

# Peking's Remembrance of Things Past

By James P. Harrison

There has been considerable speculation recently about what might be termed China's paranoid style of international relations. The Chinese Communists themselves have provided abundant evidence supporting this analysis but naturally place particular emphasis on the historical basis of their mistrust towards many of the world's governments. It follows that an understanding of the actions and statements of the leaders in Peking, whether in relation to "American imperialism" and Viet-Nam, the Sino-Soviet dispute, or the future of Asia, must be based on some knowledge of the Chinese Communist concept of the past.

Unfortunately, the Chinese view of modern Asian history is as bitter as it is emphasized. It is marked by a characteristically nationalist resentment of China's past humiliations and further reinforced by Communist belief in the virtues and inevitable triumph of the exploited.

As "nationalist Communists," the Peking leaders stress the class struggle not only in terms of class against class, but also in terms of oppressed *versus* oppressor nations.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, for the developing countries they attempt to equate the two. Hence, far from wishing to forget the suffering of a century of "internal disruption and foreign disaster," the Chinese Communist leaders stress the educational potential of this experience and clearly base their claim to leadership of the emerging nations on their own turbulent and exploited past. As Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi recently put it, "China, too, is an injured nation."

Injustices allegedly inflicted on China by foreign powers form a basic theme in the indoctrination of seven hundred million people, as articles in the daily press and reports of mass meetings readily attest. Typically, a leading Chinese Communist historian writes:

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of a form of class struggle between eastern and western nations is a logical extension of Lenin's theory of imperialism and has also been implied by non-Communist Chinese nationalists from Yen Fu, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, and Sun Yat-sen on.

*We stress the study of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary movements of the past century . . . during which the imperialist powers waged more than ten aggressive wars against China, more than twenty countries forced China to conclude unequal treaties, and eight or nine powers kept garrisons, concessions, settlements and spheres of influence in China . . . Studies of these events provide rich material for the patriotic education of our citizens.<sup>2</sup>*

At present such statements are increasingly being tied in with the war in Viet-Nam, and the sobering fact is that the vast majority of Chinese probably accept them.

It is also important to realize that this emphasis on the historical underpinning of China's revolutionary ideology strongly affects Peking's animosity not only toward the United States and other non-Communist powers, but also towards the Soviet Union. Russia is now bracketed with the rest of the developed nations in Peking's view and hence should be excluded from leadership of the struggles of the developing countries. There is an obvious connection between this attitude and the current Sino-Soviet dispute, as can be seen from a brief survey of modern Russian-Chinese relations as viewed by the Chinese.

### ***The Impact of History***

First of all, Chinese Communist writers have on occasion raised the question of Tsarist Russia's encroachments on territories regarded as historically part of the Manchu Empire—notably, the region to the east of Manchuria (now part of the Soviet Maritime Province), Mongolia, and the northwestern border regions of Sinkiang.<sup>3</sup> Although it is acknowledged that these encroachments belonged to Russia's pre-Communist period, recent frictions in these areas will certainly continue and probably increase.<sup>4</sup> Probably at least as important for the

present, moreover, are the Chinese Communist leaders' memories of past grievances against various policies and personalities of Moscow-directed international communism.

This is not to say that the Tsarist aggressions of the past and Stalin's often ill-conceived China policies necessarily preclude harmonious relations between the two major Communist powers: there was, after all, a period of relatively close relations during the early 1950's. Still less does it imply that the Communist regime is just another Chinese dynasty concerned only with traditional Chinese problems. It does mean, however, that when other aggravations intrude, as they have increasingly since 1956, the Chinese Communist leaders display a tendency to view the Soviet Union in the light of earlier Sino-Russian relations.

The Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 as a direct result of the upsurge of Chinese nationalism following World War I. The first Chinese Marxists were also nationalists, but the "un-Chineseness" of the ideology to which they turned testified to the revolutionary nature of their commitment. Throughout the history of the Chinese Communist movement, the emphasis given to the nationalist or the Communist side of the equation has varied, but a significant feature of the rise of Mao's generation to power has been the degree to which the Communist leadership has succeeded in uniting the two elements—in harmonizing a very untraditional revolutionary theory with Chinese nationalism. As Chinese Communist spokesmen proclaim, "The thought of Mao Tse-tung integrates the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution."<sup>5</sup>

Close Soviet ties with the Kuomintang in the early 1920's initially favored the efforts of the Chinese Communists to work within the framework of the nationalist movement. However, equivocal and increasingly chauvinistic Soviet policies, together with Kuomintang military successes, enabled Chiang Kai-shek drastically, if only temporarily, to reduce Communist influence in China after 1927. Chiang's charge that the Chinese Communists placed loyalty to Moscow ahead of patriotism appeared to be confirmed on numerous occasions, as for exam-

<sup>2</sup> Liu Ta-nien, "Historical Science in the New China," *Li-shih Yen-chiu* (Historical Research) 1962, no. 2.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., see Liu Kuang-chai and Ch'en Pen-shan, "Critique Lu Chin-ch'ih's Anti-Soviet Slanders," *Shih-hsueh Chi-k'an* (Historical Quarterly), No. 1, 1957.

<sup>4</sup> See Dennis J. Doolin, *Territorial Claims in the Sino-Soviet Conflict*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War," *Peking Review*, Sept. 3, 1965, p. 22.

ple when they supported the Soviet Union's drive into Manchuria in 1929. This action to prevent attempted Chinese Nationalist seizure of the Russian-held Chinese Eastern Railway<sup>6</sup> was all the more difficult for the Chinese Communists to defend because the Bolshevik regime had reneged on its promise, made in 1919, to return the railroad and other interests acquired in China by Tsarist Russia to Chinese sovereignty.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese Communists, in recent years, have contrasted their support of "proletarian internationalism" on this occasion with Soviet failure to back Peking unequivocally in the Sino-Indian border dispute.

**T**he Chinese Communists' experience of being struck down by the Kuomintang after 1927 has undoubtedly influenced Peking's present policy of not placing too much faith in the "bourgeois nationalist" governments of the developing world. Indeed, as recent events in Indonesia, the Middle East, and elsewhere have again demonstrated, the equation of communism and nationalism is still a difficult one to achieve. Yet, since Lenin, communism has triumphed on its own only where it has succeeded in capturing the nationalist movement, as it did eventually in China, and in Yugoslavia, Cuba, and North Viet-Nam.

At the same time, Moscow's contributions to the setbacks suffered by Chinese communism in the late 1920's became an initial source of Chinese mistrust of Russian leadership of the world Communist movement. Although publicly the Chinese Communists continued to go along with Soviet-dictated policies until the latter 1950's, Moscow directives caused much dissatisfaction and dissension within the party. Thus, in 1930, when the same Chinese Communist leader who the year before had defended Stalin's aggressive action in Manchuria was called to Moscow to account for the latest failure of Comintern policies in China, he bluntly told his Russian mentors that the Comintern "did not understand conditions in

China." He emphasized that "loyalty to the Communist International was one thing and loyalty to the Chinese revolution quite another," adding that some Chinese Communists "distrust the views of their comrades in Moscow as much as some comrades in Moscow distrust the worker comrades in China."<sup>8</sup>

Moscow's instigation of the replacement of this leader, Li Li-san, by the Russian-oriented "returned students" in 1930-31 marked one of the last direct Soviet interventions in the affairs of the Chinese party.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in the years that followed, lingering Chinese Communist memories of Soviet policy mistakes in China played an important part in the rise to power of Mao Tse-tung. In fact, the first "thought reform" movement in the CCP in 1942 was directed as much against "Soviet-style dogmatism" as against other deviations.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1930's, Soviet policy became far more concerned with curbing the dual menace of Japanese and German expansion than with furthering the political ambitions of local Communist parties. Accordingly, in 1935, the Comintern decreed a new international line calling for Communist collaboration in united popular fronts against fascism. The Chinese Communists, hard-pressed by Chiang Kai-shek's repeated "annihilation campaigns," were also seeking a united front with the Kuomintang and "all patriots" against Japan. This was finally realized following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937 and paved the way for rapid Chinese Communist expansion. During the hostilities, the Soviet Union extended considerable military and financial aid to Chiang Kai-shek, even after the latter partially renewed pressure against the Communists.

## Postwar Sino-Soviet Relations

With the intensification of the Communist-Nationalist struggle for power after the war, Stalin apparently misjudged the situation in

<sup>6</sup> See O. Edmund Clubb, *Twentieth Century China*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> The Karakhan Manifesto of 1919 promised to restore to China Russian treaty rights to the Chinese Eastern Railway and some Manchurian mining concessions. This pledge was not carried out, however, until 1952.

<sup>8</sup> *Pu-erh-sai-wei-k'o* (Bolshevik), May 10, 1931, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> See Charles B. McLane, *Soviet Policy and the Chinese Communists, 1931-46*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1958. For the most comprehensive account of Moscow's role in the Chinese revolution, see Robert C. North, *Moscow and the Chinese Communists* (rev. ed.), Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1963.

<sup>10</sup> See Boyd Compton, *Mao's China: Party Reform Documents, 1942-44*, Seattle, 1952, esp. pp. xvi and xxxiv.

China again, reportedly advising the Chinese Communists, in spite of their vastly strengthened position, to settle for half a loaf—in the form of either a Nationalist-Communist coalition government or Communist rule over part of the country. According to Vladimir Dedijer, Tito's biographer, Stalin privately admitted in 1948 that he had erred in giving this advice since Mao defied it and went on to conquer the entire country.<sup>11</sup>

As for Soviet aid to the Chinese Communists in Manchuria, although significant, it was reduced to some extent by Soviet destruction, or removal as war reparations, of an estimated two billion dollars worth of Japanese economic facilities, as well as by other Soviet actions.<sup>12</sup> In short, there is considerable evidence indicating that Stalin would have preferred the establishment of a not-too-powerful Communist buffer state in North China, or even an amenable Nationalist-Communist coalition government, to the emergence of a strong and united Communist China. (No doubt many Soviet leaders would concur in this judgment today.) In any case, it seems evident in the light of the entire history of Soviet relations with the Chinese Communists that the latter triumphed as much in spite of Moscow as thanks to it.

<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito*, New York, 1952, p. 322.

<sup>12</sup> For additional information and commentary on these events, see Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and Moscow*, New York, G. P. Putnam, 1963, p. 245 ff.

Upon assuming power in 1949, however, the Chinese Communists realized that, whatever their grievances on account of past Russian attitudes and actions, their needs and interests could only be served by cooperating with and seeking aid from the Soviet Union. They therefore cultivated close relations with Moscow. Nevertheless, even in the heyday of Sino-Soviet cooperation in the early 1950's, when wholesale "learning from the Soviet experience" was the order of the day in China, there were still occasional signs of something less than complete accord. In early 1950, Mao made his first trip outside China and spent two months in Moscow negotiating with Stalin before the Sino-Soviet defense pact was finally concluded. This protracted negotiation contrasts sharply with the customary brief visits of East European heads of state to Moscow for the same purpose and suggests that there may have been some hard bargaining between the two countries.

Moreover, considering Communist China's enormous needs and the fact that she fought the Korean war at least partly in behalf of the Soviet Union, Soviet aid to China has not been munificent. It totaled perhaps two or three billion dollars, now fully repaid, and the Chinese have complained that they were obliged to buy Russian goods at prices above the world market. The last direct Russian interests in China, in the form of joint stock companies in Manchuria and Sinkiang, were terminated by China in 1954, over Soviet protests.

## Peking on the World Class Struggle

Let us look at the world situation today. The whole world is in the midst of great upheaval, great division, and great transformation under the impact of the deepening class struggle on an international scale. The revolutionary movement of the world people is developing by leaps and bounds, particularly the angry revolutionary flames of the peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America. . . .

At present, imperialism, modern revisionism, and all reactionaries are intensifying their collusion to make counterattacks on the world people's revolutionary movements. But they

are in no way able to stem the tide of the revolutionary movement. . . .

The world today is as Chairman Mao's poem describes: "The four seas are seething, clouds lowering, and waters raging; the five continents are rocked by storm and thunder." A new, great anti-US revolutionary storm is sweeping all over the world. The people's revolution will certainly win, and the future of the world will definitely belong to the people.

—Peking Radio, Domestic Service  
in Mandarin, March 22, 1966.

Since 1956, of course, the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations has become far more evident. Moscow and Peking have differed over an ever-lengthening series of issues—over destalinization and interbloc relations; over the crises in the Formosa straits, the Himalayas, the Near East, Berlin, Southeast Asia, and Cuba; over general Communist policies toward the non-Communist world; and over Sino-Soviet economic and military relations. Inasmuch as these differences spring from the vastly different economic and political needs of the two countries, they should hardly be surprising to Marxist economic determinists. At the same time, the fact that they are rooted in such basically different needs and historical experiences precludes any real solution.

There is also, of course, the question of ideology. In 1950, common doctrinal beliefs were an important basis of the Sino-Soviet alliance. However, as differing needs dictated differing interpretations of the common ideology, this basis was steadily undermined, and the Chinese Communists began to claim for a variety of reasons that Moscow had forfeited its right to lead the communion of true believers. Just as Chinese who compromised Confucianism were once excoriated as heretics and bandits in traditional China, so now, in Peking's view, must all "Marxist revisionists" be purged from Communist ranks everywhere.

The intensity of the polemics between Peking and Moscow is comprehensible only in the light of the great importance which the Chinese Communist leaders place on their own version of Communist ideology. They have devoted literally billions of pages to its propagation since 1949; it is both their religion and the means of maximizing state power. As in Stalin's Russia, there is an equation of the interests of the state with the fulfillment of the ideology. Of course, Maoism is a Chinese version of Communist ideology, which explains its peculiarly anti-Western overtones—this in spite of the fact that Marxism is preeminently a Western doctrine at variance in many respects with traditional Chinese thought. (The Marxist emphasis on "struggle," for example, is diametrically opposed to the Confucian ideal of harmonious compromise in human relations.) Perhaps this fact explains the intensity of the Chinese Communists' stress on ideological indoctrination.

In short, the Chinese view of Marxist ideology and of China's history form an important part of the background of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Knowledge of these Chinese beliefs is a prerequisite for understanding the current differences between the two major Communist powers.

## *China and the United States*

Knowledge of Chinese attitudes regarding the past is equally essential to an understanding of present and future Chinese policies toward the United States and the rest of the world. For, as might be expected, Peking's sense of historical injustice is still directed far more against the United States and other "imperialist" powers than it is against the Soviet Union. Without going into the details of Chinese historiography on the subject of US "imperialism" in China, a brief summary of Chinese Communist representations of America's role will suffice to convey the depth of Chinese feelings on this score.

Voluminous writings by Chinese Communist propagandists and unceasing educational campaigns have painted a distorted picture of American transgressions against China.<sup>13</sup> The United States is associated with the misdeeds of the British, French, Japanese, and other "imperialist" powers from the Opium War of 1840 onward and is alleged to have committed over twenty "major aggressions" against China in its own right. It is claimed that in the 19th century the United States played a leading role, second only to that of Great Britain and Japan, in the economic invasion of China; and that America's celebrated "Open Door" policy, far from having been aimed at curbing the aggression of other powers in Asia, was instead motivated by US ambition to "share in the looting of China." The relatively minor participation of the United States in the suppression of the Taiping (1860) and Boxer (1900) uprisings and allegedly consistent American aid to "reactionary" Chinese regimes in more recent times, from Yuan Shih-kai to Chiang Kai-shek, are cited as proof of US hostility to the cause of popular revolution in China.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Liu Ta-nien, *Mei-Kuo Ch'in-hua Shih* (History of American Aggression against China), Peking, 1951, and *Kung-jen Jih-pao* (Workers' Daily, Tientsin,) Nov. 4, 1960.



These distorted examples from earlier history are supplemented by a much greater volume of propaganda concerning America's alleged "crusade against communism" since World War II. Needless to say, it is the latter—especially, American support of militantly anti-Communist governments in Taiwan, South Korea, and South Viet-Nam—which has dominated Peking's anti-imperialist propaganda since 1949. A typical article in the central party newspaper set forth China's "blood debt" against the United States in these terms:

*United States imperialism is the deadly enemy of the Chinese people. After the second world war, it attempted to turn China into its colony. Not long after the founding of New China, it again staged the aggressive war in Korea, set up military bases around China, and organized military cliques with their spearheads pointed against China, in an attempt to strangle New China in its cradle. United States imperialism fantastically attempted to bring us down by enforcing an economic embargo . . . and is still trying to prevent the restoration of the legal rights of China in the United Nations. . . . United States imperialism still occupies our sacred territory of Taiwan [and continues to carry out aggression in Southeast Asia . . .] Confronted with all these deeds of United States imperialism, the Chinese people can only carry out irreconcilable struggle against it.*<sup>14</sup>

More recently, Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi expanded on this recurring theme in much broader terms:

*US imperialism is the enemy of the Chinese people; it is also the common enemy of the people of the whole world. It is subjecting nearly every country to its threat, control, interference, or aggression, with the aim of attaining world hegemony. For this purpose it has built up the biggest war machine in human history. It has more than 2,200 military bases and installations on foreign soil and has sent over one million aggressor troops abroad. In these circumstances, it is only natural for China, as a socialist country, to resolutely oppose the US imperialist policies of aggression and war and resolutely support all oppressed peoples and*

*nations in their just struggles for freedom and independence. Otherwise she would be betraying her internationalist duty.*<sup>15</sup>

**F**rom all this, it is evident that current Chinese international attitudes and behavior are not simply the product of the impetuous dynamism that characterizes the present early stage of the Chinese Communist revolution; nor are they due solely to Chinese chauvinism. These factors are clearly present, but in addition there is a messianic sense of the struggle of the "exploited" peoples of the world against the "exploiting" powers. Chinese nationalism reinforces Marxism-Leninism in what Peking regards as an international class war of the oppressed nations led by China against the oppressor nations—the "Imperialists" headed by the United States and the "Revisionists" headed by the Soviet Union.

That Peking's interpretation of contemporary history is wildly emotional and often grossly distorted is perhaps not so surprising as it is frightening. A central concept in Chinese philosophy, as in other philosophies, is that to every action there is a reaction. The West believes that it was the Communists who started the chain of actions and reactions of the cold war. The Communists maintain that it was the other way around, contending that the "capitalist" powers inevitably exploit, and that such exploitation begets resistance and class struggle.

In the welter of complex historical strands, it is futile to try to fix the blame for the present complete impasse in Sino-American relations. At the same time, it seems clear that an effort to resolve the deadlock is becoming increasingly urgent, and that one of the prerequisites is a better mutual understanding of recent Asian history. The United States can and should play a role in endeavoring to guide Chinese nationalism into more acceptable channels, but such an endeavor must proceed first of all from an understanding of the historical driving forces behind Chinese belligerence. As for the Chinese, a distorted and unrealistic view of the world brought them disaster in the last century; in the future it could bring disaster to the world.

<sup>14</sup> *Jen-min Jih-pao* (Peking), Jan. 5, 1962.

<sup>15</sup> *Peking Review*, Jan. 7, 1966, p. 5.

# Economics and Politics: III

*EDITORS' NOTE: The article below continues our current series of studies on new economic trends and reforms in the Communist world. Previous installments appeared in the January-February and March-April issues of this year. Studies on Hungary and Yugoslavia, promised for this number, have been delayed but will appear in future issues.*

## Reforms in Bulgaria

By J. F. Brown

**O**n December 4, 1965, the Bulgarian Communist Party daily, *Rabotnichesko delo*, published the party Politburo's long-awaited "Theses" on economic reform. The program that was outlined indicated that Bulgaria was intent on a comprehensive overhaul of its entire system of economic planning and management. Though more cautious in important respects than the various reforms underway in Yugoslavia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, the Bulgarian program was just as dramatic in its impact—especially in the light of certain national conditions and characteristics.

Indeed, it was rather surprising that Bulgaria should have embarked upon a serious economic

reform at all. In the past the regime, led by Todor Zhivkov, had been perhaps the most timid and unimaginative, not to say dogmatic, in the whole of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the Bulgarian economy was still largely undeveloped; as a consequence, it had been able to maintain an impressive rate of growth and was still on the wave of an investment boom.<sup>1</sup> All these factors could have been expected to militate against a reform involving a large measure of decentralization.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, conditions were different. Two of the pioneers of economic reform, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, had highly developed

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<sup>1</sup> Calculations from the Bulgarian Statistical Yearbooks reveal that between 1952 and 1964 the average annual growth rate of the national income was 7.4 percent. The average annual growth rate of industry between 1948 and 1964 was 14.7 percent.