

Over There

After Sadat

A month has passed since President Sadat's death. The most persistent question since then has been, how much of Sadat's policy can his successor, President Mubarak, follow and how long can he carry it? In view of the shocking lack of public grief and mourning over Sadat's death and during his funeral, can he be as blatantly pro-western, i.e., pro-American?

Throughout this time, President Mubarak has tried to convince Egyptians, Arabs, the rest of the world, and particularly the Israelis that peace does not depend on the life of one man; that the peace treaty with Israel is not only vital to Egypt's interest, but also remains the main hope for a wider peace in the region.

Even though Sadat's peace policy enjoyed the support of the vast majority of Egyptians, including the armed forces, it would be perverse to assert that his domestic policies earned him great popularity. In the last four years, his oscillation between, on the one hand, the desire to allow Egyptians greater political freedom and, in view of a worsening economic situation, the bold challenge to the state's authority—its very legitimacy—by militant religious groups and the communal clashes between Muslims and Copts, the need on the other to repress them worked against him. So did a 30 to 40 percent rate of inflation, the glaringly inequitable distribution of wealth, the inequality of incomes, the breakdown of public services, and the inefficiency of a massive, creaking bureaucracy. That he gave the Egyptians and Arabs credibility in the West, especially after the tarnished image they projected abroad from 1967 to 1973 cannot be gainsaid. That he made the Egyptians and, more importantly the other Arabs, think of the unthinkable, that is, peace with Israel, is also true. Perhaps his exclusive concentration over a decade (1971–1981) on achieving military self-confidence (1973) and peace after that prevented him from tackling the urgent domestic problems that plague his country, such as the extremes of poverty and the plight of the small, but relatively significant, middle class. Then his paradisiacal depiction of the economic benefits that would automatically flow from his Open Door Policy and the peace treaty with Israel was injudicious.

Like most Arab rulers, he conducted policy in a very personal style, until the policy itself became highly personalized. In his anxiety to sustain the momentum of his peace policy, he quickly became too closely identified with American policy. On this basis one can argue, to some extent, that in the minds and eyes of the extremists he personified domestic failure and external betrayal. For all those within Egypt (a minority) and in the Arab world (arguably a larger number), Sadat had sinned against the Community of the Faithful, because he had granted legitimacy to Israel in their midst. How far this proposition implies a solidly hostile anti-western Islamic world or community is another serious matter than cannot be considered here. Suffice it to suggest that if it does, then at the end of the day and in desperate circumstances, western interests in such a world could only be protected by the use of military force.

Foreign observers have also been worried over the degree of the new President's authority, contrasting his quiet, reticent and almost retiring personality with his predecessor's flamboyant, bubbling bonhomie, panache, and charisma.

Yet the actions of President Mubarak, so far, suggest he has authority. His career as an Air Force officer is impressive. Trained as a fighter-bomber pilot in the Soviet Union (1959 and 1961), he had come down from the military academy in 1950. Sadat, who had known Mubarak since the early fifties, appointed him air force chief of staff soon after Sadat's assumption of the presidency, and in 1973, appointed him Commander of the air force. President Mubarak had previously commanded the bomber force in the Yemen civil war (1962-67). His overseas experience until 1973 was confined to his training tours in the Soviet Union, where he learned Russian and acquired a good knowledge of the Soviet regime and society, and to his visits to some of the neighboring Arab states. His marriage to a half-Welsh girl afforded him an acquaintance with Britain, especially southern Wales, where his wife's maternal relatives live.

Interesting to note is the fact that Mr. Mubarak's professional experience in the Soviet Union bred in him not simply caution about that superpower's politics and policies, but also a certain revulsion about its treatment of its own citizens. Equally interesting is the fact that he has never publicly expressed his views about it, and this is in character. His acquaintance with many Arab leaders and the United States was made after the October War when on several missions for his country and on behalf of President Sadat.

A vice-president of Egypt since April 1975, Mr. Mubarak came to control one of the most important sinews of state power, the state security apparatus and network. And since its founding in 1978, he has controlled the structure and organization of the ruling National Democratic Party. Significantly, he belongs to the officer corps generation of 1973, or the October War; that is, he is not a Free Officer: he was twenty-four in 1952. It is even more significant that the Free Officer generation of the 1952 revolution is now part of Egyptian history. Much of the officer corps now is led and controlled by Mr. Mubarak's generation, those who came into command positions during and after the October War.

The armed forces, and particularly the officer corps, still represent the most important constituency of the regime, and therefore of any Egyptian president. One could even suggest that for some time to come, the presidents of Egypt—and therefore the vice-presidents—will be military or ex-military men. To this extent their loyalty will remain a primary concern and a major preoccupation of Sadat's successor. The recently announced vast transfers, retirements, and plain dismissals of army officers supports this view. They amount to a purge of the officer corps.

The infiltration of the armed forces by militant religious movements or groups is not a new development. Forty years ago, the largest mass Islamic movement in modern history, the Muslim (Brethren) Brotherhood, had a designated recruiting officer within the officer corps for that purpose and, by 1950–52, more than one. (In fact, its links with army conspiracies and seditious cabals against the *ancien régime*—and even against the Nasser regime in the early 1950s and 1960s—have been reported not only by the Brotherhood itself but also by several of the Free Officers, chief among them the late President Sadat.¹) Since 1974, and especially after the violent food riots in January 1977, the renewed infiltration of the armed forces—mainly among lower grade officers and enlisted men—by the Brotherhood and its more extremist offshoots, *Takfir wa Higra*, *Shabab Muhammad* and others, seriously worried senior officers.

The growth of the armed forces into a vast (ca. 350,000) military institution may have minimized the chances of conspiracies similar to the one in 1952. On the other hand, the growth of a largely conscript army facilitated such infiltration by militant Is-

1. See P. J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and His Generation* (New York and London: 1978).

lamic groups. By 1979–80, moreover, Islamic militancy had become a widespread phenomenon and a popular option for the masses in the region. In Egypt, the Brotherhood at least was allowed to pursue its religious activities and to freely publish its tracts and magazines which soon served as the main platforms of opposition to the regime. The Brotherhood and other groups soon came to dominate several youth organizations in town and country, and most significantly university student unions and clubs. The more extreme of these groups mobilized, articulated, and capitalized upon the revulsion of the deprived, underprivileged, disoriented, and disaffected lower strata of society against what they perceived to be the aggressive and corrupt secularism of wealth, development, and power. Despairing of any future prospects, they were easily recruited into the mainstream of violent destruction, not only against the state and the inordinately rich, but also against their fellow non-Muslim Egyptians, the Copts. The communal disturbances between Muslims and Copts over the last few years, culminating in the bloody clashes of last summer, threatened to plunge the country in a veritable sectarian-communal, if not a full-scale civil, war—a condition Egypt had, in contrast to several other Middle Eastern countries, been free of since 1910–11.

Shocked by the possession of sophisticated small weapons by both communities and troubled by the rising militancy of the Copts in response to the threat from the militant Muslims at a time when general financial and military assistance to these militants was readily available from willing outsiders, Sadat had no alternative to a direct confrontation with them. His own earlier ill-advised encouragement and promotion of a trend in his regime suggesting a greater Islamic imprint on state and society compounded the problem.

It is in this context that Mr. Mubarak will concentrate his efforts on containing the Muslim militants and preventing further communal clashes. He must impose his and the state's authority in the face of all challengers if he is to survive. He will at the same time seek to insure the loyalty of the officer corps. But neither of these measures, or both of them together, will guarantee domestic security, tranquility, or stability, without greater attention to internal economic and social problems. The new administration, therefore, will most likely devote more time and effort to these. If this is the case—that the first order of the day concerns the loyalty of the army and internal security—purges and repression are un-

avoidable, and success will depend a great deal on the way the new government goes about these tasks.

One spectre hanging over the whole exercise is the disposition of the large number of political prisoners arrested over the last two to three months. One cannot reasonably argue that the incarceration of Muhammad Heikal and several journalists, writers, teachers, lawyers, and others can be justified for very long. Nor can one compose credible grounds on which they could be brought to trial. It is a problem—and difficulty—President Mubarak will have to contend with. The violent militants of course are another matter altogether.

In short, Mr. Mubarak's freedom of action is constrained by this vast array of domestic problems: Islamic militancy, which can solicit and receive support from outside Egypt; the massive—almost insoluble—economic and social problems facing his country and bedeviling his administration; and the cooperation or opposition of segments of his major constituency—the officer corps. As regards the last factor in the equation, much will depend on the President's relationship with chief of the armed forces and minister of defense, General Abu Ghazzala. An attractive, intelligent, and articulate personality, the latter is popular and effective with the armed forces. The President counts on the General to keep the armed forces in line. The two men are contemporaries and about the same age. Both are politically astute, and political astuteness can be, at the right time or given the proper opportunity, translated into political ambition. The close working relationship between them, that is, could become abrasive, sour into antagonism and end in rivalry. This is not an inevitable evolution, or outcome, of the relationship, and one doubts that it will not survive until next summer at least. So long as the President values the General's support, however, he advances his standing; and he cannot ignore or remove him from office before he insures the complete loyalty of a successor to head the armed forces. Past experience suggests that this is the kind of conundrum facing new rulers in Egypt.

The President's freedom of action is also circumscribed by external factors, chief among them being the readiness of the Israelis to reach agreement fairly quickly on Palestinian autonomy, the fluctuations of inter-Arab and regional politics (particularly those of Egypt's mischievous neighbor Libya as well as of her hard-pressed partner the Sudan), and by the pressures generated by the interests and policies of the superpowers.

President Mubarak does not carry the odium attached to his predecessor in Arab capitals. He has good personal relations with individual Arab leaders, especially those who also have a vital interest in the survival of his regime and who hope for a restoration of at least normal, if not closer, relations with it. He has never visited Israel, a fact that can be interpreted in any way to suit each one of these Arab leaders. To this extent Mr. Mubarak is in a position to effect a gradual rapprochement with some of the moderate Arab states which ever since Sadat's assassination have been desperately worried about future developments in the region. Although some of them—namely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Gulf States, and possibly Jordan—will no doubt exert pressure on Mr. Mubarak in this direction, they must realize that he, too, is aware of their desire for a peace settlement, and that with the exception of the recent Saudi peace proposals there is really no alternative Arab policy regarding the conflict with Israel to his own.

After all, Egypt never quite left the Arab world, nor was she quite isolated from it. Over a million Egyptians have continued to work in other Arab countries, and thousands of students from these countries as well as scores of their young officers have continued to be educated and trained in Egypt's universities and military colleges respectively. Many Arab states, moreover, have not been really opposed to Egypt's negotiating initiatives for peace, or her opening to the West (this includes the PLO). The bridges between Egypt and many of the Arab states were never completely destroyed.

What happened on October 6 may act as a catalyst for a breakthrough in the autonomy negotiations with Israel, and thus allow for a smoother restoration of Egyptian-Arab relations during the next year. In view of the long-drawn, stalemated conflict between Iraq and Iran in the Gulf, the chaotic situation in a shattered Lebanon, and the deteriorating relations between Libya on one side and Egypt and the Sudan on the other, such a restoration of Egyptian-Arab relations could have a salutary effect all round.

It is unlikely that the new Egyptian government will aspire to the pre-1970 active involvement in Arab affairs or the leadership role that went with it. Nevertheless, the new government will continue to conduct its Arab policy on the principle of not allowing the emergence of a powerful Arab rival in the East. It may also explore and exploit the strategic interest Egypt shares with Saudi Arabia in the security of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. To what extent it will pursue its traditional economic and strategic

interest of closer ties with the Sudan, revived by the late President Sadat, could be an important consideration.

With regard to the superpowers, the Soviet Union will press for the detachment of Egypt from the western camp. Moscow has already launched its propaganda campaign to that end. Its attack on America for its alleged interference in Egyptian affairs accompanied the vociferous attack on Egypt by its clients in Libya and the PLO. In fact, despite its presence in and links with Syria, South Yemen, and Libya, the Soviet Union still rightly considers Egypt the most important and pivotal Arab state in the region. It does not, however, have the advantage of credible Arab intermediaries to further its campaign of pressure indirectly.

The death of President Sadat was a blow to the Reagan administration and its emerging policy of seeking to establish a "strategic consensus" in the region, based on its close relations with Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia, for the better defense of western interests in the region, including if necessary the deployment of American military force. Judging by its response to the assassination of Sadat—somewhat hysterical in its overkill effect rather than calmly firm—it could be argued that America believes that any deviation from the Sadat policy undermines its plan to establish close strategic relations and military arrangements with the pro-western states in the Middle East.

Beyond the declared intention of military support for its allies—Egypt, the Sudan, Israel and Saudi Arabia—and a greater willingness to establish a military presence in the area, American policy toward the Middle East is still unclear. What is occurring so far is a greater and unpredictable military involvement with newly acquired clients in Egypt and the Sudan (arms supplies, massive economic aid, military advisers, joint military exercises and so on), and preparations for the acquisition of base facilities in the Sinai. In view of Saudi Arabia's alternative peace proposals, the determination to carry on with the Camp David peace process and Israel's continued policy regarding the West Bank—all in a way contradictory elements—President Mubarak may well press the United States to consider new approaches for a policy in the region. Considering the near certain assembling of a peace-keeping force for the Sinai after April 1982, he could advise America to go slowly on the bases while attempting a broader economic and political initiative. More immediately President Mubarak will most probably hint at the need for the U.S. to press Israel to give a new lease of life to the on-going peace process in the hope that this could

attract the involvement of at least some of the moderate Arab states and, through them the PLO, with Egypt. He will point to the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia as a good opening for such a *démarche*. President Mubarak must also be wondering whether the AWACS deal represents a significant shift in U.S. policy and a defeat for the Israeli lobby in Washington. On the other hand, he might interpret it more narrowly as a further link in the arrangements for American military-strategic strength in the region, including the readiness to intervene militarily to defend Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

What the American administration must, in turn, weigh carefully in its mind is whether it can afford to miss this new opportunity of formulating a policy that is not strictly limited to military considerations, but one that provides the political underpinning for its ultimate strategic interests. In other words, the AWACS sale must be accompanied by a new American peace initiative. This could provide the climate for the gradual return of Egypt to the moderate Arab fold while still retaining her treaty relation with Israel, which, in turn, would strengthen not only the American-western position in the region but that of Israel too.

Finally, President Mubarak will have to consider the European initiative. The Ten of the EEC seem to believe that Camp David without meaningful Palestinian autonomy and the involvement of the PLO is a dead duck; that the U.S. has put itself in a box. What they wish to do is to convince the PLO through the mediation of the Saudis and other moderate Arab leaders to concede a sort of recognition of Israel in return for autonomy on the West Bank. In addition, they plan to secure the agreement of most, if not all, the Arab states to the proposal. If necessary they will seek to explore the Crown Prince Fahad peace plan in order to have an alternative platform for new peace negotiations in case Camp David comes unstuck.

The disadvantages of the Europeans in this endeavor are several. There is, first of all, the rather watered-down conception of autonomy which the Israelis propose for the West Bank and over which they are at odds with their Egyptian peace partners. They are adamant in their refusal to consider the involvement of the PLO. In fact, the latest *démarche* of Lord Carrington in the Middle East at the end of October seems to have prompted both Israel and Egypt to try and crack the autonomy nut and thus preempt alternative peace proposals. Moreover, the road to any new initiative as envisaged by the Europeans is strewn with potential con-

flict in a number of areas: within the PLO; among the Arab states; and concerning the delicate position of Jordan with its special links on the West Bank. Even if the European initiative were to produce some useful results, these would have to be acceptable to America. In this connection it is not unrealistic to ask if the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia could act as the catalyst in tacking whatever useful and feasible proposals emerge from the European initiative onto the American-led peace process.

In conclusion, it is safe to suggest that the immediate direction of Egyptian foreign policy under President Mubarak for the next six to twelve months will not veer violently off the course set for it by President Sadat. It will press on with the Camp David peace process, and stick to the close relation with the United States. Thus Egypt made it clear it will not attend the Arab League meeting this month even if invited. At the same time, President Mubarak has indicated the first change in style as far as the conduct of foreign policy is concerned: he declared he will not attack any Arab state, nor publicly insult any Arab head of state. He also announced the withdrawal of certain army units from the Libyan border, stating that he does not contemplate any future military operations against his neighbor. In view of the benevolent attitude of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states toward President Mubarak's regime—in any case a reflection of their wish for stability in Egypt—the time may come when the need to assert his own style and impose his own policy at home will lead him to initiate a new course for Egypt's Arab policy.

P. J. Vatikiotis

East Meets East?

Imagine that you own a small, growing, prosperous business. Your profits have been rising steadily for years, despite some adverse economic conditions. Your most ambitious investment projects, undertaken several years ago, have just begun to reap their rewards. Although your company remains very small, you have begun to compete with the behemoth corporations in your field.

Now imagine that the largest of those behemoths, a sadly mismanaged and consistently indebted outfit, proposes a merger. Behemoth Corp. suggests that your company will become their subsidiary; you yourself will be made a Vice President of Behe-

moth. Your firm will continue to manufacture the same product for the same market, and you will have complete control of your own business. But of course your profits will be sucked into Behemoth's coffers, to offset their oppressive debts.

Does that merger sound attractive to you? If it does, you should be interested in the recent talk about reunifying China by allowing the People's Republic of China (PRC) to annex Taiwan.

October is the most important month on Taiwan's political calendar. October 10—the Double Tenth—is the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China (ROC). October 26 commemorates the Republic's reconquest of the island of Taiwan, ending a half-century of Japanese occupation. On the mainland, October 1 marks the Communist victory in Peking. So it is no coincidence that the PRC government in Peking chose October as the month to launch a publicity campaign for reunification. The emotional tug toward a unified China is always strong, but particularly so when the country is recalling its first nationalist stirrings.

Then, too, there is the question of propaganda. By making the first pitch for unity, Peking cast itself in the role of conciliator, with Taiwan as the intransigent trouble-maker. And if Peking is seen as the peace-maker, then naturally other governments will scoff at Taiwan's request for more military firepower. Since the Reagan Administration is pondering just such a request, the reunification offer was calculated to be heard in Washington as much as in Taipei.

The terms of Peking's offer were straightforward. Taiwan would become a province of the People's Republic. Unlike other provinces, however, Taiwan could retain its own capitalist economy, its own armed forces, and its own political system. Chiang Ching-kuo,¹ the President of the ROC, would probably become a Vice Premier of China. The details of the merger would be worked out by Nationalist and Communist leaders, meeting on equal terms. Peking made only three demands as conditions for the merger. The ROC must abandon its claim to govern the whole of China, must accept the Communist flag as its national symbol, and must accept the leadership of Peking in international affairs.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* the day after the public reuni-

1. Press agencies in Taiwan have not adopted the new method of transliteration currently favored by mainland sources. For simplicity's sake, the "old" system of transliteration has been used throughout this piece to render Chinese names into English.

fication offer, Robert Keatley described the terms as Peking's "most generous offer yet."² And indeed it was. But previous offers were not particularly generous. As Chiang Ching-kuo pointed out, "At one time they clamored for 'washing Taiwan in blood.'" What did this new offer give to Taipei as an enticement? In return for surrendering their independence, the ROC leaders would receive prestige, gratitude from the mainland, and . . . nothing else. Taiwan would retain its capitalist and democratic system, but that represents no change from the status quo. Taipei would have its own army, but marching orders (and replacement weapons) would have to come through Peking.

To no one's surprise, the ROC dismissed the reunification offer immediately, branding it as pure propaganda. Chiang Ching-kuo told his compatriots in the ruling Kuomintang Party that, "Now they shout their demands for talks 'on a reciprocal basis' and joint 'leadership.' Tomorrow they will coin another slogan and try to effect another deception."

So much for the reunification of China. But while the negotiations never got underway, the war of words has only just begun. During the Double Tenth celebration, Nationalist leaders redoubled their usual vigor in calling for the defeat of Communism on the mainland. Meanwhile Peking upped the ante by hinting that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the quintessential Nationalist hero, might be resuscitated as a hero on the mainland after reunification. On balance, the PRC seems to have the rhetorical edge, at least insofar as American popular sentiment accepts their good faith. Even the normally sober *Wall Street Journal* (in the person of Robert Keatley) enthused that the offer from Peking was "much more than a tactical weapon." Alluding to certain unnamed western diplomats, the *Journal* continued, "But there is much agreement here that the offer, which dangles carrots much more than it waves sticks, isn't just a propaganda device." Evidently the PRC has succeeded in one respect already: the topic of reunification is now very much alive in the United States.

On Taiwan, serious debate about reunification is rendered impossible by the sedition laws, which make it a crime to advocate accommodation with the Communists, or even to suggest splitting the island of Taiwan off from the whole of China. But even if such a debate could occur, it is difficult to marshal arguments that

2. "China Makes Overture to Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, (October 1, 1981).

could convince the Nationalists to negotiate with the mainland. Politically, culturally, and economically, the differences that separate the two Chinas are enormous, and steadily growing.

Politically, the ROC is pledged to the overthrow of the Communist regime. More than that, it is the promise of regaining the mainland that fuels patriotic fires on Taiwan. If the ROC is a remarkably productive little country (and it is), at least part of that productivity can be attributed to the extra effort begotten of patriotism. For thirty-two years, the ROC government has exhorted its citizens to provide a model of democratic prosperity for the emulation of their mainland cousins. It would be difficult to discard that objective without giving rise to cynicism and apathy among the Taiwanese people.

In those thirty-two years since the Communist victory on the mainland, a new generation has been born and raised on the island of Taiwan. But the influx of refugees from the mainland is still steady, and with those refugees come further complaints of Communist atrocities. So the wounds of the Communist revolution are continually reopened. Within the ruling Kuomintang Party, there is even more rancor, since Kuomintang officials consider themselves to be the rightful rulers of the mainland as well. Nor is this an idle pretense, since many senior Kuomintang officials can still vividly recall their own reign in Peking. The Kuomintang, like the Chinese Communist Party, is led by old men;³ memories of old usurpations die hard.

Even the internal politics of Taiwan militate against reunification. The most visible dissident movement on the island calls (illegally) for the separation of Taiwan from the rest of China. To date the ROC government has had relatively little difficulty in suppressing this movement. But any moves toward accommodation with Peking would naturally provoke a new outburst of separatist activity. Under the present circumstances, the separatist movement could count on the additional support generated by raw self-interests, because the economic interests of the Taiwanese people are clearly better served by the present regime.

In the aftermath of the Peking overtures, government officials called up two figures of speech repeatedly in their efforts to explain their position. First, they referred to the perils of the fly who tries to mate with an elephant. Taipei rules 16 million people; Peking rules one billion. No matter what assurances the PRC might give

3. On the executive committee of the Kuomintang, the average age is over 70.

at the outset of reunification talks, inevitably the political powers of the island republic would be insignificant within the amalgamated regime. Second, the Nationalists recalled the mathematical formula that governed the one previous “cooperation” with the Communists—in the fight against Japan in World War II. During that struggle, the Nationalists charge, the Communists devoted “10 percent of their effort to the fight against Japan, 20 percent to temporizing with the National government, and 70 percent to self-strengthening.”

Mistrust for the Communists is endemic on Taiwan. Yes, today Peking might call for reunification. But even if the gesture is sincere, is it lasting? The record of PRC history does not inspire confidence. At one time or another, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao, and the Gang of Four have represented official PRC ideology; none has survived intact. Although Teng Hsiao-p'ing seems firmly in place today, Taiwan's top analysts doubt that his triumph is absolute. The Gang of Four is still living, and its survival (in a nation much given to liquidating political opponents) might itself indicate some residual strength. If the Gang of Four were to regain power subsequent to reunification, or if yet another faction were to topple Teng, could the Nationalists realistically expect continuing amity?

This, too, is much more than an idle question. The promise to bathe Taiwan in blood rings true to Peking's history. The death toll from Mao's Cultural Revolution is in dispute, but certainly runs into the millions. During the Great Leap Forward, a period the West does not generally recognize as particularly violent, the death rate on the mainland increased by about 200 percent in the course of three years; in a country of (then) 800 million, that figure represents a staggering loss of human life. And even the avuncular Teng Hsiao-p'ing is an avowed admirer of Stalin. Yes, the people of Taiwan have heard about the mainland's ballyhooed movement toward democracy. But they also know that the leader of that movement, Wei Ching-sheng, is now serving an fifteen-year term in prison. Again, none of this is lost on the people of Taiwan. It is foolish enough for a fly to mate with an elephant; still worse if the elephant has acquired a taste for blood.

Cultural Ties

Unlike the PRC, the ROC does not periodically rewrite its history. So the past depredations of the Communist regime cannot be swept under the rug. But in the final analysis, the political differences between the two Chinas may be easier to overcome than

the growing cultural gap. The boundaries between nations are fixed not only by political treaties, but also by the cultural ties that unite some peoples, and separate them from others. China's history as a nation stretches back for thousands of years, building on a cultural pattern that traces back to the days of the Five Rulers, about 2200 years before Christ. In that long history, the thirty-two-year episode of Communist rule is nothing more than a dip on the graph. Still, in those thirty-two short years the Communist rulers have done everything in their power to obliterate the customs and teachings that constitute traditional Chinese culture, hoping to achieve a *tabula rasa* on which to create the new Maoist man. And while they have been busy with that project, their Nationalist competitors have taken extraordinary pains to conserve and enrich Chinese traditions.

In official ROC speeches and formulations of government policy, the goal of cultural enrichment takes second place to nothing—not even to the efforts to oust the Communist government, since that is regarded as a different aspect of the same endeavor. Alongside the capital outlays for heavy industry and defense, there are similar appropriations for the construction of opera houses, schools, and an ambitious network of local cultural centers. Filial piety is a way of life; indeed, the government assumes that most elderly people will be supported handsomely by their children. Schoolchildren are immersed in Confucian moral teachings, and encouraged to participate in physical training through traditional practices such as *tai chi* (as well as Little League baseball, of course). Calligraphy is regarded as a fine art, and it is unthinkable that Chinese characters would be abandoned, despite their inadaptability to modern word-processing. The birthday of Confucius, September 28, is a national holiday, and the 77th lineal descendant of Confucius, who leads the holiday celebrations, is regarded with special reverence. In an era of phenomenal economic and social change, these ties with traditional culture have provided a special, stable backdrop. Unlike virtually all other rapidly modernizing countries, the ROC has avoided dramatic social upheavals. The strong emphasis on cultural enrichment has undoubtedly enhanced this stability.

Meanwhile, just across the Taiwan Straits, the PRC has staged a series of sweeping cultural shifts: the Hundred Flowers campaign, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution. Mao's Red Book has become the Bible, then been demoted, as has the teaching of Confucius. Folk religions have been oppressed. Schools

have been closed down for lengthy periods, teachers re-indoctrinated, and urban citizens uprooted to serve in the countryside. Of the 38 million members currently enrolled in the Communist Party, some 18 million were recruited during the Cultural Revolution. These young men, who are destined to become the leaders of the PRC, are as ignorant about traditions as they are hostile to them. So the chasm between the two Chinas grows steadily.

Theoretically, political and cultural differences should be enough to keep the two Chinas separated until at least the end of this century. But political history is notoriously unpredictable, and a thirty-two-year aberration cannot untrack a 4,000-year old cultural pattern. On a purely practical level, the most reliable reason to doubt the possibility of reunification is economic. Where economic interests lead, ideological argument generally follows. And for the people of the ROC, the economic arguments uniformly favor a continued separation.

Taiwan, as virtually everyone knows, is one of the world's great showcases of successful economic development. Immediately after World War II, per capita income hovered around \$70 annually. Government economists, setting out the goals for Nationalist modernization, projected that the income figure would rise to \$1000 by 1980. As usual, the economists were wrong; but they were wrong in the right direction. In 1980, the average Taiwanese income was \$2000, and the country had officially joined the ranks of the developed nations. Other statistical indices confirm the success: life expectancy has increased by fifteen years; infant mortality has plummeted by 400 percent. Even if one uses the most optimistic projections about economic growth in the mainland, and the most pessimistic projections about Taiwan, the ROC per capita income for the year 2000 figures to be *triple* that of the mainland.

To repeat, that 3-1 ratio of projected per capita income is based on the most conservative available figures. A prudent investor would notice ample indications that the conservative figures are misleading. PRC plans for modernization have run afoul of predictable problems; Peking has defaulted on several cooperative ventures with Japanese industries, and prospects for renewed Japanese participation are bleak. Meanwhile, a generation of massive capital projects has come of age in Taiwan. In the port city of Kaohsiung, for example, the China Shipbuilding Corporation is arguably the most advanced facility in the world for the construction and renovation of supertankers and luxury liners, while the China Steel Corporation next door is working its way through

thirty-six months of advance orders. Of the young men leaving school to enter the work force, a surprising 10 percent open their own businesses, and a staggering 96.4 percent of those businesses succeed! The economy's vital signs are robust: unemployment is an infinitesimal 1.2 percent, and the rate of inflation (despite Taiwan's total reliance on imported energy) is a paltry 6 percent for 1981.

Economic Concerns

Certainly the ROC does have economic problems. The most pressing problem is an embarrassment of riches: a decreasing supply of unskilled and semi-skilled labor. The chief ingredient of past ROC successes has been an abundant supply of efficient, inexpensive labor.⁴ Now rising levels of education have combined with rising economic expectations to entice workers out of the less skilled professions, so that there is a 50 percent turnover annually in the less attractive jobs.

There are troubles, too, at the upper end of the economic ladder. Taiwan has an unusually even distribution of income, with the top 20 percent of all wage-earners bringing home about four times as much as the bottom 20 percent.⁵ This distribution may be healthy for the society, as the Nationalist officials claim. But it certainly inhibits individuals' economic incentives. Take the case of a medical doctor: In a public hospital in Taiwan, the superintendent can expect an annual salary of only \$14,000; a resident physician will earn \$6000. Even allowing for the generous perquisites of these positions, it is no wonder that Taiwan is suffering a "brain drain," with many talented young people opting for more lucrative opportunities abroad—especially in the United States.

Finally, Taiwan must continue to battle a familiar old problem: the island's almost total absence of natural resources. The ROC imports all of its fuel (gasoline costs \$4.25 a gallon), meat, fruit, and most raw materials for manufacturing. Here the lure of reunification must make itself felt; the mainland has oil, coal, minerals, silk, and arable land in abundance. The prophets of reunification conjure up the vision of Taiwanese industries utilizing mainland resources in an unbeatable economic combination.

But Taiwan has survived—and boomed—without benefit of the

4. Today, unit labor costs in the ROC are one-third of those in the United States.

5. In the United States, similar statistics yield a ratio of eight to one. In the socialist paradise of the PRC, the figure is twenty to one.

mainland's resources thus far. And although the prospect of easy access to those resources is certainly inviting, the negative ramifications are still more imposing. This, too, would be a case of the fly mating with the elephant. The billion people of mainland China could soak up the wealth of Taiwan quite readily, without even moving themselves out of poverty. In short order the unified government would have milked all the riches out of Taiwan, thereby ending the capitalist experiment. In all likelihood, the experiment with democracy in the ROC would end soon thereafter.

Unfortunately, the ROC has no rhetorical (let alone practical) answer to Peking's reunification offers. Taiwan can call for the overthrow of the Communists, but cannot undertake any military ventures toward that end. Strategists in Taipei can urge the Chinese people of the mainland to take matters into their own hands, but the fate of such insurgencies in Communist countries is inevitably tragic. So the ROC is left with its argument from principle—the argument that, inevitably, history will demonstrate the superiority of democratic capitalism.

If history offers that proof anywhere, it is in the United States. Yet today, even within the Reagan Administration, one hears the voices of sympathy for the Communist initiative. Administration officials are not allowed to surface in Taipei. The practitioners of *Realpolitik* insist on the importance of the “China card,” invariably meaning closer cooperation with the Peking government. The Secretary of Agriculture reminds Congress that mainland China is “potentially” our biggest market for farm exports. (As indeed it is—potentially. But can it pay for those foodstuffs?) U.S. policy today assumes the goodwill of our fellow democrats on Taiwan, and curries the favor of the totalitarian state that threatens to engulf them.

But Taiwan waits. The Chinese culture emphasizes patience and quietude, and a 4000-year old nation is not easily panicked. And the ROC understands the strategic reasons for this strange U.S. policy. “If I want to be your friend, I must first put myself in your shoes,” explains Frederick Chien, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. If the primary objective of U.S. policy is to combat Soviet power, then our cooperation with Peking is understandable. Sooner or later, Dr. Chien argues, the natural alliance will reassert itself.

Patience, confidence, and continued success: this is the ROC prescription for foreign policy in the long term. But is it realistic to conduct foreign policy with nothing but long-range instruments? In his reaction to the latter-day challenge of Peking's reunification

ploy, Chiang Ching-kuo could only offer those same assurances that eventually, the ROC's superiority would assert itself. He had no immediate tactical reposte; only these words from his father, Chiang Kai-shek: "A devil may suddenly grow 100 feet tall, but before long it will be overwhelmed and obliterated by the spirit of righteousness."

These are noble words, and they are words that fit well with the great sweep of Chinese political history. But they are also words that harken back to the diplomacy of another age, in which noble thoughts in themselves could suffice to guide foreign policy. In the short term, where real foreign policy is determined, President Chiang's response gives rise to no practical options. Sooner or later, everyone agrees, China should be reunified. How? No answers are coming from Taiwan.

Philip F. Lawler

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MONT PELERIN SOCIETY

announce the

OLIVE W. GARVEY FELLOWSHIPS

for the

1982 GENERAL MEETING OF THE MONT PELERIN SOCIETY
(Berlin, West Germany, September 5-10, 1982)

The Garvey Fellowships will be awarded for the three best essays on the topic

“THE VIRTUES OF THE FREE ECONOMY”

Essays of not more than 5000 words may be submitted by students or young faculty members, who are not members of The Mont Pelerin Society.

The essays will be judged by a panel of three senior members of The Mont Pelerin Society. Deadline for submission of essays is February 1, 1982.

First prize Garvey Fellow award of \$2500 + \$1000 travel grant to participate in the Society's Berlin meeting

Second prize Garvey Fellow award of \$1500 + \$1000 travel grant to participate in the Society's Berlin meeting

Third prize Garvey Fellow award of \$1000 + \$1000 travel grant to participate in the Society's Berlin meeting

Further information is available from:

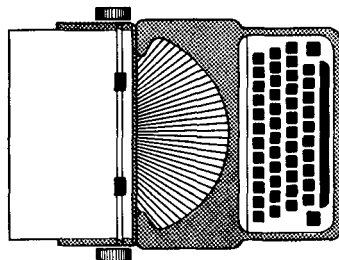
The Mont Pelerin Society
PO Box 7031
Alexandria, Virginia 22307 USA

HOOVER authors influence policy. HOOVER PRESS publishes it.

Pink and Brown People and Other Controversial Essays by Thomas Sowell

Originally appearing as articles in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Star*, these sixty-four essays by former White House economic advisor Thomas Sowell deal with politics, economic policy, race, and military defense. The author, a Harlem high school dropout who later graduated from Harvard with honors, opposes mandatory school busing and questions the impact of affirmative action programs. His perspective is far from predictable as he offers his solutions to today's problems.

Paper \$8.95 0-8179-7532-2 1981



The Wayward Welfare State

by Roger A. Freeman

In this comprehensive analysis of the activities of American government, the author describes the rise and growth of the welfare state, the general disillusionment with its results, and its incipient decline by the end of the 1970s. He queries how far the state can go in redistributing huge amounts of income from productive to nonproductive segments of the population without inflicting serious damage on the economy and on society.

Cloth \$35.00

0-8179-7491-1

Also available is *A Preview and Summary of "The Wayward Welfare State"*, which condenses the findings of the larger work into a handbook.

Paper \$8.95

0-8179-7572-1

1981

The United States and the Republic of Korea Background to Policy

by Claude A. Buss

One of the most important contributions of this study is to define clearly the enormous cultural differences between Koreans and Americans and analyze how they have been resolved in part, as both Korean and American leaders attempt to put various mistakes behind them and build a bridge between their two countries. This study identifies some of the important issues and presents a clear agenda for the future.

Paper \$10.95

0-8179-7542-X

January 1982

HOOVER INSTITUTION PRESS • Dept. 8098
Stanford University • Stanford CA 94305

Toll-Free Order Number: 1-800-227-1991

inside California: (415) 497-3373

VISA and MasterCard orders accepted by telephone.



What Makes A Good School*

TERRY EASTLAND

A number of studies independently conducted and published over the past decade has confirmed what most people have believed for a very long time about schools. That is, that some schools are better than others; that the reason some are better than others is that some teachers and administrators are better than other teachers and administrators; and that some schools take their responsibility for education seriously while many others do not.

The most important of these recent studies, all of which are unpublicized and indeed almost unheard of by the general public, is that conducted in the schools of London by Michael Rutter and his colleagues. In *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*, published last year by Harvard University Press, Professor Rutter demonstrates that children are most likely to be well-behaved and achieve scholastically if they attend some schools rather than others.

Professor Rutter measured a school's effectiveness by assessing the following: children's behavior from school to school, the regularity of student attendance, the proportion of children who stayed at school beyond the legally enforced period, the students' success in public examinations, and their delinquency rates. Stunningly (or perhaps not so stunningly to the non-expert), Professor Rutter found that over the period studied—four years in some cases, five in others—variations in both behavior and academic attainment at each school were almost nonexistent. What the schools were, they were over time.

Some of the schools were better at producing well-behaved and better educated pupils. Why? Professor Rutter found that factors such as school size, age of buildings and space available, and differences in administrative structure or organization made little or no difference to educational outcomes. "It was entirely possible," he wrote, "for schools to obtain good outcomes in spite of. . . un-

*This article is an out-growth of conversations with William J. Bennett, formerly president of the National Humanities Center, now chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.