



A NOTE ON CHINA

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The Chinese **Communists** established their present regime in Peking on October 1, 1949. During the six years since then a tremendous revolution has taken place within China, and the "**Chinese People's Republic**," although still unrecognized by a majority of nations outside the Soviet bloc, has emerged as a leading world power. The revolution in China, which **is still** continuing, has remolded society and created a regimented totalitarian state. The Chinese Communists' aim now is to **build** an industrialized socialist country, modeled on the Soviet Union. Internationally, the Chinese Communist regime, allied with the U.S.S.R., has become the strongest power in Asia; this fact has altered the entire Asian balance of power.

The impact of these developments upon the world scene has been so dramatic that there is little need to stress the importance of understanding both the changes within China and the new international role which China has assumed. The task of understanding these changes is not an easy one; **Communist China's** isolation from the non-Soviet world has limited information available to outside observers. But the task is not impossible. On the basis of known facts about China, interpretation of recent historical trends, and analysis of the considerable amount of information which even Communist censorship cannot keep from flowing to the noncommunist world, **it is possible to grasp the main outlines of the major revolutionary changes in China's** internal and international position.

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China proper is a country of almost 600 million people. According to a **1953** census conducted by the Chinese Communists, there are 582 million people in areas of the China mainland controlled by the Peking regime. The Communists also include in their population statistics more than 19 million other Chinese, including both the inhabitants of Formosa and widely-scattered Overseas Chinese, raising the official figure for **China's** total population to about 602 million.

The majority of Chinese, over ninety per cent of the country's population, are generally referred to as **Han** Chinese; they predominate in the **country's** great agricultural plains and



Political Boundaries as of March, 1955.
 Note: In late 1955, the two provinces of Sikkang and
 Jehol were abolished, but to date (September,
 1955) the new boundaries are not entirely clear.



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river valleys which are the centers of concentrated population. In addition to the Han, however, China contains many **racial** minority groups, located principally in the continental borderland regions and mountainous areas of the country. The most important ones are the Mongols in the northern **Inner** Mongolian provinces, the Tibetans in the Southwest, the Chinese Muslims in Northwest China, and the Turkis in Chinese Turkestan. Altogether there are at least 60 minority groups, totaling perhaps 40 million **people**. These minorities constitute a continuing problem of internal administration in China.

The **Han** Chinese **are** the most ancient social group with continuous cultural and political traditions now in existence. Chinese culture has held them together despite **many** centrifugal forces. This does not mean, however, that they are completely homogeneous. There are numerous regional variations **in** China. There are considerable differences, for example, between the North and the South. The North is a land of brown, dry plains growing wheat and millet crops; the South is a land of green, wet valleys growing rice. There are special characteristics and traditions which have grown up around individual provinces and regions. In addition, there are many dialect divisions. Various forms of the dialect called Mandarin are now spoken over much of the country, but the local variations are considerable, and there are other dialects such as Cantonese and **Fukienese--each** spoken by large numbers of people--which are unintelligible to Mandarin groups. One very important cultural factor which has been a force for unity despite diversity has been the written language which is uniform for all Han Chinese. This written language, based on ideographs instead of phonetic symbols, has cut across dialect barriers and, even though literacy has always been confined to a minority, **it** has helped to tie the country together.

The home territory occupied by the Chinese stretches from the cold regions of Manchuria to the tropical island of **Hainan**, and from the wet coasts touching the East China Sea to the arid deserts of Central Asia. China is bordered by Korea, the Soviet Union, **Outer Mongolia** (since its formal separation from China in **1945**), Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, (**Tibet** before re-establishment of Chinese control there by the communists,) Nepal, Burma, and Indo-China. The Yellow and East China Seas separate **it** from Japan and the Philippines.

There is tremendous variety in this area of roughly **3,750,000** square miles (larger than the **U.S.** including all of its overseas territories), but mountains and rivers determine the concentration of population. Mountains cover most of the country, and the population is consequently **crowded** into a few plains and river valleys, the most important of which are the North China plain, Szechuan plain, **Yangtze** valley, and Canton delta. Rivers are the lifelines of these population centers.

Because so much of the country is covered by mountains, **the** pressure on the land is intense. China, with over three times

the population of the United States, has less cultivated land than the United States, and China does not have any significant area of unused land **still to** be cultivated. Life in China is sustained by extremely intensive cultivation. On the average almost 1,500 persons are supported by each square mile of cultivated land, and there is less than half an acre of food-producing territory per person. This ratio of man to land is one of the most fundamental, inescapable facts of life in China; it means overpopulation, and poverty, which have a profound influence on all aspects of national life--including politics.

Chinese culture has had a continuous development for three to four thousand years, but until the 19th century the process of change was fairly slow. The social and economic **structure** which took shape roughly two thousand years ago in the relative isolation of the Chinese subcontinent proved to be remarkably durable, and although China experienced periodic dynastic changes, civil wars, and peasant upheavals, the basic pattern of life continued with only minor changes from the first unification of the country--at the time of the revolution of 221 B.C.--to the destruction of the imperial monarchy in the revolution of 1911.

Traditionally, four-fifths of China's population has lived in villages, dependent upon agriculture for a livelihood, working the soil with its hands, illiterate, politically passive. Although the situation has varied in different places and at different periods, frequently **the** ownership of much of the land was in the past concentrated in the **hands** of a minority, the land-owning gentry, whose privileged economic position carried predominant social and political influence.

Approximately one-sixth to one-fifth of the Chinese population has lived in cities and walled towns. In traditional China, these people included merchants, landowners, government bureaucrats and officials, the scholar-literati, military men, and so on. There was a considerable gap between urban upper and rural lower classes, but a degree of social mobility was maintained, and some persons of all classes climbed the social ladder to join the scholar-literati group which formed the bureaucracy and administered the country under the central monarchy.

The paternalistic family has been the foundation of social life in China in the past, and **it** has provided a source of strength and stability to the country. Even the pattern of government under the pre-1911 empire was governed by Confucianist conceptions of the family system, and both personal and national life were regulated by accepted rules of family relations.

Agriculture has been the basis of the Chinese **economy--** the principal productive activity in the country. Capitalism never developed in pre-1911 China, and the merchant class held low prestige and exercised relatively little influence on national

life. Before the impact of the West, China had not begun a process of **commercial-industrial** development such as that which took place earlier in the West.

Government in pre-1911 China was authoritarian but by and large laissez-faire. At the top of the hierarchy was the emperor, and under him a well-developed bureaucracy administered the various provinces and other divisions of the country. Considerable local autonomy existed at the lowest levels of government, however, and many aspects of life were not included in the scope of government regulation. The government, through its centralized bureaucracy, levied taxes, constructed and repaired great public works, and maintained order, but it did not exercise control over all local affairs.

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The stability of traditional China began to disintegrate in the 19th century. Internally, for reasons never completely explained by students of China, the population of the country went through a rapid process of increase--from 143 million in 1741 to 432 million in 1851 (according to some estimates)--and this produced a serious agrarian crisis by the mid-39th century. Simultaneously, the Manchu dynasty went through a process of internal decay. Then, after the Opium War in 1840-42, the West, technologically superior to China, began penetrating the country and exerting a strong influence upon it. Old values were discredited by imported ideas. Handicraft production in the Chinese rural economy was disrupted, China's independence was compromised by special rights and concessions demanded by foreign powers.

The Chinese revolution, which is still going on, can be dated from about that time. The first great outbreak was the **T'ai-p'ing** Rebellion of 1851-64. Then came demands for constitutional reform in the 1890's. Later, under Sun **Yat-sen's** slogans of the "Three People's Principles" (democracy, nationalism, and **people's** livelihood), the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty was accomplished in 1911. This marked the passing of the old order, but there followed a period of internal chaos and warlordism which lasted for many years. Finally, under the impetus of growing nationalism, Chiang Kai-shek inherited the mantle of Sun and led the revolution of 1925-28 which established a new government. The Nationalist Government set up by Chiang maintained power from 1928 until 1949 when, weakened by the war with Japan and having lost much of its internal support, it was overthrown by the Chinese Communists.

Ideologically the main currents of the Chinese revolution which brought first the Nationalists and subsequently the Communists to power have been ideas imported from the West: nationalism, democracy, social and economic reform. Before the 19th century there was nothing comparable to modern nationalism

in China. The Chinese looked upon their country as the civilized world, beyond which there **was** nothing but the barbarian. Chinese became aware of modern national states when China was militarily defeated by them, and many Chinese decided that to deal with this **new** world China must itself become a strong modern nation-state. The ideal of democracy **was** adopted from the West by Chinese intellectuals groping for something new to replace the shattered and discredited structure of imperial, Confucianist China. Most of the modern **intellectual** and political leaders of China, whether belonging to the **Nationalists**, Communists, or other groups, have rejected much of China's past and have aimed to make China a strong, modern, industrialized, "**democratic**" country in the image of the West.

The Chinese **Communists** entered the revolutionary scene relatively **late**. The party was not **organized** until 1921, and its real development of power took place during the Sino-Japanese War. Although from the **first** the Chinese **Communists** have been an integral part of the Soviet-led communist world revolution, they won the **struggle** for power within China by capitalizing on the main currents of the Chinese revolution. The growth of their strength was proportionate to the decline of the **Nationalists'** strength, which was **undermined** by foreign aggression and internal disruption. Finally, on the basis of an alliance of peasants and dissatisfied intellectuals the Communists overthrew the Nationalists in the **1945-49** civil war.

The basic strategy of the Chinese Communists, which crystallized after early failures, was to establish control over definite geographical **bases**; to **organize** peasants into **armed** revolutionary forces; to undermine, isolate, and attack the urban centers of Nationalist power; and finally to consolidate their forces and overthrow the government by military force. This strategy proved to be successful, and **it** is significant that the Chinese Communists have asserted that, "**The classic type of revolution in colonial and semicolonial countries is the Chinese revolution.**"

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The Chinese Communists have always frankly stated that their ultimate aim is a Communist state, but they have conceived of the revolutionary process as one involving several stages, each bringing them closer to their final goal. This tactical flexibility, based on practical expediency, has minimized opposition to their program at each stage of its development. During the struggle for power in China, the **Communists'** aims were **defined** in terms of eliminating "**feudalism**," "**imperialism**," and "**bureaucratic capitalism**"--which meant rooting out landlordism, Western influence, and the largest capitalists linked closely to the previous **regime**. Achievement of power was to be followed by

a "period of New Democracy," during which socialist and private enterprise would be allowed to coexist. Actually, however, the pace of socialization steadily increased after 1949, and at the end of 1953 a new stage in the revolution was defined in the "General Line of the State" for the "period of Transition to Socialism." According to the "General Line," China will move ahead toward socialism through a program of "**socialist industrialization**," which means development of state-owned enterprises, and "**socialist transformation**" of remaining private enterprise.

The Communists themselves divide the years since they came to power into two main periods. The first, a period of "**reconstruction**," lasted from 1949 through 1952. During those three years the country was unified, political control was consolidated, and energetic efforts were made to bring about economic recovery after years of invasion and civil war in China. The Communists were successful in halting inflation, restoring communications, starting large public works projects, and raising agricultural and industrial production, in many fields, to prewar levels. At the same time they carried through a revolutionary land redistribution program. A major foreign war against UN forces in Korea was fought during this period, and the Chinese Communists also extended their influence by occupying Tibet, aiding the Vietminh in Indo-China, and widening their diplomatic and military activities elsewhere. Internally, the period was one of political upheaval. One "**mass campaign**" followed another: the Agrarian Reform Campaign; the Campaign against Counterrevolutionaries, which suppressed internal opposition; the Resist America Aid Korea Campaign; The Three Anti and Five Anti Campaigns, which tightened party discipline and cracked down on private enterprise; the Ideological Remolding Campaign to indoctrinate intellectuals; and many others.

By the end of 1952, the Chinese Communists asserted that they were **ready** to start the period of "**national construction**," and China's first **Five Year Plan**, beginning in 1953, outlined an ambitious economic development program on the Soviet pattern. The objective of the Plan (which will soon enter its fourth year) is to build up, with Soviet assistance, a Chinese economy in which heavy industry will play the major role. At present, every effort is being made to mobilize national resources, skills, and energies to devote to this program. The inherent difficulties of rapid industrialization in an underdeveloped country like China have been complicated, however, by many factors such as disastrous floods and other natural disasters in both 1953 and 1954. The Chinese Communist regime has responded to difficulties and setbacks by increasing efforts to bring the population, and the economy as a whole, under greater centralized control. In the field of agriculture, where the greatest failures to date have occurred, efforts are now being made to collectivize China's peasants, starting with various forms of mutual aid teams and cooperatives. A state monopoly has been imposed on grain and some other key commodities, and rationing of staples to consumers has been instituted. Control over all aspects of private enterprise has

been greatly increased. The **Communists'** insistence that their program of heavy industrialization must be carried out despite all difficulties and costs has involved austerity, suffering, and widespread hardship for the Chinese population, but the regime has been able to make some progress toward its goals, even though accomplishments have lagged behind the targets established by the Five Year Plan.

Significant internal stresses and strains have already developed in China during this period, and some of them are clearly related to dissatisfaction caused by the sacrifices demanded by the regime to carry out its economic program. Power rivalries are also involved. In 1954 the Chinese Communists carried out their first purge of high-level party members since they came to power, and intensive campaigns against "**counter-revolutionaries**" and "**economic saboteurs**" have continued through-out 1955. But there is no sign that the basic structure of political power in Communist China **has** been weakened. Instead, **it** appears that political control has been further consolidated by increased centralization of government and adoption of a national constitution in 1954.

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Although **it** is difficult to view historic events in perspective while they are still in progress, **some** of the major changes affecting China which have taken place during the first five years of Communist rule are fairly clear. These changes are so great that the present revolution in China will certainly be ranked with the French Revolution and Russian Revolution as one of the most tremendous political, economic, and social upheavals in history.

These are some of the major changes:

China has been unified. After decades of disunity and weakness caused by warlordism, provincial regionalism, and separatism in border regions, continental China has been brought under effective control by a central government. Since 1949, Chinese Communist armies **have** pushed into the most remote regions of the country--except for Outer Mongolia, which has become a Soviet satellite. They have occupied Tibet, which has traditionally been claimed by the Chinese despite Tibetan objections. They have rooted out local armies and leaders, bringing the entire country under tight central control for the first time in this century.

Opposition has been ruthlessly and effectively eliminated. During the past five years the Communists in China have **stamped** out or suppressed almost all opposition groups and leaders. Large numbers of people were liquidated in violent campaigns such as the one against counterrevolutionaries. Whole social groups and classes which stood in the **way** of the **regime's** policies have been

"**eliminated** as classes." Landlords have virtually disappeared, dispossessed of their land and rights. The business class and the intelligentsia have been subjected to tough "**reform**" campaigns which have made them docile. The **Communists'** so-called "**united front**" has proven to be almost meaningless.

National leadership has been changed from top to bottom. The old leaders of state and society, from the central government to the villages, have been largely replaced by Communist-fostered cadres. The new rulers, members of the Communist Party, the army, and the tremendous new bureaucracy in governmental and other organizations, are to a large extent ex-peasants and youthful newcomers. They are disciplined, hard-working, and for the most part incorrupt. They are also bureaucratic, often **incompetent**, and frequently harsh in carrying out orders from above.

A totalitarian political structure has been established. The center of power is the Communist Party. Organized according to principles of "**democratic centralism**," the party channels instructions from its Politburo and Central Committee down to the 6,500,000 members belonging to thousands of grass-roots branches and cells. The government which the party controls is also organized on the basis of "**democratic centralism**." Although there is mass participation in political activities, decisions are made by a handful of top leaders, and these decisions, rather than legislation or law, now provide the framework for national life. Almost every aspect of people's daily lives is affected by the **major** decisions of the top leaders. And in marked contrast to the situation under past regimes, when there was a big gap between the central government and the villages, the decisions made by **China's** leaders are now actually carried out by the **regime's** organizational apparatus reaching the village level.

The people of China have been regimented to an unprecedented degree. Police state methods, intensive propaganda, widespread indoctrination, and mass organizations affect almost **everyone**. Virtually the entire population has been organized into Communist-controlled **mass** organizations--for farmers, laborers, youth, students, women, artists, businessmen, and others--which bring them under the direct surveillance of party and government organizations. The purpose of all organizations in the country today is to implement Communist Party policies, and intensive mass campaigns are the fundamental technique for ensuring that major policies are implemented.

Thought control has been accomplished through propaganda and indoctrination. The Chinese **Communists'** massive internal propaganda machine **aims** not only to control but also to "reform" the thinking of all six hundred million Chinese. A political message is injected into every media capable of transmitting ideas--publications, radio, motion pictures, entertainment, and the arts. Outlets for expression of independent ideas **have** been eliminated. High-pressure indoctrination is applied to millions

through group discussion techniques. The educational system has been greatly expanded, but its aim now is political indoctrination and technical training for service to the party and state,

The whole national philosophy and ideology of China is undergoing basic **changes**. Marxism-Leninism and the "**Thought of Mao Tse-tung**" are taking the place of old values, replacing traditional values such as **those** represented by Confucianism as well as modern liberal ideas imported from the West. A new generation in China is being brought up to believe that loyalty to party and state must supersede loyalty to **the family** or other groups, that hard work and disciplined service to the Communist program are the most important aims in life. With many of the youth, these ideas are taking hold.

Wealth and property in China have been radically redistributed during the past five years. A leveling process has been accomplished not only through taxation and confiscation but also through huge campaigns such as the agrarian reform program, which took millions of acres from landlords and **gave it to** tenants, and **antibusiness** movements such as the Five Anti Campaign, which squeezed private enterprise. Although poorer classes received some of the earlier fruits of this redistribution, the major portion has gone to the state, to support its economic development program and its expanded bureaucracy. The state now demands austerity on the part of all, so that China can develop modern industry.

Economic stability of a kind has been achieved in China by the Communists. The Chinese economy was in a state of near chaos in 1949, after years of war, civil strife, ineffective **government**, and runaway inflation. The Communists during their first years in power stopped inflation, brought the economy under control, and raised production toward prewar levels. Large-scale restoration and some expansion of transportation and water conservancy were accomplished, while industry was put back into operation and trade again began to flow.

The pattern of ownership in the economy has been greatly altered. Although the Communists stressed the need for coexistence of state and private enterprise when they first came to power, they have proceeded steadily with their program of socialization. By the start of the Five Year Plan, state enterprises accounted for roughly two-thirds of the value of both total industrial output and wholesale trade and over one-third of all retail trade in China. Every year more private enterprise is socialized, and the present plan is to "**achieve** a socialist society" after about three **five-year** periods or, roughly, by 1967. By that time it is expected that agriculture will have been collectivized, and both industry and commerce **will** be state-owned.

A large-scale economic development program has been started. The first Five Year Plan, begun in 1953, establishes the

pattern: industrialization, with the emphasis on heavy industry. The Communists are determined to convert China from an agricultural country into an industrial power. Some progress has been made, although agriculture has proven to be a serious bottleneck to the whole program. It is possible, however, that the Chinese Communists will come close to their announced production targets for 1957, which include the following: 4.12 million tons of steel, 113 million tons of coal, 6 million tons of cement, and 15.9 million kw. of power.

China under the Communists has become an important military power. The Chinese Communists won control of China with their armies, and their respect for military strength has not diminished since then. With Soviet heavy equipment and advisors they have converted their revolutionary forces into a modern army, a process which was given a big boost by the Korean War. **Selective** conscription provides the Chinese with a huge reservoir of manpower, and the development of heavy industry will eventually make possible home manufacture of materiel which now must be obtained from the Russians. In addition to land forces totaling two to three million men the Chinese Communists now also have an air force, which has perhaps two thousand planes, and the beginnings of a small navy. Naval weakness still limits China's military strength, however, even though it has the second largest standing army and the fourth or fifth strongest air force in the world and is now the principal military power in Asia.

China has made a complete about-face in international affairs since the Communists came to power in 1949. During the previous century, the Chinese were oriented toward the West, in ideology, economic relations, and politics. Now China is the U.S.S.R.'s major partner in the Soviet bloc. A close alliance with the Soviet Union is the keystone of China's foreign policy, and Soviet institutions and practices provide the "models" for Communist China's leaders. Soviet influence has replaced that of the West within China. And China's trade flows toward the continent rather than seaward.

As Communist China's power has grown, Peking has become increasingly active in military pressure, political subversion, and diplomatic maneuvering in Asia. China's direct military influence has spread into Tibet, Korea, and Indo-China. Chinese Communist revolutionary tactics have become the model for revolutionaries in much of Asia. And now Peking is pressing a diplomatic offensive and actively competing for leadership in Asia. It is attempting to obtain noncommunist as well as communist support. It is also working toward its aim of expelling Western, particularly American, influence from Asia. There is no doubt that, despite the nonrecognition policy of the U.S. and many other countries, Communist China is increasingly playing the role of a world power.

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The challenge of Communist China to the noncommunist world in Asia is obvious. On the one hand, the Chinese Communists are extending their power and influence through diplomacy, military pressure, and subversion. On the other hand they are conducting an experiment in economic development and social change which other Asian countries are watching closely. There is a continuing need to study, and understand, Communist China's aims and policies, accomplishments and failures, strengths and weaknesses. The **impact** of the Chinese Communist regime upon people in China and its influence upon other Asian countries will be basic factors in determining the future of the whole region. A struggle for leadership, power, and influence is under way in Asia. It is being waged **with** ideological, diplomatic, and political, as **well** as military, weapons. The outcome of this struggle is of great importance not only to the countries in Asia but to the U.S. as well.