

# The Nuclear Policy of RED CHINA

By Niu Sien-Chong



*Mr. Niu Sien-Chong is a civilian adviser in the National Defense Planning Bureau of the Republic of China in Taiwan. He was graduated from the University of Nanking in 1935. In WWII he was a colonel in the Chinese Army. He has been an editor and has translated many Western military writings into Chinese, including Clausewitz' On War; Liddell Hart's Strategy.*

*An illuminating thesis on Communist China's chameleon attitudes toward the Western world — taken from the Chinese position.*

ON 25 July 1963, the United States, United Kingdom and Soviet Union signed a partial nuclear test-ban treaty in Moscow. This treaty may be considered as an open break between Communist China and the Soviet Union in the field of foreign policy. Before the conclusion of the treaty among the three nuclear powers, there were some Sino-Soviet differences of opinion on the general disarmament problem. Still, they had rather similar opinions about nuclear weapons. Communist China had not presented an independent position up to that time.

After the partial nuclear test ban treaty, Communist China made a statement on 31 July 1963. In this statement, she not only attacked the treaty as a great hoax; but also condemned the Soviet policy. She characterized it as, "to join with the force of war against the force of peace; to join with Imperialism against Socialism; to join with the United States against China; to join with the reactionary groups in every country against the people of the whole world."

Expressing her own position on the problem, Communist China also proposed the following:

1. All the countries in the world, either nuclear or non-nuclear, should solemnly proclaim to prohibit and to destroy nuclear weapons generally, thoroughly, clearly and firmly. In the concrete sense, that means not to employ, export, import, produce, nor store nuclear weapons. All the existing nuclear weapons and the delivery systems in the world should be completely destroyed. All the research, test and production organizations of nuclear weapons should be completely disbanded.

2. To fulfill the above obligations gradually, the following measures must be taken:

a. All the military bases as well as the nuclear weapons and their delivery systems on foreign territory should be withdrawn.

b. The Asian and Pacific nuclear-free zones (including the United States, Soviet Union, China, and Japan); the Central European nuclear-free zone, the African nuclear-free zone and the Latin American free-zone should be established.

c. All nuclear tests, including underground tests, should be stopped.

d. A conference of governmental heads of all countries in the world should be convoked. This conference should discuss the problems regarding the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons as well as the aforementioned four concrete measures.

This statement may be regarded as the official position of Communist China *before* her nuclear test explosion.

### Post-Explosion Stand

Communist China exploded a nuclear device in Sinkiang on 16 October 1964. Her policy concerning nuclear weapons could be expected to change accordingly.

From a statement of her government on 16 October 1964 and an editorial of the *PEOPLE'S DAILY* (*Jen-min Jih-pao*), called "Crash the Nuclear Monopoly; Destroy the Nuclear Weapons," of 22 October, the new position may be summarized as follows:

1. The development of nuclear weapons is for the purpose of opposing the American Imperialist's nuclear monopoly, nuclear blackmail and nuclear intimidation policy.

2. China would never use her nuclear weapons initiatively under any circumstances.

3. China demands that a conference of the governmental heads should be held immediately to discuss the problems of the complete prohibition and radical destruction of nuclear weapons.

As a first step, the heads of all nuclear powers should agree not to employ nuclear weapons initiatively under any condition.

Compared with the statement of 31 July 1963, some obvious differences are discovered. In the previous statement, Communist China not only demanded convoking of a conference of governmental heads, but also proposed the undertaking of four preliminary measures as the first steps to ban and destroy nuclear weapons "completely and generally." After her explosion of a nuclear device, her proposal became more ambiguous and flexible, and did not articulate those measures. One can easily see that the proposal of 1963 was pure propaganda of little practical significance. The 1964 statement, though still propaganda, possesses some practical feasibility. Why did Communist China change her position? The real reason is: the new proposal is comparatively favorable to her continuous testing and production of nuclear weapons.

The previously mentioned statement and editorial are ambiguous in their content. This is natural. Immediately after the success of the nuclear test, there was some confusion of opinion in the inner circle of the Communist hierarchy. With respect to such an important event, the official policy could not be decided in great haste. Therefore, the official attitude about some concrete problems, such as the complete test ban and nuclear-free zone, were not crystallized in that initial stage. On 22 November appeared another editorial in the *PEOPLE'S DAILY* entitled "The New Starting Point of Seeking All-out Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

The time gap between the two editorials is a whole month. Hence, it means that the Communist leaders had made a careful reappraisal of the concrete problems. The latter article presents the conclusions of that reappraisal and a new policy.

### The Five Negatives

First, Communist China opposes the complete nuclear test ban as a beginning of complete prohibition of nuclear weapons. "Apparently, the complete nuclear test ban seems a little better than the partial nuclear test ban, but, in fact, it is only a difference between fifty paces and a hundred paces. The United States has already carried out several hundred various kinds of nuclear weapons tests, as well as already possessing a huge nuclear arsenal. Under such a condition, even a complete prohibition of nuclear tests cannot do any harm to that nuclear giant."

In addition, "If not accompanied by other measures, such as the prohibition of employment, production, stockpiling, importing, exporting and diffusion of nuclear weapons, the complete nuclear test ban can only be used to consolidate the American nuclear monopoly. It will not only prevent the other countries from developing their nuclear

weapons, but will also deprive them of their legitimate right of resisting the American nuclear intimidation. Furthermore, it may create a false sense of security and militates against the struggle of the people in the whole world who demand the all out prohibition of nuclear weapons."

In the proposal of 1963, Communist China regarded the cessation of all nuclear tests, including underground, as an item of the concrete preliminary measures. But now she has changed her original position and refused to consider the nuclear test ban as a preliminary step toward the complete nuclear disarmament. The obvious explanation is that her production of nuclear weapons needs a series of test explosions. Communist China has only exploded one nuclear device. If she should stop all her tests, then she could never accumulate an adequate nuclear stockpile.

Second, Communist China opposes the destruction of delivery systems as the first important step toward complete nuclear disarmament. The reason held is that a nuclear war head can be delivered by conventional weapons as well as by ICBM. A strategic bomber can carry an atomic bomb, but so can a conventional aircraft. Moreover, the suggestion of destruction of delivery systems first, has a tendency to confuse the problem of nuclear disarmament with that of conventional disarmament. Hence, it makes the problem much more complex and involves the question of inspection.

Because the United States possesses sophisticated delivery systems and Communist China does not, it would seem that destruction of delivery systems would be regarded as favorable to the latter. Therefore, she should not take the opposite view. However, as the editorial pointed out, a nuclear warhead can also be delivered by conventional weaponry. The American controlled bases ringing the Chinese mainland could easily use common carriers to launch a nuclear attack on Communist China; but China cannot retaliate in kind. The destruction of delivery systems not so much guarantees the security of Communist China as it impedes the development of her own delivery instruments. Hence, destruction of such means is meaningless, even unfavorable to her regime.

Third, Communist China opposes establishment of a nuclear-free zone. The editorial of the PEOPLE'S DAILY said: "Many countries are interested in the establishment of the nuclear-free zone. Never the less, unless the existing nuclear powers guarantee not to employ nuclear weapons first, the nuclear-free zone cannot really eliminate the threat of nuclear war. Even, should the nuclear-free zone be established in name, yet in fact, it only would deprive the non-nuclear nations of their legitimate right of developing their nuclear weapons in order to resist the nuclear threat. On the other hand, it cannot prevent the nuclear powers from continuously producing, accumulating and employing their nuclear weapons. The

result would be: the more the nuclear-free zone enlarges, the more the threat of American imperialism to the non-nuclear nations increases."

As everybody knows, Communist China had always advocated the establishment of nuclear-free zones before her own explosion. Actually, the proposal of an Asian and Pacific Zone, including the United States, Soviet Union, China and Japan, was first made by Communist China in 1960. Why did Communist China advocate this concept in the past, but oppose it now? The original purpose was to use the so-called nuclear-free zone to shackle the hands of the United States. In other words, prevent the US from using her nuclear capability against China. At that time, Communist China had not considered the question of whether she could develop her own nuclear weapons after the establishment of a nuclear-free zone. But now, if the nuclear-free zone is established, Communist China would be unable to manufacture her own weapons in the zone. This arrangement is more disadvantageous to Communist China after she has acquired an initial nuclear device. Because she wants to reserve the right of testing and producing nuclear weapons, her position on the nuclear-free zone is radically changed.

Fourth, Communist China refuses to participate in the Geneva disarmament negotiation. She regards these talks as being conducted within the framework of the United Nations. For 15 years her "legitimate right" in that organization has been denied by the United States. Now the United States says that she does not oppose Communist China joining the Geneva talks. China considers this attitude of the US as rather ridiculous and cannot understand the true intent. She, therefore, frankly declares that if the United Nations does not recognize the present regime on the mainland as the only legal Chinese government, she can never be involved in any affair of that organization. This indicates that the purpose of her refusal to participate is an attempt to utilize her nuclear acquisition as blackmail. That is, to use participation in the Geneva disarmament talks as a prelude to admission into the United Nations.

Fifth, Communist China refuses to participate in the meeting of five nuclear powers. Mr. U Thant has recently proposed that the five nuclear powers should hold a meeting to discuss the problem of nuclear weapons. Communist China is against this proposal. Its reason can be noted from the following:

The present most important problem is the threat of some nuclear powers to all non-nuclear nations in the world. The problem is connected with the peace and security of the whole world. With respect to this problem, one hundred-odd sovereign countries, whether large or small, whether nuclear or non-nuclear, should all possess equal voices. It must

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not be dominated by the five nuclear powers."

But the real reason for refusal may be that Communist China wishes to maintain her original position on a conference of governmental heads. Because this type of conference is almost always welcomed by most countries, this proposal can be used to enhance the international prestige of Communist China. In addition, it has political-psychological advantages for her. These accrue from the proposal itself, whether the conference is ever held or not.

In conclusion, the former three points and the latter five points can be regarded as the essentials of China's present nuclear policy. The purpose of this policy is to guarantee that Communist China can produce and test her own nuclear weapons. In addition, it has the ancillary effect of exploiting the political-psychological advantages of her nuclear capability to the utmost.

### Defensive Intent

Communist China made it clear in her statement of 16 October 1964 that, "China is developing her nuclear weapons only for the defensive purposes, that means to protect Chinese people from the threat of an American initiated nuclear war." However, possession of some nuclear weapons only enhances her international prestige, while making but a negligible contribution as a defense force.

The Chinese assertions are strictly tall talk with no real significance. Today the US possesses not only a huge nuclear arsenal but many excellent long range delivery systems as well. On the other hand, Communist China has not yet produced a single nuclear bomb, let alone an adequate delivery system. Because the nuclear gap between these two countries is so wide, it is impossible for China to catch up in the foreseeable future. At least for the time being, the United States can easily deliver her warheads on the Chinese mainland; the Chinese cannot retaliate in kind. Even if she can produce a few nuclear bombs in three or five years; for this time frame, the increment of her defensive power is still limited. On the other hand, because Communist China is now nuclearized, she may be considered by the United States as a target of higher priority. Therefore, the vulnerability of China is increased by her own nuclear capability.

Some may say, though Communist China cannot launch a nuclear offensive directly on the United States, she can strike at American bases or allies with conventional delivery instruments. However, this action would simply invite an American retaliatory strike against the Chinese mainland. The Communist hierarchy doubtlessly

realizes that such strikes would inflict substantial damage on its power bases. Therefore, it is likely, they consider such a risk unacceptable.

Furthermore, Communist China could also use her nuclear weaponry initiatively in the course of a conventional conflict. The first example that comes to mind is against Taiwan. This would also raise the possibility of a US reply in kind and an ultimate punitive strike against the mainland.

Thus, after its first nuclear explosion, the Communist regime immediately proclaimed that it would never use nuclear weapons initiatively under any conditions. This proclamation is not merely propaganda. To the Communist regime, her initiation of the use of nuclear weapons would only invite her own destruction.

### Side Effects

Nevertheless, Communist leaders still want to exploit their nuclear program for the political-psychological effects. They declared not to use them first even though they did not possess an operational capability at the time. This statement could create a false impression on their weaker neighbors. It could make them believe that Communist China is a real nuclear power already. In fact, this is not true. Even a modest nuclear capability is still far off.

On the other hand, they are not abandoning the opportunity to develop a full-fledged nuclear capability. The five negative positions proclaimed in the PEOPLE'S DAILY are clear evidence that Communist China is not permitting her nuclear development to be impeded by international agreement nor negotiation.

Communist strategists believe that, when faced with a nuclearized China, her neighbors will begin to doubt the credibility of the United States commitment in Asia. This psychological impact could cause those nations to take the line of neutralism. Accompanied by the persuasion of trade and economics, this nuclear pressure could easily motivate those countries to come to terms with Peking.

Communist China would also expect that, when she conducts "national liberation" movements in neighboring regions, her alleged nuclear capability will intimidate local governments, inhibit their reactions to local communist activities, and delay request for American assistance for fear of antagonizing a nuclear-armed China. Thus Communist China is pretending to possess an operational nuclear capability already. In any event, her propaganda attempts to leave the impression with the less sophisticated audiences, that China is already a major nuclear power.

The intractable and intransigent attitude is especially designed for this purpose. The more arrogant she is, the more favorable her neighbors' reaction will be. Meanwhile, Communist China will also use her alleged nuclear capability to

cheat the United States and other Western nations. She will use the participation in disarmament negotiations as a political price for the admission to the United Nations. If she should be recognized as the sole voice of China in the United Nations in particular, and in other international organizations in general, then her international prestige doubtlessly will be much enhanced. And like a chain reaction, it will produce strong and favorable impressions on her Asian neighbors.

Nevertheless, the Chinese Communists never lack the wisdom to know themselves, their nuclear posture may be aptly described with a Chinese proverb: "To draw a bow but not to shoot an arrow." They clearly realize that China is not a rival of equal status with the United States. Though they deliberately belittle the United States as a "paper tiger," they are not ignorant enough to neglect the nuclear teeth of that tiger. In short, at the first glance, their nuclear policy appears full of contradictions. However, whenever one analyses the policy of a Communist regime, he should consistently pay attention to those apparently contradictory concepts. In fact, they are not contradictory at all but complementary to each other. The synthesis of contradictions is always considered by Communists as a highest art in their ideological jugglery.

In a nutshell, the nuclear policy of Communist China is designed to achieve a double purpose. On the one hand, it will provide her with an effective political-psychological instrument for achieving her long-term objectives. On the other hand, it will create a favorable environment permitting her to develop her nuclear capability safely and gradually.

### Problems

A major problem for Communist China is how to persuade Western powers and Asian nations to accept her alleged superiority in the Far East region. Thus, she is taking some measures to create an impression of great military strength. The principal aim is to back up her nuclear threats. In fact, the greatest asset of Communist China is still her huge manpower. Mao Tse-tung is always advocating to fight a "people's war." He has repeatedly emphasized that the outcome of a war is decided by men and not by any kind of weapons. Even after the explosion of a nuclear device, this basic concept in his military thought has never changed. Therefore, the major activities of Communist China are designed to demonstrate her strength in the field of conventional military power. For instance, the red regime has recently lengthened its compulsory military service: Army, from three years to four years; Navy, from five years to six years; and Air Force, from four years to five years. This, the longest conscription in the world can be used as evidence of her military strength and willingness to accept the risk of war.

However, here exists a real contradiction in Communist China's military policy. In a modern war, even a conventional one, it's not sheer mass that counts. Quality is more important than quantity. It appears that the industrial base of Communist China is still not able to provide most of the equipment required by a large modern armed force. Now she wishes to develop her nuclear capability simultaneously with the modernization of her conventional force strength. Without a more adequate economic base, this is impossible.

### Choices

The Communist regime must face a hard choice, since it cannot have the best of both. If it decides to invest huge amounts of resources and wealth to develop the nuclear weapons continuously and rapidly, then the development of conventional armament would doubtlessly be curtailed. Thus, there exists not only a great contradiction between the nuclear capability and conventional arms, but also a serious one between Mao's military thought and his actual military policy.

Furthermore, there exists another grave contradiction in the national policy of Communist China. The most urgent task of the regime is economic development. Without a solid economic base, Communist China can never equal the United States or the Soviet Union. However, the development of a nuclear capability is a very expensive effort. Take France as an example. The cost of her first nuclear explosion was 350 million dollars, and the total spent between 1960 and 1964 ran to 3.4 billion. Still, France has a long way to go before becoming one of the great nuclear powers. Though we do not know Communist China's expenditure, experts here [Taiwan] feel that her total scientific costs since 1958 (when the first reactor began to operate) to 1964 was approximately three billion dollars. At least half of that may be regarded as directly pertaining to the nuclear program. Under a totalitarian regime, high priority can be given to any program the ruler desires and the welfare of the people is the last item considered. However, the total capacity of economic power is limited. The more spent in the field of armament, the less that can be reserved for economic development. Surely, Communist China does not have sufficient resources to compete with the United States in an endless arms race.

Based on the above analysis, the decision of the development of nuclear capability is not only unfavorable to the economic growth of Communist China, but also has little value as an increment of her national defensive power. However, Chen Yi, the foreign minister of Communist China, has said: "The Chinese may not have sufficient trousers, but we surely will have the nuclear bomb." As to the fate of the people on Chinese mainland, if this is not a tragedy, then what is it? US & MC