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The Coming Decline of the Chinese Empire

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Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an "Organization for Pacific Trade and Development."

Beyond its obvious value for the specialist in Pacific affairs, *Economic Interaction* can be recommended to the generalist involved in international affairs on two grounds. First, it provides a virtual primer on "international economic interactions" for those interested in acquiring a grasp of this increasingly important set of influences. For these purposes the introductory and concluding chapters will be of particular interest. Second, the focus on an economic basin in itself is enlightening. The Pacific Basin presents a model applicable to two other emerging economic regions of which we should be more aware, the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean basins. Both Brazil and India are rapidly moving to the fore not merely as major industrial nations but also as heartland economies of their regions. An understanding of the experience of the Pacific Basin in the 1970s will be of value in understanding trends in the 1980s and 1990s in these key areas.

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Louis, Victor. *The Coming Decline of the Chinese Empire*. New York: Times Books, 1979. 198pp.

The author is a "journalist" resident in Moscow who is used occasionally by the Soviet Government to transmit information and disinformation. As his book's title suggests, Louis' principal theme is that China's communist leadership has assumed control over an empire that faces disintegration. Over half of China's current territory is destined to slip from its control, Louis says, and when this happens, it will be the rightful culmination of a long process of decolonization that has seen Burma, Vietnam, Korea, Nepal, and

domination. The specific regions Louis discusses as candidates for liberation are Manchuria, Nei Monggol (Inner Mongolia), Xinjiang (Sinkiang), and Xizang (Tibet). In all four of these regions Louis sees "an unrelenting struggle for their national self-determination and independence."

The Chinese have tried to suppress the independence struggle within these important minority regions, Louis contends, with a five-point system of repression: (1) "dismemberment of nationalities," i.e., their deportation and dispersal in areas of Chinese habitation; (2) "liquidation of national cadres and the intelligentsia," including their replacement by Han Chinese in key party and government positions; (3) reprisals, with estimates of 300,000 killed in Xinjiang from 1949 to 1969, and 10 to 12 million minority individuals killed in all of China in this period; (4) mass Chinese resettlement of the minority areas; and (5) exploiting a "fifth column" of minority individuals willing to betray their people by imitating and serving Chinese colonizers. (It should be noted that these are techniques pioneered and developed by the Soviet Union, although to be fair, they seem to appear whenever an ethnic majority feels the need to oppress a minority.)

Manchuria's fate, Louis says, is the Chinese leadership's prototype for resolving the nationalities problem and arresting centrifugal forces. Deliberate "extermination of the Manchu" people and culture, together with Chinese settlement, have enabled Han Chinese to claim with some credibility that no Manchu ethnic nationality exists. The underlying falsehood of these claims was demonstrated in the Manchukuo episode, Louis asserts, when the Japanese were able to "exploit the already existing tendencies toward independence and secession from China." When the Chinese Communists and Kuomintang fought to expel the

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Japanese, it was actually "an anti-Manchurian struggle, a full-scale colonial war," undertaken in part because of a Han desire to create an object lesson for other rebellious minorities.

Xinjiang, Nei Monggol and Xizang are accordingly described by Louis as suffering under Han Chinese policies of sinification of language and culture, secularization and destruction of religious values (Muslim and Buddhist), and systematic terrorism as rebellions are crushed and dissidents tortured to death. Just as the oppressed Tibetans look south for assistance, the Inner Mongolians anticipate assistance from the Mongolian People's Republic. Similarly, and more importantly, the Uighurs and other Moslem peoples of Xinjiang (which Louis prefers to call Eastern Turkestan) look to their ethnic brethren in Soviet Central Asia—all of whom derive from "a common root, the ancient Turkic epoch" and constitute a "single cultural conglomerate extending from the western frontiers of China to the Caspian Sea." The high growth rate of both the population and the economy of Soviet Central Asia will act as a magnet to attract the ethnically and culturally similar peoples of Xinjiang.

According to Louis, however, the Chinese are not only determined to prevent the reunification and independence of these peoples, they have expansionist and aggressive designs in South and Southeast Asia and in Siberia and the rest of the Soviet Far East. While the Soviet Union has no desire for a military showdown, events may bring about armed conflict. Indeed, Louis avers, several considerations tend either to promote or justify such a war. First, the United States and other Western states are encouraging China to make war against the Soviet Union:

... surely there is something quite familiar about this business of making concessions and strengthening the potential aggressor in

order to turn his eventual aggression in the right direction. The historical analogy is all too obvious. A new Munich, this time with China cast in the role of Nazi Germany, would be an attempt to pay off one more claimant to world domination by channeling its aggressive drive toward Russia.

A second consideration that tends to make Sino-Soviet war more likely is that victory may become harder for the Soviet Union to achieve as China's population grows and her technological inferiority is overcome: "One highly placed Soviet official has been reported as saying that it would be unjust and cowardly to leave the solution of the Chinese question for the next generation to cope with." A third consideration that favors such a war is that the Chinese might easily be expelled from the lightly populated borderlands, as they are prone to panic and the inhabitants would cooperate with Soviet liberators. Louis concludes his book with a fourth and final consideration: the independence of Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang and Xizang would represent justice for these nationalities, greater security for the Soviet Union, and a Leninist solution to both of these issues.

In his "Dissenting Introduction" to the book, Harrison Salisbury describes it as "disinformation" designed to "confuse American ideas about the Soviet-Chinese clash, and to alarm and disturb the Chinese" and as "a chapbook for Moscow propagandists to quote when, as, and if the Kremlin deems the moment ripe for war with China." This book also represents a new and striking indicator of probable Soviet objectives and priorities in the event of a Sino-Soviet war. It is new because it is in English and directed to a Western audience. It merits careful consideration because it is consistent with a long pattern of Soviet statements and behavior, both military and political.

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Since the Sino-Soviet split, denunciations of Maoist deviations in foreign policy, nationality policy, and ideology have appeared in the Soviet press almost without interruption. Published sources, however, although setting forth Maoist oppression in lurid detail, have stopped short of suggesting any remedies.* So it is here that unofficial sources become our sole guide to Soviet intent. The Louis book is unique among these for its bluntness in a public forum.

Victor Louis' credentials are such that people familiar with them could easily neglect giving his book careful scrutiny. It is generally recognized that Louis is a skillful and visible agent of the KGB posing as a Soviet journalist. He has been accurate in the past; he was, for example, the first source to report Khrushchev's expulsion from power and the first of several in 1969 to report Soviet consideration of a preemptive strike against China's nuclear weapons facilities. Moreover, except for some tentativeness in minor details, his tourist's guide to the Soviet Union is reasonably objective. (Victor and Jennifer Louis, *The Complete Guide to the Soviet Union*; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976.) But Louis has also been the mouthpiece for KGB-concocted untruths about Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Svetlana Alliluyeva, among others.

Although he gives *The Coming Decline of the Chinese Empire* some credibility by referring frankly to Stalinist labor camps and purges (unusual in Soviet writers since the advent of re-Stalinization), the book only gains credibility to the extent that

it conforms to the overall pattern of Soviet behavior and throws new light on possible considerations in Soviet strategic and political planning. It is almost certainly an attempt by the Soviet Government to gauge Western reaction to public discussion of a number of highly radical solutions to its Chinese problem. It is intriguing that Louis tries to bolster his credibility by citing reputable Western sources such as *Far Eastern Economic Review* and Klaus Mehnert.

It is fair to say that Louis' book would not merit attention if it did not state so bluntly what appears to be implied in most current Soviet writings on China. His book is also corroborated by private and semipublic Soviet statements that date from even before the Sino-Soviet split. In view of the strong possibility that this work was written by the KGB, or other organ of the Soviet Government, and ostentatiously attributed to a shadowy "journalist" as a means of testing Western reaction, the question must be asked: "Why is the Soviet Union interested in having these views circulated in the English-speaking world?"

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McIntyre, W. David. *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979. 289pp.

To make the two-decade history of a naval base the subject of a book seems risky, particularly when the base is associated in most peoples' minds with defeat in war and the still disturbing memories of Britain's (and the West's) feckless policies of the twenties and thirties. Mr. McIntyre, a professor at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, slips the first association by giving but one chapter to the actual

*The Soviet Union has begun the work of compiling all of its recent press clippings on China into an ongoing series of volumes on Sino-Soviet problems. This series, entitled *Opasni Kuris*, concerns, as the title indicates, the "dangerous course" of the Chinese. It includes articles from *Pravda*, *Kommunist*, *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, *Partinyaya Zbirn'* and other journals and newspapers. (*Opasni Kuris*, vols. 1-9; Moscow: Published by 1968. Naval War College Digital Commons, 1996.)