

Thomas L. Fridman 著「Hot, Flat, and Crowded - Why The World Needs A Green Revolution and How We Can Renew Our Global Future - 」 Allen Lane, Penguin 2008 年刊を読む

Can Red China Become Green China?

- 1 . I've visited China regularly since 1990, and, looking back, here's what strikes me most: Each time I go there, China's people seem to speak with greater ease and breathe with greater difficulty.
- 2 . Yes, you can now have strikingly frank talks with officials and journalists in China. But when I walked out of my hotel room heading for an interview the last time I visited Shanghai, in November 2006, the air was so smoky - from the burning of farm fields after the harvest - that for a moment I honestly thought my hotel was on fire. For some three decades now, China's economy has grown at around 10 percent per year, based on low-cost labor and little regard for the waste and pollution it pumped into its rivers and the air. For many years, when you asked about pollution, officials and business leaders in China would say they will clean up when China gets rich enough to afford to clean up. I would argue that now that we are entering the Energy-Climate Era, China can get rich only if it cleans up. Unless Red China becomes Green China, the Communist Party leadership will not be able to deliver to all the Chinese people the rising standard of living it has promised.
- 3 . China cannot afford to do what the West did: Grow now, clean up later. I know that this strikes many Chinese as unfair, which is why global warming is perceived by more than a few Chinese as a "conspiracy" concocted by the West to slow China's growth. It is unfair, if you consider how much CO₂ the Western industrialized countries blithely pumped into the atmosphere, long before the Chinese industrial dragon ever started huffing and puffing - and how the West has shipped its dirtiest manufacturing industries to China. But Mother Nature isn't into fair. All she knows is hard science and raw math: If China were to try to grow now and clean up later, the unprecedented pace and scale of its development would lead to an environmental disaster.
- 4 . It's all in the numbers: China is one-fifth of humanity; it's now the world's biggest carbon emitter; it is the world's second-largest importer of oil, after the United States; and, according to a report in The Times of London (January 28, 2008), it is already the world's largest importer

of nickel, copper, aluminum, steel, coal, and iron ore. Timber is certainly up there as well. It is not an exaggeration to say. As goes China, so goes planet earth. If China can make a stable transition to clean power and an energy -and- resource-efficient economy, we as a planet have a chance to mitigate climate change, energy poverty, petrodicatorship, and biodiversity loss in significant ways. If China can't, China's emissions and appetites will nullify everything everyone else does to save the earth, and the Energy-Climate Era will careen toward the unmanageable. So for me, the crucial question of this book is actually two questions: " Can America really lead a real green revolution? " and " Can China really follow? " Everything else is just commentary...

5 . To put it the local vernacular, Deng Xiaoping once famously said of China's economy: " Black cat, white cat, all that matters is that it catches mice " - that is, forget about Communist ideology, all that matters is that China grows. Not anymore. Now, if that cat isn't green, neither it nor the mice, nor any of the rest of us, are going to make it.

6 . So how's China doing? The best short answer I've heard comes from the longtime Asia-watcher Nayan Chanda, the former editor of the FarEastern Economic Review and now editor of YaleGlobal Online. When I asked Chanda for his views on China's energy and environment performance, he answered with barely a pause: " Go rent the movie Speed. "

7 . That 1994 thriller stars Keanu Reeves, Dennis Hopper, and Sandra Bullock. Reeves plays Jack Traven, an LAPD SWAT team specialist who is sent to defuse a bomb that Howard Payne, a revenge-driven extortionist(Dennis Hopper), has planted on a bus. But here's the rub: The bomb has been rigged to explode the second the speed of the bus falls below 50 miles per hour. So Jack and Annie Porter, a passenger played by Sandra Bullock, must keep the bus hurtling through the streets of Los Angeles at more than 50 miles per hour - or they, the bomb, and everything around them will go up in flames.

" China is that bus, " said Chando.

8 . " It has to grow at a minimum of 8 percent a year or it will explode, " he added, " because it will have so much unemployment and discontent, the population will erupt. " The implicit ruling bargain that the Chinese Communist Party has offered the people of China has been very clear ever since the end of Mao's era. It goes like this: " We are replacing Communism with GDPism. GDPism says: We get to rule. You, the people, get to become prosperous. You accept our rule. We guarantee your rising prosperity. " Without a steadily rising Gross Domestic Product - without that China bus going 50 miles per hour - that ruling bargain would unravel.

9 . But my own regular visits to China over the past two decades have taught me that while this

remains the ruling bargain, China's leaders, who are very shrewd, have come to understand that in a world that is becoming hot, flat, and crowded, China cannot sustain this ruling bargain any longer-without adding a footnote in fine print. And the fine print now says: “ This ruling bargain is subject to limitations that China will soon have to impose on itself-because the environmental, energy, and biodiversity implications of China's largely coal-powered growth will, if unrestrained, end up killing Chinese, irredeemably polluting China's environment, sapping its economy, and alienating the rest of the world. If the rest of the world, particularly the United States, moves in the next few years to some form of carbon tax, or if Mother Nature imposes even harsher punishments in her own way, China will have to move away from cheap and dirty fuels; otherwise it will face a boycott of its goods. Therefore, the Communist Party reserves the right to slow down growth in the name of cleaning up the economy. ”

10 . China's leaders may not have spelled out that footnote to themselves or their people in so many words, but it is the logic driving where they need to go and have already started moving. That is why, when you add it all up, there is no avoiding the conclusion that China's leadership is engaged in one of the most daring political high-wire acts ever attempted on the world stage. As Chanda put it: “ China's leaders are trying to replace the motor in that Chinese bus from a gas guzzling polluter to a superefficient hybrid - but they're trying to do it while the bus is still going 50 miles an hour. ”

11 . This could be the greatest show on earth.

The drama unfolding in China is so compelling because the same Communist Party that three decades ago replaced Communism with GDPism is now trying to replace GDPism with “ Green GDPism. ” And what's most fascinating about this show is how the Chinese leadership has decided, after a lot of trial and error, to go about it. The bus driver has turned around, told the passengers that the engine needs to be changed - without specifying exactly how it's to be done - and even started allowing some of the passengers to jump into the engine well and tinker. China's leaders have come to understand that they can't change this engine alone.

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[コメント]

国際コラムニストのフリードマン氏の身軽さは尊敬に値する。どこへ行くにも一人。1週間に1本のコラムを書き、世界の人々に読んでもらうために世界中を動きまわり、物を見、人の話を聞き、また、発言し続ける。少し難しいが、わかりやすい英語。音読に耐える。英語教材としても最適。わからない語句は全部辞書を引きすべて記憶すれば、国際感覚と同時に語学力が飛躍的に身につく。CDもあるようだ。

- 2010年9月19日 林 明夫記 -