

China proposes 'just world order' to Africa

by Mary Burdman

The May 5-14 African tour of Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, was the most recent effort of China to carry out its policy to build a "just and rational" new world order. Li Peng's tour to Zambia, Mozambique, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Tanzania, follows just one year after China's President Jiang Zemin spent two weeks touring Africa nations, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Mali, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Egypt.

The policy which Jiang Zemin described in his address to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa in May 1996, "to establish at an early date a just and equitable new international political and economic order," was reiterated during Li Peng's recent visit. This is more than just rhetoric. China is unique, as African leaders have told *EIR*, in that it is actually *building* on the continent.

Modern Chinese-African relations have a 30-year history. Between December 1963 and January 1964, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai toured 10 African nations. Li Peng's recent visit was his fourth, and many other Chinese leaders have visited Africa. More than 100 leaders from over 50 African countries have visited China.

That China's policy is to build, is demonstrated by the composition of the delegation that accompanied Li Peng. They included, in addition to his wife Zhu Lin, Minister in Charge of the State Commission for Economic Restructuring Li Tieying, Railways Minister Han Zhubin, Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Minister Wu Yi, Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council Liu Huaqiu, Director of the State Council Research Office Wang Mengkui, General Manager of China National Petroleum Corp. Zhou Yongkang, and others.

While official coverage of the discussions during Li Peng's tour did not focus on the ongoing catastrophe in the Great Lakes region, the question arose during his meeting with Nigerian Head of State Gen. Sani Abacha in Abuja on May 12. The two leaders "deplored the state of instability and insecurity in Africa brought about by civil wars and conflicts," the Chinese news agency Xinhua reported. "They, however, commended the initiatives of African leaders to mediate the crisis in Liberia and in the Great Lakes region of Africa."

In this, the Chinese government is adhering to its policy of political non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. But China *is* intervening, in its characteristic way:

by stressing the importance of economic development for the nations of the Third World.

This view was described by China's leader Deng Xiaoping in a discussion with Brazil's President João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo in May 1984: "Among a host of problems in the present-day world, two especially stand out: One is the problem of peace. . . . The other is the North-South problem. . . . The developed countries are getting richer and richer, while the developing countries are getting relatively poorer and poorer. If the North-South problem is not solved, it will hinder the development of the world economy." North-South dialogue is "not enough," Deng said; "cooperation among Third World countries . . . should be stepped up as well. . . . The developed economies should appreciate that greater development of their economies is impossible without growth in the economies of Third World countries." Deng also stressed the importance of stability—a vital question for war-torn Africa—to foster economic development.

He told Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in December 1988, that the "North-South question . . . is only a question of development. . . . We should look at this problem in terms of the development of mankind as a whole. . . . Two things have to be done at the same time. One is to establish a new international political order; the other is to establish a new international economic order." China understands the urgency of the question, Deng said. "Because of mistakes made in the past, especially during the 'Cultural Revolution,' we have wasted about 20 years when we could have been building the country."

No peace without African development

On May 13, 1996, Chinese President Jiang addressed the OAU in Addis Ababa. He outlined five proposals on Sino-African relations. China and Africa must, he said, become each others' "all-weather friend." "China steadfastly supports African countries in their efforts for economic development, and will continue to provide, within its own means, government assistance to them with no strings attached," Jiang said. Both sides must treat each other as equals, and seek common development on the basis of mutual benefit. China and Africa must look toward the future and "create a more splendid world." But, he warned, a peaceful and prosperous world will "only be an illusion," if a stable and economically developed Africa cannot be ensured. But Africa is hindered "due to a weak economic base caused by hundreds of years of colonial exploitation and the unjust and inequitable international economic order left over from the past."

Li Peng announced in Beijing on April 21, to a group of African ambassadors, that his tour was to follow up what Jiang Zemin had initiated, and look for new channels of economic and trade cooperation. "The peace and prosperity of the world requires the stability and development of Africa, and any opinion or action to neglect Africa is wrong," Li Peng said. He also expressed appreciation for the support of African

nations, in helping stop a motion by some Western nations condemning alleged Chinese human rights violations, at the just-ended UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Li Peng's official visit started in Zambia and ended in Tanzania, the two countries connected by the 1,900-kilometer railway built by the Chinese.

In Mozambique on May 7, Li Peng said that the sustained development of the world is inseparable from the progress of Africa. Mozambique, a former colony of Portugal, suffered decades of civil war. President Joaquim Alberto Chissano greeted Li Peng's "historic mission" to renew bilateral cooperation. Africa, he said, must have economic self-emancipation, in the context of a new, just international economic order, or the African people would continue to rely on others and would still suffer from exploitation and slavery. Chissano said that China had not interrupted its aid to Mozambique, even when the country was in its most difficult times, and that Mozambique has learned from its own experience that there would be no economic development without a stable political environment.

Alternative to the 'Commonwealth Club'

Cooperation between China and Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is indicative of what China and other nations such as Russia and India—those which eschew the West's hideous "technological apartheid" against the developing sector—could accomplish in Africa.

Nigeria's General Abacha proposed that Nigeria and China collaborate on a socio-economic model for developing countries, during his first round of bilateral talks with Li Peng in Abuja on May 11. Thirteen Nigerian ministers participated in the discussions. Abacha called for immediate "identification of more joint venture projects in the relevant areas of technology, transport, housing, trade, investment, military, electric power development, as well as iron and steel," the Nigerian press reported.

Li Peng told Abacha that Chinese enterprises possess technology and equipment suitable for conditions in Africa, and there is great potential for launching mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries, which have already entered into cooperation in the construction of railways, ports, and other infrastructural facilities. In the future, they can expand their cooperation, he indicated. Li Peng said China hopes that experiences could be accumulated from their mutually beneficial cooperation, to promote the establishment of a new type of economic and trade cooperation between China and other African countries.

"In 1996, the volume of annual bilateral trade reached \$320 million, up from \$212 million in 1995, and merely \$57 million in 1980," Xinhua reported on May 6. "Nigeria is now China's second largest trade partner in Africa, second only to South Africa. . . . China's reasonably priced quality exports to Nigeria, which used to be dominated by light industrial products and hardwares, have in recent years turned more and more technology-intensive. Nigeria is now one of the biggest

African markets for Chinese engineering contractors. By the end of 1996, Chinese firms had signed 101 engineering contracts with Nigeria, totaling \$758 million.

"The rehabilitation of Nigeria's 3,500 km railway lines by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corp., at a cost of \$526 million, is, so far, the biggest project that Chinese firms have ever won in Africa."

Cooperation with China also provides very important political support, as Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture Walter Ofonagaro noted on May 6. Nigeria needs the support of China for its own development, he said. His country has more than 450 varieties of minerals of commercial quantity, including coal and iron ore, while China has rich experience in mining. Other fields for cooperation include down-stream processing of minerals, textiles, electronics, high technology, energy, engineering construction, railway, agriculture, and the pharmaceutical industry.

Support from China is a real alternative to dependence on the British "Commonwealth Club," the current manifestation of the British Empire, Nigeria's former colonial master. Nigeria should have left the "Commonwealth Club" before its membership was suspended, Ofonagaro said. "The Commonwealth Club means nothing to us. We are not worried by the suspension or the deluge of attacks and sanctions from the Anglo-Saxon and Roman countries. We can't be pushed around by anyone nor be subjected to neo-colonial imperialism. The sooner the West reverses the current trend the better for them, because we are moving to China and other nations for support which we are getting well."

A commentary in the Chinese press on May 14, noted the shift in focus of Chinese economic relations with Africa. Western nations now dominate Africa's imports, with \$200 billion of imports to Africa annually, while China's imports are worth only \$4 billion, or 2% of the market. While China will continue giving economic aid, its scope will be very small. China's policy now is to focus on mutually beneficial economic cooperation, including joint resource development and establishing joint-venture enterprises, including to produce locally needed products.

In his visit to Tanzania, Li Peng said in Dar es Salaam on May 13, that while he was deeply impressed by the rich resources of the African continent and by the diligence of the African people, Africa is still facing poverty and underdevelopment, the result of the longtime colonialism and the unjust and inequitable international order. Tanzania President Benjamin Mkapa said that the major concern of African countries at present is the question of self-reliance and continuous progress, as the only means of liberating themselves economically.

The Tanzania-Zambia railway has been playing an active role in the economic development of the two countries, Li Peng said. Among other agreements, China granted Tanzania a 7.26 billion shilling, interest-free loan to assist the Tanzania-Zambia Railroad Authority, and both leaders stated the need for better cooperation among Tanzania, Zambia, and China to improve the functioning of the railroad.