

Summary

Professor Burton has a long connection with China going back to the days when he studied at Fudan University in Shanghai from 1977-1981. In his lecture he noted that for centuries, before the rise of the West, China was a dominant power and perhaps the world's most important civilization. It had better technology, a better system of governance, and a higher level of prosperity than any of its rivals. The 19th and 20th centuries were more difficult for China culminating in the Communist Revolution of 1949 and the founding of the People's Republic.

For many years the philosophy on the new China was to let the past serve the present. This meant drawing upon both its Confucian past and the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of its revolutionary founders such as Mao Zedong. However, the planned economy advocated by Mao was led by farmers and peasants. Attempts to keep prices low led to poverty for the farmers and shortages for the rest of the population.

From his position in China Professor Burton had an opportunity to witness the fascinating transition from the Mao era to the new policy of opening. He described the changes advocated by **Deng Xiaoping** beginning in the late 1970s. State capitalism was introduced to complement the planned economy. The need to search for truth from facts rather than ideology emerged.

While China has made great steps forward under the new policy in terms of industrialization, poverty reduction and technological advances, some new problems have developed such as income inequality and environmental pollution. He also noted, somewhat ironically, the return of certain problems that the revolution had intended to stamp out such as corruption, prostitution, and drug addiction.

In conclusion he noted that the Chinese government continues to have considerable support among the population but he had questions about how long this would continue. Throughout his lecture he used personal anecdotes to illustrate his comments and he answered questions on a variety of topics from political philosophy to the situation in Hong Kong.

His lecture was much appreciated by the 75 persons who attended.