

Deng Xiao-ping's diplomacy: The third empire wants more

by Webster G. Tarpley

The essence of the "New Yalta" arrangement is a tripolar imperial world dominated by an Anglo-American, a Russian, and a Red Chinese empire. The three power centers are now struggling to determine the contours of the lines of demarcation which will delineate their respective imperialist spheres of influence. Compared to the Soviets and Washington-London, Beijing obviously represents a militarily and economically weaker center of power. But it is one that drives a very hard bargain, and which is capable of pursuing its goals by quick variations on anti-Soviet, anti-American, and anti-superpower (i.e., against both) political lines. Deng Xiao-ping, an evil demiurge, is accustomed to accomplishing much with little, and has shown that he is more than the equal of the Gorbachov clique and, of course, of any U.S. administration. Right now, the dominant note in Beijing appears as the extortion of concessions from Moscow and from Moscow's allies as the price of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. But a concomitant effort is being made to extort counterbalancing concessions from Washington, also using leverage provided by George Bush's two-year stint at Mao's court under the Ford administration.

The essential considerations of Beijing's strategy start with the need to avoid strategic encirclement by securing the frontiers of the empire, and keeping the small but significant ethnic minorities in line. The concern starts with Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, both of which face Soviet troop concentrations; there is also the traditional Beijing claim to sovereignty over Outer Mongolia, a Soviet puppet state, where Soviet troops are stationed. Beijing wishes to maintain hegemony over Tibet by bringing the Dalai Lama to heel. Then, there is Sinkiang ("Chinese Turkestan"), with a restive population of Muslim Turks sometimes called the Hui. The long-standing border dispute with India will be touched on later. Deng wants the Soviets out of Afghanistan, and is certainly not happy about the Kremlin's annexation of the Wakkan corridor, which deprives him of a common border with the Afghans, while giving Russia a common border with India. On the Korean peninsula, Deng's game is to minimize Soviet influence in Pyongyang while securing economic and diplomatic concessions from Seoul.

Beijing's desire to hegemonize Southeast Asia, an old imperial sphere of influence, is well known. Here, Deng

seeks to cut Vietnam down to size, forcing the withdrawal of Hanoi's troops from Cambodia as a step toward a pro-Beijing government in Phnom Penh, with the participation of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Most of all, Beijing wishes to seize Taiwan and liquidate the Kuomintang, the only serious challenge to Communist rule within Chinese culture.

The world comes to Beijing

During the first 11 months of 1988, the Red capital was visited by 24 presidents and prime ministers. Rajiv Gandhi came, the first such visit by an Indian prime minister in 34 years. If Gorbachov comes, it will be the first call by a Soviet party boss in 34 years. Prime Minister Li Peng just completed a four-day state visit to New Zealand.

The visit to Beijing that Gorbachov wants so badly remains on the front burner. Gorbachov is doing so badly on the internal front that foreign policy remains the sole arena where he can retain the initiative. Meeting Deng is the only way he can match his gulling of Reagan. But Deng intends to exact a high price. Chinese Foreign Minister Chien Chien arrived in Moscow on Dec. 1 for talks with his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, in the first such consultations in some 32 years. In announcing this visit, Foreign Ministry spokesman Li Chin-hua told reporters that the main issue in Chien's Moscow talks would be Cambodia. "We hope to see the smooth development of the talks between the two foreign ministers and further new progress on the question of Kampuchea," Li said, adding that "if the talks between the two foreign ministers on the question of Kampuchea go well, then the Sino-Soviet meeting of top leaders can be held soon." Note the big "if": If Moscow gets the Vietnamese out of Cambodia, Deng is willing to receive Gorbachov.

Hanoi has been offering talks to Beijing on fixing a deadline for removing its forces from Cambodia, but Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach says the Red Chinese are not willing to talk. Beijing obviously thinks that there is nothing left to negotiate, and that the Vietnamese must get out according to the existing timetable.

But Cambodia is far from being the only linkage. On Nov. 21, BBC World Service reported an article in the official *Beijing Review* which contained a stern warning to the Soviets on Afghanistan. Moscow has said that its troop pull-

out from that country is frozen, much to the ire of Beijing. The article bluntly stated that any setback to peace in Afghanistan could seriously disrupt the détente process worldwide. In particular, the article said that the suspension of the Soviet troop pullout could have an "adverse influence" on other situations, meaning the summit, and that any departure from the Geneva accords by the Russians would "seriously disappoint the world's people." The delivery to the Kabul puppets of Soviet short-range ballistic missiles and warplanes was "most worrisome." The BBC commentator concluded that the Sino-Soviet summit could be in jeopardy.

Then there is the question of India, which Beijing regards as an area of preponderant Soviet influence. During Gorbachov's recent visit to New Delhi, he recommended that India and Red China settle their border and other disputes so the two biggest Asian powers could cooperate with Moscow for "solving the problems" of the region—a clear reference to New Yalta condominium arrangements. The Sino-Indian border disputes were, of course, the apple of discord that led to a brief border war back in 1962. India claims 14,500 square miles of territory held by China in the Aksai Chin region of the western Himalayas. Beijing in turn claims 56,000 square miles of territory held by India in Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern Himalayas; the Chinese say this land is historically a part of Tibet. Both disputes involve the delineation of the McMahon Line, the demarcation drawn by a British imperial official who used a very thick pencil on his map when dividing India from Tibet in 1914.

It is clear that Gorbachov has been leaning on Rajiv Gandhi to make concessions to Beijing as a means of smoothing the Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Gandhi is being instructed to ante up. The haggling was blatant enough to become an issue in the Indian Parliament, where legislators demanded that he reveal all details of his negotiations with Gorbachov, including any secret protocols. Gandhi denied that anything had been said about the Sino-Indian border: "The Soviet-Chinese talks on their border and the Indian-Chinese talks on our border were not discussed as such," said Gandhi, according to the Press Trust of India. "The two situations are totally different and I don't think you can compare them." Gandhi's thesis is that "Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations are purely exclusive," and that "there is no question of one being at the cost of the other or tied with the other." Gandhi also argued that when he is negotiating with Moscow, "China is unimportant." The Indian prime minister is protesting too much.

Hanoi says that on Nov. 19, Red Chinese missile destroyer number 134 opened fire on a Vietnamese vessel in the waters off the Spratly Islands, which are claimed by the P.R.C. and Vietnam, as well as by Malaysia, the Philippines, and the R.O.C. China calls these islands the Nansha group. On Nov. 23, Beijing rejected a formal protest note of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry by stating, "It has been verified that no military action was undertaken by Chinese naval

vessels on Nov. 19 while they were performing their mission in the sea area of the Nansha islands." The Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said that destroyer 134 was in its anchorage and that therefore "there is simply no such thing as its shelling of a Vietnamese warship."

As regards the Bush administration, Beijing's clearly emerging line is that the United States must now consummate the ultimate betrayal of the Republic of China by actively helping the Red Mandarins to phagocytate Taiwan. In the *Beijing Review* that appeared Nov. 20, Fei Xiao-tong, the vice chairman of the China National People's Congress (Beijing's Parliament) demanded that Bush work toward the "reunification" of Taiwan with the mainland. Fei complained, "The United States only upholds China's reunification in words, but not in deeds." In the same article Rong Yiren, the head of the China International Trust and Investment Corporation, was quoted saying that Bush has a good knowledge of China after his 1974-75 stay in Beijing: "The prospects for further development are generally good, but not without problems," said Rong.

A similar line spiced with threats and blackmail was propounded by Red China's ambassador to Washington, Han Su, who spoke to Chinese media in Washington some weeks in advance of the tenth anniversary of the Carter-Brzezinski "China card" rupture of diplomatic relations with Taipei in favor of full recognition for Beijing. Han said that in P.R.C.-U.S. relations, there has been "stable development," but that "there are still some negative factors." He identified Taiwan as "the most crucial problem blocking China and the United States from establishing a new type of relations."

Han added, "The Taiwan Relations Act of the United States has always been a dark cloud casting shadows over the relations of the two countries." Han further commented that it is "regrettable" that "a few people in the United States still make unfair criticism of China's internal affairs and even want China's affairs to be done according to their will." The latter is thought to indicate self-consciously impotent State Department bleating about human rights violations, forced abortions, the status of Tibet, and arms sales to Iran and the Middle East. Beijing has also recognized the Palestinian state.

Beijing is full of advice for Washington these days. On Nov. 24, the *People's Daily* quoted Vice Prime Minister Tiang Jiyun saying that Red China wants the United States to "seriously consider" the North Korean plan for the reunification of that divided peninsula. The North Korean plan, which was proposed on Nov. 7, 1988 calls for a gradual reduction of U.S. troops and nuclear weapons stationed in South Korea and a three-stage conventional disarmament plan for the Seoul and the Pyongyang regime. All of this would be negotiated at a tripartite conference of North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. Tiang said Pyongyang's bid, which is a transparent demagogic ploy, represented "yet another sincere effort" by North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung to ease tension.