

CHOU EN-LAI: Great Asian Patriot

The Chinese people together with millions of others throughout the world mourn the death of the great Chou En-lai, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China. But our sense of loss is tempered by reason, by the happy understanding that we were indeed fortunate that such a man had lived in our era. His self effacing qualities, his humility and his personal charm have become so well known, that even those who had never set eyes on him, imagined what he was. He was a brave and courageous fighter who formed one of a galaxy of legendary men, led by Mao Tse-tung, to liberate the Chinese millions from bondage, slavery and humiliation, to freedom and dignity. Chou's exploits had made him a legend, even in his teens, and of all the great statesmen who have straddled the Asian continent over the long aeons of time, Chou En-lai will surely continue to be one of the waxing stars in the eyes of millions of oppressed people on the continent. But Chou En-lai in his humility, and because of his understanding of the forces of history would have been indifferent to this personal facet of futuristic projection. In his understanding it is the masses who make history, and one could imagine him say, some men merely happen to be leaders. But regardless of such cerebral objectivity it is impossible to ignore the impact of men like Chou on other men, for the reason that he has contributed so much to the liberation of at least one third of the world's people.

Born 78 years ago in Kiangsu into a "bankrupt mandarin family" he was fortunate enough to enter, at the age of 14 years, the Nankai middle school in Tientsin. He was adopted by his uncle who did not have any male heirs, and from Nankai was sent to Japan where he became an "auditor student" at Waseda University, and at the University of Kyoto. Their mandarin origins did not rescue his family from impoverishment, and Chou's studies in Nankai and Japan were financed by scholarships and borrowings. He

went back to Nankai from Japan and continued his studies by taking a job. In 1919 he was jailed for five months for leading a Nankai student rebellion. His ability to organise and arouse the people against the oppressors was evident already in Japan, and the Nankai student rebellion laid the foundation for his long career of mass organisation which earned for him from the American writer Edgar Snow, the title "the Insurrectionist". When released from jail he immediately set up the Awakening Society, and one of its early members was his future wife Teng Ying Chao whom he married in 1925. In October 1920, with a group of other Chinese students which included Ch'en Tu-Shiu who was later to become the first General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, he left for France. No sooner had he landed in France he went about setting up and working full time for the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) and for a brief time, he worked in the Renault factory. His studies in the French language were financed by well-wishers and his need to do a job, unlike that of the other great Asian who spent time in France, Ho Chi Minh, did not amount to a question of survival. After three years in France, Germany and London, Chou returned to Canton via Moscow, but during his foreign sojourn he had successfully organised the Communist Youth League, and initiated into the Communist Party in 1922, the grand old man of China, Chu Teh, twelve years his senior in Berlin. Chou's determination and strength of character had already earned him the party name Shao Shan meaning small mountain, and his future exploits were to earn him the title, "man of iron".

On his return to China, in 1924 Chou En-lai became deputy director of the political department of the Whampoa Academy under Chiang-Kai-shek, and at the same time became a member of the Communist Party, as the secretary of Kwangtung branch. In 1927, he was one of the leading organisers of the famous

Shanghai Workers' Uprising which resulted in the massacre of the communists, estimated by Mao Tse-tung to be around 40,000 lives. The failure of the coalition between the Nationalists and the Communists had sent Chiang Kai-shek on this bloody route which ended in Chiang setting up a government in Nanking. Chou En-lai miraculously escaped the mas-

A giant of resurgent Asia and a deep friend of Sri Lanka is being laid to rest as the January issue of the *Economic Review* goes to press. It is but fitting that we devote this month's foreign survey to a summary of the great man's life and times.

sacre. But his commitment to the liberation of China was foremost in his mind, for no sooner had he escaped than he organised the August First Uprising in Nanchang, and from there he went to Kiangsi where a "soviet" had been set up. In Kiangsi he became political commissar to the man whom he had initiated into the Chinese communist party in Berlin, Chu Teh, who was by now the commander of the Red Army. This was the period of Chiang's all out attack on the communists, and Chou in this period visited Moscow twice, in 1928 and 1930. This phase in the development of civil war in China, resulted in the famous Stan incident where Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang succeeded in arresting Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. It was Chou En-lai who negotiated with Marshal Chang, the release of Chiang Kai-shek, to form the historic United Anti-Japanese Army where all patriotic forces in China agreed to oust the common foreign enemy.

Chou En-lai then joined the Red Army in its historic Long March which took them across 6,000 miles in 368 days. Chou En-lai had taken part in what is mankind's greatest strategic retreat, and it resulted despite all the depletion, in the making of new men who under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, came back from the mountains to win their victory in 1949.

His negotiating capabilities and diplomatic dexterity put him in the forefront of many famous international events.

In 1950, he went with Mao Tse-tung to Moscow to meet Stalin to negotiate the thirty year Sino-Soviet Agreement. In 1952, he negotiated, with the Soviet Union, the return of Russian concessions in China. In April 1953, he initiated the truce agreement on Korea, by obtaining the agreement of Molotov to the Chinese initiative.

In 1954, Chou En-lai went to Geneva to attend the Indo-China talks where his expertise put the People's Republic of China once again back on the map of the world. It was there that the oft quoted incident with John Foster Dulles took place. Apparently Dulles had been seated in the conference room alone, and Chou happened to walk in and offered his hand to Dulles. Dulles had folded his hands behind his back, shook his head, and left the room.

In 1955, Chou En-lai went to Bandung and with the help of Mr. Nehru, with India and Burma drew up the Pancha Seela, the five principles of peaceful co-existence. (1) Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence.

In the same year Chou En-lai tried to improve relations with a then hostile U.S. by announcing China's willingness to begin negotiations with the Americans for "relaxing tension in the Far-East".

In 1957, Chou En-lai intervened with success in the dispute which had arisen between Moscow on the one hand, and Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia on the other. In 1958, by his diplomacy he ended the brinkmanship over Taiwan by resuming talks with the USA and thus was able to fuse another trouble spot in Asia, without in fact conceding the principles underlying China's rights to the island. Of all Chou's great diplomatic initiatives, the least successful was that with India. His many varied attempts to settle the border dispute with India in 1962 failed. Our own Prime Minister, Madame Bandara-

naik called the Colombo conference, where Sri Lanka, the United Arab Republic, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia and Burma met and put forward the Colombo proposals to solve the Sino-Indian dispute. The Colombo proposals were accepted by both sides at first, but the demands made by India were unacceptable to the Chinese and final attempts at a settlement in New Delhi came to nothing.

In 1964 and 1965, Chou En-lai toured Asia and Africa, and the recognition of China by France at that time, in addition, began the process by which the isolation of China from world affairs was beginning to end, culminating in their triumphant re-entry into the United Nations. A great part of the success of this diplomatic victory must go to Chou En-lai. Chou's painstaking diplomacy and determination thus produced the entry of China into the United Nations which has greatly strengthened the hand of the Third World, to the extent that China now supports all the major moves of the Third World, to right historical wrongs by changing at least some of the rules of international intercourse.

The sixties also brought an end to the Cold War but in this period came also the division in the International Communist Movement - the Sino-Soviet dispute. During the entire difficult period Chou En-lai had maintained that the two Communist giants differed on theoretical questions, and on ways of looking at things. Attempts to patch up the quarrel failed, when the Soviets condemned Albania, for refusing to abide by the decision of the Twentieth Congress. Chou went on to criticise Khrushchev for his condemnation of Albania without consultation with any other party, left the Congress and promptly flew back to Peking. He was welcomed at the airport by Mao Tse-tung in person.

But within China itself, there were vast upsurges culminating in the great proletarian Cultural Revolution, which was personally led by Mao Tse-tung, and resulted in the displacement of Liu Shao-Chi. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution which had successfully managed to re-vitalise the state machine by injecting the viewpoint of the masses, and pre-

venting the growth of a bureaucracy, some excesses had been committed, and Chou En-lai emerged as Mao's chosen candidate to bring back the discipline that was necessary to increase production. Chou played the dominant role in bringing back a sense of direction to the Chinese nation, after what the Chinese leadership itself considered the necessary shaking of the tree every now and then, so as to prevent the growth of parasites. It was Chou who was publicly projected as the man responsible for going back to the business of Re-shaping the Chinese Earth. The way in which his task was accomplished, resulted in the major role he played in the Tenth National Congress in 1973, when he appeared on the rostrum flanking Mao Tse-tung.

From then on, Chou went on to further strengthen Chinese foreign policy by resolutely supporting the Vietnamese people, leading to their final victory; earned the gratitude of the Cambodians for giving asylum and protection to the exiled Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, until he was able to return to his country after the overthrow of the Lon Nol regime. Rarely has in history, one witnessed such a process of exile and return. It was a major diplomatic coup for the Chinese. The development of friendly relations with Japan was another diplomatic move of significance, particularly in the context of the relationship between the Soviet Union and Japan. Meanwhile, China had developed into a position of a leader of Third World nations, and new names had been introduced into the field of Chinese foreign policy. It was clear that the work done, and the policies developed by Chou En-lai would continue uninterrupted. It must have given Chou En-lai great satisfaction to watch his junior colleagues develop and expand the concept of the unity of the Third World. The nation that Chou En-lai contributed so much to build, begins to emerge, to the amazement of even its arch opponents, as a just and equitable society, with the hope of achieving perhaps a transformation in the nature of man himself. The hope that the Chinese nation will succeed, and in so doing blaze a trail for other nations of the world, would surely have been Chou En-lai's cherished hope and epitaph.