

A BULLETIN FROM

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## **China Stuns World With Announcement That It Is Now A Democracy — General Elections To Be Held Within The Year**

BY TOM BROWN

**Communist China is going to become the world's biggest democracy. Defying its own historical roots — and the predictions of most world authorities — the Chinese government here today issued a simple proclamation that, effective January 1, 2030, China would begin the massive task of converting its 1.8 billion people to a parliamentary form of government.**

No one person in China has taken credit for this bold announcement. An unnamed government spokesman said that it was the recommendation of Premier Xaio Ming-Li that the announcement belong to “all the people” of China.

The announcement was printed on a single sheet of paper and said little more than the top ministers of China had now “accepted the inevitability

that only a democratic China could reach the full potential of the country's people.”

The announcement then indicated that elections for “local offices” would be held within six months with a general election of representatives to draft new “national policies and guidelines” to be held at the beginning of next year.

All other questions about this massive shift in China's government were swept aside by the spokesman with the statement that “more information would be forthcoming.”

Official reaction by other countries to China's startling statement was mixed. The White House released a brief statement saying that the United States “welcomed China to the league of democratic nations.” The foreign ministers of Japan, Australia, Canada, and Venezuela declined immediate comment although all indicated they were preparing formal responses.

However, some notable “China watchers” spoke more freely. “This is a wholly predictable event,” said Professor Carla Sanpier, an expert on China who teaches at George Washington University.

“Just look at how China has been moving in this direction for years: the move toward free trade in the 1990s, the re-admission of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, its repeated backing of the West in recent votes at the United Nations, the way its commercial interests have increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world.

“Anyone who has been watching China closely would have seen this as a natural ‘next step’ in its development,” Professor Sanpier said.

In contrast to Professor Sanpier's evaluation, Sir Reginald Robbins-Smythe, a top China expert in the British Tory political party, claimed that today's government statement could be “a ruse” designed to attract more corporate investment in China, which now runs in the billions of

dollars. “China knows that the free world will bring more business — and jobs — to its shores if it appears to be leaning toward democratic rule. But there are a lot of ‘ifs’ to be matched with a lot of ‘thens.’ We’ll see. We’ll see,” Robbins-Smythe said.

The Tory minister, who holds no official position in the British government but is nonetheless quoted widely, ended his comments on a down beat. “China — a democracy? Now, really: there are thousands of years of history to dispute that turn of events! No country of that size can make that big a change this simply or that quickly.”

If, however, today’s announcement holds and China does convert — even partially — to democratic ways, it would mean a major shift in the world order. With its huge population, vast natural resources, and military might, China could easily supplant the United States as the world’s economic and political powerhouse by the end of the century, if not sooner. |<

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