

China's gaze returns to the Soviet model

As Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visits Washington (BW—Dec. 13) and Secretary of State George P. Shultz makes his first visit to China in February, an old controversy over American policy toward Asia will quietly be played out again. The argument among government policymakers concerns the relative importance of U. S. interests in Japan and China.

Most "China hands" in the State Dept. have long argued that the U. S. can play a decisive role in developments in post-Mao China. They have been reinforced by some hard-liners, notably former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr., who see China as a strategic ally against the Soviet Union. However, a small but important group of advisers to President Reagan, backed by some scholars outside the government, has held that Washington will play a minimal role in Beijing's decisions because of the vastness of China's problems, the nature of a Communist state, and the inherent unpredictability of events. They insist that U.S. relations with Japan—a major ally and the world's second economic power—should be Washington's overwhelming concern in Asia. They say relations with Japan have been allowed to drift because of the controversy over China policy, as exemplified by Shultz's original itinerary, which called for four days in Beijing but only two days in Tokyo.

This debate has become even more intense as Beijing has sought to reach some accommodation with the Soviets (BW—Oct. 25). A crucial question in the argument is what motivates Beijing after so many years of bitter denunciations of the Kremlin. Mineo Nakajima, a professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and a leading China scholar, challenges the theory of many U. S. China specialists that the policies of Washington and Tokyo are primarily responsible for Beijing's new turn. Nakajima says China's foreign policy shifts are largely the result of domestic politics, in which Soviet-oriented elements in the Chinese Communist Party are again in the ascendancy.

'A new bureaucratic aristocracy.' Nakajima contends that a process of "de-Maoization" is carrying China back to what he calls the "moderate socialism" that characterized the Communist Party in its first years in power, from 1950 to the mid-1960s, before Mao Zedong forced China into ultra-leftist policies such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Those groups within the party who fought Mao have regained stature. The principal one, according to Nakajima, is the so-called Real Power, or Liu Shaoqi group, followers of Mao's chosen successor in the 1950s. Liu, who died mysteriously, was an advocate of policies akin to what the

Maoists called Soviet revisionism. Nakajima believes the return to prominence of economic experts such as Tan Zhenlin, Bo Yibo, and Chen Yun prove this change. Like other anti-Mao figures, they have ridden back to power in the wake of Deng Xiaoping, now China's most influential figure and a victim of Mao's excesses in the past.

Nakajima sees the return to power of other groups that were once considered closer to the Russians. For example, there are the followers of the late General Peng Dehuai, hero of the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, who opposed Mao's rural communes and maintained that China's huge manpower resources could compensate for its backward weaponry. Peng's autobiography, released last year, is a best-seller. Even some minor followers of Gao Gang, the former

Soviet puppet leader of Manchuria eliminated by Mao in the 1950s, have returned as secretaries of provincial parties in the northeast. Experts on the Soviet Union—members of "the Russian language group"—also have been reinstated. One is Qain Qichan, the Vice Foreign Minister who answered to Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev's Tashkent speech calling for a settlement with the Chinese last Mar. 26.

Nakajima says that these better-known figures are buttressed by large numbers of "the Soviet generation"—the party cadre who were trained and entered public life during the 1950-65

Sino-Soviet alliance. Then, Beijing looked to Moscow for cues on all issues. While the party has traditionally been controlled by a central political bureau under Mao or the charismatic Zhou Enlai, it is now becoming more bureaucratized and controlled by a secretariat that is presided over by the secretary-general. Almost half the 200 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party are new faces from the Communist Youth League, which constitutes "a new bureaucratic aristocracy."

In effect, the Japanese professor argues, this new group, which wants to perpetuate its power, looks to Soviet methodology as the alternative to the strategies of Mao, who sought strictly Chinese solutions to that country's problems. And this new bureaucracy, heavily larded with "the Soviet generation," is searching for a model after the near-chaos that resulted from Mao's policies. They cannot look to the West and Japan because liberal political institutions built into their systems would threaten the Communists' monopoly of power. Nakajima thinks that is why the bureaucracy will go back to "the Soviet model" for economic development—as well as political stability—however strong its flirtation with Western technological development. ■



Friendlier days: In 1953, a Soviet expert assists on a Chengchow power plant.

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