
Interview: Yue Wu



Workers played major role in upsurge against Chinese regime

Yue Wu is deputy head of the Beijing Autonomous Union of Workers. The following interview was conducted in Paris on Jan. 10 by Gil Rivière-Wekstein of the Schiller Institute, who made it available to EIR.

Q: First of all, Mr. Yue Wu, could you tell us about yourself?

Yue Wu: During the demonstrations of the “Beijing Spring” on Tiananmen Square, I was a worker. Last May, I participated along with other workers in the movement for democracy, and we created the Autonomous Union of Workers. I was elected its deputy head. After the massacre, the regime put my name on the lists of wanted people. I then went into hiding in the countryside and am now a political refugee in France.

Q: What was the role of workers in the movement of the “Beijing Spring”?

Yue Wu: At the time, in May, most of the demonstrators, that is to say 80% were workers. The workers were the base of support for the students and intellectuals. When the repression started, workers went up front to defend the students and intellectuals. It was mostly workers who prevented the soldiers from entering the city: There were only 200,000 students, while we mobilized 1 million people. The first arrests were those of workers belonging to the Beijing Autonomous Union of Workers, and the first thing the repression destroyed was our general staff.

Q: It has been said in the West that the movement of the Beijing Spring was the result of Deng’s so-called economic success, and that the population, with better standards of living, wanted more democracy and more freedom. And that therefore it was a movement of intellectuals. What is the situation of workers in China?

Yue Wu: In reality, there has not been any economic success. But in certain areas of life, there has been some improvement in the standards of living over the past 10 years. Unfortunately, there has been very little improvement for the people, because it is the leaders of the Communist Party who have profited by it. They are corrupted, and it is because of

this corruption that the Chinese people have begun to revolt. The people are not happy, and therefore they fight.

Q: A leading French China expert has said that the entire Chinese economy is organized around corruption; that corruption was the motor oil of the Deng Xiaoping system. But we now hear the Chinese leadership claim they are campaigning against corruption. Is this really possible?

Yue Wu: It is possible to limit corruption, but for that, the Chinese people must be able to express itself freely, it must have the right to develop itself and develop the economy of China. Under the Communist regime, it is indeed impossible to escape corruption. When communism will have disappeared, then and only then will it be possible to eliminate corruption.

Q: What is the present state of the Chinese economy and how do workers live?

Yue Wu: Those who say that urban workers live better are wrong. It is true that over the past 10 years workers’ wages have tripled, but at the same time, inflation has increased, and much faster. For example, in 1986, wages increased by 17%, but the price of lettuce rose by 40% and meat by 70%. Workers have a miserable life, they earn about 100 yuans a month, that is between \$3-5. How miserable! Concerning Deng Xiaoping’s economic policy, he has helped a lot the children of the Communist leadership. He gives them a lot of privileges.

Q: Are then the students sent abroad the sons of high-ranking leaders?

Yue Wu: They are the sons of high-ranking leaders, much more than of the other social classes.

Q: If workers did not profit from the so-called economic success, what about the peasants, who represent 80% of the population?

Yue Wu: In Mao’s time, the peasants did not eat well. Half of their food was based on rice or flour, the other half was made of vegetables. Nobody ate meat. Since the Deng peri-

od, the problem of starvation has been more or less solved. Most peasants can eat. Their condition has therefore improved. But since 1984, the functionaries and traders have used their power to increase the price of raw materials, of fertilizers and feedgrains, for example. So production costs are increasing more rapidly than retail prices. Peasants have lost a lot this way, particularly their enthusiasm, their readiness to work. And since everything goes up, the peasants cannot eat correctly any longer.

Q: Is it true that China has barely enough to feed all of its population with the wheat imported from the United States and that a bad crop would be enough for China to undergo again the great famines of the past, which would mean that Deng's agricultural reforms have been superficial?

Yue Wu: This is absolutely true.

Q: How has the peasant population perceived the Tiananmen demonstrations? Is it true that the movement only had the support of the urban population?

Yue Wu: No, this is wrong! Everybody has been shocked by the Tiananmen massacre. And the peasants too, of course. For example, I had to flee for two weeks to the countryside. I met peasants who helped me hide. None of them was happy with the government, they disagreed with the oppression of which the students are the victims. The image according to which the peasants are not supporting the students is false. For example, in Xiamen, Fujian, I met a peasant to whom I told my story. He cried and put me up for several days. On top of that, when I left, he gave me some money to go on my way.

Q: What about the Army?

Yue Wu: First of all, Deng Xiaoping sent the 38th Army into Beijing, but it did not want to intervene. So he sent other divisions. It took them 15 days to reach the center of Beijing. The reason for this is because there was resistance on the part of the people, but also because some officers of the divisions did not want to participate in the planned repression. In fact, there were certain officers who abandoned the Army and who refused to use weapons. I think that after the massacre, disagreement grew among the military.

Q: Certain opposition leaders believe that one should simply wait for the death of Deng Xiaoping, that this would lead to the rehabilitation of Zhao Ziyang and his reform policies.

Yue Wu: This is not a good strategy. The Communist regime must be overthrown. It is the only hope for a new China.

Q: How do you envisage new China from an economic standpoint?

Yue Wu: First of all, we must give land to the peasants. We can keep the large firms under state control, but it is necessary

to privatize the small and middle-sized enterprises. The economy must function according to the law of the market.

Q: Do you believe that the ideas of Dr. Sun Yat-sen can be of help for today?

Yue Wu: Yes, notably his idea to combine ancient Chinese tradition with Western culture. This idea is absolutely correct. It is this spirit that we need for the leadership of China.

Q: What do you expect from Western governments now? What can they do to help your struggle?

Yue Wu: We need everything. We need Western aid, whatever aid is possible to overthrow the Communist regime.

Q: Would an economic boycott help?

Yue Wu: Yes, an economic boycott would be a good thing. One must block Deng Xiaoping's economy.

Q: And what do you expect from the Schiller Institute?

Yue Wu: The Schiller Institute has done in-depth research on economic questions. I hope that when the Communist regime collapses, the Schiller Institute will have elaborated a project for the economic development of China which it will propose to us. If the plan is the best, we will follow it. For us there are two great problems. The first is, of course, a political problem; but the second is economic. We do not have a good enough understanding of economics. That's why we need your help.

Q: In this context, don't you see a necessity of creating discussion groups on economics and other fundamental problems prior to the overthrow of the regime?

Yue Wu: Before the Tiananmen Square movement, there were many groups debating cultural and economic questions. Unfortunately, most of them were controlled by the Communists and hence did not bring any solutions for the future. Certain refugees organized a center, the Center for Research on Chinese Problems. They are particularly dealing with economic questions.

Q: The China expert Simon Leys has said that the greatest event of 20th-century China is the growing demand for democracy, not taken into account by Western countries.

Yue Wu: I think this point of view is perfectly exact. Democratic ferment exists everywhere in China, in all provinces and in all social classes. The overseas Chinese have an even greater demand for democracy than those of mainland China, because they can see the results of democracy in the West: economic prosperity.

Q: Thank you very much.

Yue Wu: Thank you. The Schiller Institute has done much for the Chinese people and I hope that you will do even more in the future.