

**Is It
DEAD
Yet?**

['Communism' in China]

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(High level meeting disguised as a session of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee.)

Cast: Xi: President of China, Wang: China's top capitalist. Family members of the elite: Qianglin (F), Qiang (F), Jin Yi (F), Winston (M), Qiao Qiao (F), Haifeng (M). Politburo Secretary Chin (M).

(Opens prior to the arrival of Xi and Wang. All are standing)

QIAO QIAO: Of course, we will always preserve our obligation to the people. *(Spills champagne on her shoe)* Chin, please take care of that. *(Chin bends down to wipe off shoe)* And Chin – take another look to see if the chiefs are on the way. *(Chin departs)* We must be careful not to say certain things within hearing of the cadre as if they were our deaf slaves.

HAIFENG: Yes, thank goodness our founding boss had the foresight to call it the *Peoples Republic*.

WINSTON: But what do we call it now? – How do we erase all of this “communist” rubbish?

QINGLIN: Now, Wen, we must be more circumspect in discussing these issues when the chiefs arrive.

WINSTON: *(upset)* Why didn't you use my given name?

QINGLIN: I didn't know – that is, I can't recall your Chinese name.

JINYI: *(To Qinglin)* We never call him anything but Winston – even at home.

QIANG: That's a perfect example of what we of the younger generation must learn from our elders – *the Chinese way* – by naming a child after a notorious anti-communist we are indirectly signaling that a fundamental change has occurred.

WINSTON: Yes, but that's a change at the minor, personal, level – I still think we seem ridiculous calling ourselves "communist" as we moult into capitalists?

QIAO QIAO: *Moult* – That's it!

JINYI: You mean we call ourselves *snakes*!

(all laugh)

QIANGLIN: Then *we* don't have to do anything because *they* have already named us.

HAIFENG: Yeah, snakes in the grass.

QIANG: We sneaked up on them.

WINSTON: But we deserve what we have – Look at all the domestic industrial advancement.

JINYI: Yes, and the tens of thousands of uprisings the plebes have staged for our amusement.

HAIFENG: They certainly do have a strange way of showing gratitude.

QIANGLIN: Thankfully we've responded in kind by creating a privileged armed forces that requires a \$16,000 bribe just to guarantee a passing recruit grade – Keeps them clear-headed when it comes time to decide which side they are fighting for.

(brief pause)

QIAO QIAO: I know my daughter at Columbia is getting increasingly annoyed with having to explain our version of communism to her new friends. They've already given her a nickname – CAP.

QIANGLIN: From Jixiang?

QIAO QIAO: It has nothing to do with her name...It stands for Chinese American Princess. She is already judged a capitalist in their eyes. I warned her about being too extravagant...She's just a student, for god's sake!

JINYI: *(Laughing)* I was like that when I was over there. Then daddy cut my monthly allowance to five figures. I sure toed the line after that!

(Chin returns)

CHIN: The chiefs have arrived. *(Followed immediately by Xi and Wang)*

XI JINPING: Good day, everyone. *(Both are seated)* I hope you have already developed some brilliant ideas while waiting. *(Chin is about to leave)* No, Chin, stay and sit with us. You will add a different perspective. *(Others glance at each other with worried looks)*

WANG JIALIN: Since Chin...sorry, Comrade Chin, will participate in the discussion, he is the perfect person to start it off. What we are most concerned with at this point in time is the general feeling among the masses about the rapid development of the Chinese economy.

XI: Do they have a grasp of the historical perspective that our Great Leader used as a road-map for development? *(brief pause)*

CHIN: Certainly they know what Comrade Deng –

XI: Come now, Chin, I said *Great Leader*.

CHIN: Oh, sorry, I thought – It 's just that I doubt they think Chairman Mao expected anything like this.

XI: Haven't we followed Lenin's policy when it was clear the Russian Revolution would not spread to other countries?

WANG: The New Economic Policy...

CHIN:...Program.

WANG:...Yes, "Program"as Lenin said, "capitalism run by communists." And then Comrade Stalin told the kulaks: "Enrich yourselves" and in that way enrich the nation.

CHIN: But those programs failed. Soviet development came through central planning, and even under a stultifying bureaucracy it accomplished quite a lot.

XI: Then it ran out of steam because it was isolated from the rest of the developed world.

CHIN: That was Comrade Deng's defense of his new open door policy with the West.

WANG: Even though Chairman Mao himself started the ball rolling in 1972?

CHIN: That was diplomacy – foreign policy rather than economic policy. At least as late as 1963 he was saying, without approval, that revisionists can turn China capitalist within a few years.

XI: There was more than foreign policy behind it. Remember the failure of the Great Leap Forward....?

WANG: (*Laughing*) Backyard blast furnaces with chicken coops and clotheslines!

XI: That's right...Then the *Cultural Revolution* to buy time. The chairman was probing for alternatives to the *General Line* and began a new course in '72. Deng and his loyal allies moved it along when they found a way to entice the capitalists to help complete our process of development.

WANG: We succeeded where Lenin failed – Capitalism run by communists will soon make us the world's top economic power!

XI: But, Chin, you frown and turn away! Are you not pleased with our accomplishments?

CHIN: (*Hesitating to say all that is on his mind*) Should we be entirely pleased with the widening gap between the elite and the workers and peasants?

XI: That will narrow – look how quickly the middle class is growing.

CHIN:....and....(*Brief pause*)...other problems?...

DENG: Speak freely, Chin, the foundation of the Peoples Republic is criticism and self-criticism. Do you mean the rampant corruption? That Shanghai Gang must be called to order! Our top cadre can live well-enough without gorging on illicit wealth.

CHIN: Yes, but for capitalists, *enough* is never enough.

XI: My dear Chin, are you saying that we have become capitalists?!

QIAO QIAO: Of course he's not saying that!...Just that in order for our nation to prosper, we approached the edge...

WINSTON: We had to break some old eggs in order to make an enriching omelette.

QIANG: Everything we've done has been for our people.

XI: Goodness! There is so much defensiveness that I'm beginning to share Chin's doubts. Please, Chin, be more explicit in your concerns.

CHIN: In a socialist or communist society the producers, workers and peasants, will, directly or indirectly, receive in return the value of what they produced. Under capitalism they are only paid for the value of their labor power, not the aggregate value they have produced. That goes to the parasite – to the capitalist.

XI: But Chin, in order to attract foreign capital we have had to let them exploit our people in exchange for modernizing our economy. Yes, the workers are exploited in terms of pay, but they all share in the benefits provided by the new factories, housing, infrastructure, and so on, that we've gotten in exchange for that exploitation.

QUINLIN: Why should we be so sensitive about where the resources for raising a standard of living come from? If the workers and peasants live this well (*Holding her hand out*) getting back in return all the value they produce under socialism, but this much (*Holding hand higher*) with our socialist variant, isn't that an improvement?

XI: Oh, come now, Quinlin, it certainly does make a difference where wealth comes from and how it's disbursed. Do we have a ruling class that benefits the most?

CHIN: Don't we have immensely wealthy Chinese capitalists who live here and abroad just like the rich in capitalist countries?

XI: We had to train some of our people in the ways of the capitalists in order to convince them that it was safe to do business with us – after all, they would be shifting billions of

their capital to our shores. But that does not mean we have established a defined capitalist class. Is that not true, Chin?

CHIN: Certainly, there are no references to a capitalist class. But by not isolating the communist party leadership from exploited wealth, a state of confusion has been created – People begin to wonder just what sort of nation this is. *(Pause. They all eye one another.)*

XI: Confusion – Yes, that is definitely profusely present in our society. *(Looking at Chin)* Chin, thank you for helping to clarify the points that we endeavor to set in accordance with our general line. You may now leave us for your assigned tasks while we work on ours. *(Chin rises. Gives slight bow, and departs. Pause until he is offstage.)*

QIAO QIAO: *(To XI)* Why on earth did you have him participate in the discussion?!

HAI FENG: He looked at us as if we were a nest of turtle eggs!

XI: Because otherwise we would have a meeting where we pat each other on the back for all the fine work we have done. I wanted to impress on everyone that we have a massive problem blocking our way to the next stage. *(Brief pause)*

HAI FENG: The way I see it, this is all part of the Marxist-Leninist two-stage process.

WINSTON: I never could understand how that was supposed to work anyway. Lenin was no Menshevik; the NEP was just a temporary program to get the Soviet Union back on its feet after the civil war.

JINYIN: Yes...It wasn't intended as a bourgeois-democratic phase...Now Trotsky...

XI: Please, don't scramble the issue we are trying to clarify by mentioning the name of that traitor...

JINYIN: But how is this two-stage thing supposed to work? Marx and Engels encouraged the workers to support the capitalists against the aristocrats in the German revolution, but that blew up in their faces when the two parasitic classes, fearful of workers power, joined against them.

WANG: Careful, Jinyin, no smuggling Trotsky in through the back door! *(All but XI laugh)*

WINSTON: Yeah...Next she'll start talking about uneven development and all sorts of baloney!

QIAO QIAO: Don't even joke about such things!

QIANG: Well, what is it?! Are we all supposed to degenerate into capitalists so that our

children can get their heads chopped off in a workers revolution?

XI : Let us hold off on what may happen in the future until we define and confront the reality of today. We had tremendous growth until this recent world economic downturn. With our huge monetary reserves we thought we could avoid the crisis conditions the capitalist world was experiencing. But we couldn't. Our results were no different than Japan's following their 1990 crisis. We could do no better than stabilize those conditions – we could not escape them.

WANG: As the official “Capitalist” of China in all the New York Times, Bloomberg, and so on, write-ups – \$35 billions and other nonsensical sums are tossed about, most of which, in any case, will be placed in a public trust when I retire in six years (*tittering from the younger folks*), I'm bound to inform you that in order to do what was necessary to achieve our tremendous growth, we had to tie ourselves to the world market economy. That meant being susceptible to their crises and being forced to implement their solutions. A revival should be seen before long.

QIANG: If Chin were here he's ask why we couldn't revive the economy by using a portion of our trillions of reserves to massively increase worker/peasant incomes and in that way stimulate the domestic economy.

XI: Those thoughts entered my mind and confirmed a truth I hoped to avoid. In order to entice capital we had to alter our fundamental economic policies. And that in making those concessions we went beyond the point of no return. Our economy is now fully integrated into the global capitalist market. It's all market – if the state raised pay it would drive even our own capitalists to cheaper labor countries. Our domestic stimulation has largely failed because it was almost all infrastructure – We had no access to the mass of privatized industrial workers.

JINYI: You mean all those thoughts we had swirling around in the back of our minds were true?

WINSTON: That they reflected the reality of that change?

XI: Yes, ladies and gentlemen, that the CCP can just as well be called the Chinese Capitalist Party. We must now think of schemes for a smooth transition that makes us more acceptable to our people and to the rest of the world.

WANG: That is critical. By calling ourselves communist while conducting ourselves as capitalists we've set up a contradiction. The world looks at us as if we were a bomb that can explode at any moment. But we need to do more than look right – that smoothness must also be applied to domestic conflict. Fortunately, we've more than tripled the pay of the military. They are now more middle class than proletarian.

XI: And that middle class is now quite sizable. At 12% that means about 150 million people on our side when the necessary transition referred to by Wang moves to the

foreground.

HAIFENG: A party name change is easy enough if we want to do it. The European CPs came up with a variety of names that made them seem to be on the side of the workers while deleting the term 'communist.'

QIANGLIN: How about if we keep 'communist' but just add 'democracy' to it?

QIAO QIAO: That would just double the silliness if we are neither communist or democratic.

XI: Just renaming the party would be worse than doing nothing, but there is a good line of thought in the concept of a political change. The western philosopher Santayana wrote that political democracy is the way the ruling classes solidify their rule.

JINYI: How on earth can having the out classes really participate in governing do anything but weaken our rule?

WANG: Xi, I think I can see where your train of thought leads. Consider our dealings with western democracies. Their working masses have numerous ways to participate in governing, but when we go over there to do business we need only meet with a handful of capitalists and government officials in order to get a signed, sealed and delivered deal done.

XI: Precisely. They've made their outclasses so confused and so concerned with maintaining a decent living that they never enter the picture when it comes to which class rules. They are as far out of it as they ever were, but don't know it.

WANG: Whatever we do must be done in the Chinese way – no aping the West when it comes to this decisive change.

XI: That can be in the basic rules of party formation, for example, all political parties must maintain an essential 'socialist' line.

QIANG: That way we can still have a Communist Party of China, and...

WINSTON:...and the Peoples Republic of China is a perfect house for all those socialisms!

QIAO QIAO: Are we really cognizant of what we are saying? Chairman Mao always feared that revisionists would re-establish capitalism, now here we are shaking in our boots because the working masses might rebel against that re-establishment!

XI: We are but a product of historical necessity – and that makes it easier to learn and accept what must be done. I propose that the crux for solidifying the transition is a participatory democracy. *(Brief pause)*

QIANGLIN: Let's test out our plan on Chin!

JINYI: I'll bet he likes it.

QIAO QIAO: Yeah, young people go ga-ga over democracy.

XI: *(On phone)* Chin?...Can you please come visit with us for a few minutes? *(Hangs up)*
I'll just give him a few sentences of the basics. No need for him to know the details.

WANG: It's all about transition – that's all he needs to know.

(Chin enters)

XI: Chin, please have a seat. We have discussed a transition process and feel a critical evaluation by someone more grounded in everyday life would be very helpful. Our economy has been altered along Western lines in order to attract their development funding. That has worked wonderfully. We have the means to do what the West has done, and what they will do. Now we feel we should do the same politically. Gravitate toward a participatory democracy along Western lines.

WANG: Opening the door to a general consensus on where we should go next will make the masses realize that what we've accomplished is really for their benefit, and stifle Western criticism of our way of formulating state policy.

XI: Well, Chin, that is it in a nutshell, what do you think?

CHIN: Chairman Mao said that being attacked by the enemy is good because it marks a clear line of demarcation. Our 'enemy's' main line of attack is that we have an economy that mirrors our political framework – a command economy. They want our domestic economy to be market based – bourgeois democracy is the political equivalent of such an economy. Is that what you are proposing – a concrete transition of China to a capitalist market economy state?

XI: No, no, no...not at all...The state will retain its central role of looking after the interests of all the people, but don't you think that the creation of democratic institutions will provide means other than local uprisings for the people to work for the changes they feel our society needs?

CHIN: The people in eastern Europe thought political democracy meant freedom – It didn't take more than a year or two before total disgust set in. And Russia has just what you plan for China; a political democracy where the state clearly controls political and economic policy. Yet with all the changes they certainly do not have a stable society that is satisfied with its political input.

WANG: Don't compare us to Russia. Look at the miserable state of their economy. If oil

prices decline – the nation is on the rocks. They did nothing to attract substantial foreign capital.

WINSTON: We Chinese had to be smarter because we were 'blessed' with having few natural resources.

CHIN: And we have a similar advantage over the rest of the capitalist world if we don't spoil the chance by becoming just like them. Look at America, the richest country in the world with 13% of its population, by their count, living in poverty, and with 50 million requiring a food subsidy. We are nearing a hundred million in poverty –

XI: Now, Chin, I've never heard such a figure, nor do I believe anything like it can be true. We don't have favela communities, like Brazil, or masses of humanity living in hovels where their only toilets are the fields, like India. Even our poorest live under much better conditions.

CHIN: That those poorest now have to pay for basic expenses, like health and education, out of their own pockets has greatly diminished their quality of life, as does traveling back and forth from the country to the special zones. Being stacked up in dormitories and the like are better than what the poorest in Brazil and India experience, but Marx wrote that standards of living are relative and to be judged by the wealth of the nation, and our wealth has already surpassed those nations.

(brief pause as they take in Chin's severe words)

XI: Chin, you have raised a number of reasonable objections based on the world situation as it is today, but we must look to the immediate future. The world economic crisis has created a stagnant growth pattern. Our stimulus plans have largely failed even though we've thrown more resources into them than any other nation. Japan is in a very similar quandary, but they have a stagnant if not falling population, we do not. Our hope is that opening up the political process will allow the masses to blow off steam long enough until the economy straightens itself out.

CHIN: That 'blowing off steam' will consist of a series of demands. Genuine forward thinking means preparing to meet those demands.

WANG: Do you sense as I do that Chin is full of that 'forward thinking'?

QINGLIN: Yes, and I also sense that he thinks we're full of something else. *(Weak laughter)*

XI: Well then, Chin, there is your invitation.

CHIN: As someone who has remained a Marxist despite all that was going on around him, I see China as being in the strongest position ever to do what has never been done – advance toward full communism. *(Negative murmuring)* We not only have a modern

developed economy we have the military means to defend –

WANG:...I knew it!...He now wants to go to war against capitalism...or is imperialism the preferred term?

CHIN:...Not at all...

WANG: Then what is it?...To expropriate all foreign investment? That would cut us off from foreign trade and throw us back into darkness.

XI: Maybe we will find out what's in Chin's mind if we just allow him to tell us! (*Brief pause*)

CHIN: We do expropriate capitalist enterprises...

WANG:...I knew it!

CHIN:...But not foreign investments. In order to stop the rotting away of Chinese society from the top down, we have to chop off that top – We must expropriate all private Chinese investment in the country. Please note Mr. Wang, I said *in the country*. Then institute democracy, not bourgeois democracy, but a transparent direct democracy both in managing the enterprises and in governing the cities and towns.

XI: They will never allow it – foreign capitalists will cut us off on the spot.

CHIN: They won't be able to nor even want to – They have now become dependent on us, and will still be allowed their massive profits. Cutting us off while they are in the throes of a crisis will be like doing the same to their noses to spite their faces. The world is full of cheap labor sources, what we offer is the largest, best trained, most stable working class in the world. That is a communist achievement. Even the most developed capitalist nations have huge sectors of their populations incapable of doing anything productive. If we allow the material and social life of our workers and peasants to degenerate into a capitalist equivalent, then we've lost our edge. We will maintain the low wages in the enterprise zones while supplementing them out of state resources. Workers will be rotated in and out as if performing military service.

XI: But the capitalists also want to market their goods in the entire country.

CHIN: We would still purchase much from them, mostly raw materials, but plenty of other things. Foreign currency for those purchases will come from the enterprise zones. Eventually we will have sufficiently balanced growth and development that we can gradually dissolve the enterprise zones. (*Pause while everyone eyes each other*)

XI: (*Rising*) We called this meeting to devise ways to ameliorate a rising tremor, and instead we end with a call for an earthquake. Still, like our Great Leader said, we must instantly rid ourselves of whatever we find to be wrong. What, and or who that is, has yet

to be determined. Thank you Chin. Food for thought leaves one hungry rather than satiated. We will have more discussion of these matters very soon.

(Chin departs)

XI: What a kettle of fish!

WANG: The day before yesterday I had a meeting with Soros. When I told him I'd be attending a politburo meeting of the Communist Party of China on Thursday, I clearly detected a smirk. We are beginning to seem more foolish with each passing day.

XI: Fortunately they come across looking as ridiculous when calling us "communist" as we do presenting ourselves as such. Still, we have to make some changes.

QINGLIN: I know what I'll do – send word to my daughter – forget the MBA!

JINYI: Check things out first – maybe they have one in Marxist economic theory.

QIAO QIAO: Then she'd be a good catch for Chin.

(Weak laughter as they all depart)

[End – Second edition]

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