

## **“The Fifth Modernization: Democracy” (1978)**

**by Wei Jingsheng**

After the arrest of the Gang of Four, the people eagerly hoped that Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping, the possible “restorer of capitalism,” would rise up again like a magnificent banner. Finally he did regain his position in the central leadership. How excited the people felt! How inspired they were! But alas, the old political system so despised by the people remains unchanged, and the democracy and freedom they longed for has not even been mentioned.

But now there are those who’ve offered us a way out: if you take the Four Modernizations as your guiding principle, forge ahead with stability and unity and bravely serve the revolution like a faithful old ox, you will reach paradise — the glory of communism and the Four Modernizations. Those kind-hearted “certain people” have also told us that if we find this confusing, we should undertake a serious and thorough study of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought! If you’re confused, it’s because you don’t understand it, and the fact that you don’t understand it only goes to show just how profound a theory it is! ...

I urge everyone to stop believing such political swindlers. When we all know we are being tricked, why don’t we trust ourselves instead? The Cultural Revolution has tempered us and we are no longer ignorant. Let us investigate for ourselves what should be done! ...

What is true democracy? Only when the people themselves choose representatives to manage affairs in accordance with their own will and interests can we speak of democracy. Furthermore, the people must have the power to replace these representatives at any time in order to prevent them from abusing their powers to suppress the people. Is this possible? The citizens of Europe and the United States enjoy just this kind of democracy and could run people like Nixon, de Gaulle, and Tanaka out of office when they wished ... In China, however, if a person so much as comments on the now-deceased “Great Helmsman” or “Great Man peerless in history” Mao Zedong, the mighty prison gates and all kinds of unimaginable misfortunes await him. ...

We want to be the masters of our own destiny. We need no gods or emperors and we don’t believe in saviors of any kind. We want to be masters of our universe, not the modernizing tools of dictators with personal ambitions. We want the modernization of people’s lives. Democracy, freedom, and happiness for all are our sole objectives in carrying out modernization. Without this fifth modernization, all others are nothing more than a new promise. ...

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