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An Outlook on China in the Eighties : A Political Turnabout at Home and Relations with the USSR

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1. *China's turnabout and contradictions involved*

Any attempt at the difficult task of forming an outlook on China in the eighties should begin with a correct analysis and understanding of the country's situation today.

As is well known, the People's Republic of China, celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this fall, is now undergoing a tremendous change. Representing an unprecedented turnabout in the republic, founded and operating on an ideology called "Mao Ze-dong Thought", this change involves a great deal of contradictions as well as favorable possibilities for the future. China today is struggling in this dual environment.

I happened to visit China in mid and late June this year. That was my third visit to that country. The first was in the fall of 1966, when, just after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards were rampant. The second was in early 1975, during the "Anti-Lin Biao, Anti-Confucius" movement, when I traveled by myself traversing from Moscow through Ulan Bator to Beijing—crossing from Outer Mongolia the tension-ridden Sino-Soviet border, and entering Beijing from behind. On my last visit I saw the country after the fall of the Gang of Four. As an observer who had been watching the turbulent situation in China for more than a dozen years, I looked with real amazement at the vast change taking place in Chinese society.

In the first place, as I had expected, Maoism was fast becoming a desiccated theory although it was still upheld officially. Unlike the late Premier Zhou En-lai, Mao himself was now only nominally adored by the people, and the nation was finally institutionalizing the tacit agreement that Mao was a modern "Qin Emperor". This tendency is reflected

in the fact that the Fifth National People's Congress at its Second Session gave top priority to democratization of institutions and codification of laws as well as coordination of the "Four Modernizations" program, and declared that no leader is great enough not to be bound by law. It is noteworthy that the leader of this codification movement was Peng Zhen, who used to be the municipal leader of Beijing, and was an important target of attack in the Cultural Revolution. In short, all this change is based on the serious reflection that Chinese society cannot enjoy stability or growth unless socialist construction in China is upgraded from the level of "mass struggles" and institutinoalized in the framework of national democratization. Thus, China is trying to institutionalize de-Maoization.

With these circumstances in the background, the Cultural Revolution is now being totally repudiated, and it is evident that the term stands for everything evil today. In fact, everything that overthrown by the Cultural Revolution is being restored and turned around. It is important to note that China today is not only repudiating the Cultural Revolution but rehabilitating practically everyone victimized by Maoism since the mid-fifties. Economic leaders of the early fifties like Bo Yi-bo and Bi Mu-qiao are now coming back in popularity; and Ding Ling, the famous woman novelist who went down after branded as an "anti-Party writer" in the anti-rightist movement of 1957, has once again appeared in good shape in a photo in *The People's Daily* (Renmin ribao). These are conspicuous examples of the reviving victims of Maoism rather than the Cultural Revolution. Thus, China is beginning to review and even disapprove the process it has been through since the radical collectivization of farms in the late fifties. Since the process was led by Mao, it is clear that China is turning against Mao's socialist construction policy.

Secondly, in considering what China is going to be in the eighties, it is important to note that its "Four Modernizations" program (for modernizing agriculture, industry, national defense, and technology) involves contradictions.

This program underwent substantial amendments (which actually meant reduced goals) in the form of "coordination, reorganization, streamlining, and upgrading" at the last session of the National People's Congress, but initially had been proposed by the realist group led by Zhou En-lai and Deng Xiao-ping as a political tool for de-Maoization during Mao's reign. It was not the kind of practical, concrete economic program for quick growth of the Chinese economy that Japanese big business hoped to find in China after the recent rapprochement between the two countries.

Since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee, at which Chairman Hua Guo-feng and other leaders of the Cultural Revolution right wing criticized themselves, and Vice-Chairman Chen Yun and other old economic leaders reinstated in important positions, the Four Modernizations program has finally been established as a universal national cause, and can no longer remain a political struggle slogan. It is a national program that must be implemented strenuously. Deng Xiao-ping himself—the chief promoter of the policy—seems to have stressed at the Tihrd Plenum of the Central Committee that the Four Modernization program should not be treated as a mere rosy vision but translated into a feasible form.

One problem with this program is that it requires immense capital (estimated at U.S.$600 billion for the original version of the program) while China's foreign exchange reserves total only $2 billion, or less than $3 billion. But how to raise the needed capital is not the only problem. Having gone through political and social confusion for more than a dozen years, China is still without social systems for effectively controlling the economy—that is, its infrastructure is quite underdeveloped and unestablished. Improvement of such economic circumstances cannot be done in a day.

Moreover, if Four Modernizations mean rationalization of operations and mechanization of production in various sectors of the economy, the program will save labor, of which China has plenty, and how to absorb and reassign the nation's vast surplus labor will be a big problem. Both

the leadership in Beijing and field executives at plants and people's communes are aware of this contradiction inherent in the modernization program, which must be called basic since China is still far from attempting a general reorganization of its industrial structure.

Some estimate that China's population is already in excess of one billion. The Government is hoping to reduce the natural population growth rate from 1.2% now to 0.5% by 1985 and achieve "zero growth in population by the end of the century".[1] But this ambitious population control goal seems very difficult to reach. Moreover, Beijing's current stoic policy of enforcing stringent birth control and encouraging late marriage will be increasingly hard to maintain in an "open China" tomorrow although it has been practicable in the old "closed China". Some people in Chinese society are already beginning to argue that this unusual stoic policy represents an oppression of human rights.

The third social problem in China today concerns the backwash of the Cultural Revolution and new social pathological symptoms created by the process of change to an "open China". As unfavorable consequences of the Cultural Resolution, it will suffice at this moment to mention the tendency to vagrancy and delinquency of urban youths committed to rural life for training, general demoralization and opportunism of cadres, and the emergence of an extensive group of dropouts represented by the "rural people coming up to town" from the lowest level of agrarian society to demand rehabilitation from false condemnation in the past and ask for jobs. As many social values are radically being upset, increasing contacts with Japan, the U.S., Western Europe, and the rest of the West are causing the Chinese people to show symptoms of "moral subservience to foreigners", such as the "cult of the West" and "yearnings for Japan", in reaction to the old prevalence of xenophobia. At the same time, some aspects of "old China" are beginning to reappear in various sectors of Chinese society, which, in fact, was never reformed completely even in Mao's days. China today is faced with the vital task of properly controlling these and other social problems and establishing new standards for

its society.

Thus, China is now struggling in the process of a dynamic turnabout, and no less dynamic are the conflicts involved in this tremendous reality of Chinese society.

2. *China at the point of no return*

Now, should we think that these conflicts, political and social, inherent in China today are so great that the country is likely to go through another process of political turbulence and swing radically once again from right to left?

After the passing of Mao and Zhou, China experienced the ghastly "Tian An Men Square Incident" and the shocking political change in Beijing (the downfall of the Gang of Four) in 1976, and has since been undergoing de-Maoization. From the way the country appears today, generally it does not seem likely to show another radical change in domestic or foreign policy. In other words, it now seems impossible to reverse the pragmatic trend against the Cultural Revolution—to go back on the policy laid down by the late Zhou En-lai, who sought "de-Maoization under Mao" after the failure of the Cultural Revolution. Why?

The most important reason may be found in the objective, historical position in which China today finds itself. After a decade of political turmoil following the Cultural Revolution, the Fourth National People's Congress held its First Session in January, 1975, and at this meeting Zhou En-lai delivered a political report[2]—a sort of political will in which Zhou, dedicated to the cause of his country, prescribed its future in the form of a "Four Modernizations" program aimed at building up modern industrial and economic systems in China. Whatever difficulties are in store for the program, China today has social, national reasons that compel it to proceed, without ever turning back, in the direction called for by the program. The old cycle of moderation and radicalism, which has been repeated consistently in the process of domestic construction since the foundation of the People's Republic, can no longer go on after a deci-

sive phase in the early seventies. This social, national necessity was earlier demonstrated in a paradoxical way by the pay raise demands of the workers participating in the Hangzhou Incident of 1975. From this viewpoint, this social development, like the Tian An Men Square Incident with its anti-Maoist implications, is even more significant than such political developments as the Lin Biao Affair, in predicting the future of Chinese society. The same social, political necessity makes China want to deal with other countries in an opener, more stable way. Unless "the Chinese world order"[3] is threatened in peripheral areas along its borders, as in the case of the recent hostilities with Vietnam, resulting in a serious loss of Chinese prestige in the world, it seems that China in the eighties will have to seek such open relations with the rest of the world while taking meticulous care to maintain the balance of power with other major powers including the Soviet Union.

It should be noted that about 85% of China's external trade is already accounted for by trade with Japan, the U.S., Western Europe, and other Western areas (Japan alone accounting for about 25%). Despite this structural change in Chinese trade, however, there will always be the possibility of China's trading more with the Soviet Union again. Thus oriented, China is beginning to reduce the esoteric nature of its political leadership. Erich Fromm, discussing the significance and functions of ideology in de-Stalinized Soviet society, wrote that what matters in evaluating the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is no longer its ideology but its social, political structure.[4] Similarly, China will soon reach the stage in which its social, political structure rather than ideology will count. Then the Deng Xia-ping type of leaders, once criticized as realists or "capitalist roaders" (such as Peng Zhen, Chen Yun, and Hu Yao-bang, who is younger), will make the right Party leadership orthodox and realistic enough for the exoteric, nonideological type of regime.

Another basic factor that must be considered in this connection is the fact that China cannot afford to lose any more time in launching a long-range economic construction program, that is, a full-scale industrialization

program. China's awareness of this fact will become keener as it learns more about the outside world. For example, liberation of Taiwan, despite Beijing's loud calls for it, is actually infeasible both militarily and socially, and per capita GNP in Taiwan is likely to be, even in a conservative estimate, seven to eight times that in mainland China in the eighties.

Indeed, the People's Republic has never followed a specific economic construction policy consistently for five years. Apart from the economic rehabilitation period immediately following the Revolution, China has been through a highly unstable series of economic policy phases, including the first five-year plan period marked by the "General Transitional Policy", the second five-year plan period characterized by the "Great Leap Forward", the economic readjustment period following the failure of the "Great Leap Forward", and the Cultural Revolution period of confusion. Apparently, China cannot afford to experience all this instability again. Today, China is in a position to participate fully in international affairs while at home the people can no longer be enthused by Mao Ze-dong type of revolution envisaging an utopia in poverty. Under these circumstances, China can only hope to ensure the success of the Revolution by bolstering it with material wealth rather than ideological or moral strength through the implementation of a full-scale economic construction program.

Thus, China today has no alternative but to walk the long way toward an open society by carrying out the Four Modernizations program whatever difficulties it may involve, and whatever vicissitudes may be in store for China in that direction.

What will become of China tomorrow? After a quarter century of turbulence, and faced with various difficulties today, the country may look forward to eventually developing a unique socialist society, but such a rosy prospect is still far off. At present, Chinese society is undergoing changes involving symptoms of something similar to Soviet revisionism. This tendency may be a sort of inevitability in socialism, although the society

of China differs in some basic respects from that of the Soviet Union. Some of the choices made by the Beijing leaders, whether they are aware of it or not, make one feel that they are going beyond Soviet revisionism and trying to find a solution in the Yugoslav type of mixed economy. In China's case, this path runs very close to revival of old China, since Chinese society is a traditional, agrarian one with a great deal of inherent elements inimical to socialism. When the national policy of the Chinese Communist Party is swallowed up in this traditional society, China will be a vast, commonplace developing country with an immense population in Asia.

What will become of China is not only a vital concern to the Chinese themselves but indeed the very greatest question in the history of civilization in the twentieth century. Perhaps China may also turn out to be the biggest "north-south problem" in the present world.

3. *China's future and relations with the Soviet Union*

To form an outlook on China in the eighties, it is necessary to discuss its international environment, which, of course, involves a number of questions to be considered. Here we will attempt to look out on the future mainly with reference to Sino-Soviet relations, which will have much to do with internal political trends in China, and be of vital interest to the U.S., Japan, and other Western countries.

Today, relations between China and the Soviet Union are so strained that we may well say they are in a state of cold war with each other, and for this very reason observers are interested in the possibility of future changes in Sino-Soviet relations in connection with possible changes in China tomorrow. Moreover, Beijing's conflicts with Moscow have always been related to policy arguments within the Chinese Communist Party, and whether true or false, charges of intimacy with the Soviet Union have always been hurled at such losers in intra-Party policy fights as Wang Ming, Gao Gang, Peng De-huai, Liu Shao-qi, and Lin Biao when they were condemned. At the very least, there is no denying that Beijing's

view of, and policy on the Soviet Union have been closely related to policy struggles within the CCP. We cannot ignore the historical fact that relations with Moscow have been a more or less constant factor built in the internal behavior of the CCP.

If a significant change in Sino-Soviet relations is conceivable, to what extent will they improve? Will they change so importantly that the U.S. will be compelled to radically amend its world policy? Will there be a monolithic Sino-Soviet unity again that will be firm enough to threaten Japan's security?

To make valid predictions on these questions, it is essential to analyze the structure of the Sino-Soviet discord, and identify the right approaches for different aspects of the phenomenon.

The Sino-Soviet antagonism today is very serious from the historical point of view because it consists of conflicts at four different levels, lying one upon another and forming a complex whole: (1) conflict between the two nations or their nationalisms, (2) conflict between the two states or their egoisms, (3) conflict between the ideologies of the two countries or between their respective "heresies", and (4) conflict between their governments or between their foreign policies. These may be called respectively the nation-to-nation conflict, state-to-state conflict, party-to-party conflict, and government-to-government conflict.[5]

Referring to the first — the nation-to-nation conflict — which is the deepest-rooted and more or less fateful, the history of contacts between the Chinese and the Russians in the last three hundred years is full of conflicts. The two great peoples have lived opposite to each other on the Eurasian continent with the vast Mongolian territory lying between them as a sort of "intermediate zone", and their competition for the control of this area has been adding fuel to the hot rivalry between the two nations.

The second conflict, state-to-state, is based on the first, and has been carried on historically over border and territorial issues. Indeed, it quickly damped the Leninist spirit of internationalism intoned in the Karakhan Manifesto (1919) following the success of the Russian Revolution. The

subsequent emergence of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Maoism in China provided ideological justifications to their respective nationalisms or state egoisms, making them more exclusive of each other in their conflict at the inter-state level. Generally, journalists and foreign policy experts tend to call diplomatic or intergovernmental conflicts discords "inter-state". But what I mean by the "state-to-state conflict" here is one between two states aware of their different stands based on their respective nationalisms and ideological justifications, rather than a conflict in intergovernmental or diplomatic relations (which belongs to my fourth category).

The third conflict, party-to-party, refers to what began as the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1956 and is still continuing as an ideological conflict between the Communist Parties of the two countries. In the general context of Sino-Soviet antagonism, the conflict at this level theoretically seems to be subject to change. Partly because Sino-Soviet relations have often depended on internal fights within the Communist Parties of the two countries (especially that of China), it is always possible that this third conflict should be significantly affected by developments in such intra-Party struggles and leadership changes.

The fourth conflict, government-to-government, can change not only in accordance with leadership changes and new developments in the Party of each country but also with changes in international relations.

Only after such theoretical, methodological analysis of Sino-Soviet relations can we hope to consider in more concrete terms whether or not they may undergo important changes in the future. From the above considerations, it may be reasonable to assume that the Sino-Soviet conflict at the nation-to-nation level will semipermanently remain irreconcilable. The conflict at the state-to-state level also will be hard to resolve unless, in some distant future, the existing social, political, and economic gaps between the two countries are filled. On the other hand, the conflict at the third level, party-to-party, may change as the result of a leadership change; and the government-to-government conflict is subject

to change at any time. It should be remembered in this connection that the current Sino-Soviet antagonism began with Mao Ze-dong's intense antipathy against the Soviet Union and the latter's policy reaction to it, and represents the culmination of a process in which the Sino-Soviet conflicts at the above-mentioned four levels have been growing in a complex, integrated form. Hence Sino-Soviet conciliation was quite impossible while China was under Mao's leadership, and will remain very difficult so long as the CCP leadership persists in its present Maoist view of the Soviet Union.

Within the limits of the fourth conflict, however, it is theoretically possible to think of some improvement in Sino-Soviet relations under the impact of some international developments, such as an unfavorable turn in Sino-U.S. relations.

As we have seen, China today is undergoing extensive de-Maoization at home, and it is no longer possible to reverse this trend. Leading the nation in this direction is Deng Xiao-ping. With respect to his leadership and its future, it should be noted that, although he is indispensable to China today, his intense personality often jars with his colleagues. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to keep the following points in mind in considering his influence on Sino-Soviet relations: After attending the 21st Congress of the CPSU in 1956, where de-Stalinization was launched for the first time, Deng spoke severely of the evils of personal cult in a report on amendments to the Party Rules delivered before the Eighth Congress of the CCP that year. In the early sixties, while playing a leading role in China's dispute with the Soviet Union (at Sino-Soviet talks held in the summer of 1963, for example, he had a hot wrangle with CPSU Politburo Member Suslov in Moscow), he supported Luo Rui-qing then PLA Chief of General Staff, in his argument for a united front with the Soviet Union in the Vietnam War. Luo lost his position on account of this proposal, and was not reinstated until 1975. This shows that Deng's view of the Soviet Union was basically different from that of Mao Ze-dong, who refused to regard the Soviet Union as a socialist society,

and flatly rejected the idea of an anti-imperialist united front with that country.

Thus, so far as the influence of China's internal affairs on relations with the Soviet Union is concerned, it should be noted that circumstances are maturing in favor of possible improvements in Sino-Soviet relations at the party-to-party as well as the government-to-government level.

Under these maturing circumstances, China will—in the eighties, at least—try to form its relations with other countries while paying constant attention to the "Soviet card". Despite the historic rapprochement with Beijing, the U.S. Congress approved the Taiwan Relations Act by an overwhelming majority. Faced with this unexpected development, China was extremely careful last spring in serving notice of its intention of letting the Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance Treaty with the Soviet Union expire, thus avoiding excessive provocation to Moscow, and paving the way for Sino-Soviet negotiations at the vice-ministerial level. This suggests that Beijing already has the "Soviet card" in its hands, and we should always remember that it is China itself after all that ultimately holds that card.

Of course, it may be argued that Sino-Soviet relations are generally unlikely to improve since China today must depend on Japan, the U.S., and other Western countries for assistance in the implementation of its Four Modernizations program, or that China will continue to need an outside archenemy to keep the people united in surmounting internal difficulties arising in the course of national modernization. As we have seen, however, analysis of the structural makeup and historical background of the Sino-Soviet antagonism indicates that important circumstances are now maturing in favor of possible changes in the conflict. Personally, I feel that a significant change might occur in Sino-Soviet relations in the late eighties—sometime after 1985—when China will probably be faced with still greater difficulties in carrying out the Four Modernizations program and no longer feel freshness in relations with the West, and also when Deng Xia-ping's present leadership will have to be replaced with a new

group of leaders in Beijing. Around that time, the Soviets also will probably be switching their current military expansion policy involving aggressive strategy in Asia due to a slowdown in the growth of the Soviet economy. When both countries thus find themselves in serious economic difficulties, will they continue to antagonize each other as they do now?

Since a wishful expectation of continued antagonism between the two countries lies at the basis of U.S. world policy today, and since a significant improvement in Beijing-Moscow relations can be a diplomatic threat to Japan, we tend to accept too readily the desirable prospect of a world with Sino-Soviet antagonism. But if we indulge in such wishful thinking while neglecting to develop logical approaches and methods for analyzing the structure and historical background of the antagonistic relationship between the two countries, we will have to jump in alarm at the slightest sign of a threat to this hope.

International communism and relations between socialist countries are no better than common international relations in changeability and amplitude of change. Today we look with amazement at the fact that Albania, which used to remain China's only reliable ally and served as its mouthpiece for a very long time in its dispute with the Soviet Union, is now seriously at odds with Beijing and hurling keen accusations at the Chinese Communist Party. Meanwhile, President Tito of Yugoslavia, who had been Beijing's long-time enemy accused of "modern revisionism", and also annoyed by attacks from Albania "in his backyard", recently visited China at this late stage in his career, receiving a big welcome and having an opportunity to look north from the top of the Great Wall with a great emotion in his heart—a very ironic historical event.

Finally, I would like to point out that there is a basic difference between the stands on Sino-Soviet relations held by the U.S. and Japan although they are bound together in the U.S.-Japanese-Chinese coalition which might be viewed as an antihegemonist alliance. Located in East Asia, Japan has to deal far more extensively with China and the Soviet Union than does the U.S., which as a global superpower is in a position

to carry on a detente policy in the Europe-Atlantic area and an anti-hegemonist policy in the Asia-Pacific area, dealing with the Soviet Union and China across the Atlantic and the Pacific, respectively. Geographically destined to form a triangle with the Soviet Union and China in East Asia, Japan is carrying a heavier burden than the U.S. is in dealing with these two Communist powers. It is important to note that the Washington-Tokyo-Beijing coalition, though very convenient to the U.S. as the basis of its Asian policy aimed at counterbalancing the influence of the Soviet Union as a global superpower, is not equally convenient to Japan. This represent a new conflict within the U.S.-Japanese security system since there are some areas of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China in which Japan will find it impossible to share the U.S. stand completely. In other words, Japan has much less freedom than the U.S. does in taking advantage of the tense relationship between Moscow and Beijing and even manipulating it to some extent. Therefore, Japan needs a diplomatic strategy flexible enough to withstand possible changes in Sino-Soviet relations. At a time when friendly ties are being formed with China, Japan should give sufficient consideration to this foreign policy task of vital importance.

NOTES

1. Hua Guo-feng, "Zhengfu gongzuo baogao (Report on the Work of the Government)," *Renmin ribao (People's Daily)*, 26 June 1979.
2. Zhou En-lai, "Zhengfu gongzuo baogao (Report on the Work of the Government," *Renmin ribao (People's Daily)*, 21 January 1975.
3. See John King Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).
4. Erich Fromm, *May Man Prevail?: An Inquiry into the Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 137.
5. For a more extended analysis of this issue, see Mineo Nakajima, *Chūso tairitsu to Gendai: Sengo Azia no Saikōsatsu (The Sino-Soviet Confrontation and the Present Age: Reappraisal on the Postwar Asia)* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1978).