

Jiang Zemin speaks to Americans on China's history and culture

by Mary Burdman

Chinese President Jiang Zemin's Oct. 26-Nov. 3 trip to the United States, highlighted by his summit with President Clinton in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 28-29, fundamentally changed the world situation. As important as improved U.S.-Chinese bilateral ties are, Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States has had even greater importance for the international situation, because it has set the conditions for creating a "constructive strategic partnership" between the two nations. Throughout his trip, which took him to five U.S. cities—Honolulu, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Los Angeles—the Chinese President was persistent in his emphasis on the importance of this partnership for the rest of the world. In response to the greeting he received from the U.S. President on Oct. 28, Jiang said: "The Chinese and American people, as well as the international community, all attach great importance to this visit and to the immediate and historical significance of my meeting with you. I hope the visit will push Sino-U.S. relations to a new stage of development, which is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese and American people, and is extremely conducive to promoting world peace and development."

From the time of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué signed by the United States and China, as they began to open mutual relations, policy from the Chinese side has been to make the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence—the principles which are fundamental to a new, just, and rational world order—the basis of relations with the United States. But many tensions and unresolved issues have plagued relations. It is clear, that those who matter in both governments, realize they must move beyond the bilateral problems. However, at the same time, unless the venomous attacks on China, and upon President Clinton's China policy, by an actually small, but virulent, faction of China-bashers in the United States, can be stopped, the effectiveness of the partnership will be limited.

Mankind's spiritual wealth

Therefore, the Chinese President took special care to educate as much of the American population as he could, about his nation. Most important, was his speech at Harvard University on Nov. 1. There, he told an audience of 1,000, most of them students, that the present course of broadening ties between the United States and China is "not enough." For



Chinese President Jiang Zemin with President Bill Clinton, in Washington, D.C., Oct. 29, 1997. "Many Chinese contributed to the nation-building of the United States," said Jiang at Harvard, "while a lot of American friends helped and supported the national liberation cause of the Chinese people. We will never forget their contribution which has touched us deeply."

Americans to understand China, they must know Chinese culture and history.

This was the first speech that President Jiang has made in which he has so clearly developed the idea of why China's culture is so important to its political policy.

Jiang himself came from an intellectual family in the city of Yangzhou on the Yangtze River, a city famous for its culture and history. It was from his family that he learned his love of literature, both Chinese and international, although his professional training was as an engineer. He knows classic Chinese literature well, often quoting philosophers or poets of the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties in his political speeches, but also reciting Shakespeare, Shelley, and Abraham Lincoln, as well as the Russian novelists Tolstoy and Pushkin. Music, both Chinese and Western—particularly Mozart and Beethoven—is also a fundamental reference for Jiang, who considers both Chinese and Western cultures, "the common spiritual wealth of mankind."

Using history to change history

Jiang's speech at Harvard demonstrates that China's leaders understand well that international, and especially American, ignorance of the importance of 5,000 years of Chinese culture and history, in shaping *current* Chinese policy, has imposed limits on China's own role in the world, and made the conflict-mongers' operations too easy. China urgently needs several decades of peace to be able to develop its economy for its enormous population; to gain these essential decades, China must also act to help resolve other nations' problems of backwardness, conflict, and ignorance. One thing that must

be done to realize this responsibility, is to clarify for the world, the principles on which China is acting.

The leaders of China are, in some way, acting on the basis of the principle defined by Lyndon LaRouche as “time reversal”—the future re-defining not only the present, but also the past.

China only has a future, in a world governed by a “new, just, and rational” political and economic world order. Few nations have undergone what the Chinese nation has in this century: colonial incursions, decades of civil strife, national division, and foreign invasion and war. Many millions of people, and many years of potential economic development, were lost. For a huge, terribly poor nation, this was too great a price to pay. China’s leaders well know, just how high is the cost of failure to act in times of national crisis. Indeed, the very term “crisis,” tossed out so readily in the West to label every passing conflict, is not used so in China. There, what is termed a “crisis,” is a crisis, indeed.

To bring China into the next century, its leaders must act upon the basis, not only of recent achievements, but also their nation’s long, remarkable history. All that which, in the past, impelled China toward a just and rational order, can now contribute to creating this order in the world. It is the biggest task in China’s history, and every resource is essential. China is using its history, to *change* history.

An open nation

“Mutual understanding is the basis of state-to-state relations,” Jiang stated at Harvard. “China is a country of 5,000 years of civilization. It is therefore important to approach China from a historical and cultural perspective.”

The Chinese President emphasized, that for the far greatest part of its history, China has been an open nation. Chinese culture has grown throughout history, enriching itself through the “contention and incorporation of various disciplines.” Chinese people have always known the importance of “drawing widely upon others’ strong points to improve oneself.” Jiang described the opening up of the Silk Road, including by the great “Journey to the West” of the monk Xuan Zang, who travelled to South Asia during the Tang dynasty (618-907)—a story that is one of the classics of Chinese literature—as well as the remarkable Ming dynasty sea voyages by navigator Cheng Ho. “Only later on, especially in the late Qing dynasty, did feudal rulers adopt a policy of seclusion, which hampered China’s progress and its exchanges with the outside world.” After the Opium War, generations of Chinese leaders have striven to learn from Western science and culture, and “combine these with China’s realities,” to advance the nation, Jiang said.

Jiang then described the essential features of Chinese culture: “The tradition of solidarity and unity” of the nation; “the tradition of maintaining independence,” and the “independent national spirit of the Chinese people.” Third is the “peace-loving tradition.” From over 2,000 years ago, Chinese doctrine was that “loving people and treating neighbors kindly

are extremely valuable for a country.” Fourth is “the tradition of constantly striving for self-perfection,” which dates from ancient times. In the current century, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Jiang said, “was the first to put forward the slogan of ‘China’s rejuvenation.’” Mao Zedong led China to national independence, and now Deng Xiaoping’s policies have led China to “the fastest and healthiest development phase this century.”

On one level, Jiang’s speech was a refutation of the geopolitical bloviations of Prof. Samuel Huntington (who traces his ideological roots directly to the British Empire’s Arnold Toynbee, the historian of British intelligence), and Caspar Weinberger. Huntington’s rhetoric on “clashes of civilizations,” and Weinberger’s Hollywood-style “docu-drama” depiction of fundamental world conflicts (Bad: have dark eyes, are inscrutable, and drink tea; Good: have Anglo-Saxon names, blue eyes, and drink coffee), have been brusquely dismissed by any and all competent thinkers around the world.

President Jiang goes far beyond that, to describe the qualities of Chinese civilization that have made it the source of the only nation to have been a great civilization 5,000 years ago and today.

Documentation

Following are excerpts from Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s speech at Harvard University on Nov. 1, taken from the Xinhua release, “Enhance Mutual Understanding and Build Stronger Ties of Friendship and Cooperation.”

Mutual understanding is the basis for state-to-state relations. Without it, it would be impossible for countries to build trust and promote cooperation with each other. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the United States, the exchanges and mutual understanding between our two peoples have broadened and deepened steadily. However, this is not enough. To promote the development of China-U.S. relations, China needs to know the United States better and vice versa.

To know China better, one may approach it from different angles. China today has been evolved from its past. China is a country with 5,000 years of civilization. Therefore, it is important to approach China from a historical and cultural perspective.

I recall my first lesson on calculus in senior high school. My teacher quoted a line from Zhuang Zi, a Chinese philosopher over 2,000 years ago, which reads, “Cut away half of a rod and keep on halving what is left, and there will be no end to that process.” This gave me a vivid concept of limit. It shows that the ancient Chinese realized the endless process of changes of matters and had a fairly good understanding of the nature.

As early as in 2,500 B.C., Chinese began astronomical observation and geographical survey, and gradually formed

a world outlook of an “integration of the universe and humanity.” China produced in its history many outstanding philosophers, thinkers, statesmen, strategists, scientists, writers and artists and left us numerous volumes of literature. The scene of “contention of a hundred schools of thought” brought forth in the Spring and Autumn Period 2,500 years ago and the Warring States Period over 2,200 years ago, and the emergence of various schools of thought and their exponents, such as Lao Zi and Confucius about 2,400 years ago, all occupy a very important position in the world history of philosophy.

Ancient China made unique contributions to many areas of science including astronomy, calendric system, geography, mathematics, agriculture, medicine, and the humanities. Records of solar and lunar eclipses are found in the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty over 3,000 years ago. In the 2,100 years from the Qin Dynasty to the late Qing Dynasty (221 B.C.-1911 A.D.), the 27 appearances of Halley’s Comet were all recorded in China. Zhang Heng of the Han Dynasty over 1,800 years ago invented a seismograph to determine the location of earthquakes and the celestial globe that showed the movement of the Sun, Moon, and other stars. Mathematicians in the pre-Qin days over 2,200 years ago put forward the proposition known as the Pythagorean Theorem in the West today. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties in the Fourth century A.D., China’s mathematician Zu Chongzhi calculated the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter to be 3.1415926.

China’s silk weaving, porcelain making, metallurgy, and shipbuilding reached the world’s advanced level in ancient times. In the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Zaiyu initiated the 12-tone temperament which later became the universal standard tones. The Chinese medicine is a unique school of its own. Particularly, China’s four great inventions of paper making, gunpowder, printing, and compass had once changed the face of the world. China had been a world leader in science and technology for one thousand years until the 15th century. These inventions and creations of China have brought forward the rationalistic brilliance of coordination between humanity and the nature and the integration of scientific spirit with moral ideals.

China’s culture in history has never stopped developing. It has enriched itself through the contention and infiltration of various disciplines and schools of thought, and also through the mutual exchanges and learning between China and other countries in the world. Since old times, the Chinese people came to know full well the importance of “drawing widely upon others’ strong points to improve oneself.”

The Han and Tang Dynasty were both an age of economic prosperity and also one of flourishing international exchanges. Imperial envoy Zhang Qian’s trip to the “West” in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) over 2,000 years ago opened up the world-famous Silk Road; Eminent Monk Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) brought back ancient

culture after braving the long journey to South Asian countries. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese navigator Cheng Ho led a fleet to what that people then called the “West Sea” seven times in the 15th century, spreading the Chinese culture to distant lands. Only later on, especially in the late Qing Dynasty, the feudal rulers adopted a policy of seclusion, which hampered China’s progress and its exchanges with the outside world.

After the Opium War (1840-1842), generation after generation of enlightened Chinese people have, for national rejuvenation, spared no efforts in learning from Western countries’ advanced science and cultural achievements, in combination with China’s realities and pushing for China’s social reforms and development.

Today, the Chinese people who are struggling to achieve modernization have made the opening-up a basic state policy and conducted extensive exchanges and cooperation with the rest of the world, thus creating a brand-new situation in its opening-up endeavor in Chinese history.

Sunlight is composed of seven colors; so is our world full of colors and splendor. Every country and every nation has its own historical and cultural traditions, strong points and advantages. We should respect and learn from each other and draw upon others’ strong points to offset one’s own deficiencies for achieving common progress.

In the prolonged course of development, China has formed its fine historical and cultural traditions, which have been either developed or discarded with the changes of the times and social progress. These traditions have exerted a profound impact on the values and way of life of the Chinese people, and on China’s road of development today. Here, I would like to make the following observations, which I hope will help you to know China better.

First, the tradition of solidarity and unity. The Chinese nation is a big family composed of 56 nationalities. Since time immemorial, people of all nationalities have established closely knit political, economic, and cultural links and joined hands in developing the vast land of our country. China became a vast unified country more than 2,000 years ago. The deep-rooted Chinese culture became a strong bond for ethnic harmony and national unity. Solidarity and unity have been inscribed in the hearts of the Chinese people as part of their national identity. Despite occasional division in Chinese history, ethnic harmony and national unity have remained the main stream in the history of the Chinese nation, and an important guarantee for China’s development and progress.

The founding of the People’s Republic of China marked an unprecedented great unity of the Chinese nation. A new type of relationship of equality, solidarity, and mutual assistance between different nationalities has been established. People of all nationalities enjoy full rights and freedoms provided for by the law. In places where there is a high concentration of minority nationality people, regional autonomy is in

practice. These regions have witnessed continued economic and social development. All these have laid a solid political foundation for consolidated national unity.

Second, the tradition of maintaining independence. Our ancestors always regarded the spirit of maintaining independence as the foundation of a nation. As one of the cradles of human civilization, China has all along maintained its cultural tradition without letup, in the history of several thousand years. In modern times, the frequent bullying and humiliation by imperialist powers once weakened China. However, after a hundred years' struggle of the entire Chinese nation, China has stood up again as a giant. This fully testifies to the indestructible strength of this independent national spirit of the Chinese people. Today, in finding a road to development suited to us, we will proceed from our own national conditions to address the issue of how to conduct economic construction and political and cultural advancement, without blindly copying other countries' models. In handling international affairs, we decide our positions and policies from an independent approach. The Chinese people cherish its friendship and cooperation with other peoples, as well as their right to independence they have won through protracted struggles.

Third, the peace-loving tradition. Chinese thinkers of the pre-Qin days (over 2,000 years ago) advanced the doctrine "loving people and treating neighbors kindly are most valuable to a country." This is a reflection of the aspiration of the Chinese people for a peaceful world where people of all countries live in harmony. Today, the Chinese people who are committed to modernization need more than ever a long-term international environment of peace and a favorable neighboring environment. China's foreign policy is peace-oriented. We will establish and develop friendly relations and cooperation with all countries in the world on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, especially the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We will never impose upon others the kind of sufferings we once experienced. A developing and progressing China does not pose a threat to anyone. China will never seek hegemony even if it is developed in the future. China is always a staunch force for world peace and regional stability.

Fourth, the tradition of constantly striving for self-perfection. Through observing the changing nature of the universe and all earthly matters, ancient Chinese philosophers proposed the following doctrine: "As Heaven maintains vigor through movement, a gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection." This idea has become an important moral strength, spurring the Chinese people to work hard for reform and renovation. The fruits of China's ancient civilization were brought about by the tireless efforts and hard work of the Chinese nation. In the past one hundred years or so, the Chinese people have waged arduous struggles to get rid of the sufferings under semi-colonial and semi-feudal rule. Dr. Sun

Yat-sen, China's forerunner of the democratic revolution, was the first to put forward the slogan of "rejuvenation of China." He led the Revolution of 1911 to remove the millennia-old autocratic monarchy in China.

Under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese Communist Party led the Chinese people in achieving China's national independence and people's liberation and in building China into a socialist country with initial prosperity. Today, guided by Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Chinese people are firmly pressing ahead with reform and opening-up and have made remarkable achievements in the modernization drive. China has entered a period with the fastest and healthiest development in this century.

The reform and opening-up endeavor is an embodiment and a creative development of the Chinese spirit of constantly striving for self-perfection and renovation in modern times. We refer to our reform and opening-up as socialist reform and opening-up, because they constitute the process of self-improvement and development of the socialist system in China. The practice in recent 20 years has eloquently proved that we are right in direction, firm in conviction, steady in our steps, and gradual in our approach when carrying out the reform and opening up, and have achieved tremendous successes. We have successfully overcome various difficulties and risks in the course of our advance, without causing great social unrest. Rather, we have succeeded in greatly releasing and developing productive forces and maintained social stability and an all-round progress.

We are conducting a comprehensive reform with full confidence. Economically, we will speed up the establishment of a socialist market economy and realize industrialization. . . . Politically, we will endeavor to develop socialist democracy, govern the country according to law, build a socialist country under the rule of law, and ensure the full exercise of people's rights to govern the country and manage social affairs. Culturally, we will work hard to develop a scientific socialist culture for the people, a culture that is geared to the needs of modernization, of the nation, of the world and of the future, adopt a strategy of rejuvenating China through science and education, and strive to raise the political and moral standards as well as scientific and cultural level of the entire nation. In a word, it is to build our country into a prosperous, strong, democratic and culturally advanced modern country.

China, a country with vast territory, a big population, and a long history, should make a greater contribution to humanity. The Chinese people waged a dauntless struggle for 100 years. They have effected great reforms and changes one after another, to build China into a strong and prosperous country. They have worked to strengthen ethnic harmony and achieve national reunification and to promote the lofty cause of world peace and development. In the final analysis, they have done all these for one objective, that is, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and China's greater contribution to humanity.

In short, the choice of the social system and development path that China has made, the domestic and foreign policies that it has pursued, and the goals it has identified for the next century are all based on both reality and history. Therefore, they are not only in conformity with the trend of the historical development of mankind and that of the times, but also reflect the characteristics of the Chinese nation. They serve not only the fundamental interests of the Chinese people, but also world peace, stability, prosperity, and progress. This is the key to an understanding of the present China and its future.

Ladies and Gentlemen: The friendly exchanges between the Chinese and American peoples date back to more than two hundred years ago. Back in 1784, the American merchant ship the *Empress of China* came a long way to China. In 1847, Chinese student Rong Hong and others came to the United States, as the first group of Chinese students to study here. Many Chinese contributed to the nation-building of the United States, while a lot of American friends helped and supported the national liberation cause of the Chinese people. We will never forget their contribution which has touched us deeply.

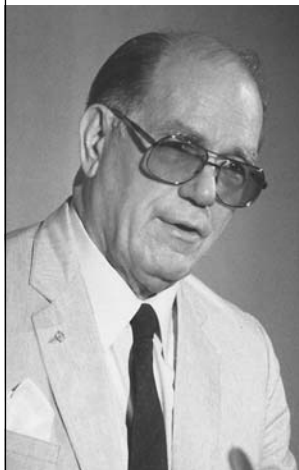
The Chinese people have always admired the American people for their pragmatic attitude and creative spirit. . . . In our course to further open up and achieve modernization, we have spared no efforts in learning from all the fine cultural

achievements of the American people.

Friendship and cooperation between our two peoples are of great importance to the world. . . . China and the United States share broad common interests and shoulder common responsibility on many important questions which are crucial to human survival and development, such as maintaining world peace and security, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, protecting the environment for human survival, and combatting international crimes. All these provide an important basis for further developing China-U.S. friendly relations and cooperation. We should take a firm hold of the overall interests of China-U.S. relations and settle our differences properly so as to reach the goal of promoting mutual understanding, broadening common ground, developing cooperation and building a future together. . . .

I highly appreciate the motto on the gate of your University. It reads: "Enter to grow in wisdom" and "Depart to serve better thy country and thy kind." Young people in China have also a motto, that is, "Keep the motherland in heart and serve the people with heart and soul." I hope that in the cause of building our own countries and promoting world peace and development, younger generations of China and the United States will understand each other better, learn from each other, enhance the friendship and strive for a better future. Thank you very much for your attention.

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