And excerpt of:

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**The Cultural Revolution and Beyond**

By Wei Jingsheng

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Losing freedom is a painful thing. But exactly how painful it is can vary. For the average child, not being allowed to go outside and play, or for an employee, being forced to work, are losses of freedom. These losses can be painful, and the child or employee might resolve to make trouble for his parents or boss. But by no means does suffering such a loss mean that you can understand what a much more extreme loss of freedom is like. So, reporters and goodhearted people always ask me questions like, “In prison, how were the meals?” or “Were you beaten?” Actually, those problems are much less important. The greatest and most serious problem is losing your freedom. That is the severe pain.

During my 18 years in prison, I was kept in strictly solitary confinement for three years. The rest of the time, although I was held alone in a cell, it was not as strict; I could chat with guards and fellow prisoners. During the three years of solitary confinement, there was a period of more than a year when I was not let out of my tiny cell even once. No one was allowed to speak with me; the door was always closed. Food was delivered through a small opening in the lower part of the iron cell door. Outside my window there was a small yard, but even that no one was allowed to enter. In this environment of complete isolation from the outside world, a person begins to slowly lose his endurance. An indescribable feeling of torment comes forth from within. Many people in this sort of situation lose their sense of reason; more serious cases go insane, becoming mentally ill. Many political prisoners are driven mad this way, including those imprisoned as a result of political fights within the Chinese Communist Party.

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Just as they were coming to believe that Mao had created an ideal society, the Cultural Revolution started in 1966. After more than a decade, the Communist Party’s autocratic rule had finally deprived the Chinese people of too much freedom. The spirit in society to resist and revolt had grown.

**…**

They have feared that the people will revolt and also that the people will say they are the dictatorship of the proletariat. So they have not allowed people to talk about the problem of the Cultural Revolution. One of the greatest lessons from the revolts during the Cultural Revolution was that everyone believed that he would gain legitimacy by rebelling under the banner of Mao. In the end, rebelling under the banner of Mao was like rebelling while kneeling before the emperor. When the emperor wants to put you back in your place, you have no way out.

The CCP especially feared that after the people absorbed this experience, the next time their rebellion would not be under the Party’s banner. So they did not permit the people to study the lessons from this experience and discuss the Cultural Revolution.

Under the CCP’s autocratic rule, the people cannot participate in forming public opinion. With no freedom of speech, the so-called “four great freedoms”—to “speak freely,” to “air your views freely,” to write “big character posters,” and to engage in “big debates”—were just to leave ordinary people with just a last little bit of the people’s freedom.

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