The democratic movement in China has been crushed. With it has gone, at least for the present, a whole outpouring of original thought in Chinese society. Much of it, ironically, came from within the Communist Party itself. Su Shaozhi, now in hiding, was one of China's leading reformist intellectuals. Here, in a previously unpublished paper exclusive to ALR, he lays out a manifesto for the movement.

Until late 1986 Su Shaozhi was the head of the Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought Institute in the Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. After a series of articles implicitly criticising the Communist Party's style of work, he was sacked, and thereafter was identified by the authorities as a dissident. This hitherto unpublished article, delivered as a lecture in 1987, is the clearest and most detailed expression of Su's views on the need for reform and democracy, and reflects many of the values and goals of the now-suppressed student movement.

For Su, political reform meant democratic reform. For many in the Communist party, however, only a government dominated by a strong leader can bring about economic prosperity. This view, known in China as neo-authoritarianism, has been promoted vigorously in recent years, and in April this year even Deng Xiaoping was quoted as supporting it.

In an interview in the liberal Shanghai World Economic Herald in the same month, Su made it clear that while he was not opposed to authority per se, he was most definitely hostile to neo-authoritarianism. In the April 24 edition Su and other leading dissident intellectuals called for a re-evaluation of the recently deceased ex-Party secretary Hu Yaobang. This was regarded as a veiled attack on Deng Xiaoping: the issue was banned and the paper temporarily closed. When it did reappear it was without its liberal editor, Qin Benli, sacked for "seriously violating Party discipline".

The bloody suppression of the students in Beijing weeks later, and the waves of arrests which followed, have temporarily silenced the voices of democracy. Su himself has gone into hiding, and there are great fears for his life. Even if the State were to kill or silence Su, however, the issues he raises will still need to be addressed if the Communist Party is to regain the legitimacy it lost in Beijing in June.

The lack of a theoretical basis is an important reason why it has been difficult to deepen the reforms in Chinese society. We have already done much, but our theory has been either unclear or we have been unprepared to articulate it. This, then, has blocked reform. Vice-Premier Wan Li has already made it clear that the "double one-hundreds principle" is also applicable in the political and policy-making arenas.

A commentator in the People's Daily also clearly pointed out: "political problems can be discussed". This opens the way for the freedom to explore and overcome a number of theoretical dogmas, a task which will be of benefit to the reform of the political system.

Which dogmas of social and political theory have to be overcome in the reform of the political system?

The first is the dogma whereby socialist society is said to be made up of only three forces - the working class, the peasants and the intellectuals - the divisions between which are said to be disappearing. In reality, the analysis of socialist society also needs group stratification, by social groups or interest groups. Otherwise, the reality of contradictions among the people will not be adequately reflected, and they will not be handled appropriately. How can this sort of division be carried out? Is it to be done on the basis of income? On the basis of one's place in social production? Research and discussion of this is underway in Chinese sociological circles, and this kind of discussion should be permitted and even encouraged.

The second dogma that needs to be overcome is that which asserts that the workers, peasants and intellectuals in...
a socialist society are bound by com-
radely bonds of mutual co-operation,
and that on matters pertaining to
politics, morality and justice their
views are identical. This sort of "inter-
est monism" needs to be replaced by
"interest pluralism". In socialist
society there exists three types of in-
terests; social, collective and in-
dividual. In socialist society our
fundamental interests and long-terms
interests are of course identical.
Nevertheless, there still exists a
variety of strata and groups. These
strata and groups all have their own
immediate interests, individual inter-
ests, regional interests and commer-
cial interests - which are not all the
same. For instance, workers and
peasants have different interests con-
cerning the raising of prices on side-
l ine products. The Party must
understand and encourage the expres-
sion of each type of viewpoint and
criticism. It will formulate its policy
decisions much better if it does so by
understanding and co-ordinating these
various viewpoints.

The third dogma that needs to be
done away with is the monistic, ab-
solutist and omnipotent concept of
Party leadership. We must get rid of
that great all-encompassing unified
structure under which the leadership
of the Party committee is everything.
Party leadership should be exercised
over the line, over principles, policy
and political ideology; it should raise
and examine problems at a macro or
strategic level. As for the analysis of
specific problems at a more concrete
level, we cannot rely on what the Party
says and definitely cannot rely on
what the Party leadership says. Fre-
fently, there is a very bad tendency
whereby Party leaders are seemingly
all-powerful. A person serving as a
Party leader is suddenly an expert on
everything, irrespective of the field;
be it cultural, academic, theoretical or
whatever. In essence, this is the con-
tinuing evil influence of the "golden
mouth and jade words" of feudal
despotism.

Within this problem there are a
number of relations which require re-
search. One is the relationship be-
tween the Party and the law. At a
general level one must ask: which is
more important, the Party or the law?
Our Party constitution stipulates that
the Party and Party members must act
within the limits of the constitution
and the law; they cannot overstep the
law. The Party participated in the for-
mation of the constitution, but the con-
stitution is definitely not a Party
formulation - rather, it is a formulation
of the people. Moreover, the judiciary
must be independent. If this is not the
case, it will be detrimental to the es-
establishment of a legal system.

Secondly, there is the relationship
between the Party and the govern-
ment. In a great many socialist
countries the Party and the govern-
ment are one: government power be-
comes Party power. In China the
provincial and municipal Party com-
mittees have taken complete control of
many matters which were originally
the preserve of provincial and
municipal governments. This actually
discourages activism in the regions,
and in reality it weakens the Party's
leadership. We should seriously con-
sider comrade Deng Xiaoping's dec-
laration that "the Party and the
government are separate". Thirdly,
there is the relationship of the Party
and the mass organisations. The union
movement was, for example, former-
l y said to be the link between the Party
and the masses. If by link is simply
meant connection, then there is no
problem. If, however, by link is meant
conveyor belt, then in reality the union
has become a Party structure and has
lost its independent capacity to repres-
ent the interests of the workers.

To get to the nub of the matter, what
needs to be investigated is the way in
which the Communist Party has be-
come a Party of power. What needs to
be asked is this: in the socialist con-
struction period, when the exploiting
class, as a class, has been eliminated,
what elements of the Party's work
methods drawn from the revolu-
tionary period are now in need of reform,
and with which is it worthwhile to per-
sist? I think that in this regard there is
a difference between the Party as un-
derground organisation and the Party
as party of government. In the past, in
the debates between Lenin and Rosa
Luxemburg, Lenin stressed iron dis-

cipline while Luxemburg stressed
democracy within the Party. The
question of who was correct must
depend upon concrete analysis. Dur-
ing the Party’s underground
period, of course Lenin was correct.
Without iron discipline, there can be
no single line of leadership. With
everything passing through
democratic discussion, the Party
could face destruction. After obtain-
ing power, however, the Communist
Party becomes the Party of power, and
here Luxemburg is correct. At this
time, the key question is the develop-
ment of internal Party democracy.

The fourth dogma we must get rid
of is the view that bourgeois
democracy is obsolete. In the past, we
considered bourgeois democracy was
serving the interests of the capitalist
classes and that it was a kind of sham
democracy. From a historical perspec-
tive, however, the catchcries of bour-
geois democracy such as liberté, egalité,
fraternité, and many of its sys-
tems - such as checks and balances,
general elections etc - were all ad-
vanced by the "third estate" (including
the burgeoning bourgeoisie and the
working people) in the anti-feudal
period. Needless to say, the labouring
people really needed those rights - al-
though, during the anti-feudal period
the bourgeoisie themselves accepted
and supported those demands.

However, things changed after the
bourgeoisie had consolidated their
hegemonic position. They tried to
restrict or eliminate those demands
and to change democracy into a sham
form. The significant thing about
capitalist society today is that those
who strive for democratic freedoms,
for true elections and a balanced dis-
tribution of power, are still the broad
masses of the people. Hence we can-
not totally reject the forms of
democracy in capitalist society.

In the resolution of the Sixth
Plenum of the Twelfth Central Com-
mittee of the Chinese Communist
Party, there were breakthroughs in
this regard. The resolution stated: "In
human history, the the struggle of the
newly emerging bourgeoisie and the
labouring people against the feudal
despotic system, forming the concepts of
democracy, freedom, equality and
fraternity was a great liberation of the
human spirit. Marxism critically in-
herits these bourgeois concepts but
also differs from them at the level of
principle". We must not allow the
right to use the banner of democracy,
freedom, equality, fraternity, human
rights and humanitarianism to fall un-
challenged into the hands of the
bourgeoisie. These things are, for
us, not only banners but things to be
strived for. Engels once said: "How
can we demand that others give us
freedom of speech if we eliminate
freedom of speech in our own ranks?"
Here, the freedom of speech spoken
by Engels can be extended to
democratic freedom.

Finally, a number of doctrinaire
readings of marxism concerning so-
cial and political theory need to be
eradicated. For example, if we con-
tinue to say today that "the State is a
class tool", then quite clearly this is in-
adequate. The use of the capitalist
State structure lies not only in its
ability to oppress, but also in its role
in resolving social contradictions, in-
tervening in the economy, and so on.
This is even more obviously true in the
case of a socialist state. In China the
exploiting class, as a class, has already
been eliminated, and therefore the
State quite naturally cannot be said to
be the tool of class oppression. We
must simultaneously consider the
class and social nature of the state.
Under the conditions of socialism we
need to especially consider the ques-
tion of the sociality of the state. The
legal system also needs to be con-
sidered in this light.

We should encourage research and
discussion into the problems of there
form of the political system, and not
continually fear the emergence of dif-
ferent opinions. How can a lack of
opinions be considered to be "even
more democratic"? Can three
thousand in favour and none against
be regarded as democratic? In reality,
there simply cannot be a situation
where no-one disagrees: it can only be
that those who disagree are never al-
lowed to express their opinions.
Moreover, how can unanimity be in-
sisted upon when there are different
strata, different groups and different
people all with different interests, dif-
ferent needs and different ideological
methods? For example, if the govern-
ment wants to adopt a measure for
raising the prices on agricultural side-
line products, the peasants will
naturally endorse this, while the
workers could disagree. We cannot
possibly stop the workers from ex-
pressing their opinions: we could only
adopt suitable measures to satisfac-
torily resolve the situation. We should
not be afraid of people raising their
opinions and airing their criticisms. If
there are differing opinions it should
be possible to discuss them, and dis-
cuss them calmly and dispassionately.
Only by this method will we find the
best result.

Reform is a kind of trail-blazing, of
doing things which have not been
done before or by others. Therefore
one must boldly explore. Who can say
that their opinion is definitely ac-
curate or completely correct? This re-
quires discussion, there needs to be
contention between different opinions
and we need to have the courage to put
forward different plans and proposals
after which we must search for the
finest schemes and promote the
development of reform. Opposing the
influence of feudalism in political
ideology, liberating ideology, smash-
ing dogma and gradually realising a
high level of democracy, this then is
the historic tendency of our nation’s
system of political reform.

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