

# For China, new milestones toward diplomatic goals

by Linda de Hoyos

For the People's Republic of China, the month of October was unprecedented in the number of milestones marked in the achievement of Beijing's diplomatic goals.

On Oct. 6-10, the P.R.C. hosted U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, with Weinberger winning agreement for a port-of-call by the U.S. Navy to Chinese ports, and with the Chinese, in turn, making some headway in the acquisition of U.S. dual-use high technology.

On Oct. 12, a multitudinous welcoming party was brought out onto the streets of Beijing in honor of the arrival of the United Kingdom's Queen Elizabeth II and her consort Prince Philip. The queen's presence in China was but the highly publicized side of a 100-man-plus British business delegation, bringing investment to China.

And on Oct. 18, Beijing welcomed German Democratic Republic President and party leader Erich Honecker to China. As a result of this visit, Honecker and China's Deng Xiao Ping publicly acknowledged full relations between the East German and Chinese Communist Parties, a necessary steppingstone to full Sino-Soviet ties.

There is no contradiction for Beijing among the great fanfare greeting each of these three visits. The Chinese objective behind this equilateral diplomacy is the securing of the best possible position within the two-and-a-half imperial division of the world contemplated by Moscow, its oligarchical partners in the West, and the leaders of China.

Although China, by virtue of its massive economic poverty, cannot present itself as a military superpower, its position "in-between" Moscow and Washington has enabled the Chinese leadership to maneuver to gain maximum benefit from both. China is further looking for allies to bring into its "third corner." As Deng Xiao Ping said in an interview published in the Hong Kong *Wen Wei Po* Nov. 2: "China regards herself as a force for maintaining world peace. . . . A gratifying fact is that the peace force is also growing in the world. Europe (including Eastern Europe) does not want to see any war. . . . Australia and Japan also do not want to fight any war. . . . We share many common points with Europe, and the most prominent common point is that both sides desire peace and are peace forces for checking the outbreak of war. This is the foundation for China and Europe to develop their political and economic relations. When men-

tioning Europe, we merely referred to Western Europe in the past, but now we also refer to Eastern Europe."

In the case of the United States, Defense Secretary Weinberger's trip appeared to put the Sino-U.S. military relationship back on line. The approval of a U.S. naval port-of-call in China—for the first time since 1949—was a recoup after the Chinese had scuttled similar plans in 1985, using the issue of nuclear-weapons-carrying ships as their excuse. The two countries further agreed upon sending a contingent of young Chinese soldiers to the U.S. Army Academy at West Point. On the high-technology front, the Weinberger arranged for the sale of \$500 million worth of F-8 avionics to the P.R.C.

Weinberger also appeared to pull off some diplomatic points for Washington vis-à-vis the U.S.S.R., whose leader Mikhail Gorbachov was sitting across the table from President Reagan at Reykjavik while Weinberger was in Beijing. With information passed to the United States from Pakistan, Weinberger appeared to convince Deng Xiao Ping that the much-publicized Soviet withdrawal of six regiments from Afghanistan—promised as a peace offering to Beijing by Gorbachov in his July 28 Vladivostok speech—was a hoax. In addition, even while Weinberger was still in Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry issued a call for the removal of all Soviet intermediate missiles from the Asian theater, underlining the U.S. position at Reykjavik against Soviet transfer of European-based missiles to the Pacific.

## The wind blows toward Moscow

Any hopes in Washington that the United States can revive its "China card," however, has to be chalked up to the same mania that is leading Washington to befriend Iran's mullahs. If China looks to the West and Japan for the technologies it requires to become a superpower in its own right, within the Asian geopolitical orbit, it is with Moscow that Beijing must deal. This has been the inevitable result of Kissinger's "breakthrough" China Card. Under that policy, the United States scorned its own allies on behalf of its "alliance" with China. With the position of the United States thereby nullified by the policy of the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, even China must turn to the emerging dominant power in the region: the U.S.S.R.

For both China and the Soviet Union, the visit Oct. 18 of

East German President Erich Honecker was a major step forward in their rapprochement. It was first through East Germany that relations between the North Korean regime of Kim Il-Sung and the Soviets were transformed into a full military partnership over the last year.

Honecker is the latest and most important of a parade of Eastern European leaders to arrive in China since early September. The first was Polish leader Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski. In the meantime, delegations have arrived in Beijing from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. Just before Honecker's visit, Chinese leaders met with Andrei Jukanov, first vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria, a visit that resulted in the signing of protocols for trade and cultural-educational exchange. The Chinese view Bulgaria as especially crucial, given its close links to Moscow.

Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang will travel to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany next summer.

China already signed a 10-year protocol with East Germany for scientific cooperation and aid for Chinese industry last May in Berlin. The diplomatic pioneer for this and other Chinese forays into Eastern Europe is Vice Premier Li Peng, the adopted son of the late Chou En lai and a protégé of pro-Soviet economist Chen Yun. Trained as an engineer in Moscow, Li Peng has many ties into the Soviet bloc, and is believed to be the strongest contender as the successor to the aging Deng.

### **Tough bargaining**

Since Gorbachov's Vladivostok speech, the Soviets have been on a full drive to fully reopen relations with China. "Sino-Soviet cooperation has been an urgent matter," declared the Soviet party daily *Pravda* on Oct. 1, reiterating the Soviet view that China will emerge "as the center of power" in all the Pacific.

In Beijing at the same time as Weinberger was Soviet Vice Foreign Minister Ivan Rogachov, who carried out border talks with his counterpart Qian Qili. The talks, the joint communiqué reported, took place in a "frank and earnest atmosphere" and will be continued in April of next year.

Other agreements have been worked out. On Oct. 17 in Moscow, Beijing and Moscow agreed to cooperate in development of Chinese agriculture, railways, and fisheries. This was the result of the first session of a Sino-Soviet committee on economic and technological cooperation. A week later, another agreement was signed in Moscow to establish a joint committee to oversee the development of the Ergun and Heilun rivers, which form a long stretch of the Sino-Soviet border. The agreement calls for joint work on power generation, flood prevention, navigation, and water utilization.

Although China is eager for Soviet technical cooperation on the border and also aid in rehabilitating many of the industrial plants Moscow left behind in 1959, Beijing continues to harp that full normalization of relations cannot take place until the U.S.S.R. removes the "three obstacles": Soviet

troops and missiles on the Sino-Soviet border, Soviet troops in Afghanistan, and Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea. But these "three obstacles" function toward Moscow as the "one obstacle" of Taiwan does toward the United States—as a useful bargaining chip.

Under the proper conditions, Sino-Soviet relations could blossom at any time. During his meeting with Honecker, Deng reminded the East German of Deng's days in Berlin in 1925 (under Comintern auspices). With relations between parties considered the barometer for relations, Deng further announced that a resumption of East German-Chinese parties ties is not necessary, because "the two parties have never broken off their relations."

This interesting formulation coheres with the fact that ties between the Chinese and Soviet-allied intelligence services were retained throughout the period of the Sino-Soviet split—running through the Trust circles of the Institute for Pacific Relations in Canada, London, and the United States.

A central focus for both Beijing and Moscow now is their joint condominium over the countries of Asia. The diplomatic maneuvering around Indochina is exemplary of the Sino-Soviet squeeze play. The Chinese asked North Korea's Kim Il-Sung, in Moscow for the second time in two years during the first week of October, to place pressure on Moscow to force the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. The Chinese indicated they might be willing to make some quid pro quo. According to Japanese television reports, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian informed his Indonesian counterpart in New York in late September that China would not insist on the participation of the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge in any peace talks on the Indochina conflict.

The Chinese also let it be known that a Deng-Gorbachov summit would be possible, if the Soviets pressure Vietnam to withdraw. But Moscow turned down the offer, with Soviet Vice Foreign Minister Rogachov telling the Chinese that Beijing should hold direct talks with Hanoi instead. The Vietnamese, after a tense meeting in Moscow between Gorbachov and new Vietnamese secretary general Troung Chinh, declared their willingness to talk. In Hanoi Oct. 19, Troung Chinh told Vietnamese military officers that Vietnam is ready to hold talks with China "no matter where, no matter when, and at any level." Soviet pressure for this Vietnamese stance may well have included a withdrawal of Soviet aid, as indicated by statements from Troung Chinh, later denied by Vietnam, that Soviet aid was in danger of being diminished.

But the Vietnam offer was declined by China. Said a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman: "As long as Vietnam refuses to give up occupation of Cambodia and withdraw all its troops from that country, there is no point in talking with it."

Meanwhile, the Vietnamese and the Chinese through their press and statements from their leaders have made known that agricultural and industrial production in both countries is verging on collapse.