

Appendix 36 – The Present Situation and the Tasks before us – Deng Xiaoping (1980)

Source: *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 224-258.

January 16, 1980

(Deng Xiaoping to Communist Party of China) (Excerpts)

Comrades,

Let me begin by defining our tasks. The three major ones are as follows:

First, in international affairs we must continue to oppose hegemonism and strive to preserve world peace. There is a consensus throughout the world that the 1980s will be a dangerous decade. So the task of opposing hegemonism will be on our daily agenda. The 1980s are off to a bad start, what with the Afghanistan affair and the Iranian affair, not to mention the Vietnamese and Middle Eastern questions which came up earlier. There may be many similar problems in the future. In a word, the struggle against hegemonism is a grave task constantly confronting our country.

Second, we must work for the return of Taiwan to the motherland, for China's reunification. We will endeavour to attain this goal in the 1980s; it will be an ever-present and important issue on our agenda, though there may be twists and turns in the course of its development.

Third, we must step up economic construction; that is, we will step up the drive for China's four modernizations. To put the matter in a nutshell, the four modernizations mean economic construction. Without sound economic foundations, it will be impossible to modernize our national defense, and science and technology should primarily serve economic construction.

Modernization is at the core of all these three major tasks, because it is the essential condition for solving both our domestic and our external problems. Everything depends on our doing the work in our own country well. The role we play in international affairs is determined by the extent of our economic growth. If our country becomes more developed and prosperous, we will be in a position to play a greater role in international affairs. Already our international role is not insignificant. With a stronger material base, we will be able to enhance it. In the final analysis, the return of Taiwan to motherland -- the reunification of the country -- also depends on our running our affairs at home well. We are superior to Taiwan politically and in terms of economic system, but we must surpass Taiwan, at least to a certain extent, in economic development as well. Nothing less will do. With the success of the four modernizations and more economic growth, we will be in a better position to accomplish reunification.

Therefore, in the final analysis, the two tasks of opposing hegemonism and reunifying the country by achieving the return of Taiwan to the motherland both require that we do well in our economic development. Of course, we have to handle our many other affairs well too, but economic development is primary.

Let us review here the major work we've done in the political, economic and diplomatic spheres.

On what grounds can we say that a fundamental change has taken place in the political situation? First of all, we have settled accounts with the Gang of Four and launched a nationwide campaign to uncover their factional set-up and to expose and criticize their crimes; basically we have consolidated our leading bodies at all levels. That was the political prerequisite for all our other achievements in the last three years. Second, the democratic life of the Party and the country has begun to get back on the track. The democratic system has been strengthened and extended year by year. Although a good number of important problems still call for deeper study and continued efforts should be made to promote what is beneficial and get rid of what is harmful, we must recognize what is really predominant and essential. For the 29 years since the founding of New China we have had no criminal law. Though we tried repeatedly to draw up such a code and it went through more than 30 drafts, nothing ever came of the project. Now a code of criminal law and a code of criminal procedure have been adopted and promulgated and are being implemented. The whole nation sees in them the hope for a strictly enforced socialist legal system.

There are now certain ideological trends in our society, particularly among some young people, which merit serious attention. For instance, could some of the posters that appeared on the "Xidan Wall" last year be considered a contribution to liveliness? What would have happened if we had continued to allow such posters to be put up without restraint? There have been many similar cases in China and elsewhere in the world. One must not take such things lightly, thinking that they won't cause disturbances. Even a handful of persons could undermine our great undertaking. Therefore, if we are to make progress in an orderly way, when liveliness clashes with stability and unity, we can never pursue the former at the expense of the latter. The experience of the "cultural revolution" has already proved that chaos leads only to retrogression, not to progress, and that there must be good order if we are to move forward. Under China's present circumstances it is clear that without stability and unity we have nothing. In their absence, democracy and the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" -- among other things -- are out of the question. Since our people have just been through a decade of suffering, they cannot afford further chaos and will not permit it to recur. Conversely, with socialist stability and unity, we will be able to accomplish step by step and in a planned fashion everything that can possibly be accomplished and to meet the people's demands to the fullest possible extent.

As I said earlier, destabilizing factors still exist. The residual influence of the Gang of Four is still being felt in the organizational and ideological fields, and we must not

underestimate its harmfulness or we are likely to make mistakes. There are still factionalists around as well as newly emerging elements who engage in beating, smashing and looting. There are also hooligan gangs, criminals and counter-revolutionaries who carry on underground activities in collusion with foreign forces and the Kuomintang secret service. Nor can we take too lightly the so-called democrats and other persons with ulterior motives who flagrantly oppose the socialist system and Communist Party leadership. Their position is clear. Although they sometimes claim to support Chairman Mao and the Party, they are essentially opposed to Party leadership and socialism. In reality, these people think that capitalism is better than socialism and that Taiwan is better than the mainland. Of course, they don't really know what capitalism means or what the realities on Taiwan are. Many of them have simply been led astray and should be educated and brought back to the right path. But we must fully recognize the general tendency and the real aim of these "democrats" and not be too naive about them. In addition, there are anarchists, ultra-individualists and so on, who disrupt public order. All these constitute destabilizing factors.

In this struggle against crime all Party members and cadres, and the higher ones in particular, must take a firm, clear-cut stand. It is absolutely impermissible to propagate freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of association in ways implying that counter-revolutionaries may also enjoy them, and it is absolutely impermissible to make contacts with counter-revolutionaries and other criminals unbeknownst to the Party organization. I am referring to sympathetic contacts and naturally do not include those made for the purpose of dissuading these persons from evil-doing. There really are some comrades whose contacts with such people are sympathetic. For instance, some clandestine publications are beautifully produced. Well, where did the paper come from? And which printing house did the job for them? It's not likely that they have their own presses. Aren't there Party members in the printing houses that turn these things out? Among their supporters there must be some Party members or even cadres holding fairly high posts. We must make it clear to these Party members that their stand is very mistaken, very dangerous, and that unless they correct their mistakes immediately and thoroughly, they will be subjected to Party disciplinary measures. To sum up, Party organizations at all levels down to the branches must be firm and show no hesitation or ambiguity about fighting counter-revolutionaries, saboteurs and all other kinds of criminals.

Some people may ask whether we are following a "tightening up" policy again. But since we have never pursued a "loosening up" policy on such matters, naturally there is no question of "tightening up" now. When did we ever say that we would tolerate the activities of counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs? When did we ever say that the dictatorship of the proletariat was to be abolished? There is no question that those activities should now be dealt with severely, because they are becoming outrageous. The state simply cannot afford to sit back and do nothing. Only by taking stern legal measures against these criminals can we bring a number of misguided young people around to the right road. We must publicize the legal system and make everyone really understand the law, so that more and more people will not only refrain from breaking it but actively uphold it. By dealing sternly with these criminals now, we will be giving

some kind of education not only to the overwhelming majority of offenders, but to the whole Party and people. Throughout the country we must resolutely implement the following principles: the law must be observed; law enforcement must be strict; law-breakers must be dealt with accordingly; and all persons are equal before the law.

In order to maintain stability and unity, comrades working in the fields of propaganda, education, theoretical studies and literature and art must join in a common effort. There is not the slightest doubt that successful work in all these fields can play a significant role in ensuring, maintaining and extending political stability and unity, but by the same token a serious deviation from the policies set for them can foster the growth of destabilizing factors. We hope newspapers and magazines will carry more ideological and theoretical explanations of the need for stability and unity, and that they will publicize the superiority of socialism, the correctness of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the strength of Party leadership and the unity between Party and people, the tremendous achievements and bright future of socialist China, and the idea that to work hard for that future is the highest mission and honor for the youth of our time. In short, we must turn the Party's newspapers and magazines into ideological centers for promoting nationwide stability and unity. Newspapers and periodicals and the radio and television services should all consider it their regular, fundamental task to promote stability and unity and raise the socialist consciousness of young people. Comrades working in the media have achieved significant successes in the past three years, and are doing well on the whole, but their work also has shortcomings. They must listen to differing opinions from various quarters and analyze and improve their work. The literary and art circles have just convened their national congress. We have stated that there should be no arbitrary intervention concerning what to write about and how to write it. This actually places heavier responsibility and higher demands on the writers and artists themselves. We will adhere to the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" and the "three don'ts", and we will drop the slogan that literature and art are subordinate to politics, because it is too easily used as a theoretical pretext for arbitrary intervention in literary and art work. Long practice has proved that this slogan has done more harm than good to the development of literature and art. Of course this doesn't mean that they can be divorced from politics. That is impossible. Every progressive and revolutionary writer or artist has to take into account the social effects of his works and the interests of the people, the state and the Party. The fostering of a new socialist man means politics. The new socialist man will of course work hard for the interests of the people, defend the honour of the socialist motherland and dedicate himself to her future. Literature and art can have an enormous impact on ideological trends among the people, particularly among young people, as well as on social stability and unity. We sincerely hope that all comrades in literary and art circles and those engaged in education, journalism, theoretical and other ideological work will constantly bear in mind the country's overall interests and try to raise the socialist consciousness of the people and in particular of the youth.

Will the maintenance of stability and unity hinder the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom"? Not in the least. We will always persist in the policy of "letting a

hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend". But this doesn't mean the policy can be implemented in ways detrimental to the overall interests of stability and unity. If anyone thinks it can be implemented in disregard of stability and unity, he is misinterpreting and abusing it. We are practicing socialist, not capitalist, democracy. So the upholding of stability and unity and of the four cardinal principles is entirely in line with our adherence to that policy. Some people claim that the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee adopted a "loosening up" policy whereas the four cardinal principles represent a "tightening up" policy. This is sheer distortion that a Party member not only must not tolerate, but must firmly oppose. The four cardinal principles require us first and foremost to uphold socialism. Can we ever stop upholding socialism? How can there be any stability, unity, or socialist modernization if we don't uphold socialism? The Third Plenary Session has called for the achievement of stability and unity -- for carrying out a program of socialist modernization on the basis of stability and unity. That represents the highest interest of the whole people. The policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" must, of course, serve this interest; it absolutely must not run counter to it.

It is the firm policy of our Party to persistently expand democracy and develop the legal system. But as with China's modernization, democracy and the legal system cannot be put into practice by the method of the Great Leap Forward or the method of "speaking out freely and airing one's views fully". That is to say, we must do things methodically and under proper leadership. Otherwise, we will only foster turmoil, hold back the four modernizations and impair democracy and the legal system. The *si da* -- that is, speaking out freely, airing one's views fully, writing big-character posters and holding great debates -- have been written into the Constitution. But when we sum up our historical experience, we have to recognize that, taken as a whole, these practices have never played a positive role. The masses should have the full right and opportunity to express responsible criticisms to their leaders and to make constructive suggestions, but "speaking out freely and airing one's views fully" is evidently not the proper way to do that. Therefore, in the light of long practice and in accordance with the opinion of the great majority of the cadres and masses, the Central Committee is going to submit to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the coming session of the NPC a proposal that the *si da* provision be deleted from the Constitution.

Third, we must work hard and with a pioneering spirit.

The third topic I want to talk about is upholding and improving Party leadership. To accomplish the three major tasks I have outlined for the 1980s and to ensure the four prerequisites for modernization will take strenuous effort. But I believe it can be done, provided we uphold and improve Party leadership and make that leadership the driving force behind all work. Upholding the Four Cardinal Principles means upholding socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, and Party leadership. The crucial thing is to uphold Party leadership.