China declares science to be 'the top productive force'

by Mary Burdman

The government of China in May convened the National Science and Technology Conference, the largest, highest-level national conference on science, technology, and education that China has held since 1978. This five-day conference followed a decision made by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, on May 6. The 40-article document on this decision, released to the public on May 21, called for carrying out the theory that "science and technology [are] the top productive force" in all fields. This conference, which was repeatedly termed "historic" in the Chinese press, was completely ignored in the western media.

On May 26, China's government called together in Beijing almost all top national leaders, State Council ministers, military commanders, presidents of national corporations, leading scientists, and leaders of the provinces, regions, municipalities, and some major cities, filling the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for the opening session. Both President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng addressed the conference. Jiang said that the meeting would have a crucial impact on China's overall economic and social development, and called on "the whole nation to join the drive of 'invigorating China through science and education,' symbolizing the country's decisive shift toward a science-oriented course of development," the official *China Daily* reported. Quoting the aged paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, the President called science and technology the "number one productive force," which must be further liberated, and said that China's CP and government leadership had recently decided to accelerate scientific and technological progress.

Prime Minister Li Peng in his speech emphasized the urgent problem of quickly translating technological achievement into agricultural and industrial productivity. Both announced that China will triple its investment in R&D, from 0.5% of Gross Domestic Product in 1994, to 1.5% by 1999.

A commentary in *China Daily* on the opening day of the conference, said that it will "chart the path of China's science and technology into the next century." This conference will be "another milestone," and its paramount task is to determine how science and technology can "fully play the role of being a primary productive force, so as to make the greatest possible contribution to scientific development." To ensure that China's scientific capacity will grow, not only will funds dedicated to research and development be tripled, but regional leaders will also be made responsible to "personally administer" science and technology. "With a new century less than five years away, vision is needed in making strategic scientific decisions in the future," it stated.

"Science and technology are the most important productive forces behind economic and social development, and are decisive factors of achieving prosperity in China," the May 6 Party and State Council Decision on Accelerating Scientific and Technological Progress states. It calls for promoting progress in agriculture and industrial growth, developing high-technology industry, strengthening basic research, "improving the overall scientific and cultural qualities of the nation," increasing international relations around science and technology, and strengthening leadership on this front.

China has laid "a solid foundation for speeding up . . . progress in the whole society," the Decision states. However, "the ratio of turning scientific and technological findings into productive forces and the ratio of contributions by science and technology to economic growth are relatively low," it reads. China still has an "irrational structure" of overlapping institutes and dispersed research forces left over from the old system; this must be changed.

The period leading into the mid-21st century will be crucial for China. "During this period, the rapid development of science and technology will certainly play an enormous role in pushing forward economic and social development, and will bring revolutionary changes to the production modes and lifestyles of mankind," the Decision states.

Precedents

China is at a crossroads, and the decision to hold this conference demonstrates that its leaders are aware of the critical situation. The government is well aware that the world economy is hovering on the brink of collapse, and that China itself must urgently expand its food and energy production, and develop national infrastructure, if the nation is to survive.

Chinese press coverage of the conference has emphasized two precedents: the science conference convened by Mao Zedong in 1956, and that called by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. These were both at turning points in modern Chinese history.

The years 1954-56 were a watershed in China. There

were broad-ranging debates about the role of scientists and intellectuals in the First Five-Year Plan, begun in 1953, in which Mao at least declared his support for science. Soviet assistance was then having a big impact, especially in industrializing the north. At the same time, there were efforts by other leaders of the CP, including Liu Shaoqui and Deng Xiaoping, to introduce a State Constitution and to curb Mao's enormous power. At the Eighth Party Congress held in October, a group of CP leaders asserted the need for collective leadership, and omitted any discussion of the *Thoughts* of Chairman Mao. Mao later took his revenge: He re-took control, and, after the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, launched the Cultural Revolution to purge his opponents. Yet, 1956 had been a time of great potential for China.

The story of Deng Xiaoping's initiative is even more interesting. In 1975, as the radical-led, decade-long Cultural Revolution was still going on, Deng, who was just returning to political life after being purged by Mao, set up a group to work on a document planning reorganization of the entire economy, of education and culture, and especially of science. This program, though never published, was violently attacked by the radical Maoist "Gang of Four." In April 1976, they published excerpts from the program, denouncing it for quoting from Mao in such a way as to give the impression that science and technology must be promoted.

This program, especially for the reform of science institutes, was drawn up by Hu Yaobang, who had been leader of the Academy of Science in 1973. Hu Yaobang, who had been the designated successor to Deng until he was purged in 1987, was opposed to the cheap-labor "Special Economic Zone" policy implemented by his rival Zhao Ziyang with the support of the same "New Age monetarists" who have plunged the world economy into its current disaster.

The current government of China is making clear, whatever has occurred in intervening years, what it is designating as the precedents for its policies. A signed editorial in the June 26-July 2 *Beijing Review*, the official Foreign Ministry publication, states that after 1978, with the end of the decade-long Cultural Revolution, Deng put forward the theory that "science and technology were the first productive forces," placing priority on science and technology in the development of the national economy. The editorial lists China's breakthroughs in atomic energy, bio-technology, agriculture, high-energy physics, computer technology, rockets, and satellite communications.

But China still lags far behind western nations. "The decision to press ahead . . . was designed to mobilize a powerful army of people ready to push the strategy forward, thereby enabling China to catch up with the world in the shortest possible time. . . . Currently, China's investment in this field is, on the whole, insufficient." Even as GDP rose, the proportion invested in R&D "hovered around 0.5-0.7% for many years," at a low level even for developing countries. Education must be the foundation for this "strategy essential to [China's] future," the editorial states. "Talented scientists and technicians serve as the principal catalysts in the development of first productive forces. On the basis of raising the scientific and educational levels of the whole nation, the aim of the education program should be to train a huge body of trans-century young scientists and technologists recognized internationally for their outstanding abilities."

Call for creativity

At the conference closing session, Vice Premier Li Lanquing said that ministries and local governments must set specific goals and take concrete measures to help the national economy develop through science and technology.

State Council member Song Jian, chairman of the Science and Technology Commission, called on Chinese scientists to become more creative, because this is the "fundamental support for China's modernization drive." China's policy is to strengthen international cooperation in science, but it can only have equal exchanges and cooperation on the basis of strong creativity. "China's modernization must mainly rely on our own efforts," Song said.

Technological progress is the only way that will work, because "overconsumption of natural resources and sacrificing the biological environment can only trade temporary success," Song said. Development should focus on renovating traditional industries, developing high-technology products and upgrading agricultural technologies; heightened awareness of science and technology, especially among decision-makers, is decisive for modernizing China, Song said. Reforms should focus on establishing an "open, flexible, competitive and cooperative" research environment.

Very serious problems remain. An article in the May 18 issue of *Outlook* reported on the nation's dearth of skilled labor, and the huge loss to the economy. Among China's 120 million workers, 70% have not gone beyond middle school-level. Of the 80 million workers under 35, 80% have basic qualifications, but only 1% advanced qualifications. While in developed countries, technical personnel generally account for 30% of the workforce, in China they are only 3%. As a result, even advanced machinery is being used to produce second- or third-rate goods. Productivity in the engineering industry is only 8.25% of that of the United States and 9.1% of Japan.

A deeper problem is reflected in the views of the president of the Chinese Academy of Science, Prof. Zhou Guangzhao. Professor Zhou's statements, published in *China Daily* on May 31, reflect how pragmatism and even anti-science, imported from tainted western circles, have crippled China's great potential for scientific progress in this century. Much of this non-scientific fraud has been imposed on China and other nations over decades by such British oligarchs as Lord Bertrand Russell—the greatest modern enemy of the true western scientific tradition based in the Golden Renaissance. Thus, Professor Zhou states that China must "preserve re-

sources, control population growth, and hold back the increasing income gap between rich and poor." His views reflect the conditions in China—such as the effects of the use of primitive technology in a poor nation of 1.2 billion persons and the need for powerful government leadership and a strong national industry—in contrast to the insanity emerging from most "advanced"-sector nations' universities and academies these days which champions primitive technology.

But his view that "science and technology can only gain insight and ideas from practice and by pushing forward economic development," will not be enough for China to win the battle it has before it. For that, China's scientists must enter into a dialogue with the western tradition based in the Golden Renaissance, the basis of all great modern scientific discoveries, which also means rediscovering true western history, even if most westerners have forgotten it. Then, the full promise of the National Science and Technology Conference in Beijing could be realized.

Who are the British, to complain of a hungry China?

by Mary McCourt Burdman

Those of us who, in defense of humanity, have had to examine the working of the British imperial "mind" over many years, have come to learn something about this phenomenon: It is extremely nasty, and it never forgets slights. People of other nations, not as willing to be quite so nasty as they are, have lost, time and again in recent centuries, to those who run the British Empire. But there are times when nations do learn, and, in learning, determine not only to protect themselves from these nasty British policies, but to even reject them. Then, the British become *very* angry. So, now, with China.

Graham Hutchings, of London's Hollinger Corp.-owned *Daily Telegraph,* has been writing a series of articles on China. One exemplary headline on the Chinese, in the June 2 *Telegraph,* was: "Why They Could Devour the World." He wrote: "There is a potential monster in our midst." It is not Brussels, the Bosnian Serbs, or Muslim Central Asia, he assures us. No, "the real challenge to the international order comes . . . from the rise of China." Citing the current reincarnation of the British East India Company's long-discredited Parson Malthus, the Worldwatch Institute's Lester Brown, Hutchings claims that China could soon be gobbling up the world's food and energy.

"The 20th century offers unhappy testimony of the problems involved in accommodating the rise of a new power," Hutchings notes. "The search for natural resources, when conducted by expanding, industrializing, fiercely nationalistic powers [meaning, in Brit-speak, Germany and Japan], has often been the cause of war." But China, Hutchings tells us, is a problem beyond all this. " 'China' is a great, yet flawed civilization, trying to become a modern state."

Those British buggers (to use their intimate term of affection among friends, male, of course) are clearly upset. The Chinese—and there are 1.2 billion of them, something which the British cannot for one moment forget—have, for one reason or another, gotten wise to Britain's plans. The Chinese are not going to go through London's proposed post-Deng Xiaoping breakup. They do not like this proposal, they do not want it: They have rejected it.

The British are in a sulk, and complaining. The breakup of China, their pet policy for such a long time, might have been somewhat unpleasant, but, they say, that they could have managed. This is far worse, because, now, all those hungry Chinese, with all their problems and all their needs, united in one nation, are going to constitute a strategic threat to the world, on the issues of food, energy, and so forth. Their ilk have been spouting about this for some time now.

But this is by no means all that really upsets the British imperial mind. There is something more. On May 26, the government of China had the nerve to say that the basis for economic growth and profitability, or what Marx and Marxists call surplus value, is generated as the result of science and scientific and technological progress. The government of China gathered the entire leadership of the nation together in Beijing for five full days, and announced that it is going to place the emphasis on science and technology, as the way to increase the productive powers of labor of the Chinese people. They announced that this was their policy for the coming century, and made very clear, in their Chinese style, that this was going to be a turning point in the history of modern China.

Now, this is a policy that goes *directly* against everything that one learns at Cambridge University. It is completely against Cambridge University's systems analysis, as taught by the late Lord Caldor, who is, undoubtedly, with his same ghastly aspect, still teaching his doctrines there.

It is this, that is really insulting, because it goes to the core of British religious beliefs, called empiricism. How can the British, who have never forgotten how Chinese Emperor Qianlong contemptuously dismissed the Britain monarchy's envoy Lord Macartney 200 years ago—it slips out every now and again, in their contemporary commentaries—possibly overlook this present insult, this challenge to their religion, empiricism? We cannot wonder they are in such a snit.

Hutchings let loose with the worst of insults. He called the leaders of China: "Unclubbable men . . . generally unwelcome in the chanceries of the West." Unclubbable, indeed. China's leaders are *not* part of the Club. China's leaders