

**far
east**

Reporter

**YOU SHALL
KNOW THE
TRUTH ABOUT CHINA**

**Excerpts from FELIX GREENE'S
A CURTAIN OF IGNORANCE**

40¢

This issue of Far East Reporter
"YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT CHINA"
 consists of excerpts
 from

A CURTAIN OF IGNORANCE FELIX GREENE

*How the American Public Has Been
 Misinformed about China*

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YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT CHINA
Excerpts from "A Curtain of Ignorance"

Far East Reporter Introduction

Felix Greene, who wrote "Awakened China" (Doubleday \$5.95) after his second trip to China in 1960, has now written a second book, "A Curtain of Ignorance" (Doubleday (\$5.50) dealing with the myths presented to the American people as facts about China - and including a chapter "Postscript From Peking" written after his third visit to China in 1963.

FAR EAST REPORTER, in order to introduce this valuable book to its American readers, herewith - from the 340 pages of the book, presents about 24 pages of excerpts. These few excerpts give samples of the facts behind such myths as:

- "The Chinese have paid too great a price for their progress"
- "The Peoples Communes have been abolished"
- "The Peoples Communes have destroyed family life"
- "Mao says 300,000,000 Chinese will survive a nuclear war"
- "China is committed to a policy of aggression and expansion".

Mr Greene gives extensive quotes to illustrate the way China news has been presented in the American press, radio, TV, books and articles by American scholars - all of which will be familiar to American readers.

Mr Greene counterbalances these familiar quotes by facts - from writers and observers of other countries, by foreign scholars who (contrary to American scholars) have visited, revisited and traveled in China since 1949, and by Mr Greene's own extensive visits in 1957, 1960 and 1963.

FAR EAST REPORTER publisher, after eighteen years of speaking to American audiences, agrees with Mr Greene that "Americans are ready to listen to the real facts of life". Here in this "Curtain of Ignorance" are the facts on which Americans can build a true picture about what is probably the most important fact and factor in today's world - The Peoples Republic of China.

FACTS abolish the fear that comes with lies, half truths, myths and misrepresentations. "You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free" - free to be a more informed, intelligent and responsible American citizen.

YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH
ABOUT CHINA

Excerpts from "A Curtain of Ignorance"
By Felix Greene

Have The Chinese Paid Too Great A Price For Progress?
From Chapter 7 (34 pages) *The Mathematics of*
• *Suffering*

I. The Cost of Progress

The world we live in today, with all its marvelous achievements, is still a world in which the life experience for most people is one of prolonged suffering,

How is a poor country to become less poor?

To begin to lift itself up out of poverty, squalor, and illiteracy, a nation needs to save. An irrigation pump, a school, a bicycle factory, a road, an iron plough, cannot be obtained unless someone has saved money to buy it with. *There is no other way.* And for a nation whose people are barely surviving, saving means suffering, and with suffering come social tensions and unrest. The suffering and social tension are less if the people understand their collective goals and if the effort is shared equally, and in these circumstances pride, the sense of joining in a common struggle, and mutual support is greatly enhanced. The social tension is great when the suffering is unequal and when one class of people not only are escaping the suffering but are actually benefiting from the suffering of others.

Western progress came with suffering. Britain led the world in industrial emergence—but at what a frightful human cost!

And the United States?

The United States began its life under extraordinary favored circumstances.

But in spite of these uniquely favorable conditions, America did not escape her share of human suffering. In using Negro slavery and Mexicans for its agrarian development (and cheap imported labor from Europe for its industries), America also inflicted its share of injustice and misery on others. The "internalized colony" of the Negro population, as far as cheap labor is concerned, served the same purpose as Britain's colonies overseas.

And with slavery, there emerged two social-economic systems within America so disparate and contradictory that only a savage and prolonged civil war could again unify the country—and the six hundred thousand dead of that war must be added to the human cost of American advance.

We need to remind ourselves of these historic facts, not to feel guilty or wring our hands, but to enable us to understand some of the extraordinarily difficult problems that today face the underdeveloped countries of the world.

There are several other essential and inescapable conditions that must be met if backward countries are to advance, and one of them is the fullest possible mobilization of the surplus that has accumulated in the hands of the wealthier classes,.....

However, such mobilization of existing and potential economic surplus is bound to meet with the determined opposition from the property-owning strata, the "small class, whose main interest is the preservation of its wealth and privileges."⁴ *The fundamental challenge that faces all backward countries* is to overcome the implacable resistance of the class that at present enjoys the possession of power and wealth. Until this challenge is faced and met there is almost no possibility of a genuine program of economic and social progress.

As their position is progressively challenged, the ruling elite in backward countries tend to increase their measures of repression.

Under these conditions the peaceful transformation of a country from a state of squalor, stagnation, and oppression toward an advancing social democracy becomes impossible. Hostility and desperation mount and the people are at last left with only one recourse—the physical removal of the elite that has for so long oppressed them. What at one stage might have been accomplished peacefully can at a later stage be done only with violence.

To overcome the resistance of a repressive ruling class, to mobilize all existing surplus capital, and to save—these are the three basic problems that confront every backward country, in Africa, Asia, or Latin America. These three essentials represent the inescapable costs of economic growth. Some countries are as yet unwilling to meet these costs, or, if the people themselves are

⁴ United Nations, *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries*, 1951, par. 37.

willing, they are still too weak to overcome the resistance of those defending their positions of power and privilege. Other countries, such as China, have understood these realities and have been prepared to act on them. China recognized, as Russia did, that no progress was possible until their regressive ruling classes had been overthrown. They recognized also that no progress was possible without the mobilization of all existing savings, and that further savings could only come through work. And, finally, they recognized the obvious fact that if the hardship and effort that are inevitable during the early stages of primary accumulation were to be equitably shared, the economic direction must be centralized.

Both Russia and China, once their regimes were established, took immediate steps to improve the social conditions of the people. They expanded educational opportunities, improved public health and medical facilities, and gave security for the old. But at the same time the basic rule of national saving was never forgotten—that during the period of primary accumulation the people's per capita production had to rise more rapidly than their per capita consumption. In other words, the individual's standard of living could improve, despite greatly increased work, only relatively slowly.

One of the extraordinary features of life in China today, as I found when I was there, is the extent to which this basic economic lesson is understood by even the humblest peasant. He knows that he is expected to work harder than ever before and he knows why improvement in his standard of living can at this stage rise only relatively slowly. Because this first lesson in economics has been explained and re-explained to the masses of people in China, because they can begin to see around them the benefits deriving from collective saving, and above all because the people themselves have insisted that the work and effort be shared equally by everyone, there has been significantly less social tension in China during the past decade than Russia experienced in the equivalent stage of her "primary accumulation."

..... No
amount of aid from outside can be a substitute for the basic savings that can come only from the energies of the indigenous population.

There is an understandable reluctance in the West to face these hard requirements of economic growth in less-favored countries. America historically never went through the period of feudal suppression that today has so many people in its grip. We have nothing in our own national experience to help us feel the helplessness and fury that is moving those who wish to break their chains. Our own revolution—led by a cultivated and politically conscious upper class—is far behind us; we shrink from the thought of social tension and violence. We hope that by providing some of our own surplus capital, our technical knowledge, and our goodwill, economic advance can be promoted sufficiently quickly to prevent the hungry masses from breaking into violent action.

This hope is not likely to be fulfilled. We are placing altogether too much reliance on foreign aid. It will require far more than aid from abroad before economic and social advance is possible in the poor countries of the world. The necessity—understood by the Chinese—of finding ways to release the energies of their own people, rather than to rely on foreign aid, is slowly being acknowledged.

II. *The Cost of Stagnation*

. . . the undeniable material accomplishments of the Chinese Communists have cost dearly in terms of human freedom and human dignity. . . . this is a tired cliché which even by 1953 had been repeated a hundred times and which has been heard a thousand times since. Whenever a scholar, . . . or a newspaper writer, is confronted with undeniable evidence of progress in China, the use of this cliché makes it appear that it would have been better if no progress had been made at all.

. . . the high price in human lives and human misery that the Chinese people have had to pay for Chinese Communist achievements.

—A. T. Steele, *New York Herald Tribune*,
September 16, 1956.

The Chinese Communists have forced agriculture ahead by a series of power drives . . . the human cost was nightmarish.

—Editorial, *The Christian Science Monitor*,
March 13, 1962.

There are many others.

Tillman Durdin, several years later in the *New York Times* for April 27, 1958, cabled from Hong Kong:

Peiping says impressively high production is being achieved. . . . But the effort that is being put forth by the Chinese people must be somewhere near the limit of human endurance.

(A week later, on May 4, *The Times* headlined a Reuters dispatch, not from Hong Kong but from China itself, which presented quite a different picture: SUNDAY IN PEIPING IS A DAY OF JOLLITY, STORES, CAFES, BATHHOUSES AND THEATRES CROWDED—REDS FIND REST USEFUL.)

And *Time Magazine* on December 1, 1961, in nearly ten pages of text and pictures on the subject "Red China—The Loss of Man," presented a picture of almost unrelieved catastrophe, but managed to detect "some gains."

But whatever the gains, they do not begin to offset the price imposed by Peking through oppression and misery. Today no one can be sure how many people share this misery. . . .

It is a disturbing fact that none of these commentators and scholars have suggested possible alternative policies that might have been open to the Chinese government. Most would say, no doubt, that to have returned to the appalling conditions under Chiang would have been unthinkable; and they might generally agree that the first achievements of Mao's government were impressive. The mobilization of the energies of the people, the stabilization of a runaway inflation, the steps taken to equalize food supplies, the reconstruction of rundown factories, the distribution of land to the peasants, the great advances in public health, and the expansion of educational facilities—all these were vital if yet further disasters were not to fall upon the Chinese people. From the moment that the Communists took over, the widespread starvation that had become a recurring nightmare of Chinese life became a thing of the past. And yet these accomplishments, we are told, were achieved only at a "human cost" so terrible that they outweighed the benefits they brought.

Press and scholar alike repeat the cliché but provide no clues as to what the government could have done. They take pity on the Chinese for their loss of dignity and freedom. What dignity and freedom did they have to lose?

..... Talk to a Chinese today about his "loss of freedom" and he would laugh in your face.

..... Ask a young woman of China today if she feels her "human dignity" has been infringed!

There is a cost to be paid for progress—no one can possibly deny this; but a cursory view of other underdeveloped countries might have reminded these writers that perhaps there is a much grimmer price to be paid for *not* progressing.

In reading accounts of other underdeveloped areas one is aware of a wholly different tone of voice to the one used when our writers deal with China. Here there is no high moral indignation, no singling out of government leaders for blame, or if they are blamed they are never spoken of, as the present Chinese leaders so often are, as if they were totally evil men.

• • • • •

Substitute the names of the countries and the cities and we would see China before the revolution—but in China on so much vaster a scale.

We need these reminders of the past, these tallies of the cost of stagnation, if only as milestones to see the prodigious distance the Chinese have come. Twenty thousand bodies, on average, picked up off the streets of Shanghai every year (37,000 in 1933); three million lives lost in 1931 in central China through flood and famine; over a million in 1942 in Honan province. And the landlords hoarding grain while babies ate grass and roots. And young girls sold to slavery or prostitution so that at least they would eat. Areas the size of France with virtually no doctors, and rickshaw men with a professional life-expectance of eight years. . . . *This was the China of the past, but it is not the China of today.* This was the price the Chinese people were paying for stagnation, until with indescribable efforts they rose and shed their nightmare past.

In the light of these historic facts, one must ask: By what right do our well-paid writers and our comfortable scholars now presume to tell us that the Chinese people have paid too high a price for their advance?

Have The Peoples Communes Been Abolished? Family Life Destroyed?

From Chapter 8 (31 pages) 650 Million Slaves

.....

Now let us turn to see what was reported to us about the communes.

It was in the autumn of 1958 that this new word "commune," with its ominous undertones, began to appear in our press. Some new and tremendous upheaval was shaking China's society. Very few facts were at first available, but the press left us in no doubt that whatever the facts were, they were very sinister. Soon the news was out—the Chinese government was deliberately reducing the 650 million people of China into a condition of the most abject slavery.

Under the communes, which merge collective farms and even urban districts into large groupings, individual homes are often eliminated and members live in communal houses and eat in mess halls.

—Tillman Durdin, from Hong Kong,
New York Times, October 16, 1958.

On November 14, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles gave his official endorsement to these stories. In a speech before the representatives of Colombo Plan, assembled in Seattle, he declared that the Chinese were "imposing mass slavery on 650 million people." They had "degraded the dignity of the human individual" and "had created a vast slave state."

This hint from high officialdom was all that was needed. For example, Marguerite Higgins reported:

The United States now concludes that the drive to organize mainland China's 500,000,000 peasants into militarized barracks life based on communes is well on the way to being an accomplished fact. . . .

(To build enough barracks to have 500,000,000 peasants in barracks life "well on the way to being an accomplished fact" within a few weeks is an astonishing logistical feat! Especially in a country where lumber is scarce. China was apparently able to accomplish within a few weeks what the U.S., throwing in *all its national resources*, might have been hard-pressed to do in five years!)

Miss Higgins continued:

As one official put it, what Mao Tse-tung has done . . . makes Stalin look like a piker. . . .

It is not only Washington that is appalled by the regimentation, which finds women "liberated" from their homes and placed in barracks separated from their husbands and everyone from teen-age youth to oldster trained to put gun worship over ancestor worship.

—New York *Herald Tribune*,
November 25, 1958.

Mao Tse-tung has herded more than 90% of mainland China's 500 million peasants into vast human poultry yards. . . .

Even the old folks, for whom the commune has established "Happy Homes," are kept busy with scheduled chores, . . . when the inhabitants of the Happy Homes die, their bodies are dropped into a chemically treated pool and converted to fertilizer. . . .

Logical next step . . . is the "Saturday-night system," under which a married woman worker lives in a factory-dormitory, is alone with her husband only on the odd Saturday night when she has the use of a dormitory room all to herself.

—*Time*, December 1, 1958.

[*Time's* memory erred. The family had already been destroyed 6½ years earlier. On June 18, 1951, *Time* had reported:

Chief among the traditions under all-out Red attack is China's revered institution, the family. . . . Marriage, except for the purely functional reason of procreation, is officially discouraged everywhere and permitted only after long investigation of the couple's political reliability. . . . Newlywed party members are permitted to live together for one week only, thereafter sleep each at his own place of work. . . . Party members' children usually are taken from the mother at the age of six to eight weeks and boarded by the state. . . .

But *Time* must share with the New York *Times* the honors for the early discovery of what the Chinese Communists were doing to the family. Five years before the communes, the *Times* was raising its editorial hands in horror on October 3, 1953:

Of the countless crimes of the Red regime of Mao none has been as terrible as the crime against the minds and hearts of the good Chinese. . . .

There is first of all the assault upon the mores and morals of the good Chinese family, . . .]

But seemingly with the arrival of the communes, the families had to be destroyed all over again.

. . . In theory all mainland China is now in the process of being reorganized into communal living. The children are reared in nurseries. The men and women live in communal dormitories, eat in communal mess halls, and work in military-type organizations. . . .

—Joseph C. Harsch, Special Correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*, December, 10, 1958.

Three days later, the same reporter wrote:

Not all people in China are yet living in the communal dormitories, eating in the communal mess halls, handing over their children at birth to the communal nurseries. . . .

But he implied that it would not be long! And what appalling sacrifices the Chinese peasants were being forced to make:

In the Chinese experiment there is, in theory, no room for personal luxury, and no future for personal savings. In most communes the individual is in theory provided by the commune with all his needs. "Needs" do not include spending money, cars, motorboats, private garden plots, private housing, or dachas in the country.

—*The Christian Science Monitor*,
December 13, 1958.

Having considered the dreadful implications of peasants denied their cars and motorboats, Mr. Harsch later in the month concluded that what was going on in China was

. . . the greatest mass sacrifice of human heritage, human comfort and human effort in all time.

—December 24, 1958.

Throughout 1959 and into 1960, the press continued to give accounts of the horrors of the commune system and the "nightmarish" life of the people in them.

.....

In looking through the files, I was struck by two things—first, the high degree of uniformity in all the accounts. There were variations, of course, but they all followed the central theme that the Chinese people were in the grip of a ruthless regime.

The second striking impression I obtained was the paucity—indeed, the virtual non-existence—of any thoughtful interpretation. Even if these dreadful things were happening, there was little to tell the reader *why* they were happening, except in the shallowest possible terms. A quarter of the human race was being “enslaved” by the most “ruthless dictatorship in history,” but we were really told nothing more. And being told nothing could only reinforce the first conviction, that the Chinese leadership are men of almost limitless evil intent.

The commune movement began in 1958, between my two journeys to China. In 1957, I had already experienced the shock—the almost disorienting bewilderment—of coming to a country and finding it so very different from the country that I had been led to expect. I knew the extent to which the press had misled me once. I was on guard. So I read the accounts of the communes with a very great deal of skepticism—especially the reports about the breakup of the families. (I felt I knew the Chinese well enough to know that if any government attempted to break up the family, it could only end in being broken up itself.)

And yet—and this is testimony to the pervasive effect of any lie if it is reiterated sufficiently—I returned to China in 1960 expecting to see some very disturbing changes. Some reports, of course, I had dismissed. I could not conceive of *any* government, however much it desired to, being able to build enough barracks for five hundred million people within a few weeks. Those statements condemned themselves. But I must admit I expected to see *some* barracks, *some* ominous changes in the mood of the people, at least *some* indications of brutal treatment. In other words, I could not bring myself to believe, in spite of my skepticism, that these reports that I had been reading had no basis in reality.

While in China in 1960, I was able to talk to the ambassadors and staffs of most of the Western and neutral embassies about the communes; I had long discussions with well-informed Europeans, including technical experts, who had been in China several years; I traveled thousands of miles, spent days in communes of my own choosing; I walked to work with peasants and ate with them in their communal dining halls. I found nothing to justify the reports that I had been reading in our press. I also found that these reports were not credited—indeed were ridiculed—by the diplomatic representatives of Western countries in China.



The press in our country was right in recognizing the commune movement as something of profound importance, and that it created many fundamental changes in the life of the people concerned. It was undoubtedly right in assuming that not all the peasants of China supported these changes with enthusiasm; but it was wrong in concluding that the commune movement was imposed on the mass of the people against their will; it was proven wrong when it continually speculated that a "revolt" of the peasants was likely—for it didn't happen; it was wrong in reporting that the five hundred million peasants had been herded into barracks (I must repeat that I have yet to meet any reporter or observer who was in China who claims he has seen these barracks, or a foreign embassy official in Peking who gives this story any credence).

We must therefore conclude that on all essential questions concerning the communes, the general impression conveyed by our press and our experts was misleading. Rumors were reported as fact. Reports by refugees were far too heavily relied on. The conditions that gave rise to the communes and the basic agricultural problems that required solution were never adequately analyzed. Accounts of the communes were exaggerated, and the little interpretation that was attempted was meaningless because it was itself based on inadequate or erroneous information.

It was in this manner that the American people were informed about an event of extraordinary significance and complexity that affected a very large proportion of the people of our world.



Did Mao Tse-tung Say That 300,000,000 Chinese
Would Be Left After a Nuclear War?

From Chapter 11 (10 pages) "There Will Be
Three Hundred Million Left"

Without mentioning names or places Marshal Tito said the Chinese liked to boast that their population of 600,000,000 was a guarantee of victory in war. According to President Tito, Peiping calculated that "if 300,000,000 were killed there would still remain 300,000,000 Chinese."

—New York Times,
June 16, 1958.

With these words by Tito, a major and perhaps immortal myth was born. (It was reported later that a somewhat similar statement was made in 1956 by Marshal Peng Teh-huai to a group of Japanese military officers visiting China. But the U.S. press did not take it up at that time. The "ready to sacrifice 300 million" story went into circulation only after Tito's speech quoted above.)

Ask any group of Americans, and nine out of ten will have heard (in one form or another) that China "wouldn't mind a war because even if half of them were killed there would still be three hundred million of them left."

No one today even knows that the remark originated with Tito, or if they do, that Tito and the Chinese at the time he made it were engaged in any angry exchange of polemics.

It was *said*, and that was enough. Here was further "proof" of the unspeakably callous nature of the Chinese leaders. The remark was eagerly seized upon, disseminated, editorialized, analyzed by learned scholars, embroidered, enlarged, broadcast, discussed on TV, written about by a score of columnists—until today it is a central and ineradicable component of our picture of the Chinese.

Tito's words were part of a long speech. A number of American correspondents were there; they all reported the speech, but only the *Times'* correspondent thought the remark about the Chinese worth mentioning. (The AP's long account of Tito's speech contained only one reference to China on the international level, saying that "China was against relaxation of tensions in the world.")

The day following the report from its correspondent in Belgrade, the *Times* ran an editorial in which the editors drew their ominous conclusions:

TITO DARES THE LIGHTNING

In terms of drama, of course, the highlight of Tito's address was his exposure of the peaceful professions of the Chinese Communists. We knew from the past bloody history of the establishment and consolidation of Chinese communism—a process which cost countless lives—that the present Peiping rulers regarded human life cheaply; but even the most bitter Western opponent of the Peiping regime would have hesitated to believe Tito's revelation that they regarded 300,000,000 lives as of little import.

The story was soon in orbit.

From then on it was difficult to find anyone writing about China who would not contrive to include some reference to the Chinese being ready to sacrifice half their population.

.....

Tito's words in the course of time have appeared in almost every newspaper, every magazine dealing with China, hundreds of syndicated columns and editorials. Tito himself was soon forgotten. It is sometimes Mao who is said to have made the remark, sometimes Chou En-lai, sometimes the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi; once it was an unnamed general in Tokyo.

The story continues. Drew Pearson said (on October 28, 1959) that Mao "doesn't worry about atomic war because [China] could lose half its population"; and it's only a little step from not worrying about war to *approving* war.

The Chinese government approves war, agitates for war, and predicates its entire existence on war. . . .

—Lucius Beebe, *San Francisco Chronicle*,
January 28, 1963.

The authorship of the famous remark remains forgotten, and the number of his people that Mao is ready to sacrifice varies, too; but never China's eventual doom.

Referring to an official Department of Agriculture report, the New York *Herald Tribune*, in a front-page feature, wrote on October 17, 1962:

A vast and grisly wasteland, offering only a future of non-existence to a massive but starving population, is Red China's bleak prospect for 1980. . . .³

The plight of people never bothered Mao. He said that in case of nuclear war, Red China would emerge best off in the world. Why? Even if 200 million lives were lost on the mainland, there'd be more people left in China than perhaps the rest of the world combined.

The arithmetic may be confused but the purport is clear. For whoever is reported as the author of the statement and whatever the number of Chinese to be sacrificed, it is always dutifully presented to show what monsters the Chinese leaders are, how callously indifferent to the wholesale sacrifice of human lives.

Tito, himself, must be amazed. Rarely has so much mileage been wrung from so brief a remark by any leader. And who really knows whether the Chinese ever said what he said they said!

.....

It has always struck me as rather strange that Mao's remark (if he ever made it) that half the population of China would survive a war caused such a furor in our press. That the Chinese, like other civilized people, have had to take into account the possible effects of nuclear war is not startling. We accept estimates of how many of us might have to be sacrificed to win a war calmly enough—in fact I don't know of any country in the world that so openly calculates and debates and discusses the number of people who might be left alive after the bombing is over. Mr. Joseph Alsop has long been preparing us for the number of "megadeaths" that we must expect to suffer. Mr. Herman Kahn's macabre book,⁵ in which he spoke of sixty million deaths or more as "acceptable," was read and considered soberly by thousands. For what we do, the press violently castigates the Chinese, and from it draws all kinds of absurd and frightening conclusions.

And in doing so, it conditions us further to accept the image of the Chinese as inhuman monsters.

While Tito's "disclosure" of Chinese readiness to sacrifice three hundred million people is the stuff that columnists' dreams are made of, scholars and specialists tend to seek something a little less crude—all the while following the same general line.

³ Not much more than six months after this official report was issued, and long before 1980, it was apparent from all reports that China's food supplies were improved and agricultural production was once more moving upward.

⁵ *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).

In the writings of Mao Tse-tung they found what they were looking for. And like the columnists with the three hundred million casualties, they have squeezed out of it every ounce of juice.

Over a quarter of a century ago, while Mao and his group of guerrilla forces were busy fighting both the Kuomintang and the invading Japanese armies, Mao delivered a long speech (in English it runs to fourteen pages) on "Problems of War and Strategy."⁶ Much of this five-thousand-word address was historical and theoretical, and in the course of it Mao said: "Every Communist must grasp the truth: 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.'"⁷

One would not have imagined that in a country which won its own political independence by using guns, this rather mild and obvious phrase would appear very startling. But nevertheless, torn out of context and with no reference to the conditions under which it was made, it has been often used at the highest levels of scholarship as conclusive proof of the wicked and warlike nature of Mao Tse-tung.

.....

Mao's essay, far from showing that the "Chinese Communists have no moral scruples" about the use of force, is instead part of a closely reasoned argument as to how wars can finally be eliminated.....

"War, this monster of mutual slaughter, will be finally eliminated through the progress of human society, and in no distant future too."¹¹

A reading of Mao's long analysis of what constitute just and unjust wars would, I think, give readers almost the opposite impression as to the Chinese leader's feelings about war than they would arrive at from reading specialist's quotations.

There is a central point in Mao Tse-tung's thinking—the absolute necessity to examine carefully the laws and anatomy of war: "Without understanding the circumstances of war, its characteristics, and its relations to other things, we cannot know the laws of war, cannot know how to direct it, and cannot win victory."¹²

⁶ Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Vol. II (New York: International Publishers, 1954-1956), pp. 267-81. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Vol. I (1954), p. 179.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

When one considers that all this was written several years before the outbreak of the Second World War and before the Japanese invaded and overran much of China's territory, an analysis of the laws of war can no more be considered "proof" of Mao's warlike nature than discussion of military tactics before Pearl Harbor by officers in the Pentagon proves that they were devoid of any "moral scruples."

.....

That those who wish to prove how "belligerent" the present-day leaders in China are, still rely on a part of a single sentence extracted from a speech made a quarter of a century ago—a speech made to a band of soldiers who had only recently survived a six-thousand-mile retreat—is in itself, I think, significant.

.....

It would appear a legitimate request that our scholars, statesmen, and soldiers, attempting to convey to us some knowledge of Mao's thoughts about war and the use of force, should give us more than a few selected quotations, with this phrase about the "barrel of a gun" thrown in. Mao Tse-tung, after all, is one of the great, and probably the most prolific, of military theoreticians of our day.

Is China Committed To A Policy of Aggression
And Expansion?

From Chapter 10 (22 pages) *The Conditioning
Of America*

Deeply implanted in the minds of Americans is the belief, the certainty almost, that of all the nations in the world today, China is the most belligerent.

The questions that I am most frequently asked at my lectures are those that revolve around China's "aggressiveness," her "wish to expand," her "disregard for human life," and "what will happen when China has the nuclear bomb?"

THE CHINA DANGER

A regime that manifests the desperate xenophobia now being displayed by the Chinese Communist Government cannot but be a constant, unpredictable threat to neighboring territories. . . .

Editorial, *New York Times*
(Western Edition), August 3, 1963.

PEKING'S GRAND DESIGN

Communist China has made no secret recently of its resolve to enter upon a Napoleonic phase of expansionism . . . with the leverage of 700,000,000 people and a vast territory virtually immune to conquest, its rulers feel bold enough to blueprint their ambitions. . . .

.....
Editorial, *New York Times*,
September 14, 1963.

Influenced by statements such as these, it is no wonder that the vision of China in the minds of most Americans is dominated by a sense of danger. China represents a threat that we cannot clearly define and presents a future menace against which we hardly know how to prepare. One human being out of four is a Chinese—we have a picture in our minds of vast hordes and limitless manpower. We know that if it comes to war we could *defeat* China, but we sense instinctively that we could never conquer her.

The enormous confidence of the Chinese leadership disturbs us—they don't behave as leaders of a poor and backward nation; they don't seem to *need* us.

For fourteen years we have been told by our press that the Communist leadership was nearing collapse—but it remains today in full and confident control. We debate among ourselves as to whether we should “recognize” China, but we suspect that she would quickly reject recognition unless we offered it to her on her own terms. Year after year we have stubbornly opposed her being accepted in the United Nations, and are now beginning to wonder whether the ostracism we have imposed on her has not, after all, been to her advantage. Our support of Chiang Kai-shek is costly and gives us no compensating advantages; and no moral support, for we know he is a poor representative of the principles we claim to be defending. Thus we have reached an impasse and can see no way through it, unable to visualize how our problems with China will eventually be resolved.

.....

Above all, it was our experience with the Chinese in the Korean conflict that set this pattern of thinking. This costly armed collision, far more than the collapse of the Nationalist government, opened up a wholly new chapter in our relations with the Chinese people. In our memory had remained the Chinese soldier under Chiang Kai-shek—ill-disciplined, underpaid, good humored, dishonest, slovenly, unable to make good use of modern weapons; the despair of his American military advisers. When in the autumn of 1950 a new kind of Chinese army swept down upon the American troops and forced them to retreat, a host of images were swept away as well. It was Korea that finally expunged the picture of the Chinese as a kindly, urbane, likable people. The men whom we thought “couldn’t handle machines” were now flying jets and were found to be better artillerymen than the Germans.² In our anger and bewilderment old images revived. We began to think of the Chinese (as we did in the Boxer War half a century earlier) as savage and brutal, a people with no regard for human life. We once more saw them in terms of the “faceless mass,” “aggressiveness,” “the Yellow Peril.” The Mogul hordes had returned.

To suffer defeats at the hands of the Chinese was a staggering

² Harold Isaacs, in *Scratches on Our Minds* (p. 226), quotes a member of his panel, “one of the country’s best-known newsmen,” as saying: “The Chinese were better artillerymen than the Germans ever were.” *Life*, November 20, 1950, described the new Chinese armies as “a menacingly Russianized fighting force.” On April 5, 1954, Secretary of State Dulles read to a congressional committee what he called an “ominous account” of Chinese technical military help being given to the Vietminh army. A few years earlier, a suggestion that any “technical aid” provided by the Chinese could be considered “ominous” would have been laughable.

national humiliation. To be fought to a standstill and sign an armistice which brought us no victory was an experience that ate into our national consciousness more deeply perhaps than we realize. It is this humiliation, and the bitterness that arose from it, that has above all made it so difficult for us ever since to view China and her actions with dispassion.

We are told by the press so often that China's intentions are aggressive that we tend to see "proof" of this in all her actions—though these could sometimes bear quite different interpretations. We are sometimes puzzled and hurt when other nations, even some of our closest allies, do not view China in the same dark light as we do. Nor are we sufficiently detached to see that some of China's "belligerence" is a very natural response to our own hostility.

The picture of the Chinese as belligerent, aggressive, warlike, expansionist, ruthless, and ready to plunge the world into war has been frequently presented by the press. This general description of China is well summarized in an editorial in the *New York Times*:

Communist China is and will remain indefinitely a big, overpopulated, economically stricken nation whose present rulers have unsatisfied ambitions that impel them into a belligerent, revolutionary attitude. They see United States power and influence as the chief barrier to these ambitions and regard hostility, even war, between the Soviet Union and the United States as a way toward removal of the American obstacle to their aspirations. January 24, 1963.

A wholly different tone was taken by Mr. Richard Harris, the China expert of *The Times* of London, a paper even more conservative in outlook than the *New York Times*. He has known China since his youth. His last visit to China was in 1960.

Whatever their revolutionary fervor or however much the propaganda churned out in Peking, any careful examination of Chinese policy towards south-east Asia shows conclusively, in my view, that China wants neutralist governments with which she can be friendly—and no more. Burma, Indonesia, and Cambodia are all evidence of this. I think Laos, if it is ever allowed to settle down, will prove the same. What the Chinese want is the removal of American power which they believe is a threat to them.

After reviewing the whole mosaic of events in Southeast Asia, Mr. Harris concludes that “. . . China has no expansionist ambitions.” *The Listener*, London, September 6, 1962.

This sober assessment by a highly informed and responsible writer of China's non-expansionist intentions is apparently shared by the best intelligence of the U.S. government. On August 1, 1963, the *New York Times* (Western Edition) reported from Washington that a high-level review conducted by the administration had concluded that it was “unlikely that Peking will depart from its policy of ‘minimum risk’ in foreign affairs” and that the “United States suspects that China plans no major adventures.”

But only *two days later*, on August 3, the *Times* (Western Edition) printed the editorial **THE CHINA DANGER** which we have already quoted, in which China is pictured as “a constant, unpredictable threat to neighboring territories. Red China now displays an implacable hatred . . . to all other countries and peoples that do not accept its grim philosophy of hate and violence. . . .”

And this was followed, as we have seen, by the other fear-inspiring editorial on September 14, in which the *Times* warned its readers of China's “resolve to enter upon a Napoleonic phase of expansionism.”

What are we to think of editorials such as these in America's most influential newspaper?

In reading over innumerable press reports, the columnists, and the weekly magazines of the past few years, I was struck by the extraordinary paucity of any solid analysis of China's foreign policies. There was plenty of denunciation but mighty little explanation.

.....

The Chinese unquestionably have intense national pride and (perhaps with good reason) a suspicion of foreigners. But China's pride and her sense of ethnocentrism should not, as it often is, be confused with expansionism.

.....

The impact of cumulative statements of China's sinister advances is frightening. Let's examine them:

“regained control of Manchuria”: Manchuria was always Chinese except during its occupation by the Japanese. This is as sinister as France’s regaining control of Paris in World War II.

“taken over North Korea”: North Korean government still in control.

“taken over North Vietnam”: North Vietnam government still in control.

“are infiltrating Laos”: disproved by UN commission—it was Russia, not China, that gave military aid to the Laotian rebels.

“are infiltrating Cambodia”: Cambodia was at this time a strongly neutralist nation.

“are threatening Thailand”: What evidence is there for this?

“are threatening Burma”: Burma is on peaceful and friendly terms with China and in 1962 signed a border agreement in which China gave up some territory to Burma.

“have made serious inroads into the political life of Indonesia, where rumors of an impending coup have been frequent.” The repatriation of Chinese to the mainland in 1959–60 was accompanied by some friction, but friendly relations have been maintained since. In 1963 Liu Shao-chi, Chinese Head of State, paid a formal visit to Indonesia. There has been no coup.

This broadside was launched by a U.S. statesman, who was later to be entrusted with some of the most delicate negotiations with the Soviet Union.

A frequent practice employed by both scholars and the press is the interchange of the word “China” with “Communist,” and by this sleight-of-word linking revolutionary movements in Asia with the Chinese whether there is any evidence for such an association or not.

.....

One could present literally hundreds of examples of such generalized statements about Chinese aggressiveness.

.....

The standard rule appears to be that whenever China is involved in a dispute China is *always the aggressor*. Occasionally—very occasionally—a courageous and refreshing voice is heard warning us that the facts if they were fully known might bear a different interpretation.

That such ideas about the Chinese leaders and their "aggressive" foreign policy are current is not surprising. It would be quite impossible, in my opinion, to come to any other view if one were to rely on our newspapers and many of our syndicated columnists and weekly newsmagazines. It certainly is not the purpose of this book to examine China's foreign policies and pass judgment on them. The point I am making here is that I believe we have been given too little objective information. Tibet, Laos, Vietnam, India . . . the image of "aggression" is deeply implanted in our minds. Whenever these "acts of aggression" take place, the invariable epithets are trotted out, the cartoonists get busy with their drawings of the rapacious dragon, the usual outraged editorials are written—but the *facts*?

I shall examine in later chapters two cases of Chinese "aggression" which remain vividly in our minds—the Chinese-Indian border dispute and Tibet.

When each of these events is examined in detail, not in terms of cold war assumptions, but based on historical background and documented evidence, the issues that at the time seemed so gloriously certain are seen to be not nearly so unambiguous as they had been made to appear.

Why Did Mr Greene Write "A Curtain of Ignorance"?

From "Foreword" (7 pages)

"A Summing Up" (9 pages)

This book proposes to challenge the accuracy of some of the reports about Communist China conveyed to the American people by the press, the experts, and by public officials.

.....

To say that those who control our press, the specialists and the politicians have misinformed the public in regard to events in China, is a very grave charge. In this book I propose to give what I believe to be evidence in support of this charge. It does not imply that these men have combined in any conscious conspiracy. It does not imply that they are disloyal or unpatriotic. But it does imply in an area where great passions are aroused, those responsible for providing reasonably authentic information have failed in their duty. On an issue which involves our future security, our lives, our commerce, our national honor, the American people have been misled.

.....

Our greatest problem in dealing with China is not China, but our ideas about China. We seem unable to assess China's strength and weakness, her mistakes and achievements, or her political intentions with anything approaching dispassion.

.....

The *spirit* of so much that is written about China is all wrong, and this is much more serious than the factual omissions and distortions.

.....

The American people, I think, are beginning to sense intuitively that a policy of almost total non-communication with a country comprising a quarter of the human race is a process of *self-isolation* that in the end can harm no one so badly as ourselves.

And this leads me to the most important thing I want to say—and the most hopeful.

I am quite certain that most of the news correspondents and the editorial writers and the producers of the TV and radio news scripts and many of the columnists are profoundly underestimating the capacity of the American people. This goes for the politicians too. The intelligence of the American public has far outstripped the intelligence meted out to them by the press and the political leaders.

..... They don't want clichés, they want knowledge of the world they are living in and not information of dubious accuracy presented (where China is concerned) nearly always in tones of superiority and contempt.

As a result of this inquiry into America's information on China I have reached the conclusion that the American people have not received the minimum of necessary information on supremely important developments. When—as it will—the truth of this becomes apparent and burns itself into men's consciousness, I believe they will examine the news in regard to other events and will begin to ask themselves what it is that shapes and forms public opinion. Unless the people are assured of news that they can trust, a democratic government cannot successfully be administered.



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