

CHINA TODAY UPDATE

DECEMBER 2013

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1.

HKSE: Corporate social responsibility in China

21st December 2013

Hong Kong Sunday Examiner
<http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/>

Corporate social responsibility in China

HONG KONG (SE): Father Benoit Vermander sj, who is based in China, has written a book aimed at helping companies to review and better exercise their corporate social responsibility in the modern Chinese context.

Corporate Social Responsibility in China is the result of years of research and a collaborative process with several institutions, notably the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, Fudan University, the Taipei Ricci Institute, BNP Paribas and the Chirac Foundation, between 2005 and 2010, as well as with leaders in industry.

The News Bulletin of the Jesuits in the Asian Pacific Region for November says that he began with the premise, "Over the years, many corporations have been trying to determine what they can and should do to contribute to the sustainability of the economic, social and ecological environment within which they operate."

It describes Father Vermander's contribution as presenting a vision, an assessment and a blueprint, that offers decision-makers a framework in which they can locate the strategic and

ethical decisions they need to make.

Father Vermander argues, “Corporate Social Responsibility is to be understood and implemented not only as a specific dimension of the corporate strategy, but also, and more importantly, as an internal driving force nurtured by the contribution of the team members of the corporation.”

He says it has to do with a sense of excellence and of responsibility grown from within the company, although its practice sits in the same time frame as a set of laws and norms that defines more and more precisely the basic obligations of the company vis-à-vis society.

He sets out first to answer two questions, how to define responsibility and make the notion fully relevant in the Chinese context, while asking what are the resources and obstacles provided by China’s socio-economic, cultural and legal contexts that define the modus operandi of corporations being conscious of their social responsibilities.

The book then presents the most pressing challenges, focussing on specifics, such as process and product safety, financial transparency, training and participation of personnel.

It also offers a blueprint to help corporations and other groups with insights into such concerns, as they weigh the social, cultural and ecological impact of their strategies and practices.

More information on Corporate Social Responsibility in China is available in the World Scientific (Singapore) website.

Father Vermander is French and has worked in China and Taiwan since 1992. He teaches in the School of Philosophy of Fudan University, Shanghai, where he is also the academic director of the Xu-Ricci Dialogue Centre.

Since 1999, he has worked with companies, non-governmental and governmental organisations on assessing cultural resources for sustainable development in China, through corporate seminars, pilot projects and field studies.

He is the author of numerous books and articles on China’s ecological and social challenges, as well as on the contribution of social and spiritual movements to managerial ethics and developmental strategies.

2.

Water and marriage and the one-child policy

21st December 2013

Hong Kong Sunday Examiner
<http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/>

Water and marriage and the one-child policy

China just announced that after 34 years of restricting population growth through its one-child policy, the government will now allow families to have two children if one of the parents is an only child.

Chriss Street comments in *The American Thinker*, “The policy initially produced a population pyramid optimal to economic growth—that is, where the largest segments of the population were neither young nor old, but in the middle (working age).”

Street adds, “Although there were a number of exemptions to the one-child policy, Chinese population growth was cut by 200 million as the birthrate dropped from 4.77 children per female in the 1970s to just 1.58 in 2012.

But the strategy also resulted in massive female infanticide and now a ticking time bomb from millions of unwed young men threatens to ignite revolutionary violence.”

Street quotes Steven Mosher, the president of the Population Research Institute in Washington DC, as saying, “Twenty-five million men in China currently can’t find brides because there is a shortage of women.”

For the young in China, the ratio is 117 men for every 100 women. Conservative estimates indicate the number of young adult males unable to find a bride will rise to about 30 million by 2020.

One of the top television shows in China is a brutally humiliating weekly matchmaking show called, *If You Are The One*, where eligible females turn down advances from lots of desperate eligible men.

However, this is not a new experience for China.

Street adds that two horrendous floods and a subsequent famine devastated northeastern China in the mid-19th century and then quotes political scientists, Valerie Hudson and Andrea den Boer, as saying that female infanticide was so rampant during the famine that about 25 per cent of young men in the region were bare branches, as the Chinese call it.

The bare branches rebelled and formed into huge bands of young male outlaws known as *nien* that wreaked havoc on the Chinese economy. The *Nien* Rebellion contributed to civil war and the end of the Qing Dynasty.

Street adds a second layer to the current population problem, saying labour shortages are also emerging, because the working-age population of China started falling for the first time in 2012.

The local joke is, “China will be the first country in the world to get old before it gets rich.” Currently 8.5 per cent, or 114.8 million of China’s 1.3 billion people are over 65, but that number will almost triple to 23.9 per cent, or 300 million, by 2050.

“But more births will mean more demand for China’s scarce water supply,” Street adds, explaining that urbanisation and a rising middle class means a greater demand for municipal drinking and wastewater.

This has intensified the precarious water supply-demand imbalances in many agricultural regions and driven food prices up. If Beijing carries out its plan to shift another 250 million farmers to cities over the next seven years, water needs will grow significantly.

China is currently facing very similar demographic challenges as those experienced by Japan two decades ago.

“Like China now, the Japanese economy was the toast of the world in the mid-to-late 1980s, but hit the wall from 1991 when its joint property and stock market bubbles collapsed and its working population began to shrink,” Street points out. “But Japan was rich by the time its demographic bomb exploded and China is still poor.”

She concludes that relaxing the one-child policy may ultimately assist in rebalancing the economy towards domestic consumption, since younger people tend to spend a higher share of their income than older people.

However, she cautions that benefits from the change in the one-child policy will take decades to have much impact on the nation’s demographics. During the interim, the millions of bare branches are going to grow in number—and also in anger.

3.

In China, abandoned kids need more than baby hatches

20th December 2013

In China, abandoned kids need more than baby hatches

PUBLISHED : Friday, 20 December, 2013, 4:04am

UPDATED : Friday, 20 December, 2013, 4:04am

SCMP Editorial

A dearth of state-run shelters means that the hundreds of babies abandoned across the mainland each day face an uncertain and even deadly future. Good Samaritans step in when they can, but some children succumb to neglect and the elements. Shenzhen's decision to open a baby hatch next year to deal with the city's annual 90 unwanted newborns is, therefore, a welcome step. But if the numbers are to decrease, such a facility is only a small part of the solution.

The scale of the problem is not precisely known; estimates range to the hundreds of thousands. As elsewhere in the world, the stigma of unwed mothers, the cost of raising a child and teenage pregnancy play a part, but the primary reason is the population-control policy restricting how many children a couple can have. The traditional preference for male heirs

has led many families to turn to abortions and abandoning unwanted girls and handicapped babies. As the case of wealthy film director Zhang Yimou proves - recent revelations showed he had at least three children outside marriage and without the approval of family planning authorities - the law can at times be applied unevenly.

A recent relaxing of the one-child policy so that families in which either parent is a single child can have two children will help. But the staggering level of abandonment means that Beijing needs to put in place a far-reaching protection policy. The ill-funded and overcrowded state orphanage system has meant that many babies are poorly treated. Efforts earlier this year to clamp down on child trafficking by making it illegal for citizens to keep children they find also has far-reaching consequences. Non-governmental groups estimate such people had been taking in 95 per cent of the unwanted babies.

Shenzhen's shelter is one of a number of programmes gradually being rolled out around the nation to fill the void. Authorities have pledged parents will be able to leave newborns there without fear of facing charges or needing to reveal their identity. It will have cribs and life-support equipment. Despite its necessity, it is controversial; some people contend it will encourage greater abandonment.

The concerns are understandable, but the nature of the problem makes such facilities essential. Authorities elsewhere have to embark on similar projects as a matter of urgency. But any significant reduction of the numbers of babies being abandoned lies in ending the one-child policy.

*This article appeared in the South China Morning Post print edition as Baby hatches - just the first step

4.

Beijing issues press credentials to foreign journalists after delay

20th December 2013

South China Morning Post

Beijing issues press credentials to foreign journalists after delay

Agencies in Beijing

Foreign news agency and New York Times had written articles critical of leadership

Beijing has issued press credentials to the China-based reporters of Bloomberg, after a tense delay seen as retaliation for hard-hitting reports on the country's leaders.

Accreditation for several reporters from The New York Times has also been renewed.

The move is a significant step towards obtaining residence visas that would allow the

reporters to stay in the country, after the delay raised concerns that Beijing was effectively forcing the reporters out.

Both Bloomberg and the Times have had their websites blocked since late last year after each published detailed investigative reports exposing the enormous wealth amassed by the relatives of Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping and former premier Wen Jiabao . The delay in issuing accreditation was criticised by US vice-president Joe Biden on a visit to Beijing earlier this month.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing that the issue of the renewals had been dealt with "in accordance with the law and the rules".

"Any person who speaks nonsense about this or who wants to seize on the incident and exaggerate it, does not accord with the facts and is completely wrong," she said.

Belina Tan, a Bloomberg spokeswoman in Singapore, confirmed the renewal of the press credentials.

"We have received all our China press cards and continue to operate as usual," she said.

Edward Wong, The New York Times' acting China bureau chief, confirmed on Twitter that some of the paper's journalists on the mainland, but not all, had new press cards, but none had yet been given 2014 residence visas.

* Associated Press, Reuters

5.

Chinese journalists face Marxist ideology exam

19th December 2013

The Guardian, UK

Chinese journalists face Marxist ideology exam

Exam to be based on 700-page manual that prohibits published reports from featuring comments that go against party line

Jonathan Kaiman in Beijing and agencies

theguardian.com, Thursday 19 December 2013 12.13 GMT

Chinese journalists will have to pass a new ideology exam early next year to keep their press cards, in what reporters say is another example of the ruling Communist party's increasing control over the media under President Xi Jinping.

It is the first time reporters have been required to take such a test en masse, state media have

said. The exam will be based on a 700-page manual peppered with directives such as "it is absolutely not permitted for published reports to feature any comments that go against the party line", and "the relationship between the party and the news media is one of leader and the led".

Some reporters say the impact of the increased control in the past year has been chilling. "The tightening is very obvious in newspapers that have an impact on public opinion. These days there are lots of things they aren't allowed to report," a journalist at a current affairs magazine said.

China has also intensified efforts to curb the work of foreign news organisations. The New York Times Company and Bloomberg News have not been given new journalist visas for more than a year after they published stories about the wealth of relatives of the former premier Wen Jiabao and Xi .

On Thursday, China's foreign ministry granted Bloomberg journalists and some New York Times reporters press accreditation, allowing them to proceed with the visa application process.

"We hope this development means the New York Times reporters still awaiting their press cards will be given them soon, and all the reporters whose visa procedure is still underway will be issued with 2014 residence visas," Peter Ford, president of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, said in a statement.

The General Administration of Press and Publication, a key media regulator, has said via state media that the aim of the exam and accompanying training is to "increase the overall quality of China's journalists and encourage them to establish socialism as their core system of values". It did not respond to questions from Reuters about the exam or press freedom in China.

Traditionally, Chinese state media has been the key vehicle for party propaganda. But reforms over the past decade that have allowed greater media commercialisation and limited increases in editorial independence, combined with the rise of social media, have weakened government control, according to academics.

Even within the party, interpretations of the media's ideal role in Chinese society vary. "Supervision by the press is conducive not only to the struggle against corruption, but also to social progress," Yu Keping, deputy president of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB), said on Thursday at the Caixin Summit, a high-profile gathering of politics and economics experts organized by an influential Chinese magazine. The bureau is responsible for "translating and researching classical Marxist works," according to the official webpage china.org.cn.

"There are preconditions for the press to make contributions to social progress," he added. "One is independence – the press should not be attached to powerful organisations."

Yet China media watchers point to a flurry of editorials after Xi spoke to propaganda officials in August as evidence of concern within the party that control over public discourse was slipping. The official Beijing Daily described the party's struggle to win hearts and minds as a "fight to the death".

Some reporters and academics, however, trace the start of the tougher attitude to a strike lasting several days in January by journalists at an outspoken newspaper, the Southern Weekly, after censors scrapped a new year editorial calling for China to enshrine constitutional rights. Xi had taken over the Communist party only several weeks earlier.

"This was a shock to Xi Jinping's leadership [circle]," said Xiao Qiang, a China media expert at the University of California at Berkeley. "They own these newspapers. That makes it an internal, public rebellion, which made the censorship and media control mechanism look really bad."

The strike ended after local propaganda officials promised to take a lighter hand with censorship. Some senior reporters have since left the paper, according to two sources. The Southern Weekly declined to comment.

Journalists will have to do a minimum 18 hours of training on topics including Marxist news values and socialism with Chinese characteristics, as well as journalism ethics, before sitting the exam in January or February. Reporters who fail the test will have to resit the exam and undergo the training again. It is not clear what happens to reporters who refuse to take it.

In theory all reporters in China need a press card to report, though Zhan Jiang, a journalism professor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, said many did without one. Zhan said recent scandals in the Chinese media had raised some questions about the industry's professionalism.

A reporter for the Guangzhou-based New Express tabloid was arrested in October after confessing on state television to accepting bribes for fabricating more than a dozen stories about Changsha-based Zoomlion Heavy Industry Science and Technology Co Ltd. The reporter wrote that Zoomlion had engaged in sales fraud and exaggerated its profits, accusations strongly denied by the state-owned construction equipment maker.

"It's hard to say if this is really to improve the actions of journalists or to control them. You don't know what [the authorities] are thinking," Zhan said.

Reporters had little doubt about the aim of the exam. "The purpose of this kind of control is just to wear you down, to make you feel like political control is inescapable," said a reporter for a newspaper in the booming southern city of Guangzhou.

6.

China's Moon Landing Highlights Strategic Ambitions

16th December 2013

The landing of the the Chinese Yutu lunar rover on the surface of the moon at the weekend has thrown a spotlight on the government's vision of China's rise to superpower status, analysts said on Monday.

China on Sunday hailed its Chang'e-3 lunar probe mission "a complete success" after moon

rover Yutu, or "Jade Rabbit," and a landing module took photos of each other from the moon's surface, following the first soft lunar landing by any country in 37 years.

"The [photos] showed that both the lander and moon rover functioned well and marked the completion of soft landing, in-situ, and patrol explorations," official media quoted lunar program spokesman Pei Zhaoyu as saying.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, the State Council, and the Central Military Commission said the landing was a "milestone" for China and for the peaceful use of space.

Little civilian use

Wu Fei, professor in the school of Journalism and Communication at Jinan University in the southern city of Guangzhou, said China's space program is dominated by military and strategic concerns, however.

"What aspect of Chinese space technology has found a civilian use throughout the development of the space program since [the founding of the People's Republic of China in] 1949?" Wu said.

"Almost none. I have never heard of any," he said.

He said the vast investment required to sustain a space program has yielded little in the way of technological benefits for the general population.

"In the former Soviet Union, the lunar and space technology developed by civilians and the military weren't interchangeable," Wu said. "This problem exists in China, too."

Mission to explore

Yutu will survey the moon's geological structure and surface substances and look for natural resources for three months at a speed of 200 meters (about 660 feet) per hour, the official news agency Xinhua reported.

The landing module, which touched down in the Bay of Rainbows late on Saturday, will conduct in-situ exploration at the landing site over the course of a year, it said.

"The 140-kilogram [308-pound] rover separated from the lander and touched the lunar surface at 4:35 a.m. Sunday, several hours after Chang'e-3 lunar probe soft-landed on the moon's surface at 9:11 p.m. on Saturday," the agency said.

Strategic significance

Hu Xingdou, economics professor at the Beijing University of Science and Technology, said the lunar landings have strategic significance for Beijing.

"Probably, they will exploit some of the natural resources on the moon, but even more important is the military and strategic value," Hu said.

"This demonstrates the exploratory spirit of the Chinese people."

But he said the government had spent "too much" of its money and resources on the project at a time when many people are struggling to make ends meet in the face of rampant inflation and an economic slowdown.

"China invests very little in social welfare," Hu said. "Education, health and social security take up just a little over 20 percent of the budget."

"In developed countries, that proportion is 50, 60 percent or more."

PR boost

Hu said the government prefers to focus on large-scale, prestige projects such as the lunar landing because of the public relations boost from seeing the Chinese flag on the moon.

According to lunar program designer Wu Weiren, China will likely ship back the samples from the moon on an unmanned spacecraft in 2017, paving the way for a manned mission, Xinhua said.

China's accelerated space program comes as budget restraints and shifting priorities hold back U.S. manned space launches, and the Chang'e-3 probe blasted off just one day after India launched a mission to orbit Mars.

While Beijing insists its space program is for peaceful purposes, the U.S. Department of Defense has made clear it wants to prevent China's increasing space capabilities' giving it any strategic advantage.

The moon rover is named after the companion of moon goddess Chang'e.

In 2012, Beijing launched its fourth manned space mission since 2003, when Yang Liwei became the country's first person in orbit.

* Reported by Yang Fan for RFA's Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

7.

UK paid more than £27m in aid to China last year

16th December 2013

The Telegraph, UK

UK paid more than £27m in aid to China last year

China received £27.4million in British aid payments last year despite boasting the world's second biggest economy

By Miranda Prynne, News Reporter

Britain hands over millions of pounds in aid to China despite the Communist state boasting the second biggest economy in the world, beaten only by the US.

Official figures show Britain gave Beijing £27.4million last year, enough money to pay for 1000 more nurses, according to the Daily Mail.

News of the massive payout, coming just days after China successfully landed a probe on the moon, undermines Government assurances the programme had ended after China and 15 other nations were judged ineligible for British aid.

Government officials said UK money went towards schemes to combat climate change and help boost economic growth.

But Tory MP Peter Bone called on International Development Secretary Justine Greening to explain why aid was still going to China despite ministers concluding as far back as 2010 that it was “not justifiable” to channel public funds to an economic world superpower.

Mr Bone said: “The public will be rightly horrified that we are still wasting money on aid to China.

“It is extraordinary that we are doing this while they send a mission to the moon. If these aid programmes are still continuing then I think Justine Greening needs to come to Parliament and explain what the justification is, because I can’t think of one.”

Pauline Latham, a Tory member of the Commons international development committee, said: “When China is sending missions to the moon it is quite clear they no longer need our help.” David Cameron visited Beijing two weeks ago to seek Chinese investment to improve Britain’s ailing infrastructure.

The country, which has a GDP of \$8.2 trillion compared with Britain’s \$2.4 trillion, poured billions into its flagship space programme which saw the Jade Rabbit lunar rover successfully touch down on the lunar surface on Saturday, watched by 1.4billion Chinese on TV.

It is not the first time the Government has been criticised for sending funds to countries wealthy enough to afford space exploration projects.

India, which received £290million in 2012, last month launched a rocket to survey the surface of Mars.

Ministers have repeatedly insisted that aid money was no longer sent to China but the Department for International Development (Dfid) figures show the country received £27.4 million last year.

It was one of 16 states whose aid programme was supposedly axed following a review by Andrew Mitchell, then International Development Secretary, in 2011.

But Dfid figures reveal that 15 of the countries still received a total of £131.9million British aid last year.

Vietnam was given £51.5million, Cambodia £14.5million, Indonesia £11.3million and Kosovo £10.2million while smaller payments went to several other nations.

Only Russia's programme was abandoned.

Matthew Sinclair, chief executive of the TaxPayers Alliance, said: "Taxpayers expect UK aid to be helping people in the world's poorest nations.

A Government spokesman said it was right to continue to work with non-governmental partners on global issues such as economic growth and climate change.

Last year's aid package to China included almost £5million from the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), which is owned by Dfid, and £22.5million from the Foreign Office.

A CDC spokesman said it had been "legally and contractually bound" to hand over the money.

8.

Shenzhen to open baby hatch where parents can abandon unwanted infants

10th December 2013

South China Morning Post

Shenzhen to open baby hatch where parents can abandon unwanted infants

He Huifeng huifeng.he@scmp.com

It happens so often in Shenzhen it is almost commonplace: a baby is abandoned by its mother on the streets, sometimes in a skip, or even in a public toilet near the factory where she works. The mothers are often migrant workers lured to manufacturing centres by the promise of a job. These young women are usually unmarried and desperate enough to abandon their child.

Next year the fate of these unwanted children may be a little more secure. The city will open a baby hatch where parents can leave their child without fear of facing charges or revealing their identity. The project has created widespread controversy, with many arguing it could lead to an increase in the number of children abandoned.

Other cities in the mainland are also starting similar programmes.

Xian, the capital of northwestern Shaanxi province, launched a centre for abandoned babies last week.

Such havens for abandoned newborns have also been opened in several other countries.

A survey by the Shenzhen official news portal sznews.com [1] found 35 per cent of the 1,348 respondents feared the centre would encourage parents to abandon unwanted babies, while 17 per cent opposed it.

The shelter will have an incubator, cribs, a ventilator and other life-support equipment. It will be near Shenzhen's Welfare Centre, which has cared for more than 3,500 abandoned babies since it was set up in 1992.

About 90 babies have been abandoned in the city this year.

The shelter will not have surveillance cameras to ensure parents' privacy, according to welfare centre director Tang Rongsheng. Parents press an alarm with a delay of several minutes to warn they are leaving a baby and staff will collect the child.

Shenzhen journalist David Xiao, who has interviewed women who have abandoned and even killed their babies, welcomed the opening of the shelter.

"Babies will continue to be abandoned whether there's a safe place for it or not," he said. "The programme means all unwanted children and their mothers can be given a second chance at life."

Xiao said that covering the cases of abandoned children had haunted him.

"I can't forget these babies. They all looked like little kittens and were dumped like a piece of rubbish," he said. "Their mothers were migrant workers with poor education and salary. Most of them were only girls. They just delivered their child in a public toilet or on the stairs and left, or even strangled the baby right there."

According to a survey by Guangdong's family planning department in 2011, about half the women migrant workers in the province have premarital sex. Of those, about half become pregnant at least once.

Single mainland mothers also face a fine and prosecution, as having a child outside marriage is a criminal offence.

If their boyfriends leave them, abandoning or killing the child is the most frequent result.

In the Baoan district of Shenzhen, at least 10 unmarried mothers, all migrant workers aged 16 to 23, have been convicted since 2009 of killing their newborn babies.

Xiao Hongxia, the founder of Modern Female Workers, an NGO that helps the city's women migrant workers, is pleased the authorities are taking steps to avert future tragedies.

"There are more than five million female migrant workers in Shenzhen. Most were born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the government did too little to take care of them or teach them how to protect themselves and have safe sex," she said

Decades After the Cultural Revolution, a Rare Letter of Remorse

6th December 2013

The New York Times

Decades After the Cultural Revolution, a Rare Letter of Remorse

By JANE PERLEZ

In an apology for his actions as a student during the Cultural Revolution, Chen Xiaolu, the son of China's famed Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, published a notice in his school alumni blog in August. A profile based on interviews with Mr. Chen in the Saturday editions of the New York Times and the International New York Times refers to the apology, a rare expression of remorse from someone involved in carrying out Mao's orders. Mr. Chen explains the apology was too long in coming, and says reflections on the past are necessary in order for China to move forward.

The apology attracted wide interest online, and also from colleagues who attended Middle School Number Eight, a prestigious school in the center of Beijing that catered to the children of the elite. Some of Mr. Chen's teachers are still alive, including Wen Hanjiang, the school principal, now 89. Mr. Chen recently visited Mr. Wen, who was badly beaten during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution at the school. The elderly man accepted his personal apology, as did the other teachers who still live in Beijing and whom he visited, Mr. Chen said. In early October, Mr. Chen organized a dinner with former teachers and students, a convivial affair, he said, where the past was discussed in a friendly and forgiving way.

At the start of the apology, he refers to grainy black and white photographs from the summer of 1966 when the school was in turmoil, and the students, ordered by Mao to crush the old structures of power, were in charge. The photos show teachers being forced to do menial labor — digging a ditch, carrying heavy loads — while cocky students look on.

On a personal note, I met Chen Yi, the father of Chen Xiaolu, when he was foreign minister. I was in China at the time as a university undergraduate from Australia on a summer vacation in January 1967, and my fellow students and I were surprised, when we arrived, to find the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. We traveled by train up the eastern seaboard to Beijing with stops in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing. At our meeting at the Great Hall of the People Chen Yi was jovial, offering cigarettes and bantering about our trip. He was dressed in a rumpled Mao suit as he talked the language of the Cultural Revolution. There was little hint that the next month he would speak out against what Mao had wrought. Forty six years later his son decided to follow his example.

The following is a complete translation of Chen Xiaolu's message of apology.

I want to thank our classmate for preserving these precious photographs, and to thank Huang Jian for making them public on August 18th. That period of time is unbearable to look back upon, but those are days that we'll have to face our whole lives. As a student leader at Middle School Number Eight and the director of the school's Revolutionary Committee, I bear direct responsibility for the denouncing, criticism and forced labor re-education of school leaders, some teachers and students. In the early stages of the movement, I actively rebelled and

organized the denunciations of school leaders. When I later served as the director of the school's Revolutionary Committee, I wasn't brave enough to stop the inhumane persecutions, because I feared I would be accused of protecting the old ways and being a counter-revolutionary. It was a terrifying time.

Today I want to use the Internet to express my sincere apology to these people. Middle School Number Eight's Old-Three-Classes student union is currently organizing a get-together with school leaders and teachers. I hope I can represent those Old-Three-Classes classmates who have hurt these school leaders, teachers and students in expressing our deepest apologies to them. I want to ask, will our classmates authorize me to make this kind of apology?

Recently you've seen in society a trend of trying to reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution. I believe that how one interprets the Cultural Revolution is matter of individual freedom, but unconstitutional and inhumane violations of human rights shouldn't be repeated in any form in China! If it is repeated, we can't even begin to speak of the happiness of the people, the wealth and power of the nation, or the Chinese Dream! My official apology comes too late, but for the purification of the soul, the progress of society, the future of the nation, one must make this kind of apology. Without reflection, how can we speak of progress!

Chen Xiaolu

*Bree Feng contributed research.

10.

Reasons for optimism over China plans

21st November 2013

BBC News

21 November 2013 Last updated at 11:29 GMT

Reasons for optimism over China plans

By China blog staff
BBC News

It's been just over a week since Chinese officials wrapped up a four-day conclave behind closed doors. For most China-watchers, the days after are usually devoted to checking out state-owned media for more information shedding light on new policies.

In the last week, for those scouring the press, it's been a swing from scepticism to cautious hope.

The communiqué released immediately after the meeting ranked high on pledges but low on detail. It was greeted with every emotion, from a determined optimism from some quarters, to a no-less determined derision in others.

However, a 20-page document released three days after that has swung the mood back in favour of the optimists, who are already talking of the legacy of the administration under President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang. Their plans for reform, say these optimists, are no less momentous than those launched by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

It is certainly remarkable in detail, laying out 60 reform goals to transform both the economic and social face of China in the decade ahead. No less than party chief and president, Xi Jinping, has stepped in to explain these goals, in editorials released by Xinhua news agency. Given the scale and depth of the overhaul planned, it is certainly going to need every ounce of Mr Xi's personal weight and commitment.

'Tough days ahead'

In 1978, when the inimitable Deng Xiaoping was pushing through vital economic reforms, he had to contend with resistance from party conservatives who saw foreign investment as a prelude to an invasion of foreign capitalists. Mr Deng's bugbear then was turgid ideology rooted in revolution. For Mr Xi, his nemesis could be every individual or groups of individuals who have something to lose in the event of sweeping change.

Already, state-owned tabloid, the Global Times, has warned of tough days ahead, with reforms proposed encroaching upon vested interests. Specifically, plans to skim the fat off the gargantuan State-Owned Enterprises who have long dominated the Chinese economy.

New plans require them to pay 30% of profits to the government. Under existing arrangements, they are apparently required to hand in 5% to 20% in dividends. But many are loath to cede even that much to the central government.

Close ties to the same government and decades of unchallenged monopoly have put these behemoths above laws that might apply to smaller players. What are the chances of compliance now, when even more payment is at stake?

Another area that's been heralded as radical is the promise of "fully" equal treatment of migrant workers in urban areas, in counties and smaller cities. Should it succeed, this would transform the face of China, as tens of millions of farmers cash in on the value of their land and invest in new lives and businesses in cities.

But this would mean re-allocating finite health care, pension and education resources. If someone gains, someone else has to lose, even if it's just in the immediate term. Convincing the urban middle-class to accept a decline in benefits for the sake of reform might be asking a little bit much in the way of altruism.

Clear break

A dose of reality: this 20-page, 20,000-word plan, is precisely that - a plan. And the devil is as much in the detail as in the implementation.

Mr Xi and his colleagues can expect to face resistance from all levels - from local governments to state enterprises, as well as the bureaucracies that oversee them. The central government may have its directives, but it's local governments who will find their own ways

to meet these directives.

A few provinces and cities have already announced how they intend to carry out these plans for reform. Eastern Anhui province, which has long struggled with debilitating poverty for example, is going its own way, with experiments allowing farmers to mortgage or transfer control of their land.

It's no wonder Mr Xi and his colleagues have given themselves until 2020 before they can expect to see any positive results. No one can know what China will be like in 10 years. But perhaps what one can know right now is that the current leadership intends to make a clear break from the recent past.

In the lead up to the 18th party congress in November last year, all the talk was on the increasingly faceless authority of Chinese leaders. Mr Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao, put an almost obsessive emphasis on collective decision-making. It seemed that Chinese leadership post-Mao and Deng had become a collective matter.

If nothing else, the 60-point plan confirms that Mr Xi does not intend to preside over another "lost decade". The relative robustness of his message and the reach of proposed change points to a man very much in charge just eight months into officially taking over as president. And a man who knows that for China, it's either reform, or go under.

End