

ultimately, their own political survival. To the led, it is disconcerting because they feel alienated, bereft of social cohesion and direction.

The document on the building of a spiritual civilization, Jiang Zemin's latest pet-project, that was unveiled last October is apparently meant to uplift the people's spirit and offer guidelines on what is acceptable behavior. Analysts in Beijing do not think it is a panacea. "A plenum and a document will not solve the problem of spiritual civilization," says a political analyst in Beijing. "It will take longer than my lifetime to give full meaning to that slogan." Others think it is better than nothing.

Not all Chinese bemoan the demise of a singular national ideology. While conceding that a society without *xinyang* (an ideology) is in the long run bound to collapse, U.S.-based political dissident Ruan Ming resists the temptation to impose a hegemonic thought. "We shouldn't have a singular national ideology," Ruan explains. "We shouldn't see a return to the days when everyone believed only in Mao or Confucius. We should let different beliefs and ideologies coexist."

Like Ruan, some Chinese think greed, crime and social malaise are an acceptable price to pay for economic prosperity and social liberation. They predict that as China moves toward a free market system, the excesses of modernization will be tempered by an improved legal system, transparency and accountability. Through long-term moral and civic education, the populace could be inculcated with an enlightened sense of self-interest and civic consciousness. Such a process could take a generation or two. For now, China remains a 1.2 billion nation spiritually adrift.

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◇ Mr. Vic Limlingan from the Asian Institute of Management commented that Mr. Sta. Romana's worst-case scenario may not be the worst: A civil war could indeed divide China, but this would create trouble only for itself and not for its neighbors. He pointed out that one theory being propounded is that the US and Japan would try to create dissension in China, so that it would break up and become weaker. He added that the attitude at AIM is: Why invest in China and make your enemy stronger? Why not invest in ASEAN to strengthen your ally?

Mr. Sta. Romana clarified that his worst-case scenario was in terms of China's domestic politics. He stressed that the more the Chinese feel that they are being threatened by external powers, the more they will unite. He added that because the West is attracted by China's huge market, it does not want to adopt an official policy of containing China, but of engaging China. That was why, for him, it is better to foster real competition in the region.

Mr. FlorCruz added that the so-called "China

threat" can be self-fulfilling prophecy, and that it is better to have a happy and prosperous China, rather than an angry and poor neighbor. He concludes that it is better for the region and the world to see China prosper.

- ◇ Prof. Benito Lim from the UP Asian Center remarked that Mr. Sta. Romana may be viewing China's political problems from a very foreign perspective. He singled out Mr. Sta. Romana's argument that the international community would be closely watching how the Chinese manage the turnover of Hong Kong is not viewed from the Chinese perspective, since Westerners perceive Hong Kong as the measure of how the Chinese would handle rising demand for democracy.

He added that in their journals, what the Chinese scholars and leaders perceive to be as the problems the Chinese leadership should address are their internal problems, such as the uneven economic development, the population problem, the environmental problem, and the mass poverty besetting 75 percent of the Chinese population.

Mr. Sta. Romana briefly replied that he recognizes the need for the Chinese Communist Party to spread economic growth to be able to maintain themselves in power.

- ◇ Prof. Benito Lim likewise asked whether Russia and India should not be included in Mr. Sta. Romana's four centers of power. Mr. Sta. Romana clarified that those countries are what he considers as the *major* centers of power, but not the *only* powers to

consider.

- ◇ A question was raised as to what lessons the Philippines can learn from China. Mr. Baculinao stressed that the singular lesson which the Philippines can learn from China is its national independence. In his words,

The whole economic strategy of China is first of all based on their inspiration of national sovereignty. I don't know whether we have accomplished our job in this regard. On that basis, we will be able to map out an independent economic strategy that suits our national condition, and, on a position of strength, be able to negotiate with multinationals, big companies, and to maximize the benefits of economic cooperation. I think that one thing alone will last us for ten years.

- ◇ A follow-up question was posed on how the Philippines can more concretely benefit from its relations with China.

Mr. Baculinao pointed out that because of increasing disposable incomes among the Chinese due to cheap housing, transportation and medical care, they now have the financial means to travel abroad. Since the Chinese from the north do not have relatives in the Philippines, the Philippines should improve its regulations to attract more tourists from China. He pointed out that because of certain difficulties in getting in the Philippines, they tend to go to Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

He also pointed out that while China is able to maximize benefits in the semiconductor industry by opening up its market in exchange for technology, the Philippines and ASEAN can match this by providing stability for foreign investments. The Philippines, in particular, can and should compete in software development, where the country is leading.

- ◇ Mr. Tesoro from the Ateneo School of Law remarked that on the question of tourism, the reason why the Philippines is losing out is because of our visa requirement. He added that Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand do not require visas for tourists coming from China, and he is recommending that the government look into this possibility.

He asked what happens if the development of economic and social areas will run into conflict with the political orientation of the Chinese government. He added, "It seems to me that China is basically not governable as a liberal democracy."

Mr. Sta. Romana stated that the question of democracy in China could be considered another scenario but is even less likely at this stage, and will probably take generations to achieve. Whether the Chinese leadership can deal with the ill effects of the reform and stay united will be a major challenge for them. One of the major determinants whether there will be a civil war in China or whether it will disintegrate is whether they will be able to handle the social situation while proceeding with economic reforms.

- ◇ Dean Aurora Roxas-Lim said she would like to hear comments on the reforms in China regarding the setting up of laws and legal framework.

Mr. FlorCruz said that China has indeed promulgated volumes and volumes of laws; however, law is still a very alien concept for the Chinese. He added that China is ahead in commercial and economic laws, but still lagging in political and social laws.

- ◇ Prof. Patrick de Castro from the History Department of Mirriam College asked whether Mr. Sta. Romana considers the restoration of imperial rule in China a possible political scenario.

Mr. Sta. Romana answered that in fact, the transition from the Qing Dynasty to the Mao era and to the present Deng era could be seen as one of the manifestations of this return to imperial government, that is, in terms of a strong central government.

- ◇ A question was raised on how China views APEC and the process of globalization.

Mr. Baculinao pointed out that China understands the challenges posed by globalization, but the pace and strategy of China's reform will not be dictated by any foreign power, but by its own assessment of its needs. He emphasized that China will not liberalize under the terms dictated by the US. He noted that in fact, the US has become flexible in its position in terms of China's accession to the WTO.

- ◇ Amb. del Mundo asked the three speakers which strategy they would adapt if they were the Philippine Ambassador to China.

Mr. FlorCruz stated that politically, he would build an independent foreign policy, one which is not pro-US. Economically, he would try to identify the complementarities between the Philippine and the Chinese economies. Culturally, he would encourage more Filipinos to learn Chinese, since it is considered the "language of the future." (He added that a number of foreign governments and enterprises are sending their people to China to learn the language.)

Mr. Sta. Romana said that he would identify areas in China where the Philippine investments can profitably enter into. He would also take steps to facilitate travel to the Philippines by the Chinese. (He maintains that the Chinese will not overstay in a country whose culture they are not very familiar with.)

Mr. Baculinao said that he would take steps to bridge greater understanding between the two peoples. He reiterated Mr. FlorCruz's proposal for a more intensive learning of the Chinese language.

CHITO, ERIC, AND JIMI

Nona A. Zaldivar
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In this space I will be essentially quoting excerpts or paraphrasing from my closing remarks at the symposium entitled "China in the Asia-Pacific Century" which featured the three aforementioned guest speakers from China. Those remarks were essentially personal reminiscences about my association with these three friends in China where I served two tours of duty as a diplomat, first, from late 1979 to about mid-1986, then again from 1993 to 1995. Thus, I speak from my vantage point as diplomat and friend.

During my first six years in Beijing I never saw Chito, tall and big as he is, even though he worked almost next door to me in the same diplomatic ghetto where I lived then. One day a Chinese-Australian friend (a wife of a diplomat), who knew Chito since they both worked for the *Washington Post* then, said to me: You know, I asked Chito Sta. Romana, because he comes from the Philippines, if he knows you at the Philippines Embassy, and it was strange that he gave me a very curt and disinterested reply: " I