

China's Post-Mao Foreign Policy

By Richard L. Walker

HAROLD C. HINTON. *Three and a Half Powers: The New Balance in Asia*. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1975.

FRANCIS O. WILCOX, Ed. *China and the Great Powers: Relations with the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan*. New York, NY, Praeger, 1974.

GENE T. HSIAO, Ed. *Sino-American Détente and Its Policy Implications*. New York, NY, Praeger, 1974.

JAY TAYLOR. *China and Southeast Asia: Peking's Relations with Revolutionary Movements*. Rev. ed., New York, NY, Praeger, 1976.

ROBERT C. NORTH. *The Foreign Relations of China*. 2nd ed., Encino, CA, Dickenson, 1974.

JOHN GITTINGS. *The World and China, 1922-1972: The Men and Ideas that Shaped Chinese Foreign Policy*. New York, NY, Harper and Row, 1974.

THE GENERATIONAL change in China has come about much more quickly than most of us expected. It was really compressed into less than two years, and although there were clear signs that the struggle for the new mandate of heaven had begun earlier, most outside observers were not really quite prepared for the fact that K'ang Sheng, Chou En-lai, Chu Te, and Mao Tse-tung would die within 10 months of each other and not long after the passing of

Tung Pi-wu. By early 1977, in the wake of the purges that accompanied the consequent power struggles, only two members of the Standing Committee of the 1973 Politburo, Hua Kuo-feng and Yeh Chien-ying, and less than half the members of the Politburo itself were in place. The changes in the top leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have quickly dated some of the painstaking work of that redoubtable band of specialists known as "China-watchers" in the Western world, some of whom apparently expected Mao and Chou to prove immortal.

The flux at the top in Peking leads us to wonder whether it will be possible to discern consistent or predictable features in Chinese foreign policy—especially since the PRC has increasingly been playing a more active role in world affairs and is now enmeshed in a much wider range of transactions around the globe. Dramatic events of the 1970's, such as the Nixon visit to China, have tended to obscure the fact that the PRC has had more than a quarter of a century of experience in dealing with foreign governments. It has conducted regularized diplomacy through embassies and a foreign service corps abroad; it has carried on extensive programs of trade and cultural relations; it has been an active participant in inter-

national conferences; and it has joined various international organizations. With the exception of one brief period during the Cultural Revolution, the personnel engaged in the day-to-day conduct of foreign affairs since the early 1950's have been relatively untouched by the dramatic contests of internal Chinese politics. Thus, to some degree at least, bureaucratic inertia has provided a minimal thread of continuity in Peking's foreign policies.

GIVEN THE GREAT uncertainty as to how China will handle the passing of a generation which has had exclusive hold on the reins of power for so long, and bearing in mind the obvious importance of the PRC in the world balance, it is useful to survey some of the recent literature on Chinese foreign policy for some clues to what are likely to be major features in the post-Mao period.

There is probably no better place to start than with Harold Hinton's survey of the new balance in Asia. This is a readable and judicious presentation of the context within which Peking's most important foreign policy decisions will be made and felt. The first third of the volume deals with the post-World War II period of American paramountcy in East Asia, up to 1969; the second part, comprising the latter two thirds of the

book, analyzes the changing power relations in East and Southeast Asia in the period of a relative Soviet-American strategic balance. Although Hinton covers aspects of Japan's reemergence as a new-style economic giant, the American involvement and defeat in Indochina, and diversity and change in Southeast Asia, China remains at the center of his attention, because he feels that "China will be a significant power in Asia, whether in the rest of the world or not, and that Peking will be in a reasonably good position to play an active role in the international politics of the region" (p. 293). Hinton charts the trends in the post-1969 period toward moderation in Peking's policies and notes the "disincentives" to a bellicose or expansionist stance.

The selection of 1969 as, so to speak, a watershed in Peking's world role is legitimate. It is good to be reminded of the great number of events which came together that year: the Nixon administration entered office and initiated a series of overtures to Peking; the United States also took steps to extricate its military forces from Indochina; Japan's economic power began to be apparent as figures revealed that it had surpassed a number of European countries, including the USSR, in per capita income; the impact of the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia the preceding August was felt in China, especially following armed clashes between Chinese and Soviet military units along the Ussuri River in March 1969 and along the Turkestan border that summer; within China, the Cultural Revolution came to a close.

Policy adjustments attendant upon the events of 1969 culminated in the visit by an American President to China and the re-

sultant Shanghai communiqué of February 28, 1972, pointing toward smoother relations between Peking and Washington. This dramatic turn in the international relations of the Western Pacific led to a number of studies and conferences devoted to analysis of the portents. The small volume edited by Francis O. Wilcox is the result of four China-centered lectures given in 1973 when the euphoria about the new China-US relationship was at its height. Short lecture-essays analyze Peking's relations with the Soviet Union, Japan, and the United States. John G. Stoessinger notes that the forces making for discord and tension between the PRC and the USSR are not easily reversed, and that the relationship between the two Communist powers thus remains central in the evolving pattern of international relations. This observation is reinforced by Edwin O. Reischauer, former US Ambassador to Japan, who concludes that "it is difficult to envisage the development of a dangerous rivalry between China and Japan unless Sino-Soviet relations improve greatly on the one hand, or American-Japanese relations deteriorate seriously on the other" (p. 44). He also feels that Chinese-Japanese relations are unlikely to develop into a meaningful partnership.

If the Sino-Soviet rivalry is one theme which runs through all the volumes under review—and it is—the issue of Taiwan and the problem of the United States security treaty with the Nationalist government there is another. Mike Mansfield, a former member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a long-time admirer of Chinese culture, observes that "until the Taiwan situation is clarified we shall probably find our-

selves looking primarily to trade and other exchanges for the cement of our relations with the new China" (p. 58). He believes that the preponderant focus of attention for the PRC has been and will continue to be the military defense of its own country.

TWO OF THE authors in the Wilcox volume, Stoessinger and Professor Jerome A. Cohen, are contributors to the more important collection of essays edited by Gene T. Hsiao, which is the result of a conference held in June 1973 in Bermuda (thus do China-watchers suffer!). It contains 15 chapters which examine various aspects of the changed structure of relations in Asia and of Chinese foreign policy concerns. Though some of the essays are dated by subsequent events, including the passing of the old guard in Peking, the volume remains a valuable guide to the long-term concerns of the PRC.

Hsiao divides the collection into two parts. The first examines some of the broader issues such as trade, scholarly exchange, media treatment in the PRC, and China's relations with and participation in the United Nations. Veteran reporter Stanley Karnow notes the many impediments to accurate or in-depth coverage of the PRC. He was concerned at the time of writing that American journalists, finally admitted to the Middle Kingdom after so long, would wind up distorting reality by substituting too favorable treatment for the relatively unfavorable treatment which he felt had pervaded the US press in former years, and he cited the journalist Joseph Alsop as an example. Indeed, it is worth recording that China has been neither the fire-breathing dragon portrayed by

many of us in the 1950's and 1960's nor the cuddly panda some observers saw during the euphoric days following the opening to the US. Fortunately, as more contacts between Chinese and Americans have developed, a balance has entered into the reporting. Stephen Uhalley, while warning of "fundamental and enormous political differences between the respective political systems, ways of life, and societal objectives" (p. 84), still held out more optimism for the development of Sino-American scholarly exchange than has proved justified over the intervening years. William R. Feeney maintains that the UN has been an important forum for the articulation of Peking's foreign policy since the PRC was admitted in October 1971 (and the government on Taiwan expelled). While the PRC has frequently had to take stands on issues where it would have preferred an ambiguity, for the most part its representatives have been able to pursue policies which have been of lasting and important interest. These include elimination of the challenge of the Nationalist government on Taiwan by expunging it from past records and voting it out of UN-affiliated bodies, denunciation of the two superpowers, and a bid for Third World leadership.

The second part of the collection deals with more specific relations in the wake of the Sino-American détente. George Ginsburgs observes that the Soviet response was one of balanced and measured, though hardly friendly, caution. Chong-Sik Lee argues that while, as a result of the opening of dialogue between Washington and Peking, the two sides in Korea were brought (and he could have said "temporarily") to the negotiating table, "it is likely to

require a long period of arduous negotiations before the Korean people experience genuine peace and can afford to shed the siege mentality under which they have labored for too long" (p. 205). Though a couple of the essays, such as Kenneth P. Landon's treatment of the Indochina conflict, have been overtaken by events, the general thrust of the volume—that major constraints will be placed on Peking's policies by the realities of the world around China—remains valid.

As Michael Witunski notes in his concluding chapter in the Hsiao volume, by the turn of the century more than 60 per cent of the world's population will be concentrated in Asia. Obviously, then, this is the major area of operation for China, which sits at the continent's heart, and the region could offer fertile ground if the PRC wishes to pursue the policies embodied in the 1965 declaration of support for people's wars by the now-discredited Lin Piao.¹

In this context, the detailed study of PRC policies toward Southeast Asia by Jay Taylor is helpful. His study is likely to remain a standard reference work for appraising the many levels of Chinese relations with the peoples and states of the region—through Overseas Chinese connections, official diplomacy and state-to-state contacts, ties with Communist parties, cadre training programs, visiting delegations, and clandestine electronic communications. Peking has insisted that its official state-level relations are fully in accord with the five principles of peaceful coexistence—that mainstay of official foreign

¹ Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War," released by New China News Agency, Sept. 2, 1965.

policy pronouncements since the Bandung Conference of 1955—but that this does not exclude support for and assistance to the revolutionary movements and insurgencies in Southeast Asia by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Political leaders in the area thus have had difficulty in separating and sorting out, let alone coping with, the various dimensions of relations.

The seeming contradictions in policy are well brought out in Taylor's discussion of PRC relations with Burma and Indonesia. His research highlights the selective nature of Chinese support for revolutionary movements abroad. It would be hard indeed to interpret the choices by Peking in strictly ideological terms, though the Chinese attempt to do so. As Taylor notes, "the primary standard by which the Chinese divide sham from genuine liberation struggles is Peking's own security, prestige, and influence" (p. 389). Increasingly, Peking's view of its own national interest, rather than its vision of some utopian Asian Communist community, dictates its other foreign policy choices too. But, as Taylor warns, to preclude the possibility that some such national-ideological objective might again motivate Chinese behavior would be to commit the mistake of an earlier period when people refused to believe that the leadership around Mao were serious Communists.

EVEN IF Peking were to attempt to bring about a Cultural Revolution-style proletarianization in surrounding areas, there would be great obstacles, for, as Taylor brings out, the political climate is not the same as in former decades. Further, there are the practical restraints on the capabilities

of China itself. The limitations on Peking's capacity to deploy its power and exert influence beyond its borders are the subject of the first part of Robert C. North's treatment of Chinese foreign policy. North's volume, intended as an undergraduate text and an introduction for the intelligent layman, condenses a great amount of material about China into brief scope. He concludes that despite its size and population, "Communist China, in terms of its economy, is still a second-rate power at best" (p. 33). And despite a nuclear capability, he feels, the same can be said about the PRC as a military power. In fact, North would probably retile Hinton's book "Two and Two-Half Powers."

The second part of North's book is devoted to "describing and projecting Chinese Communist foreign policy." His summary of the issues which have concerned Peking for more than two decades is in large part a description of continuing problems for the PRC and of major centers of persistent concern: adjustments with the United States and Japan; contention with the Soviet Union; and active participation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Although only minor changes have been made to update this book since it was first published in 1969 and most of the materials are drawn from the Chinese experiences in foreign affairs before that watershed year, North is able to point toward the major determinants of foreign policy for the future. In his concluding chapter, he gives weight to the Chineseness of that policy, observing:

For the People's Republic of China it appears that political culture, tradition, changes in capabilities,

and conscious choice arising from deep reservoirs of dissatisfaction have all been powerful factors in Chinese behavior. Of these four, capability, tradition, and conscious choice arising from dissatisfaction are still so strong that certain aspects of Chinese policy and behavior would be very likely to continue even if the leadership should substantially change and if specific aspects of the political culture — the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology and style—were to be replaced by something else. (p. 150)

But he also feels that China's foreign policy will be determined by such factors as the need to close the population-technology gap, the concern for access to raw materials, and the adjustment to the new balance of forces in Asia.

One thing is quite clear: Chinese foreign policy does have its own style. Historians have commented on the parallels between foreign policy styles of dynastic times and those of the PRC—secrecy, inaccessibility, guided tourism, internal controls, and exaggerated rhetoric, to name only a few examples. But the style of Peking today is something more. Its perspective has been influenced by Maoist interpretations and behavior patterns, and despite the clear indications that some of the exaggerated claims advanced for the late leader are being revised as his judgment about people, including his last wife, and even about policies is called into question, Peking continues to justify policies and maintain a mystique of infallibility by reference to Mao's interpretations of world forces and trends. This sometimes necessitates distortion and unmaking of facts. Nevertheless, it is important that this in-

gredient, a key factor in PRC perceptions of the world and PRC expectations regarding actions by others, be taken into account.

In this respect, John Gittings' historical summary of the Maoist views on foreign policy is useful. Gittings is an avid admirer of Mao Tse-tung, and this work is sprinkled with characterizations that resemble those that adorned the pages of *Jen-min Jih-pao* during the height of the personality cult: the Chinese leader is "correct," "clear-headed," and "farsighted"; his writings have a "brilliant twist of dialectical skill"; and the nine polemics in reply to the July 14, 1963, "Open Letter" of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,² which Gittings believes bore the stamp of "The Chairman," are a "masterly mixture of crisp invective and cold logic" (they are actually somewhat repetitious and at times downright boring). According to Gittings—and this much is accurate—a key feature in Mao's world view is the Leninist interpretation of imperialism and the resulting perception of China's position as a semicolony. Much of Mao's dynamism stemmed from his commitment to a constant struggle against the forces of imperialism as he perceived them. It is interesting that no attention is given to Lenin's 1920 "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question," yet therein lay the strategy for the semicolonial countries for which Mao was later to receive credit.

Gittings so identifies with Mao's interpretations and with PRC positions it is frequently difficult to determine which are his and which are those of the Chinese.

² *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

He accepts PRC rewriting of such items as the 1936 kidnaping of Chiang Kai-shek, the voluntary repatriation issue in the Korean negotiations in 1952-53, the 1958 offshore islands crisis (which he describes as an American blockade), and the 1965 Gestapu incident in Indonesia (which he characterizes as a "rightwing coup"). And for Gittings, who finds in "Chairman Mao's revolutionary diplomatic line" the "key to our understanding of the inner rationality of Chinese foreign policy in the past and probably in the future as well" (p. 260), naturally the villains of the piece are "American imperialism" and "Soviet revisionism." His is a "devil theory of history" which perceives a "fundamental principal of universalist capitalism which lay behind US foreign policy" (p. 164).

Much of Gittings' presentation

could be dismissed as distorted and in fact downright silly; however, these Maoist interpretations have sunk some roots into the Chinese intellectual soil, and it is important that we understand the sources for arguments which we are likely to confront in years ahead. His book also helps us to appreciate why a number of revisionist historians in the West, where there is a deserved guilt complex over past treatment of China, tend to be admirers of Mao Tse-tung and to accept somewhat uncritically the PRC's world view.

Gittings' emphasis on the Chinese sensitivity to imperialist pressures leads him to the conclusion—surely one of the most provocative theses of his work—that the internal shifts in Peking's policies are in response to external pressures rather than the other way

around. On this score, the authors of the other works under review here would certainly disagree. They too would doubt whether the Chairman's "revolutionary line" is as solidly entrenched in Chinese foreign policy as Gittings believes it is. But it remains a factor deserving our attention, and he has proved himself an able, albeit partisan, analyst.

As Harold Hinton accurately observes, "more than most countries, China in the past has surprised those who have tried to predict its future" (p. 278). Thanks to efforts such as those under review, however, we are in a better position to anticipate major thrusts and to chart important problems and trends in the foreign relations of the world's most populous state than we were for the Soviet Union when the Stalin era ended.

Peking, Southeast Asia, and the Overseas Chinese

By Thak Chaloemtiarana

GARTH ALEXANDER. *The Invisible China*. New York, NY, Macmillan, 1973.

C. P. FITZGERALD. *China and Southeast Asia since 1945*. Camberwell, Longman Australia Pty. Ltd., 1973.

IT IS ONLY in this decade that China has regained much of the prestige and power position she enjoyed prior to the 18th century. The People's Republic today looms

as a superpower, whose proximity is viewed as an overwhelming threat by Southeast Asian countries. Once limited to pursuing influence basically through the promotion of her domestic experience as a panacea for underdevelopment, the PRC is now in a better position to reclaim China's lost hegemony over the area. The countries of Southeast Asia must exercise realism in formulating viable policies to deal

with and accommodate to this recent change in the international order. And no policy toward a strong China can ignore the role and presence of the sizable Overseas, or "Nanyang," Chinese communities in all of these countries. For, unless local leaders pragmatically reassess discriminatory policies and actions rooted in traditional Sinophobia and move to assimilate local Chinese minorities (or the majority in the case of