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# **Social Change in Contemporary China and the Theory of Social Contradictions**

The Social Class and  
Interest Group Analysis in  
Contemporary China

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WANG WEIGUANG

TRANSLATED BY HUANG YUSHENG



Paths International Ltd



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## Preface to the Second Edition

This book is the second edition of my book *Efficiency, Equality and Harmony: On Contradictions among the People in the New Era and Socialist Harmonious Society* (published by People's Publishing House, Dec. 2006). During the four years after the publication of the book, various new developments at home and abroad have proved that, many views I expressed in the book are correct, including views on the two types of contradictions differing in nature, contradictions among the people, the existence and intensification of class struggle in certain limits, the differentiation of classes, strata and interest groups. They have also proved that it is absolutely necessary to take the theory of contradictions among the people as a guide in our work. The new developments in the short period of four years call for new theoretical explanations and guidance. Hence the book is revised and reprinted. For the selling of the book, at the suggestion of the editor, the above mentioned title was used in the first edition. In this second edition, its present and also original title is used. The materials and data cited in the first edition are all from sources published before 2005. In order to ensure the consistence of the arguments with the facts and data, and also to test my views, in this revision, I did not add new facts or data, but only made some necessary editorial changes.

Since more than three decades of reform and opening up, on the one hand, the great achievements of our socialist modernization have attracted worldwide attention; on the other, many contradictions and problems have accumulated, the intensification and evolution of which, in terms of human relations, find their expressions mainly as intricate contradictions among the people and, in some cases, as contradictions among the people and the enemy in certain limits that take a non-dominant position. The frequent mass incidents and occasional vicious violent incidents are all the typical demonstrations of intensification of contradictions among the people, or the entwining of contradictions among the people and contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, and some even tangled with class struggle. In the year 2009 only, there happened several large-scale incidents, including the March 23<sup>rd</sup> Gancheng Incident in Hainan Province, the May 19<sup>th</sup> Huining Incident in Gansu Province, the June 10<sup>th</sup> Haiyuan Incident in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region,

the June 17<sup>th</sup> Shishou Incident in Hubei Province, the July 24<sup>th</sup> Jilin Tonghua Iron and Steel Plant Incident in Jilin Province, and particularly, the July 5<sup>th</sup> Urumqi Incident in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. 2010 also saw not a few mass incidents. These incidents differed in nature, and their participants mostly were ordinary people, but there might be some saboteurs or hostile elements behind the scenes. It shows that, at the present stage of our society, there are a large number of contradictions among the people and contradictions between ourselves and the enemy in certain limits; and there are large numbers of contradictions among the people of both class and non-class struggle nature, and even contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. All these contradictions entwine and twist together, forming a very tricky and intricate situation. The brewing, evolution and outbreak of these social contradictions have a severe negative impact on the harmony and stability of our society and our endeavor of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

It is obvious that, the in-depth examining and analyzing the roots of these contradictions, the correct distinguishing and handling the two types of contradictions differing in nature and the correct understanding and resolving of the numerous and outstanding contradictions among the people is a major political issue having a bearing on the long-term governance of our party, long-term peace and stability of our society and the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. And the strengthening of the ability of our party as the party exercising the power, especially the ability of our leading cadres in correctly distinguishing and handling these two types of contradictions is also an important part of building up the governing capacity of the Party.

One tendency often conceals another. When correcting one incorrect tendency, we must pay attention to preventing another. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of our party held in 1978, we determinedly have abandoned the wrong line of “taking class struggle as the key link,” and reaffirmed the scientific judgment that “Class struggle is no longer the principal contradiction in our society, but it will exist for a long time in certain limits.” Experience since then tells us that, under the condition that class contradiction and class struggle is the principal contradiction of the society, we should always be aware of not expanding contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and not confusing the two types of contradictions differing in nature; on the other hand, under the condition that contradictions among the people constitute the principal type of contradictions in our society, while correctly handling these contradictions, we need to keep full vigilance against contradictions with class struggle nature in certain limits and correctly

distinguish between and handle the two types of contradictions. In the first edition of this book, I wrote: "...though the exploiting classes as a whole no longer exist in our country, various domestic and foreign hostile elements and forces as well as the exploiting elements associated with the exploiting system and classes are far from being eliminated, and class struggle between the people and these forces, elements and classes will exist in a certain scope, which even can intensify under certain conditions due to the following reasons: (1) China is still in a complex international environment, and foreign hostile forces have not given up their wild ambition to subjugate China by doing everything possible from peaceful evolution, political subversion to sabotage, corruption, etc.; (2) In the regions that adopt the policy of "one country two systems" and that has not yet achieved unification with the mainland, there are still exploiting classes, though most of which are patriotic, a few hostile elements among them are hostile to and try to interrupt China's socialist cause; (3) There are still remnants of the exploiting classes who are hostile to socialist China, criminals who disrupt socialist order, and reactionaries who are hostile to socialist system, etc., they will resort to every possible means to undermine China's socialist construction; (4) China is still at the primary stage of socialism with lots of economic, political, ideological, cultural remnants of the old society, coupled with the immaturity and imperfection of its socialist system, which will give birth to new criminals, new corrupt elements and new hostile elements." This judgment was confirmed by the history and the current situation and the developmental trends both at home and abroad. The March 14<sup>th</sup> Lhasa Incident in Tibet and the July 5<sup>th</sup> Urumqi Incident in Xinjiang are irrefutable evidence of it. To a certain extent, there were factors of class struggle, which sometimes may be very violent, behind these two vicious incidents. Take Dalai Lama for example. He himself is the representative of the reactionary exploiting serf-owner class, who, under the cloaks of "human rights," "religion" and "universal values," attempts actually to restore the old social order and their lost interests. And the Western reactionary capitalist forces are behind him. Besides, there are also some elements who do not belong to reactionary exploiting class, but at the bottom of their heart, they long for the Western capitalist system. So we should maintain high vigilance on them, otherwise our country might change political color.

In times of adversity we should see the bright side of things; whereas in favorable circumstances, we should keep vigilance on the bad side. At the present stage when China's society and economy are both at favorable circumstances of development, some of

our comrades see but the bright side of the situation to the neglect of many latent risks and the class struggle at certain limits, and fail to see class struggle behind some ethnic, religious or mass incidents, so that the strategy and tactics they used are not effective and the measures they take cannot resolve the problems in fundamental, comprehensive, strategic and institutional ways. This is very dangerous.

In the current period, it is imperative to vigorously develop socialist market economy, and, under the premise of publicownership taking the dominant role, to encourage the development of other sectors of the economy, and to allow the existence of other forms of distribution with distribution according to work as the main form. All these are necessary for the promoting socialist productive forces. Otherwise, it is impossible for us to finish the fundamental task of developing socialist productive forces and to provide solid material conditions for the shaping of new social formation. On the other hand however, other problems will inevitably come up, including the possibility of widening gap between rich and poor, contradictions between labor and capital, the intensification of various social contradictions, the differentiation, antagonism and conflicts between classes, strata and interest groups, and so on. If our vigilance are relaxed against the emergence of these problems, or fail to take necessary measures to contain, minimize and resolve them, their negative impact that we don't wish to happen will crop up.

Historical dialectics tell us that, we, on the one side should see that the general trend of history is irresistible; on the other hand, we should see that temporary retrogression of history is possible. By saying so I do not mean to make sensation. The following words of the great writer Su Shi of the Song dynasty in his article "On Chao Cuo" should make us think over: "The most dangerous and most un thing in the world is that, apparently everything is peaceful, but in fact there are latent threats. If this is left unaddressed, they may become worse to the extent that they are incorrigible. We should always keep this sense of crisis.

I append to the book my article "The global Financial Crisis and the Historical Destiny of Socialism and Marxism" published in *Qiushi*, no. 21, 2010, an analysis of the recent situation, which is consistent with views expressed in this book.

Written in the Division Building, CASS, Beijing  
Wang Weiguang

## Preface

The correct understanding and handling of contradictions among the people is a major practical and theoretical issue. About 50 years ago, after the completion of the “three socialist transformations,” on the basis of summing up the experience and drawing the lessons of the Soviet Union in its socialist construction led by Stalin, and by criticizing Stalin’s wrong views on domestic contradictions in socialist countries and analyzing the changes of basic contradictions, principal contradiction and contradictions among the people in socialist China, Comrade Mao Zedong put forth the scientific theory of contradictions among the people. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of complex subjective and objective conditions of the time, later on Comrade Mao himself gradually deviated from the correct theory both in practice and theory; instead, he tried to resolve contradictions and problems emerged in socialist construction and development with the method of class struggle, and put forward the wrong theory of “continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat” and the Ultra-Leftist wrong line of “taking class struggle as the key link,” which ultimately led to the tragedy of the “Cultural Revolution” and the grave setbacks of socialist construction and development.

In the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China(CPC), under the leadership of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, our party set things right in ideological and political lines, restored the correct line of seeking truth from facts and the new political line of “one central task (of economic construction) and two basic points(of adhering to the four cardinal principles and the policy of reform and opening up),” thus ushering in the new era of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Under the new historical conditions, the Party restored the correct theory of contradictions among the people put forward by Comrade Mao and determinately abandoned the practice of handling contradictions among the people with the method of class struggle. In the great endeavors of socialist reform and opening up and building socialism with Chinese characteristics, by correctly understanding and handling a series of contradictions among the people, it has upheld and enriched this theory in the new period. And the Party’s third generation of collective leadership with Comrade Jiang Zemin at the core and its new



Central Committee with Comrade Hu Jintao as General Secretary have added much new content to the theory.

The practices and lessons of socialist construction in socialist countries tell us that, whether we can correctly understand and handle contradictions among the people has a bearing on the position of our party as the governing party, on the success of our socialist reform and construction and on the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Whenever we do well in this respect, the position of the Party will be consolidated and our endeavors will flourish; otherwise, our socialist causes will encounter setbacks and the Party's position will be in danger. Therefore, we must properly solve this political issue of fundamental significance.

The Party's Sixteenth National Congress put forth the strategic task of building a harmonious society in China. It is precisely the existence of contradictions that we need to pursue harmony, and it is our pursuit of harmony that requires us to handle contradictions. To understand harmony, we must first of all have a better understanding of contradictions; and the precondition to build a socialist harmonious society is to resolve contradictions. Marxist dialectics tells us that contradictions exist ever and everywhere; the law of contradiction is a universal and fundamental law governing the existence of all things as well as their inner sources and driving forces of development. We should apply the law of the unity of opposites, that is, the law of contradiction to understand and handle all kinds of contradictions among the people that realistically exist in our country. With regard to contradictions, it is not a question of whether they exist or not, nor of whether they are good or bad. It is good for a contradiction to be resolved, vice versa. After the old contradictions are resolved, new contradictions will emerge. Things move forward in the process of ceaseless resolution of contradictions. By harmonious society we do not mean non-existence of contradiction in the society, but stress to pursue harmony and progress by resolving contradictions. The key to the building of a socialist harmonious society lies in balancing the interest relations of all sides and in resolving contradictions among the people.

I have been paying close attention to this issue of practical and theoretical importance early since the 1980s, when I was still a graduate student in the university. And I have made a long time and extensive investigation, research and empirical analyses on contradictions among the people and their changes in China and in other socialist countries; and I also made overall theoretical examination on the research of this subject both at home and abroad. As the outcome of these

studies, I published a series of works on this issue, including *On Contradictions and Development Motives of Socialist Society* ( co-compiler, published by Qiushi Publishing House, 1986), *Contradictions, Driving Forces and Reform of Socialism* ( Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1988), *On Social Interests* ( co-author, People's Publishing House, 1991), *Economic Interests, Political Order and Social Stability: A Deep Reflection on Contradictions in Socialist Society* ( The Central Party School Publishing House, 1991), *Some Reflections on Contradictions among the People in the New Period* ( co-author, The Central Party School Publishing House, 1994), *On Interests* ( People's Publishing House, 2001). And I have also conducted three related National Social Science Fund Projects: "Research on the Driving Forces of Socialist Development," "Research on the Interest Relationships and Contradictions in the Primary Stage of Socialism" and "Research on Contradictions among People in the New Period." It is worth noted that, my doctoral dissertation published in 1987 entitled "A Study on Socialist Contradictions" is also about this issue.

I really believe that, in making scientific study, one should be well-grounded with the spirit of perseverance like the Chinese sayings of "sharpening a good sword for ten years," and valuable academic fruit can only grow on a deep-rooted tree of intensive study. The book presented here is the outcome of my learning, reflection, investigation and research for more than 20 years. I hope it has some value of reference to the readers. My sincere thanks should be given to Prof. Yang Chungui for granting my use of some of the ideas expressed in our co-authored book *Some Reflections on Contradictions among the People in the New Period*, and to my student Peng Jinsong, who proofread all text and references of the book.

Wang Weiguang

In the campus of the Party School of the Central Committee of CPC

September, 2005

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