

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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MIDDLE EAST TURMOIL

The most recent outbreak of fighting in the Middle East has been halted, however temporarily, by a ceasefire imposed on the combatants by the superpowers. We now embark on the next phase of 'no war, no peace'. China's talk of superpower duplicity and collusion may have infuriated the Russians, but it has evoked a sympathetic response from many countries of the Third World and echoes have been heard even in some Western countries. Contradictions abound in the Middle East—Israelis and Palestinians, bourgeois Arab leaders and feudal Arab leaders, Palestinian resistance movements and Arab governments, to mention but three—but China has emphasised that the main cause of the present situation is U.S.-Soviet contention and collusion. To understand the origins of the struggle we must remind ourselves of how imperialism brought about the Middle East problem.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 promised the Jews a national home in Palestine at a time when the Jewish population of the area was less than 10 per cent of the total—and not all the Jews were Zionists. The familiar tactic of imperialism—divide and rule—set Arabs and Jews, who had been living in peace, at each other's throats. Some Jewish leaders took advantage of the Declaration and demanded not merely a home but a *state*, to be set up on land inhabited for centuries by Palestinian Arabs. A greater provocation can scarcely be imagined and the reply to it was fierce and bloody. Imperialism had drawn up the battle lines.

European fascism now greatly increased the number of Jews looking to Palestine, not just as a home, but as a refuge from Nazi terror. Palestinians, angered by the stream that became a flood, fought to hold the old Palestine, while Jews, many misled by leaders who likened Arab leaders to Hitler's stormtroopers, strengthened their determination to gain sovereignty over Palestine. Early Zionism could not have succeeded without the support of British imperialism; today Israel relies on the U.S., which has replaced Britain as the dominant Western imperialism.

U.S. AMBITIONS

U.S. involvement in the Middle East is part of her global strategy and her moves there are inevitably affected by her commitments and requirements elsewhere. Her defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese people has forced her to reappraise her tactics, and now her foothold in the Middle East is a useful bargaining position for her more restricted imperialist policy. Naturally she hopes that the present restrictions will not be permanent, for her ambitions, as always with imperialism, are unbounded.

The growing threat from the rival superpower has also been a major factor in her Middle East policy. She has been worried by Soviet successes in the Indian subcontinent and now sees Soviet penetration in the Mediterranean at a time when the U.S. administration is under pressure at home to reduce military commitments in Europe and so yield further ground to the

Soviet Union. The more recent threat of a disastrous oil shortage means that the U.S. cannot consider pulling out of the Middle East. On the contrary, imperialist logic requires her to increase her influence and penetration in the region. It is rumoured that recent army manoeuvres have been a rehearsal for taking over an oil state. If the rumours are true they indicate the kind of influence the U.S. is seeking.

SOVIET OBJECTIVES

Nor is the Russian interest in the Middle East any more altruistic; their aim is to strengthen their position as a superpower. With the withdrawal of Britain and France from the area in the early 1950s there was an upsurge of popular movements which soon toppled the fragile pro-Western governments that had been installed. The U.S.S.R. became very popular and did not neglect the opportunity to cultivate the new rulers. Since 1955, when she negotiated a generous arms deal with the Egyptians, the Soviet Union, under new leaders, has sought to reduce Arab dependence on the West, not with the intention of assisting the struggle for independence but rather to ensure their dependence on the U.S.S.R. With projects like the Aswan Dam the Russians whittled away the West's influence and were able to extend their own military presence to new fields. While there are still, officially, no Soviet bases in Egypt, airstrips are available to the Soviet air force. Her main strategic objective was access to the Suez Canal, which would enable her to patrol the Indian Ocean from Black Sea bases and increase the mobility of her growing Mediterranean fleet.

The Middle East dispute has enabled the U.S.S.R. to consolidate her position. Of course this has not been done without difficulty; she has enemies in the Arab world and Pan-Arabism such as that of Colonel Gaddafi aims to strengthen Arab unity in the face of Soviet imperialism. Further Russian penetration into the Middle East requires that the conflict should not be solved; Israel must always exist as a threat to the Arab world. Any peaceful solution would reduce Arab need for Soviet assistance and bring nearer the day when the Soviet presence will be expelled from the area.

In the carefully balanced scheme of Soviet-U.S. collusion and contention a period of 'no war, no peace' clearly has a place. Wars, provided they can be limited, are accepted, but they must never endanger superpower policies nor, of course, must they be revolutionary in character. Direct confrontation of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. must be avoided, though their pawns may perish in wars that are permanently inconclusive.

Such a situation can never lead to the restoration of the Palestinians' rights. Attempts to offer, to those driven from their homeland by the creation of Israel, a rump state consisting of Gaza and the East Bank of the Jordan, will fail. Such sops will not buy off the expropriated Palestinians. Any solution put forward by the superpowers is now suspect.

Closing his speech to the Security Council on October 23rd,

Chiao Kuan-hua expressed the outlook for the future very succinctly:

Fundamentally speaking, the days are gone when the two superpowers could manipulate and dominate the affairs of the world. Neither one superpower nor the two superpowers combined can impose their will on the people of the world, on the Third World countries and other member-states of the Security Council. The Arab and Palestinian peoples are politically conscious people with a strong will. Tested and tempered in the struggle against aggression over the past years and in the recent days, they will still less docilely allow themselves to be manipulated and duped by the two superpowers. The 700 million Chinese people and the numerous Third World countries and people, as well as all those upholding justice, sympathise with and support them. So long as the national rights of the Palestinian people are

not restored and the lost territories of the Arab countries are not recovered, there can be no lasting peace in the Middle East. The heroic Arab and Palestinian people will certainly draw the necessary lessons from what the two superpowers have done, continue to break through the situation of 'no war, no peace' which the two superpowers try to reimpose on them, continue their persistent struggle, enhance their unity, act independently and on their own initiative, ceaselessly strengthen themselves, surmount all kinds of obstructions and difficulties and carry on the struggle against aggression. The great Arab people will certainly win liberation.

The present oil crisis in the West shows that the Arabs are by no means without possibilities for hitting back at the imperialists and that their unity is growing.

CHINA'S VOICE AT UNITED NATIONS

On October 2 Chiao Kuan-hua, Chairman of the Chinese Delegation to the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations and Vice-Foreign Minister, addressed the General Assembly. His speech is of such importance, and sets out China's views and policies so comprehensively and clearly, that we give below a fairly full summary of the first three of its ten sections, using Chiao Kuan-hua's own words as far as possible.

The sections not summarised are headed: the Cambodian question, the Korean question, the question of Bangla Desh, the Middle East question, the question of opposing colonialism, the question of opposing maritime hegemony, and the question of disarmament. The speech was printed in full in Peking Review of October 5.

1. What is the characteristic of the present world situation?

The world is going through a great process of turbulence, division and realignment. The basic contradictions are sharpening, especially that between imperialism and colonialism on the one hand and the oppressed nations and peoples on the other, and that among the imperialist countries, especially the two superpowers. Since World War II local wars resulting from imperialist aggression have never ceased. The victory of the Vietnamese people has once again proved that imperialists and all reactionaries are paper tigers. A weak nation can defeat a strong one; imperialism fears the people; and revolution is the main trend in the world today.

The end of the Vietnam war does not mean that now the world will be tranquil. There is still fighting in Cambodia, tension in the Middle East has not relaxed, colonialists and racists are forcibly suppressing the African people, and superpower interference in Africa, Asia and Latin America is continuing. The coup d'etat in Chile is an example. President Allende died a martyr at his post and we express our condolences, but one must not forget how harmful the absurd theory of 'peaceful transition' is to revolutionary struggles. To dismember a sovereign state by armed force and to legalise and perpetuate the division has also become a tendency on the part of the big powers in their attempt to dominate the world.

In the economic field the gap is widening between the rich and poor countries and there are many contradictions even among the developed countries. The Algiers conference of non-aligned countries strongly condemned racism, Zionism, colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism, showing a further awakening of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples.

In a word, we consider the present situation one of great disorder and not tranquillity. The main trend is that countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution.

2. Why is there no tranquility in the world today?

All countries should be equal. All countries, irrespective of social system, should establish state relations on the basis of the Five Principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. International disputes should be settled on the basis of these principles, without the threat of force. This should apply to relations between big powers, between big and small powers, and even more between a strong and a weak or a rich and a poor country. On this basis China started to improve her relations with the U.S. and established diplomatic relations with Japan. In the Shanghai communique China and the U.S. declared they would not seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and were opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony. The same principle was expressed in the Sino-Japanese statement when diplomatic relations were established. In our view these are the minimum criteria for equality in international relations and indicate the correct way to relax international tension.

As sovereign states, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are fully entitled to take measures they deem appropriate to improve and develop their bilateral relations. However, the agreement between them on the prevention of nuclear war goes far beyond the scope of bilateral relations. Who has given them the right to enter into 'urgent consultations' in case of a dispute between either of the parties and other countries, and even between any other two countries? Does not this mean that they may interfere at will on the strength of their huge numbers of nuclear weapons? China will not go begging for protection, nor is she afraid of nuclear threat. We state our views on this matter because it concerns all the people of the world.

This argument between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. is based on the 'principle' agreed between them in 1972, that the two countries have 'security interests based on the principle of equality'. Put bluntly, this means rivalry for world hegemony.

In fact the agreement contains no explicit undertaking on the non-use of nuclear weapons, still less on their prohibition and destruction. As the U.S. Government said, the agreement did not involve any particular positive actions.

However, the Soviet leaders said the agreement ushered in 'a new era' in international relations, opening up 'historical vistas for strengthening universal security as a whole'. This recalls Khrushchev's remark about the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., that 'if any madman wanted war, we would but have to shake our fingers to warn him off'. Thus, if the two countries could be bound together, would not the whole world have to cringe to them? In our view, things will not necessarily turn out that way.

COMMUNES' SOCIALIST ROAD

It is not easy for the U.S.S.R. to bind herself to the U.S. In spite of the agreement the desperate struggle for nuclear superiority and world hegemony still goes on. Their contention now extends over the whole world, as is proved by the recent subversion of a government in Asia and another in South America. This is why there is no tranquillity in the world today. This is a travesty of peaceful coexistence; the substance is coexistence in rivalry. Can such coexistence last?

The Soviet leaders claim the Soviet Union is the 'natural and surest ally' of the developing countries. In the past some Chinese believed this, but after Khrushchev came to power direct experience proved that the Soviet Union practised not internationalism but great-power chauvinism, national egoism and territorial expansionism. History shows that a socialist can turn into an imperialist and if people can change, so can a state.

Lenin's saying, 'We judge a person not by what he says or thinks of himself but by his actions', applies to a state as well. This is clear to the masses of Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Pakistan, Cambodia and to others who have been subjected to interference. Soviet actions show that the government is 'socialist in words, imperialist in deeds', in Lenin's phrase.

The Soviet-U.S. agreement cannot hoodwink many or intimidate the peoples. The tide is mounting against the hegemonism and power politics of the superpowers.

3. Who is really against detente?

Europe is the focus of contention between the two superpowers and the conference on security and cooperation in Europe, advocated by the Soviet Government for many years, is just one of the forms of contention. However, it has gone far beyond the limits to which the superpowers wished to confine it. Many countries have said that deeds and not empty promises are called for; that European security must be based on safeguarding national independence; that one must not relax one's guard simply because of the conference; and that military blocs should be ended and foreign bases and troops withdrawn, so that relations can be based on mutual respect for independence and sovereignty, complete equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. Some have pointed out that there can be no security for Europe while the Mediterranean is subject to the armed threat of, and contention by, the superpowers. This is a direct blow at those who seek, through the conference, to consolidate the occupation of many European countries, following World War II, and to proceed further to disintegrate Western Europe and dominate the whole of Europe. The conference is still going on and, judging from its first stage, will further expose that superpower.

The Soviet Union calls for relaxation while stepping up her war preparations and her contention with the U.S. To this end she has recently revived the idea of the 'Asian collective security system'. This is an amusing reminder of Dulles and his Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation. Has his ghost gone to the Kremlin? Would it not be less devious simply to expand the Warsaw Pact to Asia?

Recently the Soviet leaders have tried to label China an 'opponent of detente'. If you are so anxious to relax world tension, why not withdraw your armed forces from Czechoslovakia or the People's Republic of Mongolia and return the four northern islands to Japan?

We hold that imperialism means war. There is danger of war as long as imperialism exists. Today, when the basic contradictions of the world are sharpening, the danger of a new world war still exists and the people must be prepared and not misled by the temporary and superficial facade of detente. Only thus can we strive for a bright future. In the final analysis, the destiny of mankind is decided by the people in their hundreds of millions who persevere in struggle and unity, and not by one or two superpowers.

China is one of the developing countries, and nowhere is this more evident than in the pattern of her agriculture. Agriculture is the predominant occupation, relying, up to the present, more on manpower than on mechanisation. Modern industry is still a relatively small sector of the economy, even with the advances made since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. The distinguishing feature of China's development is that it has been sustained and not halted. Foreign trade has played a part in it, but foreign debt is a thing of the past. Thus China is often quoted as the first example of a country of the Third World reaching a position of self-sustaining growth.

China's economic base is socialist in the sense that private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, but this does not exclude small family allotments in the communes. There are still producers' cooperatives, which are not fully socialist either. The flexibility of Chinese planning has in fact resulted in a great variety of systems of production, administration and remuneration. The organisation of a relatively poor commune will be different from that of a prosperous one, but—and this is an important point—success does not bring Chinese farming nearer to Western methods; it increases the difference between them. In the model Tachai brigade, for instance, the reckoning and allocation of work points for individuals is considered of minor importance, private plots do not exist (they were 'too much trouble'), even the new houses are built in the form of terraces rather than the separate structures traditional in China. Individualism is disappearing; the individual flourishes.

STATE AND COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP

The great bulk of Chinese industry is owned by the state or by local authorities, that is, by the whole people. In the countryside, on the other hand, the land is *collectively* owned and the farms are run by the peasants themselves (apart from some state farms). It is the collective responsibility of the peasant owners, organised in People's Communes, to produce or procure what is needed for agricultural production and for consumption—such things as seed, fertiliser and some mechanical equipment. State aid is available if necessary but the communes try to do without it and the need for it is decreasing. The commune administration allocates the labour force for agriculture as well as for such long-term projects as water conservation and irrigation, and for such social services as education, health and security. It distributes income, pays taxes to the state and ensures delivery of the crop quota. It develops local industry for its own needs and those of neighbouring communes and, in fact, carries out all the duties of local government. The communes, on the basis of collective ownership, combine the functions of political administration and production.

'Taking agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor' means that the communes are the very basis of China's development, which makes their variety and independence seem all the more remarkable. Local industries of many kinds have been growing to serve both agriculture and local consumption, thus laying the foundation for widespread mechanisation and general industrialisation. But in China development does not mean urbanisation; here again the path being followed is the opposite of the Western one. Not only do the communes become acquainted with industrial work, by having industries of their own, sometimes remarkably efficient, but they constantly see larger industrial establishments springing up in or near their own area. In this sense there are no 'development areas' in China; the whole country is one.

This is illustrated by the Chiyiling People's Commune in Honan Province, Central China, a long account of which has recently been put out by the New China News Agency. This can hardly be said to be a typical commune, for it is more prosperous than the average and, situated in a traditionally cotton-growing area, has largely—and eccentrically, conservatives might say—turned to the production of food grains. On the other hand, it is not possible to find a commune in China which does not have very special features. Singularities are an element of the typical.

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

With a population of 50,000 and 6,000 hectares (14,800 acres) of farmland, this commune has 38 production brigades, each centred on a village, and 298 production teams under the brigades. It draws up its production plans to comply with state plans and in accordance with the circumstances of each production brigade and team. Work is guided by the elected 32-member Revolutionary Committee, which is itself under the leadership of the Communist Party Committee. The Revolutionary Committee is responsible for all areas of work: politics and ideology, agriculture, industry, trade, education, health, finance, the militia. The basic task of the Committee, as of the Party Committee, is political and ideological education in all fields, to consolidate the socialist position of the collective and the state, to deepen understanding of class struggle; in other words, to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat.

COMMUNE INDUSTRY

Light industry has been established through self-reliance, without asking the state for financial or other help. Its purpose is to assist agriculture and raise the standard of living of the peasants. It includes small factories which repair and even make farm machinery, produce chemical fertiliser and process grain and cotton. Some factories are run by the commune, others by a brigade. For example, one brigade, which has 34 production teams, runs a tractor station with eight tractors, a farm tools repair workshop, a flour mill and a brick and tile works. In addition it has a pig farm and an orchard.

The whole commune has 48 tractors, six trucks, 947 engines of various kinds and 500 motors in addition to pumps, threshers and other farm machines. Now 90 per cent of the land is tractor-ploughed, transport and processing are largely mechanised, and the commune has carried out vast schemes of irrigation, drainage and pest control. In its early years the commune had to rely on the state for food grain. In the last seven years, however, the owners have sold to the state an annual average of 2,200 tons of surplus grain and 1,500 tons of cotton.

THE NEW PROLETARIANS

Not only has the commune raised its production substantially and widely diversified its economy, improving the standard of living of the peasants, but it has changed the character of the producers. Peasants are becoming at the same time workers, a new proletariat. They have become technicians, teachers, health workers, local government administrators, but they have not ceased to be peasants. They take part in farm work and in scientific experiment to solve current problems and raise production.

Success in agriculture and light industry, as exemplified in the Chiyiling Commune, has contributed to the development of national heavy industry. While local initiative has largely provided seed, fertiliser, farm tools, building materials and some

equipment, the heavy machinery essential for large-scale mechanisation has come from state enterprises. These enterprises in their turn have been helped by the development of commune industry and agriculture. Though the percentage of their crops paid to the state in the form of taxation has decreased as production has increased, the surpluses available for sale to the state are much greater than they were, and provide additional funds for industrial and other development.

The advance of China's economy demonstrates the success of the policy of 'walking on two legs'. Industry and agriculture depend on each other; the success of one is the condition for success of the other. And this structural unity is growing with the development of a peasant-proletariat engaged in rural industry, pointing the way, in the long perspective, to the abolition of the antithesis between town and country.

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In connection with the above, the following passages from Capitalism and After, by George Thomson, are apposite.

'... the function of collective ownership is to provide a bridge between private and state ownership.

'In this way it becomes possible to resolve the contradictions, inherited from the old society, between the two classes united in the worker-peasant alliance. The proletariat has never had any interest in private ownership; he has been associated from the beginning with the development of large-scale industry; and therefore, having seized state power, he is fully prepared subjectively for state ownership. The peasant, on the other hand, is a small proprietor, still attached to a pre-capitalist mode of production; he has still to learn that small-scale production has no future; and therefore, though he has supported the proletariat in the struggle against the landlords, he has done so with the aim of preserving his status as a small proprietor. Consequently, if his alliance with the proletariat is to be maintained and consolidated, he must be given the opportunity of making a step-by-step advance from private to state ownership. . . .'

With the full development of collective ownership in agriculture and of state ownership in industry, the socialisation of the means of production may be regarded as complete. Later, with the industrialisation of agriculture and the proletarianisation of the peasantry, collective ownership will merge into state ownership, or ownership by the whole people, which is the higher form:

'Both collective ownership and ownership by the whole people are socialist ownership; but the latter is more advanced than the former, because the state, representing the whole people, can directly make a unified and rational distribution of the means of production and the products of enterprises owned by the whole people according to the requirements of the national economy as a whole, while this cannot be done by enterprises run under collective ownership, including the existing people's communes.'

(Peking Review, No. 43, 1958)

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