chaos in the country or changed its conditions—inflation, unstable prices, poverty, and backwardness. We started from a backward past. There was virtually no industry for us to inherit from old China, and we did not have enough grain for food. Some people ask why we chose socialism. We answer that we had to, because capitalism would get China nowhere. We must solve the problems of feeding and employing the population and of reunifying China. That is why we have repeatedly declared that we shall adhere to Marxism and keep to the socialist road. But by Marxism we mean Marxism that is integrated with Chinese conditions, and by socialism we mean socialism that is tailored to Chinese conditions and has Chinese characteristics.

What is socialism and what is Marxism? We were not quite clear about this before. Marxism attaches utmost importance to developing the productive forces. We advocate communism. But what does that mean? It means the principle of from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs, which calls for highly developed productive forces and overwhelming material wealth. Therefore, the fundamental task for the socialist stage is to develop the productive forces. The superiority of the socialist system is demonstrated by faster and greater development of the productive forces than under the capitalist system. One of our shortcomings since the founding of the People's Republic was that we neglected the development of the productive forces. Socialism means eliminating poverty. Pauperism is not socialism, still less communism. The superiority of the socialist system lies above all in its ability to increasingly develop the productive forces and to improve the people's material and cultural life. The problem facing us now is how China, which is still backward, is to develop the productive forces and improve the people's living standard. This brings us back to the point of whether to continue on the socialist road or to stop and turn onto the capitalist road. The capitalist road can only enrich less than 10 percent of the Chinese population; it can never enrich the 90 percent. That is why we must adhere to socialism. The socialist principle of distribution to each according to his work will not create an excessive gap in wealth. Consequently, no polarization will occur as our productive forces become developed over the next twenty to thirty years.

The minimum target of our Four Modernizations is to achieve a comparatively comfortable standard of living by the end of the century. . . . By a "comfortable standard" we mean that per capita GNP will reach U.S. \$800. That is a low level for you, but it is really ambitious for us. China has a population of 1 billion now and it will reach 1.2 billion by then. If, when the GNP reached \$1,000 billion, we applied the capitalist principle of distribution, it would not amount to much and could not help to eliminate poverty and backwardness.

Less than 10 percent of the population would enjoy a better life, while more than 90 percent remained in poverty. But the socialist principle of distribution can enable all the people to become relatively comfortable. This is why we want to uphold socialism. Without socialism, China can never achieve that goal.

However, only talking about this is not enough. The present world is an open one. China's past backwardness was due to its closed-door policy. After the founding of the People's Republic, we were blockaded by others, and so the country remained closed to some extent, which created difficulties for us. Some "left" policies and the Cultural Revolution in particular were disastrous for us. In short, the experience of the past thirty years or more proves that a closed-door policy would hinder construction and inhibit development. Therefore, the ideological line formulated at the Third Plenary Session of the Party's Eleventh Central Committee is to adhere to the principles of integrating Marxism with Chinese conditions, seeking truth from facts, linking theory with practice, and proceeding from reality. In other words, the line is to adhere to the essence of Comrade Mao Zedong's thought. Our political line focuses on the four modernizations, on continuing to develop the productive forces. Nothing short of world war would make us release our grip on this essential point. Even should world war break out, we would engage in reconstruction after the war. A closed-door policy would not help construction. There are two kinds of exclusion: one is directed against other countries; the other is directed against China itself, with one region or department closing its doors to the others. We are suggesting that we should develop a little faster — just a little, because it would be unrealistic to go too fast. To do this, we have to invigorate the domestic economy and open up to the outside. We must first of all solve the problem of the countryside, which contains 80 percent of the population. China's stability depends on the stability of the countryside with this 80 percent — this is the reality of China from which we should proceed. No matter how successful our work in the cities is, it will not mean much without the stable base of the countryside. Therefore, we must first of all solve the problem of the countryside by invigorating the economy and adopting an open policy so as to bring the initiative of 80 percent of the population into full play. We adopted this policy at the end of 1978, and after several years in operation it has produced the desired results. . . .

As for our relations with foreign countries, we shall pursue the policy of opening up still wider to the outside world. We have opened fourteen medium and large coastal cities. We welcome foreign investment and advanced techniques. Management is also a kind of technique. Will they undermine our socialism? Not likely, because the socialist economy is our mainstay. Our socialist economic base is so huge that it can absorb tens and hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of foreign funds without shaking the socialist foundation. Besides, we adhere to the socialist principle of distribution and do not tolerate

economic polarization. Thus, foreign investment will doubtless serve as a major supplement to the building of socialism in our country. And as things stand now, this supplement is indispensable. Naturally, some problems will arise in the wake of foreign investment. But the negative aspects are far less significant than the positive use we can make of it to accelerate our development. It may entail a slight risk, but not much.

Well, those are our plans. We shall accumulate experience and try new solutions as new problems arise. In general, we believe the road we have chosen — building socialism with Chinese characteristics — is the right one and will work. We have followed this road for five and a half years and have achieved satisfactory results. We want to quadruple China's GNP by the end of the century. The pace of development so far exceeded our projections. And so I can tell our friends that we are even more confident now.

[From Deng, *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 95–98]