

China plays the 'America

Is Brzezinski's 'ace' a wild card the U.S. can't handle?

Under prompting from National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, the Carter Administration played its geopolitical "ace" last week, precipitously moving to extend official diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China in what Brzezinski sees as an effort to construct a "second front" against the Soviet Union in Asia.

Displaying what one perceptive China expert labeled "strategic tunnel vision," the Administration achieved its link-up with China by yielding on every fundamental point which had been in dispute between the U.S. and China over the important issue of Taiwan, and, at the same time, effectively granted the Chinese a sphere of influence over Southeast Asia. For that price, Brzezinski calculates that he has bought an important ally against the Soviet Union. The card he has played is actually a wild card in international politics, and, most experts calculate, the recognition move is reinforcing the "Han Chauvinist" tendencies within China that have made China historically the nemesis of nationalism and development in the Far East. If the pattern of the Administration's Camp David miscalculations is repeated, the "China card" could in fact force the fiercely independent nations of Southeast Asia to turn toward the Soviet Union as a counterweight to the U.S.-China axis.

What Asia, and many in the U.S. and Europe, fear is that rather than obediently serving as a NATO "second front" against the Soviet Union, the scheming and cynical Chinese leaders, Teng Hsiao-ping foremost among them, will use U.S. relations as sanction for Chinese domination in Asia. Asians are already monitoring closely China's moves against Vietnam — and the implicit Administration sanction given those moves through its support for China's puppet Cambodia — and none of Vietnam's neighbors which is familiar with the history of Chinese policy in Asia shares the National Security Council view that the China-Vietnam conflict is essentially a surrogate conflict with the Soviets. In the longer term, there is concern—the Soviets said so publicly (see page 10)—that the Administration has taken too little notice of China's official policy that "war is inevitable" between the Soviet Union and NATO. Where other countries are working to reduce that danger, the Administration's geopolitical orientation tends to reinforce the potential for conflict —

which the Chinese will certainly attempt to manipulate to their perceived advantage.

In the following three-part report, we analyze the powerful social and ideological forces at work in the Chinese population and leadership, indicating the pitfalls which must confront a nation such as the U.S. (and, importantly, Great Britain) which attempts to manipulate the Chinese along the lines proposed by geopolitical doctrines and adopted by the Carter Administration. Then we contrast the more cautious and farsighted strategic approach adopted toward the China question by Japan, West Germany, and Mexico, all nations which have major dealings with the Chinese. Finally, we report on the concern which the recent U.S. move has aroused among America's traditional Southeast Asian allies.

1. The 'New China' versus the 'Old'

For 10 days in late November, a force and a spirit welled forth from the Chinese population that, with one brief exception, has not been seen since the "Young China" upsurge of the first three decades of this century. This "New China," permitted to freely write wall posters in Peking and other cities during that 10-day period, displayed the same desire to reform the nation, the same iconoclasm and idealism, that sparked their predecessors more than 50 years ago, the generation which — behind the reform banner of Sun Yat-sen — formed the Communist Party itself in 1920.

For those 10 days, the "New China," the China of intellectuals, youth, and industrial workers seeking to cast off the dead weight of 2,000 years of a sterile Chinese cultural tradition with rationalism and science and bring China into the modern international community, spoke to the world and to its rulers. It spoke of the anger and bitterness of, especially, the last 12 years, all but two of them under the arbitrary and insane rule of Mao Tse-tung,