

Some Thoughts About China

- No nation holds sway for long. In the 19th century Britain was at its zenith and in the 20th century the USA had its moment in the sun. Will the 21st century be China's moment in the spotlight? That seems a distinct possibility.
- What the United States did to Native Americans in the 19th century, China has done to Tibetans in since 1950: attempt to mold a foreign culture to their own norms and massacre or imprison any who resist. And the way the USA handled Native Americans after 1968 is likely how Chinese will handle Tibetans after 2160: after economic and political dominance is firmly assured, they can afford to be "liberal" and allow symbolic vestiges of independence. Once a minority group is firmly under control, the dominant group then can make gestures of largess.
- When you attempt to see life without ideological distortions, the ironies are amazing. China, reputedly a bastion of communism, is now fueling capitalist enterprises throughout the world through industrial outsourcing. And the United States, claiming to be a bastion of democracy, is probably doing more to impair liberty and human rights than any country in the world. Its clandestine operations are often unreported and any government which is not pro-US – no matter how democratic – is in peril.
- The myopism of most nations is alarming. Most Japanese are unaware of how deeply they wounded Chinese and Korean pride from 1895 to 1945. Most Americans are unaware of the subtle ways they are currently wounding Chinese pride and alienating India. And most Chinese are unaware of how they have hurt other people in southeast Asia. Hubris invariably causes suffering.
- Máo Zédōng was skilled at shifting his rhetoric to retain power. Moreover, he did not hesitate to use violence and propaganda to suit his ends. Though he unified the nation in some positive ways, he was overly obsessed with personal power. Not unlike an ancient emperor, he build up a cult of personality worship. The Chinese people have paid a heavy price for idolizing this egotistical icon. I firmly believe transpersonal principles and basic laws must count more than any given leader's personality or whims. That is why it is essential to limit the term of office of leaders. We must also make constitutional laws difficult to change. Anyone becoming a "chairman for life" is on a mistaken path.
- China and Taiwan: not unlike a married couple wishing they could divorce, but too worried about losing face to do the paperwork properly.
- China has swallowed Tibet: that's a fact. However, the chemistry isn't complete – in the process of "digesting" Tibet, China itself will inevitably change. Tibetan thought will creep into Chinese consciousness. Any nation wishing to swallow up another nation should learn this lesson: be careful what you eat, because to some degree you become what you devour. This is what happened to Rome after swallowing Greece and Palestine. It is also what happened to

the Moghuls after swallowing much of the Middle East. And Tibetan consciousness is now flowing into the Chinese psyche: the impact is not merely one-way. The influence on both sides will be powerful for many generations.

○ Most Americans tend to forget the past quickly and focus on the present moment. By contrast, too many Chinese are so obsessed with the past that they lose sight of the present.

○ The movement from communism to plutocracy in China appears almost inevitable. Yet if plutocracy stretches too far and the gap between the rich and poor widens beyond a critical point, some form of radical neo-communism and major turmoil is likely to emerge.

○ There are many things China is rightfully proud of: its literature and art, food and tea, its knowledge of acupuncture and the martial arts, its traditional recycling methods, and basic understanding of how to enable a large numbers of people to live on a limited space of land in a degree of relative harmony. Not perfect harmony on this earth is possible – but at times, it seems possible to attain a modest modicum of prosperity and peace.

○ Perhaps arrogantly and certainly foolishly, there are three things I wish China could rectify: (1) the way many laws exist only on paper without enforcement, (2) the widespread use of capital punishment, and (3) a lack of independence of the press and judicial system – I believe it is healthy for every nation to have an independent press and court system so that each society can function on the basis of law without undue political pressure or personal whim.

An-Yi: (sarcastically chucking in disdain) This person is so foolish to express his personal opinions. What do personal opinions matter?

Bhāraté: Oscar Wilde gave a good response to that: What does a flea matter to an elephant?

- T Newfields

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