

The Chinese Democracy Movement lives on, say its exiled leaders

by Cho Wen-pin

On Nov. 14, the very last day of the Third Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party held in the People's Hall on Tiananmen Square, police took away two dissidents, Yang Zhou and Qin Yongmin, after a meeting in which nine dissidents signed a preliminary draft of a "peace charter" on political reform.

The peace charter, which reads, "we all agreed on the principle of open, non-violent action to open the unified movement to protect human rights on a national scale," was initiated by Qin Yongmin, and written to promote non-violent political reform, individual rights, the release of political prisoners, and to stimulate dialogue. The movement was joined four days later by representatives of the new Unified Movement to Protect Human Rights, based in the central city of Xian.

During the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Seattle, six overseas Chinese organizations gathered to protest the visit of China's President, Jiang Zeming. On Nov. 21, Ni Yuxian (who was twice jailed and barely escaped death for his struggle for a democratic China) and others initiated the Seattle Declaration, signed by 39 democratic movement leaders in exile. The signers include Liu Bingyan, senior journalist, now head of the China Initiative, based in Princeton, New Jersey; Wang Bingzhang, founder of *China Spring* magazine; Wang Che, founder of the Christian Democratic Alliance; Zheng Yi, the reporter who shocked the world with the story about the practice of cannibalism during the Cultural Revolution; Li Lu, Wuer Kaixi, Zhang Boli, and Xiang Xiaoji, all students leaders in 1989 in Tiananmen Square; and Wang Ruowang, dissident journalist and senior writer.

Wei Jingshen, jailed for 15 years as a political prisoner, in a recent article accused the United States of putting money before morality. He called President Clinton's new policy of "constructive engagement" with Beijing a "misguided shift" which will be taken by the Chinese people as proof that the Communist Party had been right to charge that "the American government is controlled by rich capitalists. All you have to do is offer them a chance to make money and anything goes."

This hero of the 1979 Beijing Spring had no illusion that economic modernization could possibly succeed if freedom of ideas is crushed by a tyrannical regime (see *EIR*, Feb. 14, 1992, p. 32).

The following is the first publication in English of the Seattle Declaration. It was translated from the Chinese newspaper *World Journal* from Nov. 23.

The Seattle Declaration

We, the undersigned, see ourselves as members of an international coalition of independent democratic organizations as well as individual and intellectual dissidents, assembling here during the Asia Pacific Economic Community conference and Sino-U.S. summit meeting in Seattle, with our moral commitments and under the name of civilized human consciousness, to state our fundamental position on the major issues facing our country, and to express our deep concerns over the future and the happiness of all the people and nations in China.

Today, everyone—no matter how much one's ideology and political position differ from those of others—should sense from his daily life that the whole world is undergoing a profound and drastic change as it is about to enter the 21st century. After the collapse of the Communist Alliance and the end of the Cold War, a half-century of confrontations between the two blocs and genocidal clashes over ideologies is being gradually replaced by movements for freedom and democracy under a rational and peaceful theme; a historical anomaly that isolates a quarter of the world population in China from the rest of the world, and opposes Chinese modernization, is disappearing, irreversibly, from the scene.

Protecting human rights and the dignity to realize the true value of a human being has become the basic demand among the new generations in China.

However, the political system in mainland China is founded on a basis that only guarantees the privileges of a few cliques—not elected by the people—maintained by using violent political methods and depriving the majority of basic human rights. The truth of indisputable facts, sounder than any arguments from the current regime and its supporters, speaks loudly: No one with an independent character would indefinitely tolerate this unlimited political and economic slavery. Thus, people would take any opportunity to rebel for their rights to live. As was demonstrated in the Tiananmen Square Student Movement, and again in the recent "Peace Charter" Democratic Manifesto, no one can ever kill freedom.

For more than two score years, China has been ruled under one party which in turn has been run by one man, a political system needed for the military communist economy. This personalized system, which features an absolute authority under absolute control, could only be created under lasting civil wars and a violent international environment. Now, long wars, extreme austerity, and general illiteracy—the very sustenance fostering that system—is being overturned. “Furs can’t grow if there is no skin,” as the old Chinese proverb says. China can’t generate another strongman like Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping to sustain the corrupt and falling house of tyranny. Now, everyone sees clearly the coming devastating chaos in the system after the death of Deng Xiaoping. Due to the historical burden the Chinese Communist Party inherited from its past mistakes, and due to the contradictions within the current structure of its political system, the so-called “core” leadership appointed by a few cannot possibly fill the power vacuum caused by the death of Deng Xiaoping; Chinese society would not accept any man-made “savior.” The day when the last political strongman dies would be the time of the very collapse of the current political system.

The Chinese Communist Party uses violence to suppress the yearning for democracy by the people, and to maintain rule by a few privileged cliques. It appears to some that each time the regime has gained for itself a temporary political stability with armed action, the inhuman brutality plants seeds of hatred among the people. Over 40 years, communist rule has caused the death of more than 40 million Chinese. Hostility grows daily among the countless compatriots who are suffering from the atrocious reign.

The economic reform program—having, relatively, unleashed some economic potential which was suppressed for scores of years, and making some increases in productivity, thus offering a better material life for those who benefit from this reform—however, has not brought a change in the livelihood of the majority in the country nor a reduction of complaints and anger from its vast population. There was no fundamental change in the obsolete political system which ensures the few privileged cliques the opportunity to carve up state properties and to loot the poor. The degenerate ruling regime has started a moral crisis in the whole society today. Those who have learned the history, be they officials or citizens, be they party members or non-members, all express deep concern over the current chaos that inevitably leads to catastrophes. If the Beijing regime refuses to face this reality, which could implode at any moment, and to decisively take initiatives to reform its politics, then the political fate of the Communist Party can only be tragic.

History has reminded us of its ruthlessness and justice. History offers the Communist Party an alternative: Immediately initiate political change to bring in democratic reforms, while symbolic figures like Deng Xiaoping still have limited control of power struggles. This may possibly be the very last

chance China has to transform itself into a peaceful society.

For the sake of 1.1 billion Chinese, we hereby honestly appeal to the Chinese Communist regime: Face the reality of this new political era, take this historical opportunity to change course toward what will lead to the current of benevolence and improved livelihood of the people, take the following necessary steps for the benefit of China, its people, and the government itself:

1) Announce the unconditional release of all the political prisoners and overturn all the charges made against innocent people who were politically persecuted over the past 40 years, retract all the slanders against the political dissidents, and allow all those in exile to return home from overseas.

2) Guarantee freedom of speech and freedom of press.

3) Open the society so people can assemble in public and can organize political groups and associations; and all the peaceful political activities of these groups should be allowed.

4) Let the people elect major offices of government at all levels, and let citizens freely participate in elections as candidates.

All of the above four points are the essence of the minimum democratic rights of citizens who live in a modern civilized country, only remotely approaching our objective of a truly democratic state. Yet, only if the current regime of the Chinese Communist Party promises the above items, can it demonstrate to the country and the world that the Chinese government has determined to renew itself according to the tide of the times, thus laying a peaceful cornerstone for social transformation.

Needless to say, the Chinese democratic movement criticizes the current political system in China, while remaining opposed to the latter. But the only reason for our fight is to establish a system that protects basic human rights and to have a society in which all citizens can enjoy their political right to choose their own government in order to provide a better livelihood, prevent further suffering, and protect the freedom of all the people of all the nations in China. We do not harbor hatred toward any particular political figure nor to any particular political group, organization, or faction, including the Communist Party, nor do we promote violent revenge. Any individual or party, from now on, as long as they promise not to use force against the people, as long as they recognize openly that the citizens have political rights of choice, as long as they respect all the basic and inalienable human rights, deserve the equal opportunity to be elected.

The Chinese democratic movement is a rational political and social force. We love peace and practice forgiveness, and we prefer to settle political conflicts with honest negotiations. The reason we look forward to the future, while at the same time we learn from history, is because we hope to bring a brighter, healthier, more stable future to our next generations. We sincerely wish all friends would join us in this effort to build a free, democratic, and prosperous New China.