Report by Joint Intelligence Committee entitled ‘The implications of a communist success in China’, 30 September 1949

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JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

THE IMPLICATIONS OF A COMMUNIST SUCCESS IN CHINA

Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee

We have previously appreciated that the ultimate object of the Soviet Union is the establishment of Communism, directed from Moscow, throughout the world. It thus seems probable that the Russian long-term intention in the Far East and South East Asia, including the Indian sub-continent, is to achieve the establishment there of Communist Governments, obedient to Moscow, and thereby to eliminate from Asia the political and economic influence of the Western Powers and the military threat from the east.

SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

2. In order to estimate the degree of control likely to be exercised by the Soviet Leaders over Chinese Communist parties and the Chinese authorities, both in China proper and in the outlying provinces, we have examined below the relations of the Soviet Government and the leaders of Communist China.

Russian Relations with the Outer Provinces of China

3. Mongolian People’s Republic, was formerly a province of China, called Outer Mongolia. It was occupied after the Russian Revolution by the Red Army, which was not withdrawn until 1924 when an autonomous government had been established. After a plebiscite in 1945 the Central Chinese Government agreed to the “independence” of this Republic. The Mongolian People’s Republic has become a Russian satellite state closely controlled from Moscow. The Mongolian Army is equipped and supplied with advisory personnel from the Soviet Union.

4. Inner Mongolia[[1]](#footnote-1), on the other hand, remains technically a part of China. A Communist regime under Yun Tse[[2]](#footnote-2), a Sinicised Mongul trained in Moscow and president of the Inner Mongolian Communist Party, was established in 1947 in the presence of Russian and Outer Mongolian forces, covering the Mongol areas in Jehol, Chahar, Suiyuan[[3]](#footnote-3) and North West Manchuria. Yun Tse himself, however, has announced that Inner Mongolia is a constituent part of the Chinese Republic and that the people, although not of Han stock, are Chinese.

5. Sinkiang likewise remains a Chinese province. By skilful exploitation, however, of the tribes on the Russian border, the Russians and their agents have arranged the establishment of a regime favourable to themselves in the north[[4]](#footnote-4).

6. Manchuria was occupied by Russian forces in 1945. When they withdrew, taking with them £200 million worth of industrial assets, they left behind a situation in which a government under Li Li-San, a communist trained in Moscow, was subsequently able to take over. By virtue of the Yalta agreement and the Sino-Soviet Treaty of August 1945, the Russians enjoy substantial control of the Chinese Eastern railway and the South Manchurian railway. They have refortified Port Arthur as a naval base and retained special privileges in Dairen.

Russian Relations with China Proper

7. The Chinese Communist leaders are orthodox Communists and have repeatedly denounced the nationalistic deviation of Yugoslavia. The particular interest of China Proper, however, both internal and external, may require special tactics; and if not skilfully guided by Russian policy special tactics may become a deviation. The basis of these particular interests is economic and they are discussed below.

8. Whereas the industrial proletariat is the usual instrument of Marx-Leninism, the economy of China Proper is almost wholly agricultural, and the “Peasant question”, or the difficulty of preserving the alliance between the “Proletarian Vanguard” and the “mass of labouring peasants” has always been a problem for communist planners. The Soviet Union is unlikely to be willing to divert China the necessary technicians and material from projectors to which she is already committed in her own Far Eastern territories. The commercial cooperation of the Western Powers will therefore be necessary for any reasonably rapid industrial development or improvement of the standard of living in China Proper.

9. The Communist Party in China Proper will therefore be confronted with special economic difficulties in bringing Chinese Communism into line with communism as it is understood in Moscow, and will at least be compelled to go slow. These special difficulties are in turn likely to limit the degree of Russian control of the Central Chinese Communist Government.

Future Relations

10. The political shape to be imposed upon the whole of China including the outer Provinces will remain to be seen when China proper has been overrun by Communist armies. The leaders of the Chinese Communists in all areas have either been trained in Moscow, or have learned their Communism from those who have been trained there. It might therefore be expected that a gigantic new far eastern communist state will arise, or a new far eastern union of Soviet Republics. Mao Tse-tung has himself forecast a “federation” of Chinese Democratic Republics but whether the focus of power in such a federation would be wholly Russian, even if ostensibly Chinese, or genuinely Chinese, it is at present impossible to forecast.

11. Since China became a Republic, no Chinese Government has ever succeeded in controlling the whole of China including the outlying provinces, and it is hardly likely that an alien government in Moscow will be more successful. Moreover, Russian imperialism in the Far East has not in the past been notably successful, and it is open to doubt whether the Soviet leaders have sufficient technical man power, specialist knowledge and political skill to exploit the opportunity offered by the success of the Communist cause in China. Direct Russian control of the whole of China is therefore improbable.

12. Present indications suggest that in China Proper the provincial organisation will be replaced by a small number of regional administrations controlled, to an extent still unknown, by a Communist Central Government. All of these will not doubt be coordinated and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party pursuing the Moscow line. Outer Mongolia, a direct neighbour of the Soviet Union, will remain firmly controlled economically, politically, and militarily, to all intents and purposes an integral part of the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders are likely to make special efforts to retain control of Manchuria, another neighbour, which is of particular economic importance by reason of its industrial potential and seaports, and of strategic importance by virtue of its naval base and communications. The degree of Russian control of Inner Mongolia and of Sinkiang will depend on the relations between the Soviet Union and China Proper.

Summary

1. The new driving force of communism in the Far East and the skill and energy of its Chinese leaders, of which the success of the communist armies is ample evidence, should not be under-estimated. In spite of the economic and political difficulties mentioned above it is reasonable to expect, at least in the near future, that there will be no important divergence between the policy of the Chinese leaders and the policy of the Soviet leaders, and that the resources of China must be counted within the Russian orbit.

POTENTIALITIES OF CHINA AS AN ALLY OF THE SOVIET UNION

14. We review below the significance of the incorporation of China within the Russian orbit.

Political Potentialities

15. An efficient and resolute Government of China could exercise a powerful influence throughout the Far East and South East Asia by virtue of the Asiatic aspirations formerly exploited by the Japanese and of the considerable Chinese population established abroad from the borders of Australia to the borders of India. Although in the past many Chinese abroad have been prosperous and contented, they have usually supported the Chinese Central Government and returned to China in their old age. The new Communist Government is likely to aim at gaining the support of the overseas Chinese, and by exploiting this loyalty, they would have (expect possibly in Burma where the Chinese are predominantly of the shop keeping class) the makings of a dangerous fifth column which could do much to make untenable the position of the Western Powers in Indo-China and Malaya, to reverse the present inclinations of the Government of Siam, and to reverse the initial inclinations of the Nationalist Government of Indonesia.

16. The relevant political objectives hitherto announced by the Chinese communists are the elimination of feudalism and of Anglo-American imperialism in China, and, in particular, an end to American interference in Chinese affairs and the complete withdrawal of British forces from the vicinity of China. No announcement has been made about Hong Kong but it has been unofficially suggested that they will wish to “discuss it”. There can be no doubt that the recovery of Hong Kong and Macao is among the ultimate aims of Chinese Communist policy. The Communists will also undoubtedly claim Formosa which is at present administered by the Chinese Nationalist Government. It would be in the Russian interest for all these questions to be taken up.

17. The Soviet leaders will no doubt afford the Communist Government of China their diplomatic support in securing de jure recognition and its admission as a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. They could thereupon encourage it to play an active part, in the Russian interest and against the Anglo-Americans, in the proceedings of the United Nations, particularly in respect of the Japanese Peace Treaty, the Korean question, and other Asiatic issues such as the problems of Indonesia, Formosa, and Kashmir.

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Keywords: Post-war Asia, China

1. In the People’s Republic of China this region is called Inner Mongolia. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ulanhu (born Yun Ze,1906-1988) – Chinese Communist political figure, the founder of the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia, Party Secretary and Chairman of Inner Mongolia in 1947—1966/67 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Provinces of the Chinese Republic 1928-1952, situated in the north-eastern part of the country. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This reference is to the East Turkestan Republic that was created with Soviet support in 1944 and which existed until 1949. See: Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia,* 163-228. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)