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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

China's Role in Africa

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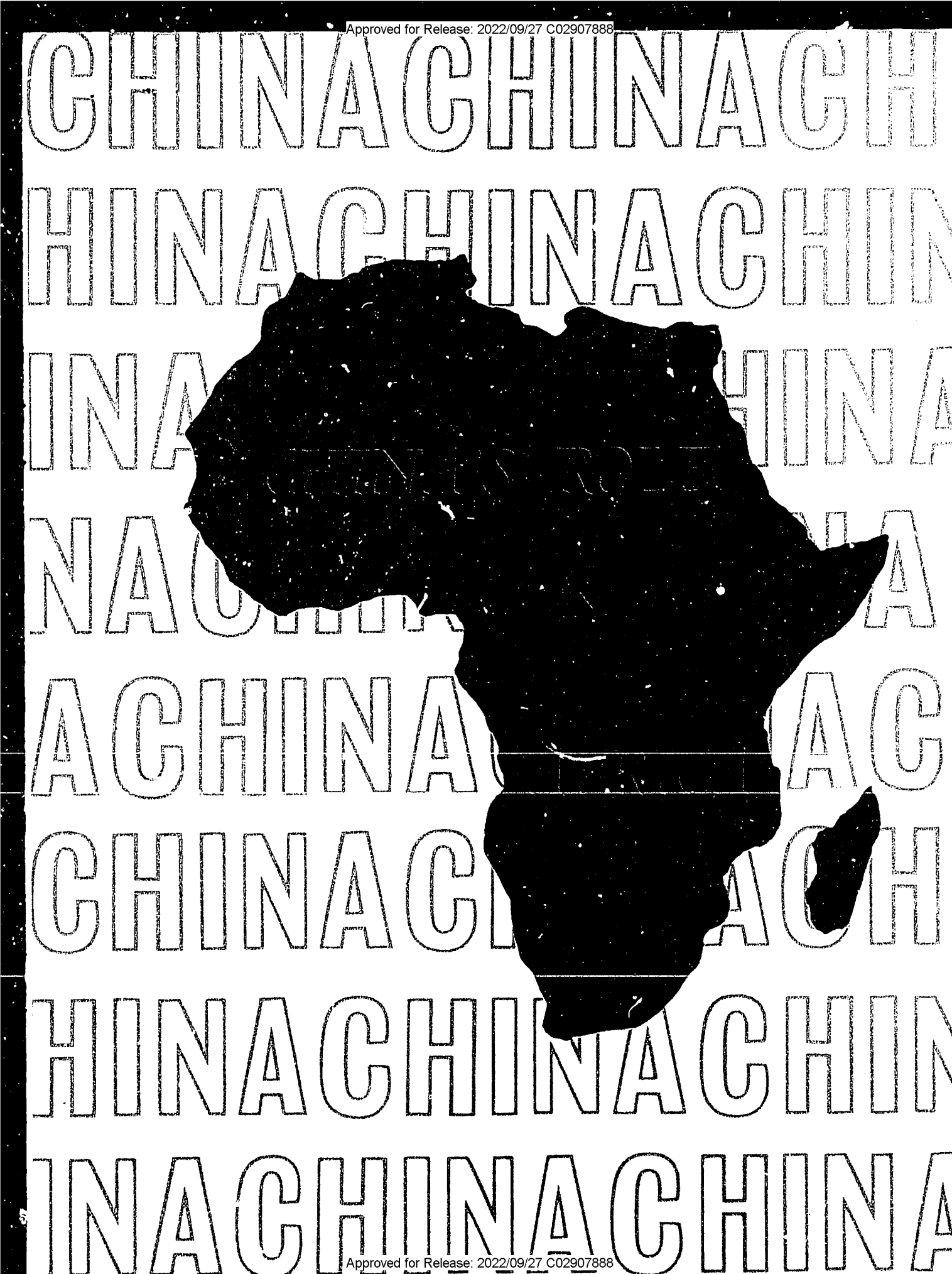

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After marking time for nearly five years, Communist China again is expanding its presence in Africa. Since October 1970, five African governments have established diplomatic relations with Peking. When the two others now in the process do so, the Chinese Communists will be ahead of the rival Chinese Nationalist regime in the contest for recognition. When the UN General Assembly voted to admit the People's Republic of China to the world body, Peking received most of the African ballots. Along with these diplomatic gains, there has been a considerable increase in Chinese economic aid to African nations.

Transforming such short-range political profit into long-term influence will depend on a number of factors: the effectiveness and continued generosity of Peking's economic aid, the ability of the Chinese to allay African fears of subversion, conditions and events within Africa, and Peking's ability to find issues on which China and the African regimes can unite. China undoubtedly will continue to give priority to its relationships with the US, the USSR, Japan, and Europe, but in Peking's effort to alter power relationships in the world, Africa has a definite, if limited, part to play.

The Early Years

Africa first attracted the attention of the Chinese Communists in the mid-1950s, when the European powers came under increasing pressure to grant independence to their colonies. Taking advantage of the surge in African nationalist sentiment, Peking stressed its opposition to imperialism, offering moral and, on occasion, material support to African national liberation movements. In May 1956, Egypt's President Nasir, sensing a potential source of support in his developing dispute with Britain and France over the status of the Suez Canal, became the first ruler on the African continent to recognize Mao's regime. Peking's aid to the nationalist rebels in Algeria paid off in 1962 when the newly independent government established diplomatic relations with China.

Peking's efforts to assert itself as a revolutionary model for African independence movements and to forge diplomatic, economic, and political ties with the more radical of the newly independent African states set the stage for increased competition with the USSR, and, as Sino-Soviet differences widened during the 1960s, rivalry for influence in Africa increased. Peking's attempt to preserve its ideological purity and outbid Moscow in revolutionary appeal, however, soon adversely affected Chinese diplomacy. Once in power, most African nationalists, who welcomed Chinese political and material aid during their struggle for independence, gave a chilly response to the Chinese cries for continued social revolution that Peking felt compelled to sound as part of its contest with Moscow for ideological leadership of the Communist movement.

Nevertheless, as an increasing number of African colonies gained independence during the early 1960s, China stepped up its efforts to gain influence, mainly to match Soviet moves. The Chinese were also trying to counter the rival overtures of the Nationalist regime on Taiwan and reduce US influence on the continent. As Chinese diplomatic missions on the continent grew in number, a modest foreign aid program was inaugurated to woo African governments and enhance Peking's prestige. High-ranking Chinese leaders, such as Premier Chou En-lai and Foreign Minister Chen I, made personal tours in Africa. African delegations were encouraged to visit Peking, and promising African revolutionaries were cultivated and occasionally given training in

China. By 1965, 15 African countries had diplomatic relations with Communist China.

Starting in 1965, China's steady, if modest, progress in Africa began to slow down. African leaders resented Chinese efforts to use them as political weapons in the widening quarrel between Peking and Moscow. A major reason for the cancellation of the Afro-Asian conference planned for Algiers in 1965 was the desire of many African leaders to avoid association with any Chinese effort to turn the meeting against the USSR. Peking's doctrinaire support of revolutionary action cast suspicion on its motives. In some cases, such as their backing of the radical Lumumba and Mulele uprisings in the Congo (now Zaire), the Chinese appear to have overestimated the revolutionary potential of the situation. Revelations—some of them concocted—of Chinese complicity in subversion aimed at overthrowing independent regimes, as in Burundi, alarmed many African leaders. Close Chinese ties with such national leaders as Ghana's Nkrumah meant that when those leaders were ousted, Chinese influence suffered.

Peking also discovered that diplomatic ties, modest Chinese economic aid, and ideological rhetoric were no match for the larger amounts of economic and military assistance available to African governments from Moscow and the West. In Algeria, for example, Peking was unable to compete with the large Soviet military and economic aid commitment. Nor was the prospect of Chinese political support on international issues attractive enough to win over more African regimes. Peking lacked the superpower status and political punch of the US or USSR.

African uneasiness over Peking's policies increased with the unfolding of the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese at that time appeared almost completely engrossed with domestic concerns and presented an image of internal instability. All of China's ambassadors, with the exception of the one in Cairo, were called home. In only one instance, however, was there a break in diplomatic relations between an African nation and Peking during the most tumultuous stage of the Cultural Revolution. In 1967, after Tunisian complaints about Chinese propaganda activities and Chinese accusations that Tunsia wished to wreck relations, Peking closed its embassy. Peking was otherwise generally able to isolate its basic interests in Africa from the effects of the upheaval, although Chinese prestige and influence undoubtedly suffered. The major effect of the Cultural Revolution in Africa was to curtail the extension of new Chinese economic aid and to put a moratorium on further expansion of Peking's diplomatic relations. After Mauritania recognized Communist China in July 1965, no other African government entered into diplomatic relations with Peking for over five years.

In 1969, the restoration of order at home and the adoption of a more pragmatic and flexible approach to foreign policy laid the groundwork for a renewal of China's campaign to increase its presence and influence in Africa. Chinese ambassadors began returning to their posts. Peking's economic effort on the continent was given new impetus; in 1970, China extended $452.8 million in new economic aid to African regimes, far exceeding its previous aid to Africa. The commitment to finance and build the Tanzania-Zambia railway accounted for most of this total ($401.2 million), but Guinea ($10 million) and Sudan ($41.6 million) were given a slice of the pie. Continuing its version of dollar diplomacy into 1971, China extended new economic aid to Somalia ($109 million), Ethiopia ($84 million), Sudan ($40 million), Algeria ($40 million) and Mauritania ($20.5 million). In Mali, Peking indicated its interest in financing and constructing the $100 million Manantali dam project.

A New Approach to Revolution

Since 1969, Peking's answer to the problem of differences between the demands of its African policy conducted in a world of nation states and the demands of its revolutionary ideology has been to downplay the ideological factor and to operate on a more pragmatic basis. In effect, the goal of social revolution has been retained but put off into the indefinite future. Chinese policy now emphasizes the cultivation of good state-to-state

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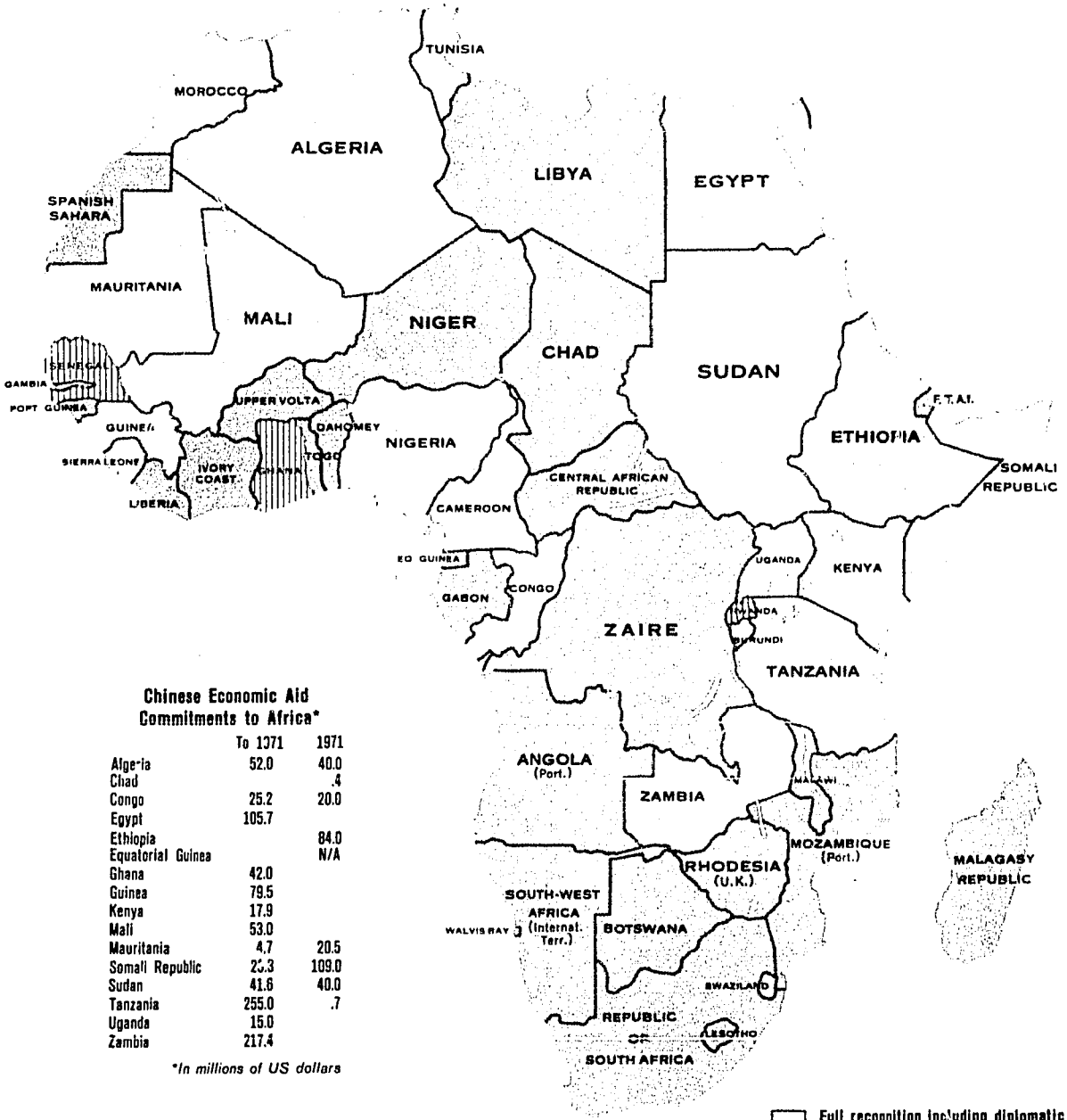
African Countries Recognizing People's Republic of China



Chinese Economic Aid Commitments to Africa*

	To 1371	1971
Algeria	52.0	40.0
Chad		.4
Congo	25.2	20.0
Egypt	105.7	
Ethiopia		84.0
Equatorial Guinea		N/A
Ghana	42.0	
Guinea	79.5	
Kenya	17.9	
Mali	53.0	
Mauritania	4.7	20.5
Somali Republic	25.3	109.0
Sudan	41.6	40.0
Tanzania	255.0	.7
Uganda	15.0	
Zambia	217.4	

*In millions of US dollars

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relations with any government willing to recognize Mao's regime as the sole legitimate government of China. No ideological strings are attached, and Peking does not demand that other governments support its position vis-a-vis the USSR. Communist China's leadership apparently accepts the fact that non-Communist, nationalist regimes are in power throughout Africa and are likely to remain indefinitely. Naturally, the Chinese are pleased when an African regime adopts a radical position, as in Guinea or Congo (Brazzaville). Nevertheless, while publicly applauding such measures as the nationalization of various sectors of the African economy, Peking has demonstrated considerable private caution. Chinese officials have warned various African regimes of the dangers of going too far, too fast in remaking their economies. Chinese spokesmen also have reminded African leaders hungry for economic aid that China's capacity to help them is limited, implying that they should not cut themselves off from other sources of assistance.

China's adoption of a flexible, pragmatic policy emphasizing good state relations has paid off in wider acceptance of Mao's regime by African states. In turn, diplomatic recognition by African governments helps buttress the international legitimacy of the Peking government and undermine that of its rival on Taiwan. African regimes are encouraged to believe that they can do business with Peking without fear of Chinese-sponsored subversion. In the long run, the Chinese obviously hope that increased international prestige and acceptance will be translated into support for Peking's moves directed at altering its power relationships with the US and the Soviet Union.

Peking loses no opportunity to establish the image of China as a champion of third-world—hence, African—interests against those of the two superpowers. Chinese propaganda hits hard on the theme that Washington and Moscow are "contending and colluding" in order to divide the world between them, that Soviet and US economic and military aid are given with ulterior motives, and that Afro-Asian (and Latin American) countries should "get united" to oppose the schemes of the two superpowers to block the attainment of complete political and economic independence. Peking, which repeatedly pledges never to behave as a superpower, looks for concrete issues of importance to Africans on which China can take the lead. For example, China supports African anti-colonial moves in the UN, approved the Security Council decision to hold a session on African problems in Addis Ababa, and keeps up a drumfire of criticism against the white governments in Rhodesia and South Africa. If possible, Peking attempts to select issues that involve the interests of as wide a range of third-world countries as possible. Thus, Chinese support of the claim of several African countries to a 200-nautical-mile limit for territorial waters, a matter of even greater concern to most South American states, was included in the communiqué of July 1971 summarizing the visit of a government delegation from Sierra Leone. Later the same month, the communiqué marking the end of the visit of the Algerian foreign minister called for a "Mediterranean for the Mediterranean states," obliquely criticizing the presence of both the US and Soviet fleets in the area.

Current Chinese pronouncements stress the African states' struggle to protect their sovereignty and interests in the face of "imperialism, neo-colonialism, and racism." Peking is fully aware of the damage done to its position in Africa by its past association with subversive movements. The Chinese quickly, and probably truthfully, denied charges made in the summer of 1971 by Uganda's President Amin that they were aiding exiled President Obote in his plans to return to power. They have told the Tanzanian Government that if any Chinese personnel there step out of line, the authorities in Dar es Salaam have only to say the word and the offender will be sent home immediately. There is no good current evidence that Peking is offering material or propaganda support to any movements aimed at overthrowing black or Arab regimes in Africa. Indeed, as demonstrated by Chinese criticism of the Soviet Union's alleged meddling in the internal affairs of the Sudan, Peking is attempting to turn the tables on those who continue to label it subversive. In a recent conversation, Sudanese

President Numayri contrasted Chinese "correctness" on the issue of subversion with what he believed to be the unsavory record of the USSR.

Liberation Movements

China maintains the revolutionary basis of its African policy by supporting liberation movements directed against white rule in Portuguese Africa, Rhodesia, and the Republic of South Africa. Peking furnishes arms and training to the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) based in Tanzania, and a small amount of arms have been given to the rebels in Portuguese Guinea. The FRELIMO leader, Samora Moises Machel, visited Peking in late summer 1971, and further Chinese aid probably was discussed. The Chinese have given limited amounts of aid to two smaller groups, the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee and the Partisan Liberation Union of Mozambique, in an effort to maintain wide contacts within the anti-Portuguese liberation movements.

The chairman of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola made his pilgrimage to Peking in July 1971, and he may have secured promises of Chinese support in the form of supplies and training by Chinese instructors in Tanzania. The Chinese also have given token amounts of aid to the National Union for Total Independence of Angola. Peking furnishes funds and military training in Tanzania to the Zimbabwe African National Union, an organization seeking the overthrow of the present regime in Rhodesia.

Ideological and organizational splits have undermined the political and military impact of the various liberation movements, particularly those in Rhodesia, and Peking probably discounts their ability to overthrow colonial or white rule in the foreseeable future. After seeing their aid to various African revolutionaries frittered away in the early and mid-1960s, the Chinese apparently have decided to give only relatively modest amounts of aid to such groups, at least until these organizations prove to have created effective, well-disciplined movements with a chance of eventual success.

Chinese influence among the African liberation movements faces several limiting factors. Many of the movements, such as in Portuguese Guinea, receive aid from the USSR which their leaders are loath to jeopardize. The thought of Mao Tse-tung may inspire some African leaders intellectually and emotionally and interest them as a general guide to military and political action in a "people's war," but none of these leaders is an out-and-out Maoist, and all are ardent nationalists. None of them appears susceptible to firm Chinese control, even if Peking should attempt to exert it. Finally, Chinese efforts to influence the liberation movements are restricted by the attitudes of the African states that play host to the rebels. For example, in view of Peking's efforts to court the Nyerere regime, it is highly unlikely that the Chinese would go against his wishes in dealing with FRELIMO.

Given these limitations, which are aggravated by China's remoteness from the scene of action, the Chinese are contenting themselves with being more of an inspirational force to the movements. Chinese propaganda stresses the necessity for each movement to be self-reliant, to build a base of local popular support, and to adopt its tactics to the local social and political environment.

The Chinese have no qualms about reducing or even abandoning their propaganda or material support of an African liberation movement, if such an action helps cement good relations with an African government. Peking ceased propagandizing for the Eritrean Liberation Front several months before China began recognition talks with Ethiopia, and, since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Peking has severely cut back and probably ended support for the Eritrean rebels. Suspension of aid, never very great in absolute terms, was one of the main conditions set by Ethiopia as the price of recognition, and the Chinese apparently paid the price with alacrity in order to gain a presence in an important

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African state. During Emperor Haile Selassie's visit to Peking in October 1971, the Chinese leadership emphatically reassured their guest that their aid to the Eritrean Liberation Front had ended.

African Communists

Peking's decision to accept the necessity of dealing with the existing African nationalist regimes is paralleled by a decision to write off as a potential source of support the few existing—and in almost every case illegal—African Communist parties. Most of the parties have generally been ineffectual and have lined up behind Moscow in the Sino-Soviet ideological split, making it easier for the Chinese to write them off as revisionists. Peking's utter indifference to African Communist parties is illustrated by its reaction to the fate of the Sudanese Communists. China did not join the Soviet and East European chorus protesting President Numayri's violent suppression of the Sudanese party. On the contrary, according to Numayri, the Chinese sent him a "good luck" message on the occasion of his countercoup. The Chinese ambassador was the first foreign representative received by him after his restoration to power. Peking has nearly doubled its economic assistance to his regime and has signed a military protocol with Khartoum. Chinese national interest in gaining influence at the expense of the USSR in a major African state clearly overrode ideological considerations.

If Peking has written off the existing Communist parties, there is still the question of why the Chinese have made no great effort to encourage the formation of pro-Peking Communist movements in Africa. One deterrent to such a move is the bias toward "European Communism" in the African movement. Particularly in French-speaking Africa, most of the recruits to Communist or other ultraradical views have undergone ideological conversion under European influence. During the colonial era, the embryonic African Communist parties were in a sense an extension overseas of the Communist movements in the metropole. An equally strong factor is Peking's view of the prospects of African Communism. The Chinese very likely do not regard the situation as ripe for the launching of African Communist parties, which in their view cannot be organized from outside but must evolve according to the circumstances in each state. Rather than engage in futile efforts to encourage chimerical Communist movements, Peking has chosen to support selected radical African leaders or nationalist movements and to await developments more favorable to the organization of pro-Chinese parties.

The Economic Sweetener

Since the renewed expansion of Chinese activity in Africa in 1970, most of China's new economic aid has gone to regimes that already have recognized the People's Republic. In part, this generosity is meant to impress African leaders who do not recognize China with the tangible benefits to be gained by good relations. Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea concluded economic aid agreements with China within a year after recognizing Peking. Chinese diplomats in Cameroon have broadly hinted that their government is willing to entertain a request for assistance, and the Chinese Communist ambassador in Nigeria has suggested the conclusion of trade and economic aid agreements between the two countries. Peking uses its foreign aid as more than just a lure for recognition. Provision of aid helps project an image of a dynamic, expanding, and modern Chinese economy that will serve both as an inspiration and source of help for underdeveloped nations.

The Chinese are well-suited by experience and the level of their technology to build basic projects—roads, railroads, dams, ports, light industry, and agricultural and medical facilities—so badly needed by many African nations. The technologically more sophisticated Western donors often will not match Peking's financial terms, which include mainly no interest credits with repayment over a long term following a

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substantial grace period. Chinese aid has been well received by most of its African recipients. The Chinese have a reputation for hard work, frugality, and living within the local economy. The scarcity of African complaints about Chinese ideological proselytizing in connection with the aid programs suggests that Peking is treading with circumspection. Moreover, the Chinese are willing to undertake economically dubious projects if they believe that the political gains will justify the burden. A case in point is the decision to finance and build the Tanzania-Zambia railway at a cost of $400 million. In addition to its direct utility, the railway is a showcase demonstration of the Chinese ability to handle a large-scale project under the difficult conditions of the African interior.

China's economic competition with the West or the USSR is limited by its own economic deficiencies. In Africa, Chinese economic aid has surpassed that given by the Soviet Union in only seven countries. The immense cost of the Tanzam railway has enabled Peking to outdistance Moscow in Tanzania and Zambia. China is the largest Communist aid donor to Congo (Brazzaville), and a $109-million aid package negotiated with the Somali Republic makes the Chinese the major source of aid there next to Italy. Peking also has topped the Soviet aid level in Sudan and Mauritania. Half of the small loan given to the Central African Republic in 1964 remains unused. Bangui broke diplomatic relations with Peking early in 1965. On the other hand, China's total economic effort in Africa through 1971 ($1,146 million) pales in comparison with the USSR's $2,519.5 million in grants or loans during the same period. Most African states also retain important economic ties with their former colonial rulers; there is still considerable French economic interest in west and central Africa, and the United Kingdom is an important trade partner for its former African possessions, including Tanzania and Zambia. Chinese aid activities, particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia, have succeeded in arousing Soviet apprehension. Moscow's representatives have attempted to blacken Peking's new pragmatic image by recalling past Chinese association with subversion and, on occasion, by meeting the Chinese in head-on competition, as in Somalia, where the recent Soviet agreement to finance a large agricultural development project obviously is meant to offset increased Chinese economic aid.

Moscow's competition probably will not deter an increasing number of African regimes from seeking Chinese economic assistance in the future. Almost all African regimes profess to follow a nonaligned foreign policy, and acceptance of Chinese aid helps reinforce this image. Although there probably are few African leaders who have any illusions about China's ability to replace the West or the USSR as an economic patron, Peking's assistance is welcome, not only in its own right but also as a device to counterbalance any Western or Soviet presence, and as a bargaining tool with which to negotiate elsewhere for more aid on better terms. The Malian regime, for example, appears to be trying to play off China, France, and the USSR in an effort to secure greater economic aid.

Military Aid

Peking's use of military aid as a supplement to its larger economic effort is more sparing. Tanzania and possibly Sierra Leone are now the only African states dependent on China for most of their new military equipment. President Nyerere, fearing eventual Portuguese retaliation for his support of FRELIMO, has agreed to receive, free of charge, about $12 million worth of Chinese equipment (tanks, trucks, jet aircraft, artillery, patrol boats, small arms, and ammunition), much of which has already been delivered. The Chinese also are building a base for the Tanzanian Navy at Dar es Salaam and a major airfield. Chinese instructors provide military training in Tanzania, and Tanzanian naval and air force personnel have received military instruction in China. In addition, the Chinese have been asked to help train the new Tanzanian popular militia.

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Apart from Tanzania, no African government has received large amounts of military aid from Peking since 1960. The agreement concluded in July 1971 between China and Guinea calls for Peking to supply only several small patrol boats and an undetermined amount of arms and ammunition. Despite the signing of a military aid agreement with Congo (Brazzaville) in September 1971—which will bring in Chinese tanks and "heavy equipment," and send some military personnel to China for training—the Congolese receive most of their military equipment from the USSR. The Chinese have been well received, however, garnering considerable prestige from a modest amount of aid. Sierra Leone has received some small arms and ammunition and reportedly will receive some helicopters, gunboats, and more small arms. Zambia recently received its first shipment of small arms from China.

Prospectus

Locked in a competition with the US and the USSR in the changing world power balance, Peking is likely to continue to take advantage of Africa's underdeveloped economies and endemic political instability to expand its influence and secure African political support. How well the Chinese do will depend on a number of factors. Fifteen years of expanding involvement in Africa have given Peking certain intangible assets—experience in the area, contacts with several important African leaders, such as Nyerere and Kaunda, and a greater understanding of the region's complex social and political structure. These assets have not always been well used—witness the setbacks dealt the Chinese during the mid-1960s—but Peking's increasing experience in Africa suggests that its policies and activities there are likely to become more sophisticated in the years ahead. The turn toward a pragmatic policy after 1969 has paid off in an expanding Chinese presence, yet Peking, by backing selected national liberation groups, has managed to retain its revolutionary aura.

Transforming these assets into long-term political gains is a more uncertain process. The Chinese must continue to make good on their promises of economic aid and to show African leaders that China's support is valuable in attaining their sometimes competing national objectives. A major factor shaping the future of China in Africa is, of course, the unpredictability of events on the continent itself. The fall of Nkrumah, which wiped out the political gains Peking had made in Ghana, and the failure last year of the attempted coup in the Sudan, which opened up a new opportunity for expanding Chinese influence, are cases in point.

So far, China's ability to influence developments in Africa has been very limited. No African regime or liberation movement appears about to adopt the Maoist model of society in toto, and, given the intensity of the African desire for independence, it is unlikely that any African regime will allow itself to become completely dependent on Peking. African leaders are more likely to become increasingly skillful in balancing the competing pressures from the West, the USSR, and China.

But as long as Peking supports important African objectives, avoids a repetition of meddling in subversive activities within black and Arab African nations, and offers cheap economic and military aid, it probably will continue to make modest gains. In such a context, the view of a skeptical Soviet diplomat in Ethiopia—that for years the Ethiopians had milked the US, had attempted to milk the USSR, but now have found a new cow and will milk it as dry as possible—may come to reflect much of the reality of Peking's African adventure.

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