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China's Path

To

Her New Society

25 cents

CHINA'S PATH TO HER NEW SOCIETY

The people of China move steadily toward their goal of a new society—out of feudalism and into a modern industrial society. They very decidedly believe there is no need to go through a capitalist stage. One reason for their skipping the capitalist stage is their bitter experience of being for over a century on the receiving end of one aspect of capitalism, the foreign colonial exploitation of their manpower and resources and the attempt of the capitalist powers to keep China an agricultural nation; a second reason is their desire to have what they consider the most modern form of an industrial society, socialism (and eventually a communist society).

Great popular movements have characterized the Chinese people's struggle against the old society of feudalism and colonialism. They have never been passive victims of the misery and backwardness forced upon them by exploitation, domestic and alien. For centuries peasant revolutions dotted China's history. For over a century, beginning with the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century there were popular and organized movements and expressions of resistance to foreign intrusions and exploitation.

Early Attempts of China to Modernize

For over half a century there were considered attempts by patriotic Chinese individuals and groups to remedy the conditions that made China backward and impotent in the modern world. Late in the 19th century modern education on the Western model seemed to provide the way out toward a rightful place in the modern world; students were sent abroad to absorb education from the already powerful modern nations; and modern schools—missionary, government and private—were set up in China, with much advice from foreign educators. In the early 20th century Chinese began to introduce

Western political forms, as the road toward national power. But modern education related too many of its recipients to the interests of the exploiters of China; and the imitating of foreign constitutions, legal codes, political parties, etc. only provided a facade of modernity behind which China's native exploiters continued their control.

Two large 20th century revolutions seemed to the outside world to move China toward its place as a modern nation: the 1911 Revolution of Sun Yat-sen out of which China emerged as a Republic; and the 1925-1927 Revolution led by Chiang Kai-shek which largely ended the divisive war-lord wars within China. But neither of these revolutions changed the basic relationships in Chinese society; the veneer of modernization enabled China to call herself now only "semi"-feudal and "semi"-colonial, but the exploitation of China's people continued; no new class alignment of power emerged to mark any change in the structure of Chinese society.

The Chinese people continued to resist—continued their struggle for a way out of popular misery, political degradation, economic backwardness and international weakness. In the second decade of the 20th century the Chinese people began to find the real way out—the way to end the colonial status and foreign exploitation, to end the rule of the feudal landlord class who had become the collaborators of the foreign exploiters of the Chinese people.

The Possibility of Modernization Emerges

By the end of the second decade of the 20th century the material conditions for a successful revolution in the interest of the Chinese people had matured; World War One had eliminated Germany and Czarist Russia as imperialist powers; the West had lost its glamour as something to be copied lock, stock and barrel; the October Revolution in 1917 in Russia had upset the old relationships among the Western Powers.

In China itself the imperialist introduction of capitalist economy, on a limited scale to be sure, for the exploitation

of China's raw material and cheap labor, had already created a small working class, unhappy people but cohesive and organizable by their working and living together. The example of the Russian people successfully upsetting their seemingly powerful Czarist ruling class was not lost on the Chinese people.

And for the struggling Chinese people there was the model of a new kind of political party—not, as in the Western democratic world, a system of political parties each representing conflicting interests within a given society, but a Communist Party representing the interests of the working people who are after all the great bulk of the population of any country. And this new kind of political party had a new political tool, the science of society, which explained, as the political theories of the other parties did not, the forces in society with which a people must deal. China's patriotic revolutionists saw that they now possessed a means of analyzing the true nature of the forces against which they must strive—and, equally important, the forces with which they could and must work for a genuine change in China's society.

The Chinese Communist Party was organized in 1921. But even prior to its organization Marxism-Leninism was being studied; the new analysis of society was beginning to implement the new leaders who were to guide the Chinese people toward their dream of an independent and modern nation, a "people never again to be insulted," as Mao was to declare to an exultant people in 1949. The year 1949 became the dividing line between "Before Liberation" and "After Liberation."

Before Liberation: How They Ended The Old Society

What was the process of liberation which succeeded where the other centuries-old attempts had failed?

The process was the increasingly organized, informed and responsible *participation of the people* in the revolution, guided by a Party with a correct analysis of the forces within their society, and the slowly-acquired but ever-growing know-

ledge of how to align all the forces favorable to the interests of the people. Marxism-Leninism provided the theoretical analysis and the basic methods; but it was the wisdom of the new leaders that implemented the theory and enlisted the *power of the people*.

The new leadership succeeded where the two modern uprisings of the peasants had failed—the Taiping Rebellion of the mid-19th century and the Boxer Uprising of 1900. These two movements demonstrated the immense power of the wronged and suffering peasants and the organizational skill of their leaders; but their objectives did not envision any effective altering of the system that kept China weak, feudal and still subject to the power of reactionary forces, both domestic and foreign.

The new leadership succeeded where the liberals, the leaders of the Reform Movement of 1898-1899 had failed. The liberals had wanted a constitutional monarchy strong enough to shake off foreign tutelage, to achieve some industrialization of China, and to modernize China's defenses. Their objectives were limited to reform and they had no masses to support them—they had not seen the need to ally themselves with the only power, the people, that could defeat those who wanted to maintain the old society. These liberals were easily kept down by the reactionary elements.

The new leadership succeeded where the leaders of the two 20th century Revolutions (Sun Yat-sen, 1911 and Chiang Kai-shek, 1925-1927) also failed. The leaders ushered in by these two revolutions, instead of enlisting the people's power for the process of freeing China from feudalism and colonialism, proceeded rather to increasingly suppress the people.

The New Method of Liberation: Mass Organization, Education and Mobilization

The first indications of a change in the method of freeing China from its old society—its oppressive feudal and semi-feudal society and its impotent semi-colonial society—came with the great mass organizations of the people. This began

with the Student Movement of 1919 and was quickly followed by the organization of Trade Unions, Peasant Unions, the Women's Movement and the organization of the Communist Party on July 1st 1921. Organized, these students, workers, peasants and women who individually could scarcely even dare make demands, found that, united, they could exert pressures on school authorities, employers, landlords, reluctant fathers, brothers, uncles. For example, the workers in one Central China city were organized as a part of the Trade Union drive; within a few weeks the Union of the Servants of the Foreigners demanded a 100% increase in wages; the Westerners demurred, but granted the increase; a few weeks later, at China New Year, the Union presented a second demand: "double the wages again"; the Westerners called them "crazy," but gave in. The many small shops in that city had numerous flunkies, family members and relatives kept on more as a favor than as hired help; the Union demanded wages for all these "workers"; the shopkeepers were frantic, but they gave in. In all major cities there was a Women's Organization; any woman whose father was trying to marry her off or whose brother was depriving her of some of the family inheritance had only to report to the Women's Union—and brave was the male who persisted in denying the modern demands of his female relative! And peasants, who individually could scarcely even think of making any demand on the landlord, found that organized, they could stand up to the landlords and get a reduction in rent or in interest. Of course there were excesses in demands and of course there was opportunistic leadership among those new people's organizations; but people discovered that in unity there is power. Even more important, this new relationship between worker and worker, peasant and peasant, woman and woman served to throw these workers, peasants, and women out of the old feudal relationships into new modern relationships. One of the great Chinese virtues remained—loyalty; but now it was beginning to be loyalty not to the guild boss or employer, not to the landlord, not to the mother-in-law but to each other as fellow workers, fellow farmers, fellow women and to the larger society, to China,

rather than to a feudal clan.

These organizations were nation-wide. Along with them there were gigantic ad hoc patriotic movements—with patriotic day-long demonstrations and mass public meetings participated in by hundreds of thousands in any given city—with speeches and slogans and explanatory handbills and posters which acquainted the people with unequal treaties and international actions and policies detrimental to China; or which acquainted the people sympathetically with great labor strikes occurring in other or distant Chinese cities.

So the people's organizations and movements at the same time began to break down the feudal society, joining people in modern relationships, began to create organized people's power, and began giving mass civic education to millions and millions of China's people. An understanding citizenship was emerging, people seeing a way out of the old society's miseries and a way out of national humiliation.

So the successful way out toward a better China started not with vague theory but with the actual participation of the people, organized participation in terms of their own interests (as students, workers, peasants, women)—people doing things for themselves in their own organizations. They were linked in action and loyalty to non-family members of their organizations, and through the patriotic movements they came to an understanding of why their country was backward and weak. One of the startling things to Westerners who saw these great patriotic demonstrations with their slogans "Down with foreign aggression," "Down with unequal treaties," "Down with imperialism" was the everyday acceptance by the Chinese of the idea that the blame for China's backward position was not all thrown on the foreigners. Stamped on pencils, notebooks, cookies, on handbills and wall posters was the slogan: "Don't Forget Your Country's Shame." Handbills and speeches explained "It is because we let our rulers get away with selling out to the colonial powers that we are weak and backward; it is because we let them treat us this way that we are miserable." The people

were organizing, learning, acting, and realizing their share of responsibility for the kind of society they had.

Meanwhile the new leadership was studying and analyzing the classes in Chinese society. As Mao Tse-tung in 1926 put it, "Who are our enemies, and who are our friends? To distinguish real friends from real enemies we must make a general analysis of the economic status of the various classes in Chinese society and their respective attitudes toward the revolution." In the then current Chinese society there were "the real enemies, the landlords and the compradores; there was the wavering middle class national bourgeoisie, representing China's capitalist relations of production, some of whom would eventually join the ranks of the revolution and some join the counter-revolution; there was the petty bourgeoisie owner-peasants, master handicraftsmen, petty intellectuals with a right wing minority skeptical of the revolution, a middle section favoring the revolution but refusing to join it rashly and remaining neutral, and a third section, people who had seen better days but now living in more reduced circumstances, contrasting their past with their present misery—these formed the left wing of the bourgeoisie." (Mao in 1926 said that "in a revolutionary upsurge when the dawn of victory is discernible" all the petty bourgeoisie would attach itself to the revolution. History has borne out this judgment.) A fourth class was "the semi-proletariat, semi-tenant peasant, poor peasants, handicraftsmen, shop assistants, peddlers—all of whom possessed revolutionary qualities in varying degree and were receptive to revolutionary agitation." The fifth class was the proletariat, of about two million industrial workers; these were analyzed as representatives of China's new productive forces and the most progressive class in modern China; they were the leading force in the revolutionary movement because of their concentration, their low economic status, deprived of all means of production except their hands, and subject to brutal treatment by all of the people's enemies, imperialists, war lords and bourgeoisie.

So the new leadership correctly estimated the favorable internal forces with which they could work—what parts of the

population would be on the side of the people, not in terms of being emotionally "for the people" but rather "who would be impelled by their own economic interest to support the revolutionary struggle." They correctly estimated the varying degrees of involvement in and support of and the pace of adherence to the struggle of various sections of the population.

This new leadership, the Chinese Communist Party, participated in united front actions with the Kuomintang and the other political parties and forces throughout the long years of struggle from its beginning in 1921 to its place of accepted national leadership in 1949; but throughout it maintained its identity as an independent political organization.

The revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people—through centuries of peasant revolts against feudal conditions, through a century of popular patriotic resistance to colonialism, through three decades under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party—this long struggle finally eventuated in the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Then began the task of constructing a people's society—a socialist and eventually a communist China.

After Liberation: How They Build the New Society

The building of this new Chinese society was based not on any doctrinaire blueprint furnished, imposed or implemented by China's leading political party, the Chinese Communist Party. Rather, the clear goal—of a new society, socialist and eventually communist—was to be reached, as was the achievement of liberation, by a social process, by the movements of the people participating in the creating and achieving of this new kind of society. Again there was an analysis and evaluation of the favorable forces within China that could contribute to the new goal.

Nothing of value to the people in China's historic heritage or in current social assets was discarded. A new force for social reconstruction emerged as the fresh insights and tools furnished by their analyses of society were wedded to the accumulating experience of the participating people. Every

fundamental change on which the new China is based is the result not of a government decree, but of a process combining positive assets of the old China with the newly emerged social force.

The political force that established the new government of China in October 1949 was not a one party force, nor a coalition of political parties. It was, rather, a coalition of the democratic forces in Chinese society, meeting together in the People's Political Consultative Conference; this Conference was composed of representatives of the fourteen existing political parties, of representatives from the nine Liberated Areas Governments that the people had established in some areas during the final years of the Chiang Kai-shek regime, of representatives of sixteen nation-wide people's organizations, social, economic, and religious (such as Trade Union Federation, The All China Peasant Unions, the All China Women's Federation, the Buddhists, the Christians, the Mohammedans, etc.), and of the representatives of the six People's Liberation Armies that had borne such a heavy responsibility in ridding China of its enemies. Thus these current favorable political and social forces were incorporated, not discarded, and assumed a share in and a responsibility for the building of the new society.

Today all sections of the population, including the fifty or more minority groups, participate in the political life of China, a far cry from the day when one class, the landlord-bureaucratic capitalist class, alone had any political say. Today the people are citizens not because of a paper right or privilege granted them by some ruling element but because of their involvement in the process of creating their new government.

Today China has a constitutional government—but not with a ready made constitution, nor a patch-work of various foreign constitutions such as pre-Liberation governments in China had attempted to fabricate. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China is a product of a domestic political process, growing out of the experience of setting up the new

society. In 1949 the People's Political Consultative Conference worked out a Common Program, incorporating the views of the various constituent groups in that Conference, views on which all agreed after much discussion; for instance, when the final draft was presented to the full Conference one delegate suggested that in addition to the accepted goal of socialism, the Common Program should include "communism" as well; a Communist Party delegate rose to disagree: "Everyone here agrees on a socialist goal; not even half would agree now on a communist goal; to add that would be divisive; of course the Communist Party envisages a communist goal and will work hard to convince the Chinese people; but meanwhile we must advance on what we all agree." The Common Program of 1949 was to serve as a national guide until such time as developments would furnish the conditions for a formal National Constitution. It was not until September 1954, five years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, that the necessary conditions for a formal constitution had matured—people getting experience in citizenship and voting by participation in the political and social concerns of their various local organizations, personnel being trained to administer electoral procedures, a census of the country, and popular experience in building the new kind of society—a new society which would demand a new kind of constitution, not one patterned on the constitutions of foreign bourgeois societies. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China is the product of the process of people experiencing, learning, understanding and knowing what they want.

China today has an economy all but completely socialist, with some elements of a communist economy already in existence. This achievement in ten years is the product of a process which, while aiming at eliminating feudalism and avoiding capitalism, used all the possible assets of the old. In 1949 China had five economic sectors. The largest was the individual peasant and handicraft sector; there was also a private capitalist sector; a sector of pre-Liberation government-owned industry and economic assets which passed to the

hands of the new regime; and there was a sector of cooperatives; under the direction of a state-capitalist sector the new government geared all these existing assets into the socialist goal. There was no discarding of the old, but as the first stage toward a socialist economy, the incorporation of all that was useful in the old economy into a mixed economy of the five sectors. There was no disruption of the people's current economic activities—but their enlistment in the new economic goal.

Capitalists were an asset, the most prepared to meet China's immediate economic need, production. They were therefore a major asset, not to be ignored or mistreated; true, they were no longer to control or direct China's economy. ("The State aims to restrict capital, not to destroy it, but eventually to eliminate capitalism.") The role and dignity of the capitalists is symbolized in the flag of the People's Republic of China—one of the five stars in the flag represents "the national capitalists"—"national," related not to worldwide capitalism but to their own country's economy. By 1959 the private-owned capitalist enterprises had become part of the nationally-owned enterprises as joint-private-government-owned-enterprises, with the erstwhile private owners now receiving five percent interest on their turned-over investment for seven years and receiving a salary for their continued work in the enterprise. They have become workers, a part of the process in which the differences between "owner" and "worker," between "mental" and "manual" are diminishing; former private owners are now fellow-owners and fellow-workers in the commonly owned people's enterprises. There was no sudden losing of their economic status but a process of transforming that status into a common economic and social status as citizens and builders of a new kind of society.

There were pre-1949 cooperatives in China. Both the constructive experience of cooperative ownership and action and the experience of the destructive lukewarmness and antagonism of the semi-feudal, bureaucratic Chiang Kai-shek elements had served as an educative basis for now directing these cooperative members toward a socialist society. This

organizational experience of millions of peasants (and some urban workers) was an asset—now easily geared into the mixed economy and toward the new kind of society; there was no ending of the cooperative organization of these peasants and workers, but an incorporation of their experience into the wider and common goal of all. In place of small owner-worker cooperatives these peasant and worker members are now fellow-owners and creators of the national economy.

The basic change in China has been land reform—the complete elimination of feudal land relationships. The ending of the old system was a primary task for the liberated Chinese. This was achieved by no decree of the new government but by a social process in which the peasants (farmers) themselves were the moving force.

One of the first regulations of the new government was: "All feudal land ownership is to be abolished." Note the verb, "is to be," not "is." And who was to end feudal ownership?—the peasants themselves through a process of organization, action and accumulating understanding.

The first step in this process was the organization of the Peasant Unions. True, some peasants had organized in pre-Liberation days; then from 1949 on, peasants throughout China organized their unions. This organized strength enabled them to force landlords to reduce rents and interest charges—a revolutionary victory for the hitherto oppressed peasants. As they grew in understanding and courage the peasants forced the landlords to hand over the deeds to land; these deeds were burned and the peasants, union by union, distributed the land to themselves with erstwhile landlords also receiving their share. Size of the shares of land varied, according to the situation and value of the land as determined by the (sometimes long drawn out) discussion and decisions of the Peasant Union members. This process meant that never again could the rural population of China revert to the pre-Liberation status of poor or landless farmers: an educative and basic democratic process of land distribution had taken place with results that no subsequent government reg-

ulation could undo: the long process, extending over the years, had created a new peasantry, men and women who had been through a dignity-and-responsibility-creating experience. The peasants themselves had ended the long years of feudalism and had helped lay the basis both for the modernization of China's economy and for the erecting of the new society.

China already has replaced a pre-Liberation feudal agricultural economy with a modern industrial economy. The productive potential released by the land reform achievement of the peasantry undergirds this new modern economy: land owning peasants are more productive than landless, poor and tenant farmers. Land to the tiller was however only the initial step in the contribution the rural population made to the building of the new society. The new economy was to be not only industrial, but, the new China affirmed, the most modern form of industrialization, not capitalist, but socialist (and eventually communist). As we have seen the start toward this goal began with incorporating all the existing economic assets into a mixed economy, gradually gearing all these sectors into the socialist pattern.

The peasant contribution to the new society has been immense. Their private ownership activity moved steadily toward socialized activity—mutual aid teams, cooperatives, collectives, and finally people's communes. Each of these new organizational forms of peasant activity meant a more rationalized, more socialized use of the land, of equipment, and of manpower. The latest form, people's communes, is partly socialist in nature, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work"; and they are partly communist, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." That is, as part remuneration for their work the commune members distribute to themselves wages—"according to work"; and as part remuneration they distribute to themselves "free supply"—free food, free nurseries, kindergartens, free education, medical and cultural facilities—"according to need."

In 1958 when the urban economy was as yet unable to meet the peasants' increasing demand for commodities, for farm

equipment, for building material, for insecticide, for fertilizer, the collectives took matters into their own hands, joined together into larger units, as people's communes, and started factories to produce the things they needed, and began tackling larger projects such as modest electric installations, bigger irrigation schemes, buildings, roads, transport, etc. This new move on the part of the rural population at first worried the central authorities with the thought, "Are the peasants moving toward capitalism?"; but the government soon recognized this movement as "natural and necessary" and as "a new social organization fresh as the morning sun, above the horizon of East Asia . . . the large scale people's communes . . . which combine industry, agriculture, trade, education and military affairs and in which the government administration and commune management are combined."

Almost six hundred million people in rural China are already on the steps of socialism and communism—the product of a decade of peasant experience; they learned the strength there is in organization; they struggled and learned through the process of making decisions about land reform; they saw their productive potential increase by cooperative and rational use of their resources. Pushed by their need and their experience they made the decision to unite in the higher form of socialized action, the people's commune.

The same popular process toward socialism was taking place in the urban areas. Street committees of forty to fifty families were early organized to look after the physical and livelihood and social concerns of each street area. While the wage and salary earning men and women in the cities were learning and experiencing in their trade and professional unions, the home women were taking responsibility for running these street committees—cleaning up the area, starting nurseries and kindergartens, establishing small, modest and sometimes large light industry and handicraft factories for women, opening public dining rooms, establishing clinics, etc. In April 1960 these street committees were officially recognized as potential urban people's communes; and already millions of women (and some men) have by now organized themselves

in these more socialistic people's communes.

The equality of men and women is now a fact in China. One of the earliest regulations of the new government was: "Men and women are to be equal"; note the verb, "are to be," not "are." The change from feudal inequalities could not be made by a fiat of government, nor even by a general popular desire. It could only come as the actions of the people created the conditions for equality. A many-sided social process produced the necessary conditions.

One of the earliest expressions of this social process was the women's organizations which gave the women not only the opportunity to become articulate about their own concerns but also gave them the wider knowledge and strength of group solidarity to express and achieve their desires and gave them the training to participate as full members of their communities. The street committee, in which women were the prime factors, was an added avenue of articulateness and responsibility for interests outside their more narrow family life.

Women became workers in factories, shops, institutions—full members with the men in their trade unions. More and more women began having incomes of their own, giving them economic independence, the basis of any equality. But to have freedom for wage-earning work demanded new conditions—new home conditions: nurseries, kindergartens and schools for their children, piped water, electricity, public health measures that eliminated rats and flies, packaged food in stores, ready-made clothing—things that would make household duties less onerous. All these conditions for easing household chores could not come by government decree, but were also a part of the process making possible women's participation as equals with men in economic, social and community activities. And wage-earning jobs demanded some training—literacy and technical classes for women who had not hitherto participated in outside work. In the rural areas the basic condition for equality, economic independence, was early provided in that when the land was divided women received their shares as individuals, not as members of some man's family.

Along with this many-sided process of creating the conditions for equality went a nation-wide education on the subject. Men and women both must understand the necessity for ending feudal relations, relationships that if persisted in could slow up the achieving of the goal of a new society. A man tied down by a feudal-minded wife could not give his fullest energies to the building of the new; a mother still imbedded in feudal ideas, because she knew no other, could hamper the development of her children as citizens of a new China. A man still clinging to feudal relationships could block the entry of his women folk into the new activities for women and so lessen the constructive potential of his country. To build the new China all—men, women and children—must bring to this task their fullest potential. Feudalism which curbed the full potential of individuals must be ended—socially and economically. Newspapers, magazines, theatres, movies, discussion groups—all were used to create a nation-wide awareness of the relevance of this question of equality. New uses of old cultural tools for the implementation of new ideas was a part of the process creating the conditions for the equality of men and women.

Conclusion

So China moves toward a new social order. They see their successful struggle for liberation from the old and the building of the foundations for the new society as based on the Marxist-Leninist analysis of the forces in society, domestic and international, favorable and unfavorable. The power for this liberation and this building which the Chinese Communist Party enlisted was the people's power—the people organizing, participating, learning, using their familiar assets and activities to achieve a new goal, a China that is theirs.

It is true that the existence of the Soviet Union and the socialist states was a major factor favorable to the struggle for liberation and helpful as new China's constructive years began. Mao Tse-tung has said, "We learn from the Soviet Union, but we do not copy; to copy is like cutting one's feet to fit the shoes." How could China copy?—Chinese leaders

point out that the Chinese people have a historical background different from that of the Russian people, that the Chinese revolution came to fruition at a later time in history than had the Russian people's revolution, that China's liberation came at a time when there was already a socialist world, at a time when the capitalist world nations were increasingly on the defensive, looking more and more like a "paper tiger," less and less able to solve their problems, increasingly in conflict with each other as the sphere of their colonial activities shrinks. The Chinese people are building their new society under different and more favorable world conditions than those which faced the Russian people in 1917.

So China builds her new society, not on a pre-determined blueprint, but guided by Marxist-Leninist principles applied to actual domestic and international conditions and involving all-inclusive participation of the people. The basic changes from the old to the new—land reform, equality of men and women, constitutional government, a socialist economy, a communist society—are achieved not by governmental decree or fiat; these basic changes are achieved by a social process which so involves the participation of the people that new men and women emerge, a new kind of citizen unable, because of their experiences (hard, sometimes bitter, but creative) ever to revert to their old pre-Liberation selves. This social process took place under a leadership that came from and that enlisted and depended on the only force that could achieve a permanent freeing of China's hundreds of millions from the old society, the only force that could effect and maintain lasting new social relationships, the power of the people themselves. It is truly the People's Republic of China.