

Chinese ambitions and British policy

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1. Chinese ambitions

Our only major long term commitment of men and money East of Suez, now that the Aden base is due to be abandoned in 1968, will be in the Far East ; but so far it has been the activities of Indonesia and not those of China that have been primarily responsible for the stationing there of some 54,000 British troops at an estimated cost for 1966-7 of £251 million (almost £50 million more than our expenditure in Germany). Furthermore, the virtual elimination of the Indonesian Communist Party, the ouster of Dr. Subandrio and the decline of President Sukarno give hope that skirmishing in the jungles of Borneo will die down even if the verbal postures of confrontation have to be maintained for a time. This in turn would seem to imply that substantial British withdrawals from the Far East may become possible.

Indeed the Defence Review, published some five months after the abortive Communist coup that has so transformed the Indonesian political scene, states : " As soon as conditions permit, we shall make some reductions in the forces which we keep in the area." But this hopeful remark clearly does not foreshadow the kind of major withdrawal proposed for the Middle East. Unlike Aden, the British bases in Malaysia and Singapore are to be preserved so long as the governments concerned allow us to do so on acceptable conditions.

The Defence Review asserts categorically : " We believe it is right that Britain should continue to maintain a military presence in this area." The clear implication, too, is that the anticipated dangers that are held to justify this policy have nothing to do with Indonesia, for the Defence Review talks in terms of a threat that has not yet arisen: " It is in the Far East and Southern Asia that the greatest danger to peace

may lie in the next decade, and some of our partners in the Commonwealth may be directly threatened." The linking of the Far East and Southern Asia, that is the Indian sub-continent, indicates that China is the shadowy bogey man, for only China conceivably threatens both areas ; and only China is potentially a strong enough power to warrant talk of the " greatest danger to peace " for the next ten years.

There are two implicit justifications in the Defence Review's terse assertion of the rightness of an East of Suez defence policy : Britain has a general responsibility to help keep the peace in South and South-East Asia and a particular responsibility to help defend members of the Commonwealth who may be threatened. But before one can argue either proposition, one must first examine the assumption of potential Chinese bellicosity. If the assumption does not hold water, then the justifications are largely irrelevant.

Chinese bellicosity

The image of Chinese bellicosity is by now firmly imprinted in Western minds. It stems from the Korean war, the Sino-Indian border conflict, the Sino-Soviet dispute over war and peace and China's whole hearted support for the Viet Cong. And underlying all, there is the constant barrage of Peking's propaganda, today unremittingly hostile to the government of every major nation save the mavericks, Pakistan and France. Even in moderately sophisticated circles, there exists the nightmare that an overpopulated China, armed with nuclear weapons, will one day send her hungry millions across her borders into more fertile lands, thus provoking armageddon.

The Chinese Communist vision of the

outside world has unquestionably been shaped by the thought of Mao Tse-tung. This is not to say that Mao imposes his will and ideas, Stalin-style, upon his colleagues. There is no evidence of that. But if one reads Peking's statements on foreign policy and then looks back at the kind of things that Mao has been saying all his life, there is no mistaking the organic links between the two. Any analysis of China's foreign policy must therefore begin with an examination of the forces and events that have shaped the Chinese leader's view of the world.

INFLUENCES ON MAO

The three major influences on Mao were: the condition of China during his formative years; Mao's experience of the Chinese Nationalists; and thirdly, the Chinese Communists' road to power.

formative influences

Mao was born in December 1893, only 18 years before the collapse of an imperial system that had persisted for over two millennia despite the periodic disruption of civil war and economic breakdown. Fifty years earlier, Britain had shattered Chinese isolation from the West in the Opium wars, and thereafter the other imperialist powers, France, Russia, Germany and America, had joined in forcing their way on to Chinese soil, extracting extra-territorial concessions through the unequal treaties. Shortly after Mao's birth, China was humiliated by a new imperialist power, Japan, a country that down the centuries had admired Chinese civilisation and had borrowed heavily from it. China was defeated, even by this "younger brother," and forced to cede Formosa. Japan presented further demands upon China in 1915, and it was

again the Japanese, four years later, who were responsible for the first great explosion of Chinese nationalism. At Versailles they were awarded the former German concessions in China though China had been on the victorious side. On 4 May 1919, spontaneous student riots triggered an upsurge of demonstrations throughout the country and that date gave its name to a movement that represents the birth of modern Chinese nationalism.

The "May Fourth Movement" was not merely the outraged response to 80 years of humiliation at the hands of foreigners. It also embraced wide ranging attempts to adapt Chinese culture to the modern world. For the Chinese intelligentsia, heirs to a centuries' old conviction that Chinese civilisation represented man's finest achievement, the impact of the Western "barbarians" was shattering. Mao, growing up at the turn of the century, had imbibed enough of traditional attitudes to retain an unshakeable belief in the greatness of the Chinese people. But it required his tough flexible mind to combine that self-confidence with the necessarily ruthless rejection of traditional values and the search for new ones in the conquering West.

What Mao and young men like him were looking for above all was the means by which to end imperialist exploitation of China. Edgar Snow in *Red Star over China* reports that Mao, describing his youth, said: "In this period also I began to have a certain amount of political consciousness, especially after I read a pamphlet telling of the dismemberment of China. I remember even now that this pamphlet opened with the sentence: 'Alas, China will be subjugated!' It told of Japan's occupation of Korea and Formosa, of the loss of suzerainty in Indo-China, Burma and elsewhere. After I read this

I felt depressed about the future of my country and began to realise it was the duty of all the people to save it."

For many patriotic youths of the May Fourth generation, Lenin's theory of imperialism came like a revelation. Prior to 1917, few Chinese intellectuals had bothered with Marxism because it had so little to say about underdeveloped countries. The Bolshevik revolution aroused some interest because it showed how revolutionary intellectuals could seize power, a crucial problem in a China carved up by warlords. But it was in the anti-imperialist upsurge after 4 May 1919, that more and more of the intelligentsia turned to a Russia now speaking a language that was music to their ears. The Soviet government proclaimed its intention, still unfulfilled, of renouncing all Tsarist gains at the expense of China and there was a surge of popular enthusiasm in China. Here for Mao was the right ally and above all the right doctrine in the struggle against imperialism. He joined the Chinese Communist Party as a founder member in 1921.

Twenty-eight years later, Mao set up the People's Republic in Peking. During the intervening years, his views on imperialism had been hardened by the support, however half-hearted, given by the Americans to the Chinese Nationalists during the civil war. A few months before the victory parade in Peking, Mao wrote: "Imperialist aggression shattered the Chinese dream of learning from the West. The Chinese wondered why the teachers always practised aggression against their pupils. America wanted to enslave the whole world and she aided Chiang Kai-shek with arms to slaughter the Chinese. To sit on a fence is impossible not only in China but also in the world without exception. One either leans to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism."

Today, over 16 years later, these are still Mao's views. Anti-imperialism is still the basic factor in Mao's emotional make-up and it colours his whole view of the world. Underlying the bitterness of the Chinese polemics when they attack Russia's attitude towards America is the fact that for Mao imperialism is a national and a personal experience. The Russians may be anti-imperialist, but historically the colonisers never the colonised, they can never match the Chinese fervour.

In 1949 when Mao came to power, the world fitted relatively neatly his two camps stereotype. The cold war was at its height; NATO was being formed; Communist revolts had been started in Burma, Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia apparently at the orders of Moscow; and in Indo-China, Ho Chi Minh was at war with the French. In a year the Korean war was to begin and further lessen any chances of reconciliation between Washington and Peking though the war itself was the fault of neither. Later there was a short period, roughly 1955-7, when Chinese hostility towards the outside world and the West in particular seemed to diminish. Stalin was dead, the Korean and Indo-China wars were over, China needed a breathing space as she began her five year plans. Premier Chou En-lai suggested Sino-American talks and they started in the summer of 1955. Peking appealed to Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists on Formosa to rejoin the motherland and be forgiven.

By the end of 1957 it was clear that this policy was not paying off. Neither the Nationalists nor the Americans seemed likely to respond in the way Peking wanted. The basic anti-imperialist direction of Chinese foreign policy was resumed, encouraged by the growth of Soviet power. This was the year of the first Soviet ballistic missile tests and,

most important, the year the first Soviet sputnik was sent into orbit. The Soviet Union, it seemed to Mao, had now decisively overtaken the United States in military hardware and when he went to the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the Bolshevik revolution in November 1957, he enunciated his famous slogan about the east wind prevailing over the west wind. Mao's objective was simple: he wanted the Soviet Union to use its new military superiority to back far more militant policies towards the West. If Communist powers were not militant, the West would attempt "come-backs," as at Suez. There was no danger of the West daring to resist Communist militancy.

The Russians did not accept Mao's analysis of the decisive superiority of the Communist bloc and certainly were not prepared to take the risk of nuclear conflict with America, and from this basic disagreement over policy towards imperialism the Sino-Soviet dispute developed. The Chinese have considered that Moscow is pursuing a policy disastrous for world Communism and a rank betrayal of China's national interests. The Camp David discussions were seen in Peking as an attempt by the Russians to settle their disputes with the Americans while ignoring China's legitimate demands upon the US in the Far East; the partial test ban treaty confirmed China's fears that Russia was determined to freeze her out of the nuclear club. For Mao it has been a shattering experience to realise that the ally he chose 40 years ago in the struggle against imperialism has by his standards gone "revisionist" and sold out to the Americans. The anti-Soviet utterances coming out of Peking are often bitterer than the anti-American ones though it hardly seems possible. Most recently Peking has been accusing the Soviet Union of trying to form a "holy alliance" with America to surround China. Whatever

Soviet intentions, it seems certain that Mao has decided that China will have to take on both America and Russia. There is no indication that the prospect dismays him.

attitude towards the "Third World"

The second major factor in Mao's background that has significant implications for his foreign policy attitudes is his experience with the Chinese Nationalists during the twenties. At that time the Chinese Communist party was under Soviet direction and Stalin ordered it to co-operate fully with the Nationalists and to accept their leadership. Stalin thought that the party of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek was the only organisation capable of uniting China quickly and he was keen that they should succeed so that the Soviet Union might have a strong ally to protect her Far Eastern territories against possible Japanese attack. His long range intention was that the Chinese Communists should take over the victorious Nationalists from within. Unfortunately for Stalin's plans and for the Chinese Communists, Chiang Kai-shek was well aware of the likely direction of Soviet policy and in 1927 he turned upon his Communist allies and decimated the party. This experience had a decisive impact on Mao's thinking and I believe that since then Mao has never been prepared in the last analysis to trust the good faith of any non-Communist leader in the "third world," such as Nehru and Nasser.

When the Chinese Communists came to power, the implications of the then accepted Soviet two-camps theory was that leaders such as Sukarno and U Nu should be dubbed "running dogs of imperialism" and there is no indication that Mao found this uncongenial. Indeed at one particularly low period in

Sino-Egyptian relations, Nasser was specifically compared to Chiang Kai-shek. But here again, as in the case of policy towards the West, there was an interval during which a new line was tried. This was the high point of Afro-Asian friendship symbolised by the Bandung conference in 1955. The Chinese had perhaps been impressed by the neutrality of countries like India during the Korean war, and Chou En-lai's success in charming his fellow delegates at Bandung seems to have encouraged Peking to adopt new attitudes in Asia. This "Bandung line" of cordiality towards the whole "third world" did not long survive the return to militancy in policy towards the West. The suppression of the Tibetan revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959 disenchanted a number of Buddhist countries of Asia that Chou had visited, while the start of the border dispute with India in the same year opened a rift between the two countries which has grown steadily wider. Relations with Jakarta deteriorated about this time over the question of the overseas Chinese resident in Indonesia, though later matters improved when Peking perforce accepted what the Indonesians had done.

The Chinese have not returned to the blanket condemnation of all bourgeois nationalist leaders of their early days in power. They are quite prepared for friendly relations with a country which is pro-Chinese like Cambodia or, until recently, Indonesia or a country which is determinedly neutral such as Burma. But their underlying attitude towards all "third world" regimes is one of suspicion and this has been another source of conflict with the Soviet Union. The Russians are prepared to woo all "third world" nations with aid and trade, even traditionally hostile ones like Persia and Turkey. The Chinese feel this will lead to repetitions of Chiang's 1927 coup

—recent developments in Indonesia must have confirmed them in this view—and they are particularly incensed that the Soviet Union should continue to aid and even sell arms to India after she had become China's enemy.

the road to power

The third major influence on Mao, the mode of his ascent to power, is linked with the last. Because of Chiang's coup and his continuing efforts to wipe out the Communist party, Mao's road to power was not as Stalin had hoped a process of gradual and peaceful take-over from within. The victory of 1949 came only after over 20 years of almost continuous fighting with the Nationalists. This is why, today, Mao rejects any suggestion by the Russians that a Communist revolution can be successful without the use of violence.

The Russians allege that the general complexion of Chinese foreign policy, compounded as it is of bellicose anti-imperialism, fundamental disapproval of "third world" leaders, and a belief in the inevitability of violent revolution, can only lead to war, and very probably nuclear war and the total destruction of world civilisation. They accuse Mao of stupidly under-rating the destructive power of nuclear weapons. Now it is true that Mao and his colleagues, as the first generation leaders of a young revolution are more militant than the Russians. It is true that they say that local wars and "wars of national liberation" as in Vietnam are inevitable. It is true that they say this is nothing to worry about because the imperialists will not dare to launch a nuclear war and if they do they will be wiped out and Communism will inherit the earth. And it is probably true that the Chinese are readier to risk world war because they have less to

lose. But one cannot leave matters there; one must recall the other lesson which Mao also learned from his road to power, the value of caution.

Most of the fighting the Communists engaged in during their struggle for power was on guerrilla lines, and the fundamental tenet of Mao's writings on military matters is that you never attack a superior enemy for that is adventurism, which is what the Chinese dubbed Khrushchev's decision to put missiles into Cuba. There are many formulations in Mao's works that illustrate his basic caution: despise the enemy strategically, but respect him tactically; abide by the principles of justifiability, immediacy and restraint; arrange one's forces to be sure of victory; make truces before the enemy can strike back.

One can trace the application of these principles in Korea and on the Indian border. Consequently when Mao proclaims that the United States and her atomic weapons are paper tigers he does not mean, as the Russians seem to imply, that he is anxious to start a war with America. Despising the enemy strategically means that he believes in the inevitable triumph of the revolution and, more precisely, that in particular revolutionary situations like Vietnam, the Americans will not use their nuclear weapons and will eventually be defeated. But this is not to say that Mao fails to recognise the devastating effect that a nuclear attack would have even on an underdeveloped country like China. He conceivably may believe that China with her vast, village-based population could survive a nuclear war better than most great powers, but China's behaviour on her borders—in Vietnam and the Formosa Strait—indicates more certainly than her words, Mao's caution when directly confronted with American military might. He is not about to provoke a Sino-American conflict.

In sum then, Mao has been conditioned by his experience to have a deep hatred of imperialism, to suspect all non-Communist "third world" leaders, and to believe in violence tempered with caution. Nor should there be any doubt as to the significance for Mao of his personal experience. His overall foreign policy strategy, as recently enunciated by Defence Minister Lin Piao is simply the transference to the world scene of the Maoist formula for victory in China: capture the countryside and surround the cities. On the global scale, the countryside is the "third world" of the underdeveloped countries whose peoples (the peasantry) are ripe for revolution if suitably led. The cities are the developed countries of the West and possibly one day soon will include Russia too. Mao believes that as Communist revolutions gradually achieve success in the underdeveloped world, the West will become more and more isolated and will eventually be overrun with ease. What does this global strategy imply for that part of the world countryside which is the direct concern of Britain's East of Suez policy?

2. implications for Chinese policy

Clearly China's national interests are far more intimately involved in the Far East and Southern Asia than elsewhere in the "countryside" and therefore she is more deeply concerned by anything that happens here; clearly also since this is on China's doorstep, here Peking is at its most cautious.

China's aims in this area are first and foremost—restoration of all the former Chinese territories lost during the time of imperialist encroachment. This is why the Chinese walked into Tibet; all Chinese, Nationalist or Communist, rightly or wrongly, believe that Tibet is part of China. Outer Mongolia occupies a similar place in the minds of Chinese of Mao's generation, and he indicated to a delegation of Japanese Socialists in 1964 that he regarded it as being under Soviet domination rather than independent. Perhaps Mao hopes that Outer Mongolia will freely rejoin the motherland. It is also clear that China's present leaders are not happy with Soviet retention of territory which the Tzars lopped off north-east and north-west China during the nineteenth century; but they have stated they are prepared to regard the "unequal treaties" which assigned them to Russia as a basis for negotiation.

On the issue of Formosa, Mao is not prepared to compromise; like Chiang he regards the island as an integral part of China and he sees the interposition of the us Seventh Fleet as a humiliating carry-over from the days of gunboat diplomacy. But as the offshore islands crisis of 1958 showed, Mao is far too cautious to attempt to recover this territory in the face of US armed force. Hong Kong and Portugal's Macao have been listed by Peking as Chinese territories whose status will be discussed when conditions are ripe. The Indian border also falls within the restoration area. They believe they have

the better claims to the Aksai Chin section of Ladakh and a large section of India's North-East Frontier Agency; their bargaining power seems to be that they will recognise the McMahon line and so give up their claim in NEFA if the Indians will recognise China's title to Aksai Chin.

Outside the restoration area lies what one might call China's former suzerainty area, mainly South-East Asia and Korea. This is an area which traditionally accepted China as its dominant politico-cultural centre, though the relationship was normally a very loose one. Local monarchs would send tribute missions to the Chinese Emperor, or they might seek his official blessing on their dynasty, especially if they had just seized the throne. The Chinese would like to see a revival of this habit of looking respectfully towards China as the natural centre of the area, preferably to have these countries behaving on the present Cambodian pattern, strongly anti-American and pro-Chinese. Albeit Cambodia's princely ruler is no Communist, the Chinese are quite happy to leave him alone and let the Cambodian revolution take what they believe will be its inevitable course. The Indian-protected border kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim are Tibetan in culture and these, too, the Chinese regard as rightfully part of their sphere of influence and only illegitimately part of India's. Nepal's studied neutralism they seem prepared to accept.

Japan occupies an odd position on the fringes of the former suzerainty area. While they were always independent of Chinese control, the Japanese, too, looked towards China and borrowed heavily from her civilisation. Perhaps elder brother-younger brother is the correct description of the relationship which prevailed and which the Chinese would like to see restored.

Finally, there is the area which might be called, from China's viewpoint, outer Asia, embracing those countries with which Peking had little relationship in former times, for the purposes of our East of Suez policy, this would include the Indian subcontinent and Australasia. Australia and New Zealand are clearly counted among the world's "cities," countries which will probably only succumb to Communism at the last. They figure in Chinese thinking in short range terms as minor allies whose support the US calls on in time of trouble in South-East Asia. India and Pakistan are far more central in the Chinese scheme of things. China clearly sees India as her principal indigenous rival and enemy in Asia. Peking would like to see democracy collapse in India in order to have it demonstrated that such a system is viable in the continent, and in general see India weak economically and militarily. Her friendship with India's enemy Pakistan is simply the converse of this, a marriage of convenience on both sides.

restoration areas

Two general propositions can be stated about how China proposes to secure the restoration of her lost territories, the recovery of her lost influence, and the undermining of India. First, Mao does not think in terms of the aggressive use of force, *even in the absence of countervailing American power*, except in the case of the "restoration" area, and not necessarily even there. There is no indication in Mao's writings that he would like to set up a satellite empire in the way the Soviet Union did in Eastern Europe. Mao's attitude can be explained in two ways. Traditionally, an indigenous Chinese dynasty did not go out to conquer territory, but was content to allow tributary leaders considerable independence. Much of

the outer territory of present-day China, Sinkiang and Tibet for instance, was conquered when China herself was under alien rule, and usually in response to attacks by warlike nomads on the frontiers. Looking at it in more contemporary terms, the evidence suggests Mao genuinely believes that revolution cannot be exported. His own unhappy experience of Soviet meddling in the Chinese revolution is presumably the basis for this conviction. The operational consequences are that the imposition of revolution abroad by force of Chinese arms would be counter-productive in the long run. An opportunity for China to impose satellite status occurred in North Korea but was not taken. At the end of the Korean war, the Chinese army was the dominant force in the North and could have been kept there on the pretext of constant danger of attack by the South. Russia having been prepared to see China do all the fighting in Korea could hardly have objected if Peking had taken over Moscow's pre-war dominating role in the country. But the Chinese army was withdrawn, and North Korea maintains a sort of Rumanian-style neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Secondly, while Mao believes in violent revolution, he sees China's role in subversion abroad as essentially a passive one. In other words, if there are indigenous Communist revolutionaries anywhere, he would be glad, other things being equal, to give them advice, training, and material support if they want them. But there is little evidence to suggest that the Chinese are interested in actively trying to initiate or mastermind subversion abroad. The distinction may seem unimportant to a country undergoing subversion, but it does serve to underline that its main problem is to eliminate the breeding ground for unrest at home and then foreign interference can be ignored. The Thai "free-

dom" groups set up in Peking in the past 18 months are not an indication, in my opinion, that China proposes to go all out to subvert Thailand; any hope of that is illusory unless the few rebels actually working in north-east Thailand have greater success than hitherto. Peking is using this as a diplomatic threat to shake Thai friendship with America; it is a weak threat and the Thais should know it.

In the "restoration" area, China would certainly use force to recover Formosa if she were not deterred by American power. Not only does Peking consider the island an integral part of China; it is also sheltering an avowed enemy whose continued existence means that Mao has not yet won the final victory in the civil war. Hong Kong is a different matter. China evidently values it as a valuable listening post and contact point in the Western camp as well as an important source of foreign exchange. On present showing China is in no hurry to get this territory back before the lease on the New Territories ends in 1997. If she were determined to recover it "spontaneous riots" could probably be arranged which might be impossible to control.

On the Indian border, China seems content with possessing Aksai Chin and the vital road across it into Tibet. The Chinese invasion of India's North-East Frontier Agency in 1962 seems to have been a major effort to settle the border question once and for all by showing Delhi that India had no chance of recovering the disputed section of Ladakh. During the summer of 1962, Mr Nehru and the then Defence Minister, Mr Krishna Menon, were making tough statements about driving China out of Indian territory; believing attack to be the best method of defence, the Chinese decided to teach the Indians a lesson. In terms of *Realpolitik* it was an effec-

tive move, for the chances that India will now take on China in a showdown over the border seem remote. This being so, China is unlikely to go beyond propaganda and encouragement of the left-wing splinter group of the Indian Communist party. But if Pakistan had been beaten in last autumn's war, China would have felt compelled to intervene. As it was Peking was quite happy to get away with issuing ultimatums to Delhi.

suzerainty area

In the area of former suzerainty the first priority is obviously the elimination of Western and particularly American influence. In the face of American power and given Mao's views on how revolution spreads, China has to use the weapons of aid, trade and diplomacy to further her aims. If there is an indigenous national liberation struggle as in South Vietnam, the Chinese are firm supporters and will provide what material assistance they can. But they would be unlikely to intervene unless America sets out to destroy North Vietnam, lock, stock and barrel, for intervention would not only expose them to devastating US retaliation, it would also write finis to China's countryside and cities theory. For if revolution is to sweep through the "third world," it must show its ability to win by itself against all odds. If China were to intervene it would mean that national liberation struggles cannot invariably succeed unsupported by foreign arms if America is prepared to help resist them. There is no evidence to suggest that China is in any sense calling the tune in the war in Vietnam. Clearly Peking strongly approves of the waging of this national liberation struggle. But if the Vietnamese Communists decided tomorrow that they had had enough, the Chinese might well express strong dis-

approval, but they would not be able to stop them going to the conference table and certainly would not consider taking over in the North as a means of preventing peace negotiations. One cannot regard China's support for the present war as indicative of Chinese control, and therefore Chinese verbal bellicosity on this issue cannot be used as grounds for East of Suez policy decisions designed to cope with China. This war is a Vietnamese war.

In South-East Asia as a whole, there is one factor which seriously complicates Chinese diplomacy: the presence in these countries of commercially important Chinese minorities. During a trip I made round the area in 1960 to see whether these powerful groups were in any sense fifth columns, I found that overseas Chinese everywhere, except possibly Thailand, nearly always considered themselves Chinese. In effect these Chinese are still living in the colonial era when the rulers were uninterested in their nationality. Today with nationalism rising in the newly independent countries, the Chinese will have to assimilate or emigrate as events in Indonesia have shown. The government in Peking has naturally shown great sympathy for the plight of the Chinese in those countries with which it has relations. It protested strongly at the actions of the Indonesian government in 1960, but its powerlessness in that case underlined the inevitability of its earlier decision to advise overseas Chinese to conform to their country of residence. The overseas Chinese are in fact something of a nuisance from the point of view of Peking's national and revolutionary aims. Any suggestion that overseas Chinese are involved in a local Communist movement can only weaken its appeal to the indigenous population, a factor which the British exploited in suppressing the largely Chinese Malayan Communist Party's insurgency.

Malaysia is of course a special case because in Malaya itself the Chinese form about 40 per cent of the population. It was Malay fear of domination by local Chinese that led first to the formation of Malaysia and then to the expulsion of Singapore, which is, in effect, a Chinese city state. But I do not believe that the relatively high proportion of Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore will mean that Peking's policy towards these overseas Chinese will be fundamentally different from that towards overseas Chinese communities elsewhere. If there is to be Communist insurgency in these two states, it will again be locally led and will again feed on local problems. While China might well give clandestine support, she would move with particular caution in this case to avoid arousing fears throughout the rest of the area.

outer Asia

In "outer Asia," while China would like to see the collapse of the present Indian regime, this objective will not lead Mao to consider contemplating an attack on India. The overthrow of Indian democracy, his whole experience tells him, must be organised by the Indian Communist party or it cannot succeed. He will attempt to isolate India diplomatically—by settling China's borders with other Asian states, he has endeavoured to show that it is India that is being unreasonable on the Sino-Indian frontier—and he will support Pakistani hostility towards India. But while China may now be called upon to supply some arms to her ally, I think it unlikely that she will encourage Pakistan to reopen the conflict. Any new war would probably become a fight to the end and China might well find herself dragged in and exposed then to the danger of American and perhaps even Soviet retaliation.

3. China and the West

China's acquisition of nuclear weapons and, eventually, ballistic missiles could change the basic situation, but China will only consider herself free to act when she is strong enough to hit America decisively with nuclear weapons; until then, and it almost certainly will take place after the end of the single decade under examination in the Defence Review, it would be suicidal for China to provoke American nuclear attack by using her own nuclear weapons in Asia.

More important, I believe that the suggestion itself is based on a misconception of why China wants nuclear weapons and a misunderstanding of Chinese verbal bellicosity. Mao's virulent anti-imperialist propaganda is a product of China's past humiliations and a reflection, too, of his failure, as a result of American intervention, to effect the restoration of China's former territory and the re-establishment of Chinese pre-eminence in Asia. He is determined to achieve some form of nuclear weapons parity with the US because he believes that only then will Washington listen to his demands and, more deeply, because he assumes that China ought to be a super power and knows that in the contemporary world she will never achieve that status without a full-scale nuclear armoury. These aims are rational ones and Mao is well aware that it would be irrational to think in terms of achieving them by nuclear war which would probably destroy the territories he seeks to recover or influence, even if he really believes China would in some sense survive.

food problems

China's agriculture has done badly in recent years, partly as a result of bad weather, partly because of mismanagement. But China, unlike India, is basic-

ally capable of feeding even her giant population, given average luck and the more sensible approach to agriculture which Peking is now adopting. The invention of the loop and the perfection of better crop strains give China an even greater chance of handling her population and food balance. And if the worst comes to the worst, there are still vast wastelands within China capable of cultivation by the industrious Chinese peasantry. It seems that hunger is unlikely to drive China to expansionism, especially when in time of troubles she can replenish some of her losses with purchases from Canada and Australia.

fear of Chinese expansionism

In sum, if the basis of Britain's East of Suez policy is fear of Chinese expansionism, then I believe the fear to be mistaken. If the basis is fear of Chinese subversion then the troops are facing the wrong way; the danger lies within and indeed is not even fundamentally a military danger to be combated with foreign troops. The problems are political, social and economic and will have to be solved by indigenous governments. It may be argued that things look different on the spot, in the potential firing lines, and perhaps Western troops do perform the function of boosting morale. Yet at the same time they give a sense of false confidence and obscure the real issues and the urgency for their solution. Surely Britain would be better advised to start withdrawing her troops from Asia and spend a good proportion of the money saved on economic aid to the area. Fortunately, the economic problems of most countries in Asia are not as serious as those of India, Pakistan or China herself.

Unhappily Britain can do very little about the larger problem of overall

Chinese hostility towards the West. The basic confrontation is Sino-American and even a Gaullist Britain could do little to defuse it. The crucial problem is Formosa and what the people of that island will want to do after Chiang Kai-shek's death. Britain can work towards getting China awarded the Security Council seat now occupied by the Nationalists; fortunately the climate of opinion on this matter is slowly changing in America. The actual acceptance of Communist China as one of the UN big five permanent members of the security council would go some way towards satisfying Peking's drive towards super power status. But even if the Formosa and UN problems were solved to China's satisfaction and Western military forces began to be withdrawn from Asia, it would still take time for Peking's revolutionary aims to die down. For Mao and his immediate successors, the former imperialists will always be the enemy. Perhaps a third generation of leaders, the young Chinese of today whose lack of revolutionary vigour appals Mao, will help begin a more lasting reconciliation between China and the West.

fabian society the author

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