



RED CHINA'S LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

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THE foreign policy of a totalitarian regime such as Communist China is conditioned, to a large extent, by its internal problems. Yet, because of the general inaccessibility of Chinese Communist source materials, this hypothesis, along with others relating to trends and developments on the Chinese mainland, has long been impossible to test.

On 5 August 1963, however, through the offices of the US Department of State, some secret Chinese Communist military papers labeled the *Kung-tso T'ung-hsun* (*Bulletin of Activities*) were released to interested scholars. They have been accurately described as "one of the most important caches of material ever obtained from behind the Bamboo Curtain."

In order to appreciate the vital importance of the *Bulletin*, it may be relevant to draw attention to the following background information con-

cerning this military journal. The *Bulletin* is published by the General Political Department, the senior agency within the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), through which the Chinese Communist Party exercises political control and military surveillance over policy and personnel. It is published at irregular intervals and is a secret journal for internal purposes, designed for cadres at regimental level and above.

The journal's importance is further enhanced by a 17 January 1961 announcement that, while the *Bulletin* is normally regarded as a "secret" document, it will, in the event of need, be classified as "top secret" and will be dispatched down only to division or army level.

Opinions of Party

In view of this, the views expressed in the *Bulletin* must be considered to represent the authoritative opinion of the Chinese Communist Party headed

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by Mao Tse-tung. Some of the documents contained in the *Bulletin* may, indeed, be treated as "executive orders," for they bear a terse inscription at the very beginning saying that "no separate communique will be issued." Others often carry a special endorsement by Mao Tse-tung or by some other Chinese Communist leaders.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the publication is that its contents go beyond matters normally considered within the jurisdiction of military authorities. In addition to military affairs, the *Bulletin* deals with virtually every major politico-ideological issue and socioeconomic problem in Communist China. As Marshal Lin Piao, Minister of National Defense, declares:

The armed forces are peasants and workers in military uniform. Whenever there arise some problems at the local level, the armed forces will reflect these accordingly.

It is of interest to point out that these 29 issues of the *Bulletin*, reveal a great deal of hitherto unconfirmed or unpublished information relating to Communist China during the period of January-August 1961, although it should be admitted that, by its very "secret" nature, the publication includes little general information of a melodramatic nature.

Crucial Periods

These journals do, however, cover one of the most crucial, if not critical, epochs of the Peking regime. This was during the time it was confronted with serious economic problems and widespread social discontent—as a result of the confusing Three Red Flags program—and with catastrophic natural disasters. In fact, as Marshal Lin Piao put it:

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During 1961, especially in the first half of this year, the number of political incidents and cases will probably exceed that of any other year. Owing to some difficulties in our economy and livelihood, certain cadres and soldiers will possibly nurture some feelings of dissatisfaction, even to the extent of harboring complaints against local authorities and creating the spectacle of disunity with local authorities.

It was stated in January 1961 that armed rebellions had occurred in northwestern and southwestern China, including the provinces of Kansu, Tsinghai, Szechwan, Tibet, and Yunnan. It was further stated that there were still 3,000 "armed rebellious bands" left at the end of 1960.

Ideological Shortcomings

Among the problems confronting the Chinese Communist leaders in mid-1961, according to the *Bulletin*, was that of ideological shortcomings among military officers and men. A thorough investigation of 63 soldiers in the 1st Company of the 1st Battalion of the 403d Regiment of 27 January 1961 revealed that 52 of them were found to have ideological problems of various kinds. It was stated by General Hsiao Hua, Deputy Director of the General Political Department, who inspected army units in the Nanking Military Region, that family difficulties had exerted a great influence upon the thinking of the men and that letters carrying bad news from home were fairly numerous. In some companies there were more than 200 letters received in one month, an average of five or six for each soldier, with the largest number being 14 letters.

We are also told by the *Bulletin* that, although most of the troops were

enthusiastic about their duties, some of them worried about "exceeding the time limit" of their military service, some were anxious about getting a job or a wife after they left the army, some were dissatisfied with their sal-



The *Bulletin* shows that the soldiers suffered from the economic hardships and social discontent prevailing in the countryside

aries, and others earnestly sought to be admitted to the party for materialistic reasons. Furthermore, because some of the cadres were not very skillful in teaching and handling various kinds of problems, they often "disturbed the minds" of the soldiers.

Hardships and Discontent

It is obvious from reading the *Bulletin* that Chinese Communist troops suffered both from the economic hardships and the social discontent prevailing in the countryside. They were also involved in the feelings of frustration and uncertainty often found in restless veteran soldiers. In some army units, the high percentages of soldiers' families located in disaster areas

caused grave concern among the Chinese Communist leaders:

According to comrades in the Wuhan Military Region [Central China], the proportions of soldiers whose families are in disaster areas range from 16% to 17% in some companies. . . . This is an extraordinary situation.

In addition, General Lo Jui-ch'ing, Chief of the General Staff Department of the PLA, commented in February 1961 upon the lack of combat experience among the junior officers stationed in Kunming, Chengtu, Chungking, and Wuhan (that is, southwest and central China):

None of the squad and platoon leaders now in our Army units has ever fought in a war. They do not have any experience in actual combat. After a few years, this situation may exist among commanders at the company, battalion and even regimental levels.

Among cadres at the platoon level of Army Unit 0099, those who had never taken part in actual fighting were: infantry subunit, 64 percent; artillery subunit, 75 percent; tank subunit, 90 percent; and chemical subunit, 100 percent.

Food Shortage

The shortage of food also seems to have affected the physical fitness, if not the morale, of the Chinese Communist armed forces. For instance, the tank subunit of Army Unit 0100 had meat only twice from the Spring Festival in February to the May Day Festival. Because their food did not have enough nutrition, the drivers of tanks were losing their physical energy. Many times when a man had driven a tank for an hour he became dizzy or nauseated. Infectious diseases were also becoming a serious health problem, especially hepatitis. It is further reported that:

In general, conditions of life in the Army, although they may be considered rather good, still revealed quite a few problems. Problems of everyday life for the first half of this year (1961) were arranged comparatively well. . . . There is in the Army now a comparatively big problem, and that is, the grain ration for each person is just barely enough for his need and not enough to satisfy him.

Efficiency and Discipline

Contrary to the belief of many observers on Communist Chinese affairs, the operational efficiency and military discipline of army personnel left much to be desired. As a matter of fact, General Lo Jui-ch'ing made the following succinct comment in connection with an inspection tour in February 1961:

With regard to [army] organization, there are some problems. For instance, in company headquarters there are no communications personnel. The term of service for soldiers with technical skill is very short. An automobile driver who has just learned to drive is soon to be discharged from the service. That is why many automobiles cannot move.

It was also reported by the General Political Department on 3 January 1961 that 5,173 "secret" documents, among which 177 were "top secret," were missing from the files of 23 branches of the superscientific and technological departments of the armed forces, and that the Public Security Bureau in Chekiang found 72 issues of the classified August 1st magazine, which was to be dispatched to cadres at the regimental level and above, in a shop which had purchased them as waste materials.

It is of interest to note that even the supremacy of the thought of Mao

Tse-tung appears to have been threatened in late 1960:

At present, the idea of revisionism is spreading. The world revolution relies on Mao Tse-tung's thought. We must raise high the great flag of Mao

works is our principal objective. This policy cannot be changed. Study of experiences in the democratic revolution, especially experiences in the Socialist revolution, has been developed in our country, China. We are not say-



Chinese Communist soldiers join in a reading and discussion session based on the writings of Mao Tse-tung

Tse-tung's thought and use it as a weapon to criticize revisionism. In the past some comrades have felt that the mere study of Mao Tse-tung's thought was not 'strong enough to satisfy their yearnings,' not profound enough. They have acted as if merit lies in profundity and things Chinese are not substantial enough to satisfy their cravings.

What to Study

As early as September 1958, special emphasis was urged by the late Marshal Lo Jung-huan upon the study of Mao's works:

What is to be studied? It must be affirmed that to study Mao Tse-tung's

ing that we do not study the classical writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. But primarily we must study Chairman Mao's works, which, too, are classical writings. In studying the classical writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, we should select what is useful to us and grasp the key points. But still we must regard the study of Chairman Mao's work as our primary objective, and learn the classical writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on a selective basis. The curriculum of the Political Academy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army was changed from the study of the 'four courses' (consisting

of philosophy, the history of the Chinese Communist Party, political economy, and political work in the armed forces . . .) to the study of Socialism and Communism.

Training

As regards the training of the Chinese Communist armies, the *Bulletin* points out:

In the past, soldiers learned to fight by constantly fighting. Some say that at that time there was little training, but the training was in actual fact very substantial, and quite practical. Without much training, the soldiers were expected to be ready to fight at any time, because the skills required were simple and easy to learn. Now conditions are altogether different, for almost all of the men in service and some of the cadres have never seen actual fighting. That is why we must increase our training. Weapons of war at present, more complicated than those of earlier periods, make it necessary for the armed forces to undergo much training before they can be useful.

The Chinese military training program in 1961 appeared to stress, among other things, the employment of conventional weapons and the strategy and tactics of conventional warfare. It is also interesting to note that the Chinese Communists claimed that:

Apart from 9,597,000 square kilometers (which amounts to the total area of the territory of our country), we do not wish to have an inch of territory belonging to others.

But they warned that they did not entertain any "illusions" regarding peaceful coexistence with imperialism:

For instance, an agreement reached in the morning upon the problem of disarmament will still be torn up by

them [the imperialists] in the evening. The Chinese have also had their own experience. During the period of the government under the Northern warlords, those who joined the warlord government were soon dirtied, as if they had entered a pig-sty. During the dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek, whosoever participated in his government got at most a post as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, of Economics, or of Health. What useful function did this serve? If we join the United Nations, we will still not be in the majority. Although the situation may seem relaxed on the surface, conflict will be sharpened in actuality, and we shall lose freedom of action.

Real Significance

Perhaps it is necessary to reappraise, in the light of the information contained in the *Bulletin*, the real significance of the increasing involvement of the Chinese Communist regime in the war in Vietnam during recent years, Chinese Communist aggression upon India in 1962-63, and the sharpening of the conflict between Communist China and Soviet Russia at the present time.

In view of the alleged grave economic difficulties and widespread social discontent prevailing on the Chinese mainland, I am inclined to believe that these Communist aggressive actions were, to a large extent, motivated by the desire of the Peking regime to divert the minds of the people from worry over their individual problems and family hardships to concern over winning personal laurels and national prestige for the fatherland abroad.

It is also important to state that the *Bulletin* and related works on the contemporary Chinese scene strongly indicate that, within the power struc-

ture of the Communist Chinese regime, the military leaders apparently enjoy extensive prestige and authority both in the armed forces and throughout the nation. The military clearly played a decisive role in causing the downfall of the nationalist government in 1949, in protecting the Chinese People's Re-



Marshal Lin Biao

public at home, and in carrying out the Korean and Indian campaigns abroad.

Since the founding of the regime, the key organs of state (for example, the State Council, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Public Security, and the principal regional and provincial administrative units) are often staffed and manipulated by military leaders and cadres who have been transferred from their respective military units to serve in civilian posts in the Chinese People's Government both at the central and the local level. Because of their former working habits and institutional connections, these "military" cadres often take great pride in, and consciously keep alive, their old military ties and memories, and form themselves into various "intraparty" groupings within the "civilian" hierarchy.

The preponderance of the military leaders in the Chinese Communist Government is clearly revealed throughout the *Bulletin*. While praising the over-all leadership of the central authorities of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the *Bulletin* contains only occasional reference to the party's civilian luminaries such as Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai, and little or no mention of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, now Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, and other civilian members of the Politburo and Central Committee.

Western Influence

While one should not overemphasize the role of the Chinese Communist military leaders, some students believe that the military have been the most significant force in shaping modern Chinese history. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to interpret modern Chi-



Liu Shao-chi

nese history in terms of the vicissitudes of militarism and its impact upon the Chinese nation.

Military preponderance, to a large extent, may be attributed to the Western impact upon China. It is ironic, yet true; that the influence of Western military power has probably out-

grown all other Western influences upon Chinese thought and organization. This is true because of China's earlier impotence and her repeated defeats by Western aggressors during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, much light can be shed upon the Chinese Communist scene by a more systematic study of military developments and their relation to other aspects of contemporary China.

New Insights

Studies such as these could give us new insights into the small but influential military groupings within the Chinese Communist power structure. For example, it is important to examine the hierarchical distribution of key personnel of the Chinese People's Government in terms of their prior attachments to the four different field armies during and shortly after the Sino-Japanese War 1937-45.

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defense may, for all practical purposes, be deemed to fall under the aegis and control of military leaders formerly attached to the 3d and 4th Field Armies respectively. We may also conclude that Mao Tse-tung and his followers were able to purge the faction headed by Kao Kang and Jao Sou-shih in 1955 precisely because the military leaders, such as Ch'en I and Lin Piao of the 3d and 4th Field Armies respectively, choose to support Mao Tse-tung following the recall of Jao and Kao to Peking two years previously.

To some, it may seem unwarranted to place so much importance on the military factor in interpreting modern Chinese history. But, in a nation of 650 million, power on a massive scale is a critical element. The Chinese leader thus instinctively finds wisdom in Mao Tse-tung's famous dictum, "a

sufficiently powerful and regular Red Army is a prerequisite to the establishment of a Red regime."

Tensions and Disunity

Finally, it is debatable whether "internal and international tensions have contributed to a split within the party based partly on 'generational lines' and whether the party has become increasingly divorced from the Chinese people." Although these statements seem to have truth in relation to the contemporary scene, it may be pointed out that "generational disunity" or tensions can be found in any type of human society, past and present, East and West. It is not really peculiar to the problems of the Chinese Communist leadership.

The fact remains that the "people's democratic dictatorship" of the Chinese Communist Party is still firmly entrenched in power with the support of its military leaders and cadres, in spite of economic and social difficulties on the Chinese mainland during the dismal years 1960-61. My perusal of the *Bulletin* has led me to the conclusion that the Chinese Communist Party has not been divorced from the armed forces or the bulk of the peasants and workers, who comprise almost 90 percent of the total Chinese population.

It is highly speculative to predict who will succeed the aging Mao and other leaders in 10 or 15 years. Yet, the future leader must inevitably secure the support and confidence of the principal military group or groups. One such leader may well be Marshal Lin Piao. If and when that moment arrives, this will prove the proverbial wisdom of Mao Tse-tung when he states: "Experience tells us that the problems of China cannot be settled without armed might."