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China's Universities - "Ideological Reform"

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

"The Chinese Communists are converting the universities on the mainland into political centers and trade schools." That is how an American-educated Chinese college professor (I will call him Professor Wang), who worked under the Communists in both East and South China and only recently escaped to Hong Kong as a refugee, sums up the Chinese Communists' present policy toward higher education. His statement is supported by official pronouncements and reports on current developments contained in Chinese Communist publications.

During the past half century, prior to the Chinese Communists' rise to power, modern education in China developed under the strong influence of Western ideals of liberal education and academic freedom. This influence, combined with the well-established Chinese respect for scholars, produced, in the modern universities of China, centers of intellectual ferment which played a leading role in the Chinese revolution. But the revolution is now turning on the universities and is attempting to destroy them as centers of independent thought. The universities are gradually being converted into indoctrination schools and technical training institutes for the bureaucracy of the new regime.

For two and a half years after the Chinese Communists "liberated" the country, they moved rather cautiously and slowly in their relations with most universities and intellectuals. Then, last Fall, they took off their gloves and started an all-out campaign of "ideological reform" which has subsequently developed into a many-sided attack upon intellectual freedom and integrity in China's academic institutions. During recent months, for the first time, educators of outstanding national reputation, who at one time publicly supported the Communist regime and tried to adapt themselves to it, have been made scapegoats in this attack upon the intellectuals. The professors at Yenching University, in Peking, have been a major target of attack.

Yenching, formerly a private American-supported institution and one of the leading universities in China, is not entirely typical of China's universities. During the first stages of Communist control it was treated more leniently than the average Government university, and recently, since the beginning of more strenuous efforts to root out what the Communists call "American cultural aggression", it has been treated more harshly. But the process is essentially the same in all universities, despite variations in timing and methods.

The Chinese Communists' People's Liberation Army entered the campus of Yenching in December, 1948, and received an enthusiastic welcome. The prevailing atmosphere was one of hope and optimism. I remember a conversation I

had on the Yenching campus about six months later with the president of the university, Dr. Lu Chih-wei. He said, in effect, "I sincerely believe the Communists will allow universities such as Yenching to continue, and we are going to try to adapt ourselves to the new regime, as long as we can maintain our basic standards and principles." For almost two years thereafter Yenching continued operating without basic change. Then, in April, 1951, the Government abruptly "took over" the university and made it a state institution; other private institutions, particularly those which had received foreign financial assistance, suffered the same fate subsequently. Another year went by and then, in November, 1951, the Government adopted a "Plan for the Reorganization of All Technical Colleges throughout the Nation" which transferred Yenching's Engineering Department to Tsinghua University and its Colleges of Arts, Science, and Law to Peking National University. The Plan included a sentence which stated, simply: "The name of Yenching University shall be abolished." This step was taken after initiation of the intensive "ideological reform" movement in Peking. The final blow, however, came late this Spring when President Lu Chih-wei and several outstanding Yenching professors were publicly denounced and removed from their posts. Lu, according to one of the most recent travellers from Peking, is believed to be under arrest.

Recently I asked Professor Wang what he believed the effect of these harsh measures against Lu and his colleagues would be upon intellectuals elsewhere in China - specifically upon the professors whom he knows and talked with only a few months ago. "Tremendous", he said. "Yes, tremendous. Lu and the others are universally respected in China. They are representatives of what I would call the cream of China's intellectuals. Lu, particularly, has been admired for his character as well as for his scholarship. If people of Lu's stature can be denounced and discarded, no one is safe; I imagine my friends are thinking that this is only the beginning."

Full reports of developments in Yenching have never been published in the official Chinese Communist press, but copies of a college publication called "New Yenching" have reached Hong Kong, and this publication contains many of the details.

The climax of the attack on President Lu Chih-wei came when he was denounced by his only daughter in a bitter tirade made at a public accusation meeting last March 11. The daughter, Lu Yao-hua, postgraduate student in Yenching's Biology Department and a candidate for membership in the Communists' New Democratic Youth Corps, was at one time known to be exceptionally fond of her father, according to friends now in Hong Kong, but she lashed out at her father in a merciless attack. "You are a one hundred per cent claw of imperialism and a tool faithful to American imperialism in its cultural aggression"; "you have been a hypocrite and I have been cheated by you"; "you are no longer my respectable father"; "you are actually a 'Christian with no political sympathy for the Communist Party'"; "no Chinese will ever pardon you". She excused herself for not having denounced him earlier by blaming it on "the parental love between a father and a daughter", but she went on to say: "Even if this love is true, it is definitely insignificant compared with the love among the broad masses, not to mention the fact that your love is not love but deceit. Why must I be deceived by you and revolt against the people? I want to be with the broad masses and struggle hard for the sake of Communism."

During the course of the so-called "Three Anti" campaign which was in progress when he was denounced, Lu Chih-wei himself made humble confessions that he had been "one hundred percent pro-American, willing to carry out American cultural aggression", had "passively attacked the cultural-educational policy of the

Chinese Communist Party\*, and had \*sought to keep the old traditions of Yenching\*. "I confess my crimes", he said; but apparently his confessions were not sufficient. He was repeatedly denounced and \*exposed\* for organizing a \*reactionary clique\* in Yenching and \*conniving with the enemy for monopolizing the school affairs and for continuing to carry out his policy of cultural aggression\*. The \*Lu clique\*, all of whom were also denounced, included four of the key figures in the university: Nieh Ch'ung-ch'i, Dean of Studies; Ch'i Ssu-ho, Head of the Department of History and Dean of the College of Arts before its dissolution; Ch'en Fang-chih, Head of the Department of Political Science; and Shen Nai-chang, Head of the Department of Psychology.

In addition to Lu, two other Yenching professors with nation-wide reputations were denounced and removed from their posts; there are unconfirmed reports that they as well as Lu are under detention. One was Chang Tung-sun, an outstanding philosopher who for many years was a leader of the Democratic League, principal pro-Communist \*minor party\* in Peking's present \*coalition\*. The other was Chao Tzu-ch'en, Head of Yenching's School of Religion, who has been a vociferous fellow traveller and public defender of the Communist regime as well as one of the leaders of the Communist-sponsored independent Chinese Christian Church. At the time of their denunciation, Chang was a member of the Central People's Government Council, top executive-legislative body in China, and both Lu and Chao were members of the People's Political Consultative Conference, precursor of a People's Congress.

Although in some respects Yenching is a special case, the drastic measures applied there are merely an extreme form of the pressure which is being applied to all universities in the intensive \*ideological reform\* process. This process began in Peking, where it has already passed its peak, but it is now being extended to other parts of the country, and in Kwangtung, the province bordering Hong Kong, it has just \*begun in earnest\* in most universities.

Like so many of the \*campaigns\* which have taken place in Communist China in rapid succession during the past three years, the "ideological reform" campaign started with relatively little fanfare and then, over a period of months, built up into a frantic, violent, and almost hysterical \*struggle\*. (A recent refugee from the mainland has described some of the meetings held during the course of the campaign in Peking, and they sound very much like \*holy roller\* orgies.) The stated aim of the campaign when it started was to carry out general \*ideological reform\* through a "study movement" and "criticism and self-criticism". It was initiated in Peking, foremost center of higher education in China, by a nineteen-member, Government-appointed \*Study Committee of Teachers of Institutes of Higher Education in Peking and Tientsin\*, headed by the Central Government's Minister of Education, Ma Hsu-lun. Under this over-all committee, sub-committees were established in each of the twenty-odd institutions participating, and the professors were grouped into small discussion groups with approximately ten members each.

The campaign really started rolling on September 29, 1951, when Premier Chou En-lai himself addressed a mass meeting of over 3,000 professors, assistants, and instructors in Peking, to define a correct "standpoint" and "attitude" for them. The professors were then put to work reading Communist literature, including Chou's report, holding discussion meetings, and carrying out thorough criticism and self-criticism. A special journal, named "Teachers' Study", was brought out by the directing committee to guide the campaign, and the committee despatched reporting officers, coordinators, and liaison men to all the universities to check up on the process. Altogether over 6,500 professors and

other university teaching personnel in Peking took part. They spent many hours each week in required reading, discussion, and meetings.

Five stages in the campaign were outlined. The first consisted of study of Chou En-lai's report. The second centered upon a report by local Peking Communist Party chief, P'eng Chen, on three previous "major movements" (agrarian reform, Resist-America and Aid-Korea, and the suppression of counter-revolutionaries) and was intended to "expose reactionary thoughts" and "draw a clear line of demarcation between ourselves and our enemies". This was followed by a period of study on the Chinese Communist Party and its history; the aim was to establish the correct "standpoint, viewpoint, and method of the working class" and to criticise "the mistaken thoughts of the bourgeois class and the petty bourgeoisie". Subsequently, the professors studied a report on national economic development stressing the need for training cadres in order to "establish the ideology of education serving the needs of national defense and economic construction". Finally, they went through a summing up period.

The essence of this process was the criticism and self-criticism, which are among the Communists most effective techniques of thought control and indoctrination, and during the latter part of 1951 the Chinese press was filled with the humble (and one cannot help but believe, in many cases, humiliating) confessions of the best-known Peking professors. These men, who have been the intellectual leaders of China in the past, vied with each other in public expressions of intellectual submission to the Communist Party and repudiation of past beliefs - such as that made by the Dean of the College of Law of Peking University who abjectly apologized for the "serious mistake of holding on to my own views".

The professors admitted, and resolved to rid themselves, of such a plethora of sins that it is difficult even to list them all. Individualism, reformism, objectivism, dogmatism, sectarianism, opportunism, feudal thoughts, compradorism, a "pro-America, worship-America, fear-America" mentality, reactionary capitalist thoughts, bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology, liberalism, a non-political standpoint, the "mistaken pedagogical philosophy of 'freedom of thought' and 'freedom of study'", and others.

The Vice-Minister of Education, Ch'ien Chun-jui, summed up the aim of the campaign by stating: "In the course of this study movement, we should adopt the Marxist standpoint, approach, and method, fall back upon revolutionary patriotism, internationalism, and collectivism, and follow the working class' basic viewpoint of union of theory and practice, to eliminate with determination the....influences of the Anglo-American reactionary capitalist class and overcome the erroneous trends of individualism, objectivism, sectarianism, and dogmatism."

Actually, the use of these complicated labels and "isms" merely obscures the Government's basic objectives: to obtain complete acceptance of the Communist Party's collective will, to suppress intellectual independence and freedom, and to force the professors into the accepted ideological mould. From their statements, Chinese Communist leaders appear to believe not only that this is necessary and desirable per se but also that it is dialectically necessary to facilitate implementation of their new educational policies which emphasize technical and political training and contemplate changing "old-fashioned universities into new people's universities."

On October 1, 1951, after the "ideological reform" campaign had started, the Government Administration Council (GAC), highest administrative organ in the Peking Government, promulgated a decree entitled "Decision on the Reformation

of the Educational System". The new educational system outlined by this Decision places primary emphasis upon development of elementary education, education of political workers and cadres, and technical education. (I will have more to say on the educational system, including specific developments in the curriculum and organization of higher education in later newsletters.) At the university level, technical education is particularly emphasized, and it is clear that the Chinese Communists reject the accepted "old-fashioned" idea of universities as centers for independent scholarship and thought. Ma Yin-ch'u, President of Peking National University which is traditionally the leading university in China, stated in a speech shortly after promulgation of the GAC decree: "The aim of higher educational institutions is to train advanced technical personnel and principal cadres for national construction", and Ministry of Education officials have asserted that in the next five to six years institutions of higher learning in China should train 150,000 to 200,000 "senior construction cadres" for industrial, agricultural, communications, transport, medical, and similar technical work (and that middle school level technical institutions should train 500,000 "junior cadres" in the same period). This is the primary job that the universities are now being converted to do.

It is not surprising that many Chinese professors, brought up on the traditions of liberal education, resent both the ideological thought control which demands that they "gradually turn themselves into Marxists" and the trend toward mass production of university graduates with a minimum of knowledge and skill in some specialized technical field. The Communists themselves now admit passive opposition to their educational reorganization - Professor Wang says that in the two universities where he taught the opposition to current educational trends is widespread and deep among professors but that it cannot be anything more than passive due to the police controls which extend to the universities as to all other organizations under Chinese Communist rule - and this is undoubtedly one explanation for the fact that the "ideological reform" campaign in Peking, which was originally slated to last for only four months, did not conclude on schedule but merged into a new and even more intensive campaign.

In early 1952 "ideological reform" in Peking merged with the "Three Anti" movement. Since then all normal university classes and activities have been virtually suspended, and the professors, with the "assistance" of their students and university employees, have been caught up in a full time process of denunciation and confession which seems designed to wipe out the last traces of independence and intellectual integrity which may have remained after the first stage of "ideological reform".

The "Three Anti" movement was not primarily ideological. It originated in August, 1951, in Northeast China, as part of a local Increase Production and Economy drive. Then, in December, it developed into a national campaign to rid the Government and Party of corruption, waste, and bureaucratism and to combat the "corrosive" influence of the bourgeoisie which was alleged to be the main cause of these evils. In January of this year its scope expanded again, and it concentrated its fire on the bourgeoisie - especially commercial interests - in a companion "Five Anti" campaign against bribery, tax evasion, stealing of State property, cheating on labor, time, and materials, and stealing State economic intelligence. These two campaigns have undoubtedly concerned more people and have had more far reaching effects than any other Chinese Communist campaigns centered on urban areas to date. (I will attempt to assess the economic

effects of the campaigns in a later newsletter.) It was natural and logical that the Communists would apply this attack on the bourgeoisie to bourgeois thought in the universities, and in early 1951 "ideological reform" in the Peking universities continued with renewed vigor under the "Three Anti" slogans. As in the case of the original ideological campaign it did not begin elsewhere until somewhat later, and it is still in full swing in universities in many parts of the country.

The "Three Anti" campaign in Peking's universities was led by the Cultural-Educational Sub-Committee of the Economy Check-Up Committee established to supervise the over-all movement, and Economy Check-Up Sub-Committees were established in all the universities. The campaign was described as a "grave and acute class struggle" against the "bourgeois mentality", and in actual fact it developed into a complicated real struggle involving conflicts between various groups of professors, between professors and junior teaching personnel such as instructors and assistants, and between the teaching staff and students. It is standard Communist practice to intensify group conflicts of this sort to achieve their ends, and it had already been done in the universities but never to a comparable extent. The official Communist papers described the role of the students in the campaign with what, to a distant observer, seems to be grim humor. "The students," reported one paper, "organized themselves into groups to interview the teachers, mobilize them, hold heart-to-heart talks with them, help them do away with their doubts, and sincerely assist them in their ideological reform."

The campaign reached its climax in the bitter denunciation meetings of backward elements - such as the meetings where Lu and his colleagues were denounced - and by the time it was over, according to recent arrivals from Peking, almost everyone in the universities from presidents to gate-keepers had publicly humbled themselves or been humbled before the power of the Communist regime.

During the campaign token attention was given at the beginning to the anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucratism slogans under which the struggle was being waged, and exhibitions of the "vaste waste" in the universities were held ("Even the garbage in the institutes of higher education is found to be full of the blood and sweat of the people."), but the central idea was the "demarcation of the ideological line between the bourgeoisie and the working class", between "foe and friend". The "evidence of bourgeois mentality" used to attack the professors included everything that the Communists have objected to in the professors' attitudes, and consequently the list varied in different universities. In one, for example, it included: obstruction to the organization of "universities of a new type", reluctance to give up "American standards", rating research above teaching, unwillingness to sacrifice academic standards for the benefit of students active in political work, general indifference to politics, "individualism", and so on. The president of another university complained that the professors: "turn up their noses at the laboring masses", "think themselves above class distinctions and politics", "think that.... they represent labor", "hold that technique has nothing to do with politics", "pay little attention to the practical requirements of the new country's industrial and agricultural construction", "are still incapable of fostering a hatred for America", "cling to old methods", "give no encouragement to the

students' political study", and show irresponsibility, departmentalism, and a tendency to observe old school ties. These are merely examples; the aim was obviously to attack all evidence of non-conformity with the ideology and policies of the new regime.

It is impossible from a distance to judge the extent to which the submissiveness of the professors is real or sincere and the extent to which there is passive resistance and the Communists have been increasingly led to use force and intimidation to keep the intellectuals in line. Some of the public "confessions" sound phoney, but others sound as if they might be authentic. In this connection, however, the remarks of Professor Wang to me are of some interest. He doesn't think more than a small proportion of the professors in China's universities sincerely support the regime now. "One of the first things one learns under the Communists", he says, "is that one cannot disagree. I think most of the professors in Peking are simply playing a role. They can't help it. I know something about that, because I 'confessed' too. As a matter of fact the Communists liked my confession; it was considered the second best confession in my university. If I could get away with it, I am sure the professors in Peking are able to do so too. There isn't anything else they can do."

It would be a mistake to assume either that the professors are completely converted or intimidated after their "ideological reform" or that China's universities have completely changed their character as a result of the Government's new educational policies, however. It is a standard technique employed by the Chinese Communists in their "campaigns" to apply extreme pressure for a short period of time and then to relax the pressure, boasting of their magnanimity, while they consolidate gains made - which are always short of the extreme goals and maximum aims defined in the campaigns. It may be some time before the Communists in China complete the process of converting "old-fashioned universities into new people's universities", but the aim has been defined and in their recent "ideological reform" campaign they have made a big step in that direction.

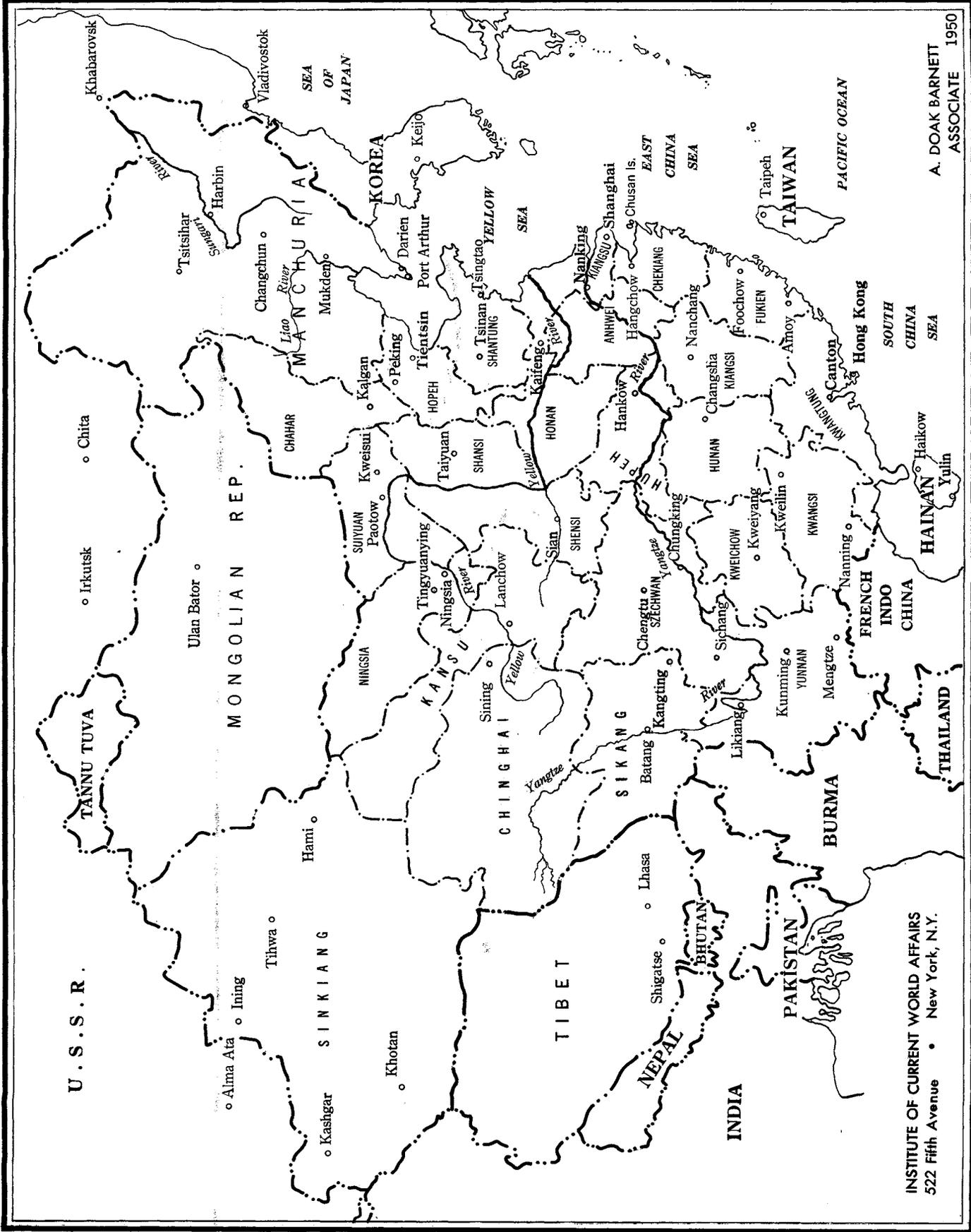
Sincerely yours,

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# CHINA



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