

黃霑：無望

No Hope

By Huang Zhan

Translated by John Steinhardt

TO DATE, there has never been a government headed by a Chinese that has trusted the people. That's true not only of both sides of the Taiwan Straits, but also of Singapore. So you've always got one-party dictatorship, no freedom of speech, a muzzled press, prohibitions on this and prohibitions on that.

Why?

Is it that we Chinese are particularly inept? Or particularly stupid? So that Chinese blood and democracy simply cannot mix?

As I see it, the problem starts in our own minds.

To this day, the Chinese mind still hasn't modernized. Even Oxford-educated Lee Kuan Yew is as feudal as they come. As far as anyone with Chinese blood is concerned, the Chairman, President, or Prime Minister, is in reality the Emperor.

When some Overseas Chinese saw Chiang Kai-shek they cried until the "moving" spectacle was awash with tears—I saw it once with my own eyes. At the time I couldn't fathom why these old gentlemen, who had returned to wish him long life on his birthday, should get so worked up. Gradually I came to see that this was the emotion of "the subjects on seeing the Emperor", as the saying goes; when they catch a glimpse of heaven's countenance, the old tears start to flow.

Even people who absolutely detest feudal thinking still can't escape its vice-like grip. Is there anyone among us who does not wish Deng Xiaoping health and long life?

But no matter how much the American people might like Reagan, they would

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never feel the same sort of emotion we feel for Deng Xiaoping. If the Americans lost Reagan, America wouldn't change that much. But what will happen when China loses Deng Xiaoping?

Chinese people merely hope that China will have a good Emperor; it's never occurred to us that what we really need is a system that obliges the leader to be good.

Our thinking is simply too backward.

For us, democracy is just a word, something vague to be hoped for but never achieved. We've never really demanded democracy. We're not even sure we need democracy. As long as the government doesn't interfere in our everyday lives, and lets us enjoy a limited measure of freedom, we're perfectly contented. The old song that goes "Work at sunrise, slumber at sunset—what has the Emperor's power to do with me?" is still a cry from the heart; we've never understood that we, the people, are in fact the true Emperors.

All those with Chinese blood running in their veins need a thorough brain-washing.

Our blood is still poisoned by feudalism. If this poison isn't washed out, there'll never be any hope for any Chinese government.