

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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1949-1974: the Revolution in the Concept of the Chinese Scholar

The Chinese people, while happily celebrating their 25th anniversary, are going ever more deeply into their criticism of Lin Piao and Confucian ideology. Both workers and peasants are learning to study some important and relevant classical writings and are digging into their own minds, the unconscious store of beliefs, ideas and habits handed down from time immemorial. For the first time they have become acutely aware of how deeply Confucian ideology is still embedded in their own mental make-up 25 years after they seized political power. Thus they have especially deep cause for rejoicing in their celebration. Now they are liberating their minds from the forces of reaction in order to build a new socialist super-structure.

To appreciate the nature of the struggle going on inside China, not only now but during the last 25 years, it is necessary to grasp the root of the problem, the power and strength of the pillars of the old super-structure, the scholar-officials.

The traditional Confucian scholar-official

In former times the Chinese character *shih* had many related meanings: a scholar, a learned official; a man who could take responsibilities, well versed in ancient and contemporary affairs, who could distinguish between right and wrong. It could also mean various kinds of government official.

It is possible to interpret the ideograph *shih* as having meant originally that a man's qualities go from one to ten, thus forming a complete whole, or, conversely, as representing the concentration of ten into one, again completion or perfection.

As when studying most Chinese traditional ideas, habits and customs, one has to turn to Confucius (551-479 BC). Confucius' students numbered some 3,000, of whom 72 were close to him. The content of their education was the Six Classics: the Books of Changes, History, Poetry, Rites, Music, and the Spring and Autumn Annals, all edited by Confucius himself. The principles of his system were to train men to be excellent in writing, good in conduct, loyal to their masters (emperors, feudal lords), and fair dealing with equals. The overriding aim was to train a man well versed in the classics, but disciplined by the *Rites* (see 'Confucius and Confucianism', BROADSHEET, June 1974), so that he would not deviate from the true path, i.e. would not rebel.

Who could become scholars and officials?

China used to enjoy the reputation of having the oldest and most democratic system of education in the world, leading to

entry into the imperial service through examinations which required decades of concentrated study of the classics of all periods. Obviously only those with leisure and money could attempt to study.

But there was an even more fundamental barrier which kept the overwhelming majority from entering the gate to the long avenue of arduous learning, leading eventually to the Hall of Scholastic Achievement. The student Fan Chi asked Confucius about learning to grow grain, but the Master said he was not a farmer; asked about how to grow vegetables, he said he was not a market gardener. When Fan Chi went out Confucius said to some other students: 'What a small man, poor Fan Chi!'

In Confucius' cosmology, everything on earth was decided by Heaven, including the status of human beings:

Those born with knowledge are the highest; those who have gained knowledge by studying come next; those who learn with difficulty by hard work are lower down; those who have to work very hard to learn anything, but are too lazy to learn, are base material.

He considered that only

the most intelligent and the most stupid could not be changed, as their nature was ordained by heaven. It therefore followed that:

The superior man is concerned only with principles and not with livelihood; the tiller of land must inevitably suffer from hunger caused by natural calamities, but in studying the scholar has the prospect of becoming an official.

Political and social conditions in Confucius' time were turbulent, outstanding features of the period being the decline of the slave-owning class, the rise of the land-owning class, and the accompanying peasant revolts. Confucius lamented that:

The *Rites* have collapsed and music has been debased. He therefore devoted his whole life to training students for the work of 'restoring the Rites'. This was purely and simply an attempt to turn history backwards.

Mencius (372-289 BC) further developed Confucius' principles and ideas. He stated categorically that:

Those who work with their minds rule over people; those who toil with their sinews are ruled over.

Thus for nearly 25 centuries 'study well in order to become an official' has been the ambition of almost every Chinese, for himself, his sons and his grandsons. If his particular branch of the clan had no sons, the brightest boy in the whole clan

With this double issue we warmly greet the 25th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Each year since 1949 has seen achievements which have brought happiness, prosperity and political advance to the people of China and which have been the foundation for the steady growth of China's prestige throughout the world. The manner and method of these achievements are of universal significance and in this issue it has been our aim to bring out some of the important features of China's policies during the period. We wish the Chinese people further triumphs in building socialism in the years to come.

would be encouraged to study, and supported financially by the clan so that it could enjoy the glory and power of having a scholar-official, one of the *literati*. Even the poorest and most wretched farm-labourer or urban beggar knew the saying:

All ten thousand occupations are base, only study is supreme.

The nature of the Confucian scholar

This tiny minority of scholars, pale-faced, long finger-nailed, long gowned, monopolised learning and the ruling bureaucracy at all levels from imperial ministers right down to village level for almost 25 centuries, despite the fact that, dynasty after dynasty, they met with opposition. Such opponents included, in particular, the Taoist school, thanks to whose influence Chinese science and technology were far ahead of the West for hundreds or even thousands of years (see J. Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*), and the Legalist scholars who stood for progress and improvements demanded by the conditions of their time.

The Confucian scholar was trained to support the status quo and authority, of which he was himself part, against the common people, the poor and ignorant, but he also feared them and their revolts. He was trained to be reactionary and to fear new things.

The question of knowledge or action

In the long history of the Confucian scholar-gentry-bureaucracy the question arose again and again as to which was more important to the Empire—the scholar's writings or his actions; and which was easier and which should come first, knowing or doing. Both views had advocates. The earliest refutation of the Confucian theory of learning came from Hsun Kuang (3rd century BC), an eminent Confucian scholar who broke with orthodoxy and became an outstanding Legalist. He said:

Not hearing is not as good as hearing; hearing is not as good as seeing; seeing is not as good as knowing; but knowing is not as good as practising. Only when study is put into practice is it accomplished.

Those who have studied and put their learning into practice can be called scholars.

The wisdom of the so-called sage is the sum total accumulation of all mankind.

These questions became urgent after 1840 when China suffered defeats and immeasurable losses in wars imposed by imperialist powers. The common people were enraged and tried to fight back; the literati-bureaucrats felt humiliated that the ancient, heaven-ordained Confucian Empire should be so bullied by the barbarians. A new idea arose: Confucian scholarship-knowledge is not enough; we need to supplement it with Western science and technology to prepare for future action. Many students were sent abroad to study scientific and technological subjects. The imperial examination system was abolished in 1906, and modern schools on Western, especially American, patterns were introduced.

The new westernised bourgeois intellectuals

Students returning from imperialist countries, having specialised in scientific and technological subjects, with M.A., M.Sc., or Ph.D. after their names, wore smart Western suits and ties and often spoke foreign languages as a sign of superiority. They were 'higher intellectuals'; their mental attitude was very close to that of their western counterparts; in fact they were bourgeois intellectuals.

The ambition of every boy from a petty-bourgeois family was to go abroad. Sometimes this involved great difficulties for the family, and one result of such study abroad was often the break-up of traditional family life. These new elites, however learned in their Western textbooks, did not soil their hands or mix with the wretched, ignorant working people any more than the old scholar-elite had done; they could not answer the country's need and did no more than fill government offices and positions in higher education, drawing high salaries.

The Revolution which under Sun Yat-sen's leadership overthrew the Manchu (Ching) dynasty in 1911 can be regarded as one of the most important results of the debates on knowledge and action—but it failed completely to solve any problems. Another answer was offered by the 1919 May Fourth Movement: this time, foreign imperialism directly stirred the students and many 'higher intellectuals' to actions of protest, in which they were joined by industrial workers and many merchants. One of the most significant slogans of the movement was 'Down with the Confucian shop!'. The campaign to point out and publicise the reactionary nature of Confucius' teachings was led by Lu Hsun.

Mao Tse-tung's philosophy of education and the revolution of the scholar-official

From the very beginning of his work in the Chinese Revolution, Mao Tse-tung was actively concerned with helping the peasants to educate themselves as the conditions demanded and as his work at the Canton Peasant Institute in 1925-26 and in Hunan in 1926-7 shows. But it was in Yen-an from 1935 onwards that his education programme became a mighty force embracing millions of peasants and workers, and also intellectuals who braved Chiang Kai-shek's blockade to get there from all over China, everyone learning and everyone teaching at the same time. It was 'do-it-yourself' and collective education, *servicing proletarian politics and combined with productive labour*. In Practice, Yen-an education led to the successful production of all the material necessities in the liberated areas and created revolutionaries to carry on the war of resistance against Japanese aggression and against Chiang's 'exterminate the Red bandits' military campaign.

When the People's Government was established in 1949, Mao Tse-tung's philosophical line remained the same as in the Yen-an period. But because the task of providing education for the illiterate 85% of the population was so gigantic, China had to rely on Soviet help. The consequences were serious. Soviet-type elitist bureaucrats replaced the capitalist type of bourgeois intellectuals. Children from worker, peasant and soldier families were virtually barred from entering schools and colleges, or were forced to leave because they could not cope with the burden imposed by the old dogmatic, destructive cramming methods and examination system. There was a popular saying about those who stayed to finish the college course:

After the first year he's a native intellectual; after the second he's a foreigner; after the third he doesn't recognise his father and mother.

It was a question of 'red' vs. 'expert', and for a time the 'expert' faction nearly won, as shown by the struggle during the 'Hundred Flowers' period. This 'expert' was not basically different from the old 'scholar-official' in his political outlook; he remained a member of an elite, divorced from and looking down on the masses, thus perpetuating the gap between mental and manual workers.

But in the countryside the peasants were gaining experience and confidence in their own collective labour through the struggle to form bigger agricultural units. Urban industrial workers were growing in proletarian consciousness and in power. Since 1949 they had been learning to read and write. During the socialist transformation of industry and commerce (1956) they gained experience in struggle against the capitalists. Now in the year of the Great Leap Forward thousands upon thousands were in part-study-part-production schools. Schools and colleges set up workshops and farms, as well as sending students to work in the countryside. Whether in factories or on farms, these young people became aware of their productive ability and their legitimate rights in the new society. Most important, both the peasants and workers were learning about Chairman Mao's teachings and were ready to take part in any struggle.

The struggle between the two lines

Should the elite, whether of the Confucian, Western or Moscow type, control the country or should the working people 'be educated to develop morally, intellectually and physically' and become 'productive labourers with socialist consciousness and culture' (*Mao Tse-tung, 1957*)? Once these people, comprising 90 per cent of the population, had attained these goals, the whole of China's political and social fabric would change. The bourgeoisie as a class had been overthrown but its ideology persisted, and would for a long time to come, raising its head in different guises. However, the latent power of the new generation was fast showing itself and most significant of all were the converging demands of those in schools and those in productive labour. So the Cultural Revolution was sparked off among students; throughout the Revolution the Red Guards were at its centre and eventually they became the object of their own Revolution.

In 1966 the Chinese Communist Party issued a vitally important directive by Chairman Mao (*The May 7 Directive*) on educational principles, i.e. that workers, peasants, soldiers, students and others, in addition to their main work should also learn to work in other fields: agriculture, industry, military training, as well as politics and culture. This would serve a dual purpose—both developing socialist society and nurturing new socialist men and women to carry on the proletarian revolutionary cause and serve the interests of the proletariat, not only of China but of all nations.

As struggle, criticism and transformation in the Cultural Revolution developed, it was discovered how deeply entrenched were reactionary ideas, manifesting themselves in covert or overt opposition to Mao Tse-tung's line. Examples were the opposition to educated youth going to the countryside and to the 'May 7' cadre schools, as well as the revival of the Confucian idea of people being ordained by Heaven to be brilliant or stupid. It was necessary, therefore, for the masses to study Marxist classics and Mao Tse-tung Thought so that they would have a weapon to analyse the history of struggles between reactionary and progressive forces and link them up with their present struggles. This is the present movement for criticising Lin Piao and Confucius and this is why the Chinese people are training a contingent of theoretical workers from peasants, workers and the People's Liberation Army. These theoretical workers are studying Confucian Classics from the standpoint of Mao Tse-tung Thought.

Socialist men and women in the making

Thus in China today factories and mines run colleges, schools or classes: schools and colleges have factories or workshops and farms or vegetable gardens; the Army reclaims land from desert and swamp and runs State farms as well as helping peasants in time of need. The army men and women too are studying Marxism and relevant Confucian classics and fighting against reactionary ideology. Communes and production brigades run schools and factories of various sizes. Schools and colleges, factories and communes form regular links with one another for mutual help in production and for training personnel.

School-leavers, unless health or special family reasons prevent them, 'go down' to the countryside or factory or the armed forces for at least two years to integrate themselves with workers, peasants and soldiers and to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants as the first generation of educated peasants. Only then can they be eligible for selection by their workmates to go on to higher education. The institutions of higher education are under a leadership which includes the working class. Graduates go back to industry or countryside and resume their worker or peasant status. 1974 saw the first batch of such university graduates of worker-peasant-soldier origin. Three or four years of higher education, Mao Tse-tung's 'open door' education, not only gave them specialist training, but also consolidated their proletarian consciousness.

Back in factories or communes they are warmly welcomed by the rank and file and many have been elected cadres. They are in government at various levels but continue in the three revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. They are 'red and expert', yet fully integrated with the workers and peasants. This is indeed a far cry from the concept of the scholar-gentry-official which lasted for 25 centuries before 1949.

In this way the scholar of the Confucian type—'his four limbs do not function and he cannot recognise the five grains' (a contemporary description of Confucius)—is at long last disappearing.

Many college graduates going to work in the countryside settle there, making full use of their training and helping to raise the cultural and technical level of the peasants, and learning from them at the same time to change their own thinking and world outlook. Similarly, government and institutional personnel all take turns to go to May 7 Cadre Schools. There they build their own houses, bring new land into cultivation, grow food, help the peasants, do other forms of manual work and study politics. Through this process they get rid of bureaucratic attitudes and re-orientate their thinking. The self-important 'official' becomes a working man or woman, serving the people and the socialist cause.

In China today it is very difficult to tell from somebody's appearance, speech or behaviour what his or her occupation is.

The significance of the present struggle

The working people are becoming more experienced in class analysis; it will be more and more difficult for future revisionists to deceive them. Their study of the history of the struggle between Confucianism and the Legalist School of thought makes 'the ancient serve the present' and prepares the ground for further revolutionary changes in education, the fundamental element in the superstructure. The rooting out of their own traditional Confucianism frees their minds from age-old restrictive conventions, thus enabling them to carry on the proletarian revolution and lead in building a socialist society, especially its superstructure. Chairman Mao has warned the Chinese people that in the long historical period of socialist transition, classes and their ideologies will continue, and so will class struggle. But from each struggle the revolutionary forces gain strength.

The study of the revolutionary changes, during the last 25 years, in the concept of the Chinese scholar-official, is the study of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, which has been in constant and fierce struggle with the reactionary line for nearly half a century. The balance of forces has been changing all the time. Those Chinese who left China about 1949 realise with a shock of joy, on revisiting their homeland, that they can no longer see the old familiar sights. The visitors are lost in the new surroundings and find neither the scholar-official full of arrogance nor the downtrodden, dirty, ignorant and starving masses. The new China is full of vigour and creative activity, determination and confidence. This revolutionary transformation is possible only because Mao Tse-tung understands and trusts the masses and has integrated himself with them.

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TWO REVOLUTIONS

October 1949 was a very different date from November 1917. Liberation in China was the culmination of more than twenty years of reflection, study and experiment in all aspects of warfare and of the economic, social and political problems lying before a socialist nation. When the new government was established, they knew what had to be done. The Bolsheviks seized power in the midst of a desperate crisis, with no time for thought—and a belief in the imminence of a European revolution which turned out to be mistaken.

In China, the time has come now to mow down the remnants of Confucianism to make way for a thoroughly socialist morality, but we must not forget that it was Chinese political philosophy which brought one of the great civilisations of antiquity down to

the twentieth century. Confucian teaching could not be dismissed till there was an equally broad and equally subtle system of thought to take its place, while Stalin could only substitute one kind of obscurantism for another.

The enormous achievements of the last twenty-five years have been the unfolding of policies conceived before Liberation, swinging a bit to the right and to the left from time to time, but never far from a central line of development. The thought of Mao Tse-tung is not a philosophy made up in one man's mind and handed down from on high. 'Where do correct ideas come from? . . . They come from social practice.' Mao's thought has been successful because he knew how to find the responding chord in his people.

In the economic sphere, Mao Tse-tung insists upon the primacy of the

relationships of production over technology. Stalin, in the desperate rush to build up heavy industry, had to impose a crushing burden on the Russian economy and, for that reason, had to rely on an authoritarian system of command. This became built in to the Soviet industrial system, and attempts at relaxation do not have much effect. For China, the quarrel with Khrushchev was a blessing in disguise, for when the Russian technicians left, Chinese industry threw off the influence of their teaching and found the way to develop technology within relations of production suited to Mao's concept of socialism.

For the Third World, Chinese agricultural and social policy has most to offer, but for the West, the greatest fascination and amazement is caused by the spectacle of highly sophisticated modern industrial technology being developed under the slogan: Combat egoism and eschew privilege.

JOAN ROBINSON

TRADE IS POLITICS

China before 1949 provided one of the world's most pitiful examples of distortion of trade by plunder from without and profligacy within. By far the heaviest responsibility for this is borne by the British, who pioneered the China trade and occupied the leading place in it for over a century, during which they fostered and eventually enforced the debilitating import of opium from India and submerged every attempt to develop a rational pattern of trade or a cohesive, instead of fragmented, market. Japan and the United States then took over, adding new dimensions to China's exploitation as a colonial trading area. By the late 'forties when the revolutionary forces issued their final challenge to the corrupt, luxury-corroded and degenerate Kuomintang government which had become nothing but a client régime of the United States, foreign trade was a hideous burden on the economy instead of a source of strength. The import of luxuries and non-essentials completely swamped the export trade and, together with systematic falsification of the accounts of foreign transactions and a substantial flight of capital, contributed to the chaotic hyper-inflation that preceded the People's Republic.

The most stable currency

The stabilisation of the currency—in fact the creation, as it was to turn out, of the most stable currency in the world—was one of the key moves in transforming foreign trade from a drain into a powerful nationalised arm of the economy. Even before this, trade, like production, had recovered from the low point of 1949 and had been doubled again in 1951. The steady climb since then has had to take in its stride obstacles such as the Western embargo on 'strategic' exports (at its height from 1951 to 1958) and subsequent restrictions on the import of Chinese goods (from 1959 onwards, and now likely to be intensified by the operation of the European Common Market). The story of the twenty-year American trade black-out of China and of more transient cut-offs by Japan and various other countries subjected to American pressure may be traced

in BROADSHEET, along with the gradual demonstration by the Chinese of a completely new attitude to foreign trade and aid, in part prompted by the negative example of the Soviet Union, and now recognised as a specific socialist contribution to the solution of problems facing the world in the closing decades of the twentieth century. This is the strategy of self-reliance, which does not reject either trade or aid but insists that both should be used to increase, rather than reduce, a country's ability to pursue an independent course and if necessary make do without drawing on outside resources.

Aid repaid politically

How China herself uses trade to develop self-reliance was described in *The Truth about the China Trade* in our January issue this year. Trade is the supply of goods and services against payment. Aid is the supply of services and goods without repayment, or on substantially deferred repayment. In practice China's trade tends towards a situation of two-way balance, with imports requiring exports. In the case of aid, however, China regards her economic and technical support as required by the political gain for the Third World as a whole of the recipient country's increased self-reliance and independence of superpower control.

Trade and aid mingle nevertheless, and several comments can now be made on misconceptions about Chinese policy generally in this field.

It is not only capitalists who swing from one pole to the other in their assessment of China. Self-declared lefts and radicals do the same. At one moment they are indignant with the Chinese for getting involved in the web of inter-state relations and trade; then the wind changes and they upbraid them for harping on the virtues of self-reliance instead of accepting the need for interdependence. It is almost as if when the capitalists are persuaded that relations with China should be stepped up, the intelligentsia of the left conclude that they

have already gone too far, and vice versa: two arms of a weather-vane.

This shows itself in attitudes to development aid. China is alternately at fault for being seen near such a rat-race and for not entering it more dramatically. This comes of focusing on the parameters of actual projects, instead of on what they set off in the way of self-sustaining development. Totting up how much each donor has given in hardware or cash, or even in training of operatives, for development projects in the Third World is thinly-disguised imperialism. Development in the true sense of the word is relatively seldom seen, and is really more a new stage of social consciousness in which the people go over to the initiative than a transformation scene in which they are forced to get out of the way of heavy machines. Chinese aid, pitched in the very subdued key of 'What we can do, you can do', lacks the glamour of big mechanised schemes and is not understood by the sponsors of such projects, or by some of their clients. In fact nothing could be more natural than that aid by one developing country to another should aim to spark-off indigenous development rather than provide an imported substitute. The purpose of aid, as of trade, should be to stimulate development, not provide an alternative means of meeting the needs of either partner.

The bourgeois theory of international trade based on the principle of concentrating on the things in which you have the 'greatest comparative advantage', lures a country on to ever narrower specialisation. 'The international division of labour', the planned-economy variant of the bourgeois principle, while it does not progressively narrow down the range of production, curtails it at the outset. Both systems are imperialist, as they make developing countries increasingly dependent on others for vital production, which in a dual-superpower world means that every country ultimately depends on one of the superpowers.

In the Middle East the 'aid' arm of Chinese economic strategy was repeatedly directed towards equipping cotton-growing countries for the first time with spinning, weaving, dyeing and printing mills so that they no longer had to export cotton in order to import their own clothes. Then the trade arm came into play to purchase large regular tonnages of surplus raw cotton for use in Chinese industry. This now provides one of the main outlets for Middle East cotton. Thus, in a quite unspectacular way an economic relationship is transformed by limited aid and the resulting situation turned into a basis for long-term trade.

Complex patterns

When people talk about China's trade they usually mean China's trade with *them*. They are prepared to take in at the same time the position in Chinese trade with Japan—her principal partner, accounting for some £625m imports and £550m exports a year—and with Western Germany—for long the second largest partner, accounting now for £145m imports, though only £75m exports, a year. But the complex web of trade with a hundred other partners—some more important than Britain and some less—too often remains unprobed. It is true that foreign trade is a less important part of the economy in China than in any other country, yet nothing could be further from the truth than the idea that it is humdrum or without drama. Even with those East European countries who have condemned Chinese economic policy lock, stock and barrel there is a sizeable turnover of business every year. In return for Chinese ready-made clothing, fresh fruit, frozen meat, metal concentrates and other raw materials the Soviet Union supplies passenger aircraft, lorries, generating plant, timber and miscellaneous industrial equipment, to the tune of £60m a year each way. A few other Comecon countries keep to the back seats in these bitter-sweet exchanges, but not so Romania, which not only does more trade with China than Britain does, but has not been too vain to seek and receive substantial development aid from Chinese industry in recent years.

For a while in the 50s China was doing 80 per cent of her trade with the planned-economy countries and only 20 per cent with the free-economy area. By far the greater part of the 80 per cent was trade with the Soviet Union. This was a mistake. Today the Chinese make no bones about the improvidence of becoming as dependent as that on another country, even if only in one sector of the economy or administration. Such a situation opens the way to blackmail and coercion, both of which the Soviet leaders attempted in 1960 when China refused to fall in line with their plans. Subsequently the trade ratio has shifted the other way round: 20 per cent with the planned-economy countries and 80 per cent with the free-economy area. Is this not equally dangerous?

The free-economy area is not a bloc, or even several blocs. There are blocs within it, like N.A.T.O. the E.E.C. and so on, but it also contains a lot of independent capitalist countries in the 'second intermediate zone', as well as the Third World. If we look at the 80 per cent of Chinese trade done with free-economy partners, we find that rather less than a fifth of it (largely commodity business at present) is with a superpower, the United States; a third is with Japan; another quarter is with the other countries of the 'second intermediate zone' including Britain and the E.E.C., Canada, Australia and the neutrals; and the remainder is with Third World countries (i.e. other than those in the planned-economy sector).

This pattern is no more fixed than the previous one. Both the distribution and the composition of foreign trade change constantly in the hands of a people's government carrying through a social revolution. Despite all the excitement about snowballing Chinese contracts in Japan and the United States, the most spectacular build-up of orders in the last twelve months has been in Western Europe.

China bought industrial plant heavily from Japan and Western Europe twelve years ago. The results were very mixed. Some contractors supplied satisfactory plant, others had not adequately assessed the demands likely to be made on it or the physical conditions in which it would have to operate. This had happened with the plants set up by the Russians in the 50s. Nevertheless the Chinese feel confident they are now in a position to import plant with less risk of disappointment. They are making the same or similar plant themselves. Foreign suppliers know that in the last resort orders can be withheld, the schedule deferred and the whole equipment made in China.

The essence of self-reliance is never to be lured into a position in which you can't fall back on your own resources. Trade must be a servant, at all times under control, just as aid must remain a contributory support from those who want to help you carry out your own plans rather than fit in with theirs. The chief importance of Chinese trade is not in relation to China itself but in relation to the ending of the Third World's dependence on the superpowers and those they partially control. The precedent and impact of China's control of foreign trade and constant discipline of market activity to ensure that it serves the central objective of development is in fact of greater consequence than the content of the trade.

As regards the content of the trade, however, the successive tactical phases through which it has passed, and is still passing, will gradually be seen emerging into a trend. Temporary expansions and contractions in exchanges with the developed countries will give place to a broadly rising gradient of commerce with the Third World, the principal long-term growth area of Chinese trade.

SOME PREVIOUS ARTICLES ON CHINESE TRADE AND AID
Vol. I, No. 11 (*China's Example of Socialist Aid*, November 1964); Vol. III, No. 1 (*Promoting Trade*, January 1966); Vol. V, No. 1 (*Stable Expanding Economy*, January 1968); Vol. V, No. 11 (*China's Trade: Fantasy and Reality*, November 1968); Vol. VI, No. 7 (*Out of Debt*, July 1969); Vol. VIII, No. 2 (*Foreign Trade Tactics*, February 1971); Vol. VIII, No. 9 (*China Seeks No Aid Repayment*, September 1971); Vol. XI, No. 1 (*The Truth about the China Trade*, January 1974).

CHINA AND EAST ASIA

The publication of John S. Service's World War II despatches from China¹ reveals yet again, with unprecedented clarity, how the then leadership of the United States deliberately chose to ignore the urgent advice of the best of their 'China hands' and to opt for all-out resistance to social revolution in Asia. Their public statements notwithstanding, Washington's top people knew full well that the communists not only had the support of the people but also were the only group in China capable of reconstructing and regenerating the country and uniting its citizens. Such facts, however, counted for little against what world imperialism would lose if revolution were to sweep Asia as it was palpably sweeping China.

Mao and his colleagues had, throughout their contacts with U.S. personnel during the course of the war, made unambiguously clear that they were prepared to establish correct relations with the U.S. after liberation. Service and other key men stationed in China believed, naively, that when they reported these facts Washington could be induced to accept realities and prepare for a post-war world in which China, so long the focus of American eyes in the Pacific, had gone communist. They did not then appreciate that, granted the broad contours of the post-war international economic system already mapped out by Washington, no compromise was possible with social revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces—no voluntary compromise, that is, for ultimately even deep-dyed reactionaries such as Nixon were forced to recognise inescapable necessities.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean war, it is as well to recall those early post-war days with a proper humility, for few in the West were open-eyed enough about the true nature of American imperialism to expose and oppose it adequately. Even before 1950, Western imperialism had shown its fangs in the ferocious crushing of left-wing forces in many parts of colonial and semi-colonial Asia, in order to restore pre-war economic relations—as in Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia and of course Indochina. These repressions around China's southern approaches represented containment of the revolution; the Korean war marked a first attempt to roll it back by pitiless application of military power. China's involvement was the measure of her determination to thwart and turn this effort.

Threat by the superpowers

The Americans were ultimately baulked in Korea, at least with respect to crushing Korean communism and bringing the Peking regime to its knees. But, as Kolko has recently reminded us², the war in its economic aspects rejuvenated and galvanised capitalism in 'free' Asia; it was essential to U.S. Pacific rim economic strategy. Japan was, of course, the major regional beneficiary. The 'loss' of China had forced upon Washington a major re-drawing of her imperial boundaries. To secure Japan and South East Asia required holding at the very least the two key access corridors—southern Korea and southern Indochina. Their importance to American imperialism has been proved over and over again, up to and including the present.

It suited the purposes of America's leaders to portray Russia and China as a monolithic world-force intent on military expansion if not ringed in with iron. In fact, of course, they knew perfectly well this was not so—but the public had to be reconciled to maintaining vast peace-time armies capable of dealing with social revolution wherever it appeared in the 'free' world. From the outset the reality was quite different from the rhetoric. The Chinese had little reason to love or trust the Russians, and Molotov had assured the Americans that they were not interested in promoting the Chinese communists. Mao and Chou, having had their offer (1945) to fly to Washington for talks rejected³, embarked upon the perilous path of

steering between the Scylla of Russian arrogance and contempt and the Charybdis of rampant American imperialism. Super-power hegemonism remained the main threat, though as international patterns shifted and changed, the correct way of handling it changed.

In opposing and frustrating it China was not, and could not of course be, restricted to collaboration with countries whose social systems were similar to her own. Mao and other Chinese spokesmen had made clear long before 1949 their attitude to other powers, including those of a bourgeois or reactionary hue. 'After all', Chou En-lai told the 1970 C.C.A.S. delegation to China, 'we live in a world of nations'. Many of these nations, including some of China's near neighbours in Asia, although vacillating in their attitudes and actions with respect to world politics, had recurrent cause to feel resentment against the two superpowers trying to mould the world to their designs. Looking back, the logic of the Bandung spirit emerges clearly.

Fragile neutralism

But the vaunted 'neutralism' or 'non-alignment' of many of these countries of the 'free' world was either illusory or very fragile as subsequent events showed, India for instance moving into alignment with Russia and Indonesia with the U.S. The all-out assault of the U.S. government on the peoples of Indochina revealed the true face of an unrepentant and ruthless imperialism. But the Vietnamese prevailed, and by doing so made a tactical shift in U.S. policies inevitable. We have witnessed these adjustments in recent years in the seating of the People's Republic of China at the U.N., the Nixon visit to China, and the Paris Agreement of January 1973. These collectively represented American abandonment of the aims which had defined her Asian policy from the end of World War II.

There can be little doubt, too, that options began again to open for the countries of South and South-East Asia, a circumstance that China's leaders were quick to appreciate. In the context of the brief considerations above, we should now look into the changing relationships of this most recent period. The tale is a complex one, for it involves the interaction not only of the West with the region, but also of Japan and Russia with the region. Let us treat these briefly in turn.

The Western position has changed more in appearance than substance, important though the changes may be for the flexibility of the countries of 'free' Asia. We can see this most clearly in the continuing U.S. war effort in Indochina, in the American-orchestrated coups in the Philippines and Thailand to ensure 'firm' (i.e. reactionary) regimes, and in a host of other American interventions in the region—some of which will no doubt be familiar to BROADSHEET readers, but others (such as the growing role of U.S. advisers in Malaysia) perhaps less so. The pattern overall is clear enough, however: a continuing ambition to use U.S. power to check social revolution in the area—an area so sensitive to her economic and strategic needs.

Japan, it goes without saying, casts a long shadow over the region. America's leaders had Japan's reconstruction and assimilation into the American empire very much in the forefront of their post-war ambitions for Asia. But in the nature of things, the partnership envisaged could not be an easy one. As Japanese military and economic power grew, so did the number of interests where divergence with Washington was inevitable. Even today, though, the two powers have enough in common to remain, broadly speaking, in harness. Nevertheless, several recent traumas have undoubtedly severely shaken the alliance, once the very cornerstone of the American design for the Pacific rim. One was the Nixon visit to China, undertaken without informing—far less consulting—the Japanese leaders.

The other was the oil crisis of October 1973 and after, which revealed all too frighteningly to the Japanese that they were an industrial giant with an Achilles heel. The first was more particularly resented in the light of America's long-standing inhibition on Japanese aspirations to normalise relations with China, an inhibition the sudden lifting of which was quickly taken advantage of by Tokyo. The second, however, taken in conjunction with an intensifying trade war, has more alarming undertones for Japan's neighbours in South East Asia, whose peoples demonstrated their feelings about Japanese economic penetration and manipulation so unequivocally last January.

There is no doubt, though, that China's consistency in opening normal relations with Japan was not only a further demonstration of her foreign policy, but also correct in other ways. The 1960s had seen an ominous convergence of regional interests on the part of Russia, America and Japan. This could be detected in such diverse matters as their shared interest in developing the resources of rich but backward Siberia, their common stance on internationalisation of the crucial Strait of Malacca, and their expressed desire for 'security' in the region. As far as the last is concerned America's several efforts are well known and long discredited. Russia's announcement of her interest in participating in a Collective Asian Security scheme was made in 1969, when the U.S. was in deep crisis in Indochina. She has persisted in peddling the idea round the capitals of 'free' Asia with precious little reward as yet though distinct pressure has been exerted on such friendly governments as that of India.

The petrol which abounds in China and is so cruelly lacking in Japan seems destined to play a vital part in the immediate future in Sino-Japanese relations and, furthermore, in the politico-diplomatic balance in the Far East. The growth of Chinese sales is in fact so rapid that it may forestall the development of Russian-Japanese cooperation to exploit the petrol of Siberia.

Japanese experts expect a production of 100 million tons of crude oil in 1974 and double that amount in 1980. Chinese exports—5 million tons last year and 7 million in 1974—will reach 10 or 14 million tons next year and will then fairly rapidly reach 30 million tons It seems that Siberia would be able to supply by 1980 only quantities less than those proposed by China.

Le Monde, 10 Sept. 74.

China has, of course, consistently opposed the whole concept of a regional security scheme, beloved of America's leaders and now favoured by Russia's, too. Japan is in rather a different category, and has reservations on co-operation with Russia, just as she has differences reflecting inter-imperialist contradictions with the United States. Russia still occupies Japanese territory. The asking price for participation in such joint ventures as the proposed Siberian oil pipe was—even for affluent Japan—breath-takingly high. There are other impediments, some deeply rooted in history, to good Russo-Japanese relations. Therefore, growing evidence of China's oil riches is of more than passing interest to Tokyo. Although characterised by some deep ambivalences, Japanese attitudes to China are different in kind and quality from those to Russia. If China holds promise of being able substantially to contribute to the satisfaction of such key Japanese requirements as that for oil, then her policy will undoubtedly trim to that wind. At the same time, China has shown—in such matters as her support of the countries bordering the Strait of Malacca in their resistance to demands for internationalisation—a firm intention not to surrender the principle of standing shoulder to shoulder with other Third World countries in their resistance to superpower

demands, to the expediency of courting even so powerful and important a neighbour as Japan.

Russian influence has made itself felt increasingly throughout the region. Although Moscow, under intense international pressure from progressive forces, finally abandoned her plans to prop up the Lon Nol clique in Phnom Penh, she clearly sees more future for herself in such regimes as that of Suharto in Indonesia and Indira Gandhi in India than in the Maoist C.P.s that are taking the brunt of the armed revolutionary struggle in most parts of the region. One can detect a few rump pro-Moscow C.P.s as in India, but they are moribund and discredited. The vanguard of Russian leverage in the area today is less those archaic relics than the warships, bases, submarines and other such military hardware now ostentatiously (or covertly) deployed from the Indian Ocean to the North Pacific. Russian capacity to attack and maul China is now obviously greater than America's, and Russian troops have suffered no such demoralisation and humiliation as that inflicted by the Vietnamese on the Americans. To the extent that China affords an important base for world revolution, a model for socialist transformation, and a steady reliable ally for small powers battered by the bullying of the superpowers, then clearly Russia is at this time a graver threat within the projected U.S.-Soviet hegemonic world-system. Anything which relaxes the grip or even mere presence of superpower hegemonism clearly enhances prospects for regional social revolution accomplished, as it must be, by protracted armed and political struggle.

It is to be wished that many of those who pontificate upon and snidely denigrate Chinese foreign policy would take the trouble to read and study the pronouncements and speeches of China's spokesmen—and to familiarise themselves with the available record. Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which strengthened the guidelines of Peking's foreign policy, in speech after speech and statement after statement—at the United Nations, at the Caracas Law of the Sea Conference, and elsewhere—China's leaders have defined their stance. We may sum it up in the slogan 'Unite the (poor) many to defeat the (rich) few'.

Principled foreign policy

That this principled position, although it involves support of reactionary regimes in disputes with the superpowers (for example, Malaysia and Indonesia on the Strait of Malacca issue against Russia and America), does *not* imply *nor* involve in practice abandonment to their fate of people's revolutionary armed struggles in Asia, is the most important thing to grasp. Every public indication substantiates this proposition, while what we know by other means lends it most powerful confirmation. Is it surprising that much of this goes on outside the glare of the Western media and unknown to the most eager of China-watchers and 'experts'? Revolutionary armed struggles do not advertise their deployments and intentions, and it would be poor service to them for an ally to do so, merely to refute unfounded allegations by a handful of 'left-wing' detractors of China (and of Asian revolutionary movements) in the West. Revolution is more serious than, and obviously must take priority over, puerile polemics in ephemeral Western political periodicals.

It would be impossible to summarise faithfully a picture as complex as that presented above. Space has precluded justice being done to such important considerations as the relations of China with the countries of South Asia in particular (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), though the general guidelines apply and prevail. Perhaps the most fitting way to wind up is to quote some extracts from the Chinese message to the C.P. of Burma. (August 1974).

Holding aloft the great banner of Marxism-Leninism, the C.P. of Burma has resolutely opposed imperialism, revisionism and reaction, persevered in most arduous armed

struggle and achieved important victories over the past 20 years and more. We feel elated and inspired by this. The present international situation is excellent. The two superpowers . . . are beset with difficulties both at home and abroad, and find the going tougher and tougher. Amid great turbulence in the world, the people are marching forward in big strides. Countries want independence, nations want liberation, and the people want revolution—that has become the irresistible trend of history. We are convinced that, uniting closely all the comrades in the Party, relying on the broad masses of people of various nationalities, uniting with all forces that can be united with, adhering to the correct line and policy and persevering in struggle, the Communist Party of Burma will surely surmount the various difficulties on the road of advance and win victories in the revolutionary war. Following the teachings of Chairman Mao, the C.P. of China

always considers the sympathy and support for the revolutionary struggle of the people its bounden proletarian internationalist duty.

Who can seriously doubt that the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of 'free' Asia will ultimately prevail? As this tremendous drama unfolds with incalculable consequences for peoples, governments, and institutions all over the world, is China's role, in all its subtlety as well as its broad consistency, historically positive or historically negative? Time alone will finally tell, but the record to this date is already, surely, so convincing that only one answer is possible.

MALCOLM CALDWELL

1 John S. Service: *Lost Chance in China*, Random House, New York, 1974.

2 Joyce and Gabriel Kolko: *The Limits of Power*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972.

3 See *Foreign Affairs*, October 1972, New York, for this incident.

PAST BITTERNESS AND FUTURE HOPE

Recollecting the old days in China, which was my home for nearly three decades, in an attempt to make comparisons, following my recent visit, I found myself overwhelmed by happy memories. I was again among students, not only in the laboratories but strolling along the river bank in the moonlight, as they played their flutes; and with my colleagues and their families, happy with the older men as they admired the flowers in their sunny gardens. There were farmer friends, too poor to offer more than boiled water, who talked and laughed as we drank their *white tea*. I remembered visits to beautiful temples, where we rested in courtyards, cool in the shade of great trees, and listened to the beat of drums and the deep voices of the chanting priests. There was friendship, love, affection.

Memory works like this. We forget evil and the unpleasant. Even in the bitterest circumstances of life, hope is rarely entirely lost, for without it mankind would perish in despair. Yet we must not allow the opiate of forgetfulness to lessen our awareness of corruption, lest it returns and destroys us.

I remember travelling through colourful valleys, all carpeted by blooms: white and red, with pink patches and a deep purple, which shone violet in the sunshine. They were poppies, raised by the farmers as the only means of paying the fines, demanded by the military overlords, for growing opium—which had to be paid whether it was grown or not. As warlords and landlords fattened, the victims became emaciated, eventually to die. Our carriers (for there were neither roads nor cars) each with two 40 lb packages on a shoulder pole, trudged thirty miles a day. They ate little, but to keep going needed frequent stops for opium, borrowing their payment in advance, so that by the end of the ten days' journey they had nothing due. In every town and village there were dens in which men lay smoking behind coarse sacking curtains. The poor sought opium to take away the desire for costly food, to dull the pains they had no medicine to cure.

Famine victims, in times of drought, sometimes found their way to where we

lived, skin loose upon their bones, dying with guts clogged by the Goddess of Mercy mud they had eaten in desperation. Many of the poor, through economic necessity, added banditry to their usual occupations—success resulting in enlistment in a warlord's army, or even to leading yet another private army. One memory is of bandits and their victims lying dead along the water's edge, after a defended raid on a riparian farmstead, near the boat on which we travelled. Once there was a corpse, executed, as was customary, at the place of crime, and people struggling to secure his heart, that they might eat and be brave as he had been. Another time, when food was short, riots broke out because the wife of the powerful Governor hoarded rice and refused to sell until the people were desperate enough to pay (after borrowing at cruel interest) the price she demanded. Inflation, worse than any European country has known, brought untold suffering, taxes were collected years ahead, so that even the beggars seemed better off than artisans.

It is not surprising that what impressed me most, in China now, is the new stability and the security under which people live. Interwoven with this is the development of farm and factory, the altered surface of the land, the new irrigation, the broad acres farmed by modern methods. There were the beginnings of all this in the old days, but it is the new security and political philosophy that have made development possible. There is security to work, to eat, to be housed and clothed, enabling people to be educated, removing the fear of unemployment, illness and old age; above all the security from injustice, lack of justice being almost more terrifying than hunger itself.

The essential factor today is the unbelievable change in the attitude of the people themselves. No longer is there struggle so that the individual can keep himself and his family alive, but now the purpose is to secure the greatest good for everyone. After Liberation, for over two years, I was a member of a small group, and know that it is not easy for personal attitudes to change.

It involves the deepest inner conflict, and although aided by the criticism and encouragement of others, there is, especially for those of middle class, great personal anguish. To escape from a self-centred class approach needs not only intellectual but also emotional conviction. For the peasant and worker it may be easier, as it must be for children brought up in the new environment, but for many who are older complete liberation of the mind may be impossible to attain, although they strive sympathetically to cooperate with the younger dedicated masses.

Often we felt old as we met so many who were born after 1949. Soon very few will remain with memories of those disordered times from which the new era by necessity sprang. Perhaps other minds work like mine, and there is danger that the bitterness of the past may be veiled by a romantic glow. The future of China, and maybe of the world, depends on the continued faithfulness of the people, their refusal to turn back. The enthusiasm of the young was unbounded. The determination of those who were older, even though some appeared more weary than during the early days of Liberation, was not lessened: they knew the reality of the life from which they had been freed.

Success is the great incentive for the Chinese people; yet it may produce its own dangers of revisionism and relaxation, unless steps are taken to guard against them. New movements, fresh campaigns, may renew political and emotional convictions, but memory of the past remains an important factor. The questions we were asked were not about Britain and the outside world, but what it was like in the old days. The time is soon coming when all those who themselves experienced pre-Liberation bitterness will have gone. By story-telling, pictures, sculpture and the history book the past will be kept vividly in mind, making it easier, in the future, for the revolution to continue, knowing that to fail would risk sinking again into chaos, the security and welfare of the people endangered. I came from China believing that the people, in commune, factory and neighbourhood group, will continue to press forward with ever enlarging hope.

WILLIAM SEWELL