

China At The Crossroads

Teng Hsiao-ping, China's symbol of pragmatism and realism after a quarter century of Maoism, has at last become the de facto head of state and leader of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China. Few observers doubt that Teng, not party chairman and interim prime minister Hua Kuo-feng, is the real power in China, after his reappointment to his former posts of deputy prime minister, party vice-chairman, and army chief of staff, and his elevation to the number three spot in the Peking hierarchy after Hua and aging Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying. Teng's return — on his own terms — after he helped engineer the downfall of the "gang of four" top Maoist acolytes in October and maneuvered to ensure the repeal of most Maoist domestic policies and the purge of thousands of Maoist cadres — signifies the victory of the faction he heads and the policies he has stood for since his first rehabilitation by Chou En-lai in 1973.

CHINA

Teng's policies are discipline in the factories, emphasis on economic productivity, reintroduction of learning to the school system, fostering of science, and the importation of foreign technology. Broadly, they represent the bare minimum needed to pull China back from the brink of the economic collapse and political disintegration to which Maoist misuse had brought the country since 1958. The common-sense sanity of the Tengist approach — which bears for the Chinese an uncomfortable similarity to the Soviet model they so rudely abandoned after 1957 — is completely contrary to the atavistic emperor-rule of the late Mao Tse-tung, who calmly contemplated the destruction of the country's science, education, and economy to fulfill his mystical dreams and destroy his factional opponents. In the nine months since the October arrests of Mao's widow Chiang Ching and her three Politburo colleagues, most of the program first put forth by Teng in summer 1975 has been progressively carried out.

The Chinese population's response to Teng's return shows the degree to which the putative mass support for the Maoist line masked a yearning for relief from the barrenness, hypocrisy, and insanity of life under Mao. Despite the lengths to which the press has gone since October to portray the forced march away from Maoism as in fact what Mao *really* meant, every aware Chinese knows that the post-October regime has repudiated everything but Mao's name. The public return of Teng reassured the population that nothing can now interfere with the implementation of his program. The July 22 announcement by radio and loudspeaker of the Central Committee decision restoring Teng was hardly completed before masses

surged into the streets, fireworks went off, and police cordons were overwhelmed by festive crowds.

China, U.S. and Europe

Despite Teng's domestic policies, China's foreign policy has changed little since Mao's death last September and remains a significant factor for world war. The psychotic rage against the Soviet Union displayed by Mao has shown no signs of abating, while China continues to play dangerous games in several African hotspots and courts U.S. warmongers like Elmo Zumwalt and James Schlesinger. China shows no outward signs of any serious perception of the world strategic situation, and appears to be operating on an updated version of the ancient "manipulate the foreign barbarians" maxim.

European political circles greeted Teng's return with unconcealed pleasure. The most explicit welcome was given by the right-wing London *Daily Telegraph*, whose military correspondent, Clare Hollingworth, the paper's former Peking correspondent, is rumored to have had direct links to the Teng faction. Two warm editorials were accompanied by several Hollingworth articles claiming that European NATO circles were overjoyed by Teng's return because it meant a continuation of China's anti-Sovietism and close economic ties with the West. Hollingworth speculated that Teng would normalize diplomatic relations with the U.S. later this year and warned British businessmen they had better conclude trade deals to provide China arms and factories soon or risk losing the business to the U.S. The universal expectation in Europe is that Teng will import vast quantities of technology and capital, and large numbers of military aircraft and other weapons, even if it means abandoning China's long-standing policy of taking on little credit.

From the U.S. side, the response has been extremely cautious. Teng is known as a hard bargainer and a testy individual. He gave Cyrus Vance, scheduled to visit Peking in August, a rough time when Vance made a private visit to China in 1975. It is not known whether Vance is prepared to accede to the three Chinese conditions for establishing full relations: end of U.S. recognition of the Taiwan regime, end of U.S. military presence there, and abrogation of the U.S.-Republic of China defense treaty. It is more likely that Vance hopes instead for some Chinese concession, such as a statement to the effect that China will not use force to conquer Taiwan. In that case, Teng's return insures the abortion of Vance's mission.

A subtle change in Chinese foreign policy, however, seems to have occurred in recent months. If confirmed, the change would constitute a "second world-third world" strategy of allying with Europe, Japan, and the Third World against the "first world" in the Chinese lexicon, the two "superpowers," the U.S. and the Soviet Union. While in no way altering China's vituperative anti-Sovietism, the shift would doom the scenario pushed by Rockefeller circles, notably Zbigniew Brzezinski and

James Schlesinger within the Carter Administration, to conclude a military alliance with Peking against the Soviet Union.

One hint of the policy shift comes in China's coverage of the strongly pro-Soviet liberation movement in Rhodesia which China had almost ignored until recently. Chinese de facto support for South Africa against pro-Soviet Angola has been dropped and a major effort to court the liberation movement has emerged. In coverage of the arms race and the Belgrade CSCE meeting, the Soviets are treated comparably to the U.S. in the Peking press. A third hint is the sudden breaking of a long silence on Korea and the strong denunciation of the South Korean regime and of U.S. policy there. China's strong support for North Korea and rejection of any scheme to recognize both Koreas makes difficult the Carter Administration's attempt to bring China in on a deal to close the Soviet Union out of the North Pacific.

The first outlines of Peking's "second world" approach became manifest under Teng's previous tenure as de facto head of state in 1975, when a host of conservative European leaders visited China, and Teng visited France — and it disappeared with his fall in early 1976. Teng probably now advocates an "equi-distant hostility" toward both the U.S. and the Soviets. After a trip to Peking, Japanese Socialist Party leader Narasaki reported that China views the Carter Administration as no different than the Ford Administration, which it cordially disliked.

Europe has an excellent opportunity to consolidate its trade ties and exert diplomatic pressure on Peking to support Europe against the U.S. — putting the Chinese rhetoric about the importance of a strong and united Europe to the test.

The Long Road Back

At home, the Teng regime faces a monumental mess. In education, all schools in China were closed for four to five years after 1966 and the colleges and universities for longer. When the colleges reopened, academic ability or achievement was not an entrance requirement, and all high school graduates had to serve three years on a farm before becoming eligible for college. Scientists were constantly badgered and attacked, forced to do stints in the countryside and terrorized out of doing any basic or theoretical research. The combined result has been a hideous collapse of both educational standards and scientific competence. Equally disastrous, standards of efficiency and productivity in Chinese industry fell to abysmal levels as "political" meetings wasted huge chunks of each working day, factional brawls closed factories for weeks or months at a time, and workers who hadn't seen a pay raise in 10-15 years found no incentive to work except at leisurely paces.

Since October, the regime has tried to rectify these problems. Recently articles in the press are stressing the importance of intellectuals and their role in science. A typical article in the July 8 edition of *Peking Review* entitled "Intellectuals Are An Important Force in Socialist Revolution" quoted judiciously from Mao's pre-1958 writings — before Mao's 18-year rampage against the intellectuals — to extol intellectuals' role in the economy and to excoriate the gang of four's anti-intellectual cam-

paign. A *Kwangming Daily* article in early July said that "every achievement of (our) socialist revolution and construction has embodied the joint efforts of mental work and the sweat of the workers, peasants and intellectuals," and praised the intellectuals for having "made important contributions in developing China's science and technology, culture and education and training new forces."

A June 30 article in the *People's Daily* shows how far the regime is prepared to go in repudiating Mao. The article scathingly attacked one of Mao's pet campaigns — albeit while exonerating Mao himself — to force scientists to "learn from the peasants" in "open door research." "Some of the projects scientific personnel are engaging in are needed by the masses today and some tomorrow; on some, the scientists should work with the masses and some need study by scientists first. We must make a concrete analysis of a concrete situation. That is why the report (by Teng) advised against speaking of 'open-door scientific research' in general terms."

Frequent features have elaborated the intimidation of scientists, and the abandonment of theoretical research under Maoist rule.

Other articles have admitted that China has turned out a generation of maleducated ignoramuses, and have called for a return to examinations, study, and graduation and college admission on the basis of talent, not slogan-spouting. Quietly, the policy of sending high school graduates to farms for three years has begun to be abandoned for the brightest students, and those who are sent away now generally go to a suburb of their home city, not frontier areas, as in the past.

In the economy, the regime has tried to raise productivity, eliminate meetings on company time, tighten discipline, and give managers the decisive say in how the factories are to be run. Numerous articles have also appeared extolling the importance of foreign technology. However, China has yet to make any major purchases of western plants or technology since Mao's death.

Here lies a critical problem for which there is no easy answer. China needs tens of billions of dollars in foreign plants to get its industrial program moving. The burden would be easier if China were to accept large-scale credits. But China must also raise the wages of its workers substantially if it is to get higher productivity, which means it must also produce equivalent additional consumer goods to avoid inflation, a task it can ill afford right now. A wage-raise now could be disastrous economically, but is essential politically.

A second problem is the credibility gap between government, party, and press statements and reality. The Chinese population is deeply infected with cynicism and mistrust toward the government and party, while most people live from day to day trying to take as little initiative and responsibility for anything as possible. The most demoralized is the "lost generation" of students in their twenties — tens of millions of them — who are poorly educated and also deeply affected by the insanities, hypocrisy and betrayal of the Cultural Revolution period from 1966-68.

— Peter Rush