

O. LATTIMORE

FROM
CHINA, LOOKING
OUTWARD

S3
Store

*Education
Pamphlets*

951P STACK LAT

*The University Library
Leeds*



*The Library of the
Institute of Education*

STACK



30106022763360

FROM CHINA LOOKING OUTWARD

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

OWEN LATTIMORE

Professor of Chinese Studies

LEEDS UNIVERSITY PRESS

1964

28694/ 951 P STACK

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Printing House, Cambridge
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*

A CENTURY ago the West, with Britain in the lead, was successfully beating and dragging a reluctant China out of the isolation it cherished and into the turmoil of the world's power politics. A century later the West, led by the United States (though some Western nations do not accept the leadership), is trying unsuccessfully to batter an indignant China back into an isolation it no longer wants, and in an age of internationalism to bar the world's largest nation from participation in the world's affairs.

These two courses of policy are opposite only in the sense that alternating phases of a cycle oppose each other. Together, they constitute the successful opening and the unsuccessful closing of an historical age, a cycle of Cathay. This was the age in which China was changed, and made to cease being what it had once been, by forces converging on it from the outside. These changes went on until the Chinese were, by the processes forced on them, made capable of becoming a new kind of nation. When this potentiality was turned by political, economic and social revolution into actuality, the cycle was completed.

China is now in the opening phase of a new cycle. Its most important characteristic can be succinctly described. Major events and significant developments in China can no longer be determined by other nations, friendly or hostile, which look in on China from the outside, assess its problems, and decide what to do. What matters now is how the world appears to the Chinese, looking outward, and what they decide to do about the world in which they are the largest nation.

One of the conclusions to be drawn from this change in the world's balance is put very well in a leader in *The Guardian*. I quote from its Manchester edition of 14 October 1963: '... China's isolation from the rest of the world is diminishing, and one day this will be recognised in United Nations member-

ship. The great danger is that by then it may have ceased to matter; for a United Nations without the largest of all nations contains the germ of its decay.' That is what we face. The world, by excluding China, cannot make China more to its liking; but China, in spite of being excluded, can do and is in fact doing a great deal to make the world more to its liking. Exclusion from the normal channels of international relations does not isolate China. On the contrary, the Chinese have had considerable success in forming groups with which they have direct contact, and influencing groups and single nations with which their contacts are less direct.

It is for these reasons that the student of modern China, even when doing his research and teaching outside of China, should cultivate an intellectual method of seeing China from within, and looking from China outward at the world.

When he does so, he finds natural the Chinese concept of *Chung Kuo*, the Central Kingdom. He also finds it natural to look at every Chinese problem historically, as the Chinese themselves do—for the Chinese are the most history-conscious of all the great civilised peoples. It is indeed a well-worn commonplace to note that the Chinese have the longest continuous history in the world. High levels of civilisation were reached earlier in Egypt, Mesopotamia and North-west India; but the languages that were written in hieroglyphics and cuneiform are not the languages of those great river-valleys today. In China, our oldest surviving written materials date from approximately 1300 or 1400 B.C. The script is an ancestral form of the Chinese writing of today, and can be read; and the language is the Chinese of today, though we do not know exactly how it was then pronounced.

China at this time was in the Bronze Age. Its nobles rode in chariots and were armed with bronze weapons, like their Homeric contemporaries. As bronze was never really plentiful,

it was used for weapons or hoarded as treasure (often in the form of beautifully and skilfully cast ceremonial vessels). The labourers in the fields still used stone tools. Even at the level of production of an agriculture without metal tools the Chinese were already able to support rather large, walled cities; the interaction of urban life and rural life had already begun, and the pattern of future growth and geographical spread had already been set. The important cities were established in open country, but the richest terrain of the future had not yet been occupied. The lower Yellow River Valley was choked with marshes, and the Yangtze Valley with jungles. The clearing of these immensely rich alluvial lands had to await the further development of engineering techniques, and the organisational skill needed to conscript and deploy very large numbers of labourers.

A look at a map of China drawn to emphasise the relief will show that there is very much less open and flat country than hilly and mountain country. The centres of rapid cultural advance were overlooked by smaller valleys and higher hills in which the population remained much more backward. As the urban centres developed, they needed more hinterland, and the increasing strength of the plains people enabled them to push up into the small valleys, subordinating the hill people, incorporating them administratively in the city-centred political states, and at the same time raising their cultural level and assimilating them to what was already 'the Chinese civilisation'.

These were the first recorded contacts between 'Chinese' and 'barbarians', and they shaped and set the trend of the innermost characteristics of the Chinese society for the next three thousand years or so. An understanding of what was happening is therefore important even for the modern historian. Conventionally, both Chinese and Western historians have assumed that the early accounts of clashes between

'barbarians' and Chinese must echo invasions of China by non-Chinese. The assumption is untenable. Many of the place-names in the early accounts can still be identified, and when these are plotted on the map, together with the dates, it is clear that the Chinese were steadily expanding at the expense of the barbarians. (One recalls the history of the peaceful white man in North America, forced to defend himself against the aggressive Indian savages. In the end, the white man defended himself from the Atlantic to the Pacific.)

What really happened was that in China in the late Neolithic and the early Bronze Age there was a matrix of kindred peoples. As a few centres of more rapid evolution formed, they subjected to themselves their more backward kinsmen, whom they called barbarians, and formed a rather large number of small kingdoms, each with its own urban centres and rural hinterland, so that there was a trend toward a universal type, but because the type was repeated over and over again, regional differences tended to be long-lasting. Thus there crystallised out of the common matrix the Chinese people, from the beginning a rich combination of unity and diversity.

Invasions, in fact, had astonishingly little to do with early formative processes in China—less than in any other great civilisation. The migrations of the speakers of Indoeuropean languages did reach the fringe of China. Indoeuropean languages continued to be spoken in what is now Sinkiang until about the eighth century (where the descendants of the people who spoke them now speak Turkish). The Indoeuropean-speaking peoples, who may have included more than one race or physical type, penetrated only lightly into the north-west fringe of what used to be called China Proper, that is China within the Great Wall. In contrast with India and the Middle East there is no evidence, in the early period, of the spilling over into China of large new populations, or of political structures

in which alien conquerors imposed themselves as a ruling class. There is, for example, no indication that the chariot-riding nobility of Bronze Age China were a different people from the stone-using peasantry.

Important skills, like the working of bronze and later of iron, did enter China from the outside, but it would seem that they must have been brought by small numbers of people, wandering smiths, who, being too weak to conquer, lived by selling their skill. The technology of metal was eagerly taken up, and improved, by Chinese who were ready to exploit these techniques because they had already reached as high a level as they could, using the technology of stone. A striking thing about both early bronze and early iron in China is that, though they are later than in the Near East, they are not crude, provincial imitations of the higher technology of a culture which was centred somewhere else. The Chinese soon reached the highest technical level of their time. Though some crude early bronzes have been found, it has been said that the bronze casting of China in the second millennium B.C. was technically superior to that of Italy in the Renaissance.¹

Not thrown off their course of development by alien invasion and conquest, the Chinese applied consistently each advance and improvement in their mastery of the physical environment in which they lived. The great source of wealth was the land. The form of cultivation was intensive, and from a very early stage was made more intensive by the use of irrigation. It has often been said that Chinese farming is more like gardening than farming. The maximum number of man-hours of labour is applied to each acre. This results in high production per acre, dense population per square mile, and very little reliance on animals as a source of food, the principle being that land which can grow grain for human beings ought not to be wasted on forage or fodder for animals.

The use of irrigation wherever possible encouraged the early growth of a powerful bureaucracy, skilled in the mobilisation and deployment of conscripted manpower and the endless compilation of reports that goes with public works. It also encouraged the bureaucratic vice of quoting precedent and higher authority, which is damaging to initiative and original thinking. At the same time, the placing of cities with an eye to food resources rather than proximity to minerals and industrial resources resulted in a peculiar demographic pattern. In the old China, 'most rural' was not 'most remote from cities': the highest farm production was closest to the city walls, where the fields could be manured with night soil carried out from the city.

This combination of food production, social structure and demographic distribution led to avoidance of diversification and to expansion by seeking more land of the same kind, and this in time led to a sharp difference between the northern and southern horizons of colonisation and expansion of the state, Chung Kuo, the Central Kingdom.

In the south and south-west the limits of the old mode of growth have even yet not been reached. The valley-bottoms are occupied by Chinese, the hillsides by 'aborigines', or 'native barbarians', most of whom are in fact congeners of the Chinese, cousins so to speak of some of the ancestors of the Chinese, who are still in the process of acculturation to and absorption by the Chinese.

In the north, on the other hand, the Chinese began by the fourth century B.C. to approach the escarpment of the Mongolian plateau. Here the monsoon-borne rainfall dies away and the land is higher. Instead of streams flowing to the Yellow River and the sea, one finds streams that flow only a short distance and then die away. Irrigation cannot be used on a large scale to make up for the lower rainfall. Grass grows better than

grain, and pastoralism is less risky than agriculture. Even where the land can be ploughed without too much risk, Chinese intensive farming must be modified in the direction of extensive farming: large fields, with a low yield per acre; hence a lower population per square mile, more widely scattered villages, and small cities, far apart. When the Chinese reached this terrain, they found that if they went farther they would have to become less Chinese, abandoning the trend to which the main body of their people was already committed. Increasingly different agricultural practices and a quite different demographic distribution would require new economic, social, and eventually political institutions, alienating them from what they themselves accepted as the norm of being Chinese and being civilised.

There is a great deal of evidence that the Chinese of the time understood the problem. The evidence has been insufficiently examined, because attention has been concentrated on other aspects of Chinese economic and social history. The main facts are clear. For the rulers of the northern states in a China not yet imperially unified the main rewards of power, the great prizes in military and political competition, were to the South. They must restrain the northward movement of their own people. The steppe was not a land to be entered. It must be set apart as the land of outer barbarians whose inclusion in China was undesirable.

It is at this time that the record of wall-building begins in China. Then, at the end of the third century B.C. the ruler of the great north-western state of Ch'in conquered and unified the whole of what was then 'China'—down to the Yangtze, that is—proclaimed himself Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, First Emperor of Ch'in, and unified and simplified a number of already existing frontier walls to create 'the' Great Wall. Thus in fact the Great Wall was not suddenly created at the order of a great

tyrant; it was the outcome of innumerable and repeated decisions, taken by many local rulers in order to deal with a situation which had been emerging and hardening for about two centuries. We should therefore recognise the stabilisation of the Great Wall frontier for what it really was: not the *inner* line along which the Chinese managed at last to halt the advance of the barbarians, but the *outer* line along which they themselves established the demarcation between civilised China and the outer barbarians.

It is time now to try to sum up the general character of the stabilised, agrarian-based, urban-centred, imperially ruled and bureaucratically administered society of China. We are here in a field of controversy, made more difficult to clarify by the fact that the terminologies used are not sufficiently precise to be scientific. The problem can be simplified, I suggest, by putting emphasis on a form of land tenure and landlord-tenant relationship which emerged in the Ch'in period, became dominant in the Han period (last two centuries B.C. and first two centuries A.D.) and lasted until the coming of the communists. This was private ownership of land, without feudal heritage of rank and rule going with the title and the land (except in marginal cases); with freedom to buy and sell, and consequently to mortgage and foreclose, and with the landlord collecting from his tenant a rent which, even when paid in cash, was calculated and contracted as a percentage of the crop—what in America is called share-cropping. This kind of land tenure was upset in periods of re-feudalisation and periods when government regulation was attempted, but it remained a norm, a standard to which the land-holding interest always returned.

Under this system the landlord had far more power than a feudal noble. His leverage was increased by the fact that while there was much irrigated land, and the irrigated land was the best land, by no means all land was irrigated. The man who

held a piece of paper, a deed giving him title to irrigated land, had no need to invest working capital. He could make peasants bid against each other, to see who would pay him the largest percentage of the crop in return for being allowed to work the land. The tenant had no security of tenure. He could lose the land if someone else bid higher. Hence the paradox that in the old China the place to look for chronic undernourishment was in the richest food-producing areas. The population of the unirrigated land, where another kind of insecurity prevailed because of the uncertainty of the climate (too much rain one year, too little the next), provided desperate bidders for the irrigated land.

The system had other advantages for the landlord, as compared with a feudal system. Not being tied to his land by feudal title and obligations, he could if it suited him sell his land, move to another part of the country, and buy land there. He could also, because of his economic strangle-hold over his tenants, exact many supplementary services of a 'feudal' kind from them—cartage, work on buildings, domestic service from the tenant's womenfolk, and so on.

The landlord could also, as a man of leisure, educate his sons and enter them in the civil service which thus, though nominally open to all by competitive examination, became dominated by the sons of landlords, making the landlords in fact the ruling class. Landlord-minded bureaucrats, directing public works to protect existing irrigated land from flood, or to bring new land under irrigation, did so in the ways which best protected the interests of landlords, thus perpetuating their families as the ruling class.

This system has everything to do with China's failure to develop industrial technology and capitalistic industry. It has often been noted that, while there were always wealthy merchants in China, their position was unstable; they were kept in

their place, and prevented from founding a new ruling class to challenge the landlords, by arbitrary expropriation and selective taxation. It has also been noted that such enterprises as mining were repeatedly taxed down to a level of unimportant activity. On the other hand, no efficient method of taxing landlord wealth was ever enforced for long, but on the contrary they were allowed a built-in method of tax evasion by acting as the intermediaries in collecting the tax from the land farmed by their own tenants.

It is clear that we have to do with a system which was not haphazard, but had its own logic. This logic was further expressed in the attitude toward poor peasants who tried to escape from tenantry by striking off into the wilderness to clear new land, independently of government-decreed and landlord-organised colonisation. They were denied the romantic credit elsewhere accorded to the bold pioneer, and called instead *liu-min*, 'vagabonds', and similar names. This is quite understandable, given the logic of the established order, because by showing their self-reliance they were diminishing the pool of unemployed and underemployed agricultural labour which the landlords needed to keep up the bidding for share-cropping occupation of tenant land.

Domination of the entire economy by the landed interest also accounts for the fact that China through most of its history was weak in maritime enterprise. This is a statement to which exceptions must be made, but the exceptions sustain the major premise. Favoured by seasonal winds, the merchants of South China voyaged to the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, and even to India and Africa. They maintained overseas establishments, or 'factories', to use the later European term. On one occasion a Chinese expedition, considering that it was treated with insufficient respect by a local Indian ruler, captured him and hauled him off to China, showing that the Chinese were quite

capable of the later European methods of demonstrating superior civilisation.

Yet in the upshot there emerged no 'Tudor' class of merchants capable of gaining access to the sovereign, allying themselves with some of the landed gentry, challenging the political supremacy of the gentry as a whole, and investing at home the wealth gained overseas in such a manner as to begin to revolutionise the economic structure and political superstructure of their country. This again can only be explained by the fact that the landed gentry, though weakened at times, always regained the upper hand.

Sir George Sansom has written brilliantly of the aborted 'Elizabethan' period in Chinese history.² In the fourteenth century the Chinese threw off Mongol rule and established a new Chinese dynasty, the Ming. Not long afterwards a series of great expeditions were sent out to explore the oceans. They went so far that they brought back, for example, a map showing the Cape of Good Hope and the lower part of the west coast of Africa. These expeditions were able to draw on the knowledge gained in the previous voyages of merchant adventurers, but they were not commanded by merchants. They were outfitted by the state and commanded by eunuchs, who represented the interests neither of the merchants nor (directly) of the landed interest, but of the court itself. Yet after several brilliantly successful voyages, all this activity ceased. The state did not see its interest either in supporting and protecting Chinese merchants in ventures overseas, or in projecting the power of the state to create a colonial empire. Why not? In seeking the answer, two lines of inquiry are open.

First, the expeditions on the maritime route to India and beyond were not the only ones. Other expeditions, also eunuch-commanded, explored the lower Amur and the maritime coast of Siberia in the region of Vladivostok, and left some monuments to mark their exploits.

Second, we must go back farther in time. Under the previous dynasty, the Mongols had tried to subordinate the landed interest, at least to the extent of weakening the landlord domination of the civil service. They patronised merchants, and not only Chinese merchants but foreign merchants, like Marco Polo and his father and uncle. Many of the Turks, Persians, and Arabs in the Mongol service were also of merchant origin. The Mongols were also interested in the maritime world outside of China. They tried twice, unsuccessfully, to conquer Japan, which the Chinese had never even tried to do. They were quite aware of the maritime route to India and beyond. Marco Polo was sent home from China by sea to Persia, whence he went on overland to the Mediterranean. His mission had been to escort a Mongol princess who was being sent by sea instead of by the overland route to marry the Mongol ruler of Persia.

Going a little farther back, a Chinese scholar has recently thrown light on the Mongol interest in the sea and in seagoing merchants.³ Before they conquered the whole of China, the Mongols ruled in North China. In South China the Sung dynasty, though warily hostile to the Mongols, was unable to prevent merchants from sailing up the coast from South China to trade with the Mongol domain in the north. The interests of these traders became identified with those of the growing Mongol power, and eventually the merchant fleet went over to the Mongols. Acting as a navy, it conquered the coast of South China while the Mongol armies advanced to conquer the hinterland.

‘Unable to prevent.’ Here we have a key to China’s economic and social history, and to important chapters of its philosophy, its ideology of the state, and its literature.

For nearly 400 hundred years before the final conquest of all China by Khubilai, grandson of Chingis Khan, North China was ruled by barbarian conquerors from Tibet, Mongolia, and

Manchuria. For most of this time the unconquered part of China was ruled by two successive dynasties, the Northern and Southern Sung. Even though the predecessors of the Mongols could not fully conquer the Sung, they could make them pay tribute in grain, silk, and silver. As this tribute increased their prosperity, they wanted trade as well, to provide them with additional amenities and luxuries.

A foreign shield held over them—the demand of the barbarians that their trade not be interfered with—gave the merchants a protection that their own landlord-controlled society refused them. Their domestic influence increased accordingly. Increase in the general freedom of trade included more importation of goods by the southern maritime routes. At the same time new land was being brought under cultivation, through the clearing of jungle and the displacement of hill tribes whose agriculture was more primitive than that of the Chinese. There was a long-continued migration from the north, to get away from barbarian rule. The migrants were not all poverty-stricken. Often landlords were able to organise their tenants in a manner that had something in it of retreat, but something also of conquest, to colonise in the south: the result of this kind of movement was a rather rapid resumption of agricultural production, so that Sung China, though a shrunken China, was a flourishing country. The Sung era ranks with Han and T'ang for intellectual activity—in philosophy, literature, art, and also in political innovation and the controversy that goes with attempted innovation.

Needham,⁴ Balazs,⁵ and others have shown that in the Sung era there was a transition from 'medieval' to 'modern' in Chinese thought. Instead of *mirabilia*—lists and descriptions of strange animals and plants, real and imaginary—we have rational classification, zoology and botany, and alchemy begins to be replaced by chemistry. These beginnings faltered later, and

failed to lead to full scientific development. There is a strong case for a working hypothesis that the failure to develop along these lines is associated with the failure of merchant enterprise, with its support for inquiry and discovery, to develop into later forms of capitalism, because of the return of the landlord interest to full control, after the Mongols had been at last expelled and North China recovered, in the fourteenth century. If so, then the merchant whose advantage in his own society was favoured because he was a necessary intermediary with, and to some extent protected by, the importunate barbarian was a forerunner of the 'compradore' who was the indispensable trading auxiliary of the later sea-barbarians, the Western nations of the age of imperialism.

The social ferment of this era is reflected in the *Shui-hu Chuan* (translated by Pearl Buck as *All Men are Brothers*), written later but set in Sung times, whose heroes are outlaws of the Huai marshes, a zone of bloody unrest between Sung rule and barbarian encroachment, and in the *Chin P'ing Mei* (available in several translations) whose protagonist is a rich, debauched merchant, powerful enough to deal with the great, but not bound by the conventions of the landlord-gentry, and willing to deal also with outlaws.

The intellectual questioning of old values which accompanied the social ferment must also have had something to do—but just what, I leave to the historians of philosophy—with the thought and the political programme of the Sung philosopher-statesman, Wang An-shih. He has been described as a sort of primitive or naïve socialist, but he was in fact a Confucian reformer who sought no more than to bring under control the landed gentry, the traditional but selfish and unreliable custodians of the Confucian ethic, so that, instead of intercepting too much of the national revenue and subordinating the common interest, they should be subordinated to it.

FROM CHINA, LOOKING OUTWARD

This reconnaissance into some of the aspects of China's history is intended only to show that for the Chinese of today it is nothing new to look outward on a world of clashing power-politics and ideologies encircling China. He is more aware than we are that China's 'isolation' was never hermetic; that the Great Wall was a gesture of repudiation, but that instead of effecting isolation it merely modified, and to some extent regulated, the contact between China and the realms beyond the Wall; that the cyclical patterns in Chinese history fall far short of meaningless repetition without growth or evolution.

We must bear in mind that in China under present conditions intellectuals who are not Marxists do not count. The Chinese Marxist of today has no difficulty in rearranging the old, conventional, anecdotic, episodic history of good men and bad men as a history of changes governed by the mode of production and class-conflict. He does not need to invent evidence. The evidence is all there. It is only a question of selecting evidence that was not emphasised by the traditional historian. There is even a handy Confucian formula for this mode of procedure: 'The rectification of terms.'

It remains true that Marxists, like the rest of us, are the children of history and to some extent the prisoners of history. The Chinese Marxist may reinterpret history, but he is also conditioned by the history which he, in this generation, represents. One may give different reasons for the fact that China, during most of its long history, was land-bound, but the fact is a fact: until the nineteenth century the invasions and the transmission of economic, intellectual, and religious influences that did most to affect internal change in China came from the landward side and not from the seaward side. The north and north-west was the major front for entry into China. The south and south-west was the major front for the growth and

expansion of the Chinese people and nation. On the seaward side, the influences transmitted from China were much greater than those received by China.

An Indian diplomatist-scholar has commented on the way in which such conditions, when long-continued, create deeply implanted assumptions which in turn set the trend of conscious thinking.⁶ In India, he points out, hostility toward Russia is much less deeply ingrained than suspicion of the intentions, and fear of the power, of the great Western nations. This is because the invaders who repeatedly entered India from the north-west, violently dislocating its political history, were themselves changed by India more than they changed India, and became, one after another, part of the further unfolding of Indian development. In the age when the great maritime nations of the West made themselves the imperial rulers of colonial Asia, on the other hand, the new conquerors of India could not be absorbed and integrated. They came by sea. They imported only a small military contingent and civilian administrative *élite*, most of whom, at the end of their tour of duty, returned home and were replaced by fresh drafts. Even if the new men were sons of the old men, they had normally been sent home for education. Thus generation by generation the alien character of the rulers was refreshed.

If this is true of India, it is much more true of China. For centuries, often consecutive centuries, North China was ruled by barbarian conquerors; but the invaders entered and settled in China in much smaller numbers than in India, and were more quickly and thoroughly assimilated. The traces they left, in customs, institutions, architecture, dress, and even in the vocabulary of the language, were much more evanescent than in India. All through North China today it is impossible for the foreign traveller, unless he has had special training, to point to this or that and say, 'Here is a mark of China's subjection to a

people who were not Chinese'. The most important modifying influence that entered China by land, Buddhism, was imported and welcomed by the Chinese themselves, not imposed by conquerors.⁷

Even in the age of modern imperialism the impact on China of Russia was different from that of the maritime powers. One of the British (now Australian) scholars who has spent the most time in China and most thoroughly comprehended the Chinese outlook, has pointed out that when the Manchus, themselves conquerors of China from the north, encountered the Cossacks on the Siberian frontiers of Manchuria and Russia, hostility and alarm were quickly modified by a mutual understanding impossible between China and any maritime people.⁸ For the Manchus, in their first century of rule in China, the great danger was the possibility of a resurgence of the power of the Mongols. The coming of the Russians from the north divided the attention of the Mongols, weakened them, and in the end facilitated the Manchu subjugation of both Mongolia and Sinkiang.

For this, it was worth the while of the Manchus to settle the frontier with Siberia as amicably as possible. What little fighting there was amounted only to a show of force, facilitating negotiation. The territories bargained away, though huge, had never been occupied by Chinese, provided little or no revenue, and were not under Manchu military occupation. To concede them to the Russians was not felt to be a loss of either power or prestige, but a reasonable allocation of spheres of influence, with compensating benefits. The argument of 'compensating benefits' was used again successfully by the Russians in negotiating the treaties which confirmed their position north of the Amur and east of the Ussuri and made possible the founding of Vladivostok. The eastward movement of the Russians brought them into rivalry, not co-operation, with the loose coalition of maritime powers who were harassing China from the coast.

Thereafter, even the extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway across North Manchuria and south to Dairen; even the attempt of the Russians to linger in occupation of Manchuria after their intervention in the year of the Boxer Rising, 1900; and even the 'winter war' of the Soviet Union against Manchuria in 1929-30, which was confined to local demands on the provincial government and never became a formal war with China, did not upset the foundations of China as did the penetration of the Western powers and Japan from the coast. For the Chinese of today, as of the past, the northern horizon remains in large measure a zone in which there are no problems that cannot be solved by patience, skill, and the modification, where necessary, of traditional methods of diplomacy, with even a show of force, when necessary, being preferable to a commitment to solution by force.

It is on the seaward side that the Chinese now, as in the past, look outward warily—but also with a new confidence. In the past there was uncertainty. It seemed that the West could only be held at bay with the instruments of power of the West—economic as well as military. But how was China to acquire these instruments without disastrously changing its own fabric? Out of this grew futile doctrines expressed in hortatory slogans about preserving the spiritual (Confucian) content of the Chinese tradition while adding, as external adjuncts, the Western instruments of power.⁹ The new confidence is born of the conviction that the West itself has created outside of China, and helped to create within China, the conditions which make it possible for Marxist leadership to defeat the West. We must understand why the Chinese, for Chinese as well as Marxist reasons, think this way.

After the great naval expeditions of the early Ming dynasty, the landed interest returned to power and maritime enterprise atrophied. In the declining decades of the dynasty, although

China had not yet been defeated by a naval power, the method of defence adopted when Japanese pirates harried the coast was to withdraw the population inland. This measure cut down the revenue of the landlords of the coastal regions, but the landed interest as a whole would rather see them lose their money than undertake measures that would bring power to men from the seagoing coastal population, not identified with the landed interest.

When the Manchus conquered China they did not, like their Mongol predecessors, patronise merchants or employ foreigners (except, for a limited time and for limited purposes, the Jesuits) in order to dilute the power of the Chinese bureaucracy. Instead, they tried from the beginning to ally themselves with the Chinese landed gentry from whom the bureaucracy was chiefly recruited. They tampered with the examination system enough to make sure of placing a proportion of Manchus in the bureaucracy, but apart from that they protected the interests of the landed gentry and adopted their ideology. By the time the full power of the West was brought to bear, the China of the Ch'ing or Manchu dynasty was once more paralysed by the static interests of a ruling class so obsessed by the single concern of revenue from the land that experiment and adaptation were impossible.

It was the demand of the West for trade, trade, and more trade that progressively weakened the old ruling class. To weaken them was not the intention of Western policy. There were missionaries, as well as merchants, who from the middle of the nineteenth century believed in 'revolution' in China. Many quotations can be gathered from the period which read ironically today: but all the missionaries meant was that they wanted the intellectual ascendancy of the Confucian scholar-gentry to be shattered, so as to make openings for the entry of their own doctrines; and all the merchants meant was that they

wanted to break the power of the ruling class in China to restrict the economic freedom of the merchants, because the profits of foreign trade would increase with the activity, wealth, and power in Chinese domestic politics of the Chinese merchants.

The policy-makers of the great powers, especially Britain, were not willing to go so far. It has been shown that the policy of Britain was not controlled by a 'lobby' of merchants in the Treaty Ports.¹⁰ (It could equally be shown that the China policy of the United States today is not controlled by 'Wall Street'. The amorphous American 'China lobby' is strongest among groups which, for the very reason that they have no financial interests at stake in China, can afford to be vociferous.) The responsible policy-makers were appalled by the economic devastation and administrative breakdown caused by the Taiping Rebellion of the mid-century. If the dynasty fell, they might be dragged into intervention, at a cost to the foreign states, in military expenditure, out of proportion to the private profits of foreign traders. The thing to do was to prop up the dynasty, to make it at least strong enough to enforce, within the country, the demands for trade, investment, and the development of railways and mines presented to it by foreign governments on behalf of their merchants and investors.

Thus began the search, at first reasonably profitable, later running into diminishing returns, for a 'strong man' to take over in China and establish 'law and order'. The search began under the Empire, with Tseng Kuo-fan, Li Hung-chang, and others. It continued under the Republic with Yuan Shih-K'ai, Wu Pei-fu, and others. Its last symbol is Chiang Kai-shek in exile.

But to go farther is to look at China from the outside. It is time to return, and look outward.

One reason for the failure of the Taiping Rebellion, which is studied as minutely by revolutionaries in China as the French

Revolution is in the West, was that its explosive force was concentrated in the instinct of the Chinese peasant to rebel against the landlord, at a time when there was not enough combustible material in other strata of the society to be detonated by a peasant rebellion. Given the long Confucian tradition that the polarisation between the producing peasants and their non-producing, wise, contemplative, even-handedly inactive lords, the *chün-tze* or 'gentlemen', must not be disturbed by the rise of other classes, it is quite possible that there was a pervasive though ill-defined feeling in China's educated upper class that any multiplication of intermediate classes through contact with the foreigners would be to their disadvantage. A searching of the literature for a study of 'Early intimations of multiple class-conflict in China' might prove rewarding.

The foreigners, on the other hand, when the Treaty Ports and the extraterritorial treaties were being forced on China to create conditions of 'law and order' for the better pursuit of profitable business, could hardly have foreseen that the outcome would be the slow growth of multiple class and economic interests which would in the end overwhelm foreign trading capital, foreign investment capital, and the successive Chinese regimes on which the foreigners served their demands, and which at the same time they tried to aid, and to make strong enough to see that the demands were carried out. Their self-righteousness hid from them a future in which China would at last blow up in their faces because they themselves had laid a fuse along which the fire of revolution could travel from the rebellious peasantry through the new classes into the vitals of the system of 'law and order'.

What happened can be seen better from inside China than from the outside. In the age of the Treaty Ports many Chinese saw many different things. The Treaty Ports were created to provide equal safeguards and equal opportunities—but not

equal political rights. Chinese merchants saw that by entering the Treaty Ports to serve as the agents of foreigners for inland trade—these were the famous ‘compradores’ or middlemen—they could make money and keep it safely. They would not, like merchants in the interior who had no foreign protection, be exposed to whimsical taxation. The lack of equal rights with foreigners was of little concern to men who did not have equal rights in the inland cities of China. Later, when foreigners realized that in the Treaty Ports they had safety not only to trade, but to employ Chinese labour in factories, compradores could see equally well the opportunity to invest some of their profits in the same way.

The products of Chinese labour, systematically employed in Treaty Port factories and sold from there into the Chinese hinterland competed destructively with those of farm-village labour, employed more haphazardly in off-season household industry. The peasants, however, were accustomed to calamity—flood, drought, shortages—and when they could no longer sell what they made themselves, thousands were willing to migrate to the Treaty Ports to work in factories.

Young men (and later, in increasing numbers, young women) saw in the Treaty Ports opportunities for secretarial and service employment if only they could learn a little English and the elementary skills of book-keeping (especially the transposition of accounts from one currency into another), letter-copying, at first by hand and later by typewriter, and so on. For many, these bourgeois skills were easier to acquire than the highly specialised rigmarole (much of it was no more than that) needed to pass the old-style examinations and enter the old-style intelligentsia. In this way a new intelligentsia grew up. It was barred from the avenues to higher power under the old system (although this changed under the Republic, as it became necessary to have more and more Western-trained bureaucrats). It

was also barred from employment in the higher levels of Western business firms and other enterprises. It therefore became a middle-class intelligentsia of discontent, resentful against the old order and also hostile to foreign supremacy. It tended to merge with a new generation of business men, which hived off from the compradore class and began to try to make money by competing economically with foreign interests instead of serving as their agents, like the compradores. From this merging came the 'national bourgeoisie', as the Communists call them, which out of nationalist patriotism was often willing to co-operate with left-wing movements, and in the end even with the Communists.

From a very early period another class of Chinese saw an advantage in the Treaty Port system—officials fallen from power under the Empire, and later under the Republic, politicians plotting to get into power, and defeated warlords waiting for an opportunity to get back into power. The worst abuses of Treaty Port sanctuary stemmed from the highly democratic Western doctrine of political asylum. A warlord could plunder his region to the point of breakdown, knowing that until the moment it broke down he could siphon his profits into a Treaty Port, putting some of his money into foreign banks and some into real estate, factories, and businesses in the Concessions and Settlements. Then at the end he himself could take refuge there, and it was of no use for his successor to try to have him extradited, to face charges for crimes everyone knew he had committed, because he was a 'political refugee'.

From the Chinese point of view the Treaty Ports, symbols of the law and order and security for investments which the foreign powers kept pressing successive Chinese governments to promote, were in fact centres of infection poisoning law and order and spreading insecurity into China. The Chinese view was vindicated when the Japanese used Treaty Ports like

Shanghai and Tientsin as beach heads for the invasion of China, and the other Treaty Powers, which shared with Japan an international responsibility for the treaty system as a whole—its outward symbolic representation of law, order, security, and responsibility, and its latent military advantages for intervention—stood impotently by.

Only from China, looking outward, can it be clearly seen that a Communist revolution would have been impossible without the century of Western and Japanese domination that began in 1840-2 when in the name of law, order and security for business (opium was not mentioned in the Treaty of Nan-king) the Treaty Port system was created, and subsequently elaborated into a system of indirect controls and sanctions. It was this system of herding, coercing, coaxing, and at the same time frustrating the Chinese, so different from direct colonial rule, that fostered the growth in China of new economic interests, new social classes, new antagonisms, new alliances and, because of a sovereignty that was impaired but not, as under colonial rule, destroyed, an increasingly impatient search by the Chinese for methods, however radical, by which to fuse all the discordant forces at work into a mighty national effort to break out of the net.

But foreign intervention had still its final contribution to make. It was not an upheaval from within, but Japanese invasion, that ruptured the net. Upheavals which had been premature, like the Taiping Rebellion, or too primitive to know what direction to take, like the Boxer Rising, could now be followed by a much more intricate process of detonation and fusion, at great speed: open class conflict, accompanied by new class alliances, with the explosion confined, and its energy concentrated, by the pressure of a foreign invasion. When the enclosing Japanese pressure collapsed, the energy released within China went into a second stage of expansion in which,

by a partial destruction, partial transmutation of the mixed classes which had been fostered by the period of foreign domination, Chiang Kai-shek's régime was consumed. It was destroyed not only because it was corrupt, but because so much of its corruption was rooted in its function of being the end-product, the last and most hated phenomenon, of reliance on foreign support in order to keep the upper hand in China.

If there is a single clue more important than any other to an understanding of how the idea of independence strikes home to Chinese emotions as well as Chinese intellects, it is probably in the statement by Mao Tze-tung, soon after the Communist triumph: 'We lean to one side'—to the side, that is, of the Soviet Union and the further progress of world revolution. Now that there is opposition between the Soviet Union and China on important issues of theory and action, this statement is even more important than when it was made. At that time, many believed that it meant the acceptance by China of satellite status. With diffidence, because there is always a risk in glossing the measured words of heads of great states and leaders of great political movements, I suggest that we can understand this pregnant statement more as the Chinese understand it if we restate it, first in negative and then in positive form, as follows: 'We do not give way to Soviet pressure while resisting American pressure. Out of our own reading of China's needs and purposes, our own analysis of the condition of the world, and our own sounding of the tide of history, we lean toward the Soviet Union, the completion of the destruction of capitalism, and the establishment of socialism throughout the world as the condition precedent of a future world communism.'

You will have noticed that up to this point I have said very little about the Soviet Union. That is because I believe that the involvement of the Soviet Union in China's revolution can be seen in truer perspective from China looking outward than by

trying to project into China, from the outside, ideas derived from studies of the Soviet Union. We have here at Leeds, in our new Department of Chinese Studies and elsewhere, the capacity to use Soviet materials, and we shall use them with due recognition of their importance, but our orientation will be from China looking outward, to the extent that that is possible in a British University.

From China, looking outward, it is apparent that the Soviet experience is of greater importance than the example of, say, the American Revolution or the French Revolution. The Soviet Revolution was indeed decisive, to the extent that if it had not been what we now call a 'break-through', a reaching of new ground and an establishment of a new relationship between the theoretical and the possible, a Chinese Communist Revolution could not have succeeded.

But that is not to say that the Soviet Revolution was the only begetter of the Chinese Revolution. For the hard core of Chinese Communism, the outer integument of general Chinese Marxist conditioning, and outside of that the periphery of Chinese who, understanding Communist party doctrine only vaguely, and generalised Marxism a little less vaguely, are nevertheless ardently loyal to a leadership which is Communist, the Soviet Revolution throws a sharp light on a situation in which the potentials of revolution in their own country already existed. For them Mao Tze-tung and the revolutionaries of his generation are the men of genius who, from China looking outward, saw how much of the Russian experience was general, and applied to China, and how much in China was peculiar, and should not be forced into the Russian mould. The Chinese leadership themselves, rather than their followers, admit that not all that they understood was understood by insight and inspiration, but learned with pain and loss, by trial and error.

FROM CHINA, LOOKING OUTWARD

It is the upshot that matters for us, however, looking now inward on China from the outside. Let me try to summarize the pith of the matter. In the First World War, the Russian Communists had perforce to be defeatists. For them, the Tsar was as bad an imperialist as the Kaiser. The victory of a Tsarist Russia, in a coalition of imperialists against other imperialists, would defer the hope of revolution. For the Chinese Communists, in the Second World War, the hope of revolution would have been deferred if it had been necessary to accept defeat of their country by Japan in order to have Chiang Kai-shek overthrown.

The Chinese Communists share to some extent with Yugoslavia, but not with Russia, a war history in which, instead of relying on invaders to defeat domestic rivals who were also supported by foreigners, they earned the widest possible support among their own people by doing whatever could be done to minimise class conflict of a modern kind and ancient hostilities toward minorities. By so doing, both Chinese and Yugoslav revolutionaries left it to the counter-revolutionaries to keep fanning the fires of class and minority conflict that would consume them after national victory was won. Thus the present conflict between Chinese and Yugoslav Communists arises not so much from the manner in which each came to power as from their present analysis of the world, and forecasting of the future. Similarly, the argument between Chinese and Soviet Communists has nothing to do with 'rebellion' of one against the other, but is a question of independent analyses of the same material.

The century of international imperialism in China, the transformation of the traditional China in that period, the defeat of Japan, and the realignments throughout the world since 1945, set before us the field in which we have to work here at Leeds. Our aim is to produce graduates who are competent in one or another discipline—History, Geography, Economics or Social

Studies—and who are competent to pursue those studies through knowledge of the Chinese language. We may also develop specialised courses of teaching: for example, Chinese for the use of scientists and technologists, or Chinese as a second language for specialists in Russian. We hope also to develop post-graduate studies. With the small staff that we have assembled as a nucleus, we can deal not only with the Chinese language but with Chinese institutions. Independently of the Hayter scheme, which made possible the establishment of our Department, we also have appointments in other Departments, in order to set up a Centre of Research on China. We already have an appointment in History, Dr Jerome Ch'en, and a Visiting Lecturer in Geography, Dr James Hsieh. We anticipate appointments in Economics and Social Studies. For research and post-graduate work we command not only Chinese and Russian, a language whose importance for modern Chinese Studies is obvious, but Japanese, a language in which there is an enormous amount of research material on China. We also command Mongol, which is the language of an independent state, the People's Republic of Mongolia, and of minorities in China and, in its variations of Buryat and Kalmuk, of minorities in the Soviet Union. The value of such a language for comparative studies is especially great.

It would have been difficult for us to enter our field, the study of Modern China, had it not been for the pioneer work already done at Cambridge, London, Oxford and Durham. While we hope to add to the work that they are doing, we hope also to make the field of interest wider by co-operation with the other Yorkshire universities at which new studies have been started under the Hayter grants—work on Japan at Sheffield, and South-east Asia at Hull.

We have, that is, resources and a network of connections that will enable us to study China with detachment; standing

FROM CHINA, LOOKING OUTWARD

aside, looking on from without, making our observations as accurate as possible and drawing conclusions with cool deliberation. Yet we shall never forget, I hope, that the greatest reward for learning the language of the Chinese, studying their history and institutions, informing ourselves about their problems, may be the ability to see China from the inside, looking outward; and this may be also the most valuable service we can offer to the countries of the West.

NOTES

- 1 H. G. Creel, *The Birth of China* (London, 1936), is still the best account of this age. There is also a rapidly growing specialised literature. See also Cheng Te-k'un, *Shang China* (Cambridge, 1960). and Chang Kwang-chih *The Archaeology of Ancient China* (New Haven, 1963).
- 2 G. B. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan* (London, 1950).
- 3 Jung-Pang Lo, 'The Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the Late Sung and Early Yüan Periods', in *Far Eastern Quarterly*, xiv (1955), pp. 489-503.
- 4 Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 1- (Cambridge, 1954-).
- 5 Etienne Balazs, 'The Birth of Capitalism in China', in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, iii (1960), pp. 206 ff.
- 6 K. M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean* (London, 1945).
- 7 Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford, 1959).
- 8 C. P. Fitzgerald, *Revolution in China* (London, 1952). See also T. Pereira, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689)*; the *Diary of Thomas Pereira, S.J.*, edited and translated by Joseph Sebes, S.J. (Rome, 1961).
- 9 Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism; the T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford, 1957).
- 10 Nathan Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office* (New York, 1948).

THIS LECTURE
WAS DELIVERED IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
ON
21 OCTOBER 1963

iversity 7

Price 2s. 6d.