

A Patriotism of Three Loves

Love of Motherland,
Love of Socialism,
Love of Communism

by Jean Charbonnier
translated by P. Barry



(1) PATRIOTISM: An Enormous Spiritual Force in Building Socialism

This is the title of an article which appeared in the Wen Hui Bao (文匯報), March 21-22, 1981. The text was signed: "Special Critic for the People's Daily." What follows is a general outline of its contents:

The effort to accomplish the goals of modernization stirs up a new wave of fervent patriotism similar to that found in the great moments of our history: the Opium Wars, the May 4th Movement and the proclamation of independence in Tiananmen Square.

The Cultural Revolution has seriously endangered this patriotic tradition by snipping away at the whole fabric of our national history in an effort to make it conform to the limited view of a group of Legalists.¹ This form of nihilism has provoked the resurgence of a national inferiority complex,

the "slave of the foreigner" mentality previously denounced by Lu Xun (鲁迅).²

Nevertheless, the Chinese patriotic tradition is rooted in a rich culture that has had a long history of wars of liberation, from peasant uprisings to the hard fought battles of our national minorities. Throughout the past 140 years, the patriotism of the Chinese people, when confronted by threatened annihilation has risen up to effectively stamp out all forms of imperialism.

Chinese patriotism has always been a great force for progress. In modern times, it has passed through various national stages; republican democracy, the new democracy and now socialism. In uniting itself with proletarian internationalism, it has avoided a rigid conservatism and a narrow-minded nationalism. In Marxist ideology, the Chinese people have found scientific, revolutionary truth with which to defeat imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. It is the Chinese Communist Party that is the vanguard of this democratic revolution, and the heir of Hong Xiuquan and Sun Yatsen.³

Throughout history, Chinese patriotism has been born from the creative force of the workers and the intellectuals. The country has produced a whole line of outstanding thinkers (Laozi, Confucius, etc.), poets (Qu Yuan, Libai, Du Fu, etc.), scientists (Zhang Heng the astronomer, Zeng He the navigator, Li Shizhen the botanist etc.), military strategists like Sunzi, rebel chieftains who established dynasties (Liu Bang of the Han, Li Shimmin of the Tang, Shu Yuanshang of the Ming, etc.), generals and great reformers such as The Five of 1898, and, finally, the great communist leaders.

During the socialist period, those seeking to exploit have been stripped of power and the country has now been restored to the people. The doubts which manifest themselves today are due to past errors and the winding path traveled by socialism. Nevertheless, there remains but one truth: socialism alone can save the country. Reverses do not proceed from socialism itself but rather from antagonistic forces seeking to undermine it. Only socialism is capable of building a material and spiritual civilization of the highest level.

Today it is necessary for patriotism to respond to a certain number of objections that have been raised:

"Our Country is underdeveloped."

As poor as she may be, she is the mother who has given us birth and has nourished us. If there be poverty, let us struggle to eliminate it.

"Is it not a mark of a lack of self-respect to seek to learn from foreigners?"

There is no true conflict here. It is merely a matter of discerning among foreign values those which are of value to us.

"It is not that I do not love the country, it is the country that does not love me."

This was true when the State apparatus was in the hands of the exploiting classes. Now it is in the hands of the people. To love the country is to love the people, that is, one's own State. In actual fact, those who suffered most from the Cultural Revolution were the Party and its higher cadres. Yet great patriots, like Qu Yuan, despite the injustices they suffered, did not give up loving their country.⁴

When a Chinese mathematician was offered a post in America that gave promise of a brilliant future career, he refused it, saying: "They know the level of my science, but they do not know the depths of my heart."

In his youth Zhou Enlai wrote an essay entitled: Why I Study. His answer? "To put China right!"

Lu Xun once wrote: "The Chinese have lost confidence in themselves." Yet he hastened to point out that this pessimistic judgment was not true of the patriots who form the nation's backbone.

Nor is the ideal of 'serving humanity' in conflict with patriotism. Service to humanity, of necessity, begins with service to one's own socialist country.

Youth, then, cannot disassociate themselves from their

elders. They cannot let down the revolution which is led by the Communist party. Let us reject pessimism and all other negative attitudes, and let us work together to build a prosperous and powerful country.

If one might judge from the many and diverse objections raised, this text is an exhortation aimed at a public that is in need of some convincing. The "ardent wave of patriotism" does not seem to be a tidal wave. The general line of argumentation demonstrates, moreover, that the real problem is less a defect in love of country and more a lack of faith in socialism under its communist form. There can be no doubt that it is love of country which provokes the question: Can socialism save China?

This lack of faith is attributed by the writer to the misdeeds of the Cultural Revolution, to the tortuous path followed by the regime, and to antagonistic forces which seek to sabotage socialism.

Easing somewhat the burden of negative argument, the writer gives a more positive demonstration of his thought. He first recalls the great tradition of love of country exemplified in the lives of the great heroes, reformers and revolutionaries of history. He seeks to prove that this tradition finds its proper place of fulfillment in the socialist society. His argument is at once pragmatic -- the victory of the forces of independence, and at the same time, dogmatic -- the scientific truth of the proletarian revolution. His final purpose is two-fold: to place patriotic sentiment at the service of modernization, and to place patriotic sentiment at the service of the socialist faith. By envisaging a socialism that can exist only under its communist form, the writer equates the two because, in his view, the country's modernization can be achieved only under the leadership of the Communist Party.

The author's appeals reflect the preoccupation of the government which, during the past few years, has seen patriotism as playing a major part in its effort to develop a civilization that is at the same time both material and spiritual. In line with this, the "Three loves" have been added to the list of slogans governing moral education: love of the motherland, love of socialism, love of communism. At times, in an effort to make them more explicit, the three are expanded to five: love of motherland, love of the people, love of work, love of science and love of socialism. Irrespective of how they are enumerated, the slogans bring together into an indissoluble union love of country and love of socialism.

It is not our intention here to question the legitimacy of such an association, even less to question its legality. Much can be said concerning the principles upon which it is founded. In the People's Republic the linking of patriotism and socialism is legitimate and legal because government ideology makes the law. On the other hand, in Taiwan it would not be legitimate because the patriotism of the Nationalist Party is primarily nationalistic and anti-communist, even though it remains faithful to the socialism of Sun Yatsen. This is why Chiang Kai-shek is not listed among the patriots in the communist article cited above, despite the fact that he struggled to achieve national unity for over 30 years.

Laying aside such questions of legitimacy and legality, it does seem to serve some useful purpose to explore how patriotism can be closely linked to a political ideology and under what conditions such an alliance is profitable. A pragmatic approach to these problems might receive proper inspiration from the principle ascribed to Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping: To seek truth from facts.

(2) THE MEANING OF PATRIOTISM

It is significant that the general term "love of country" must be further divided into three or five specific loves. Actually, love of country is, primarily, "love of the motherland", love of one's place of birth. This love of the Chinese for their native land has been a favorite theme of poems and other literary works of art. In recent times, the writer Lu Xun was so fond of his native home, Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province, that he sprinkled his novels with etchings to bring alive its landscape, its customs and the diversity of its people. Today overseas Chinese in large numbers flock to China to visit the land of their birth. And while they may find the living standards not quite up to what they have become accustomed to abroad, they generally see only the beauties of the home country. This is a patriotism deeply rooted in cultural identity. It is a patriotism of province of origin and mother tongue. It is also a pride of race, a pride in being Chinese and a part of an ancient and glorious civilization. While this patriotism is certainly of the land, it is of a cultivated land, a feeling of cultural belonging that goes beyond provincial, and even national, boundaries. Such a feeling of belonging to the Chinese world may be rooted in the particularity of the native country, but it grows and spreads itself until it blossoms into the universality of "a great family under heaven" (Tian xia yi jia: 天下一家).



The compound character ai guo, "to love the country" or "love of country", is used to translate the term "patriotism" and it expresses the idea of national belonging very well. The Chinese character 國 (country) is composed of a mouth (口) and a lance (戈) surrounded by a border (阝)--a population to be fed and to be armed to defend its borders, a population within the confines of a crenellated Great Wall. The idea of national defence was, up to the end of the 19th century, largely a defence of the

Han civilization from the invading forces of barbarians from the border areas and from the Far West. It was only from the armed struggle against superior forces of the Western powers that was born the idea of nation, that is, a political unity composed of citizens who take charge of their own destiny. From the very beginning, then, this idea of nation had close links with modernization, which is the indispensable condition for resisting the aggressor. This patriotism is not the patriotism of cultural identity that comes with birth, but rather, a patriotism of conscious identification with the political destiny of the people. And such an awareness first came to life among intellectuals, reformers and revolutionaries.

The love of the nation in this modern sense is perhaps better rendered by the expression "love of the people" (ai ren min: 愛人民), if one understands "the people" in the same way that Sun Yatsen defines it in his Three Principles of the People (San Min Zhuyi: 三民主義): minzu (民族), national independence, minquan (民權) democracy, and minsheng (民生) material well-being. Reformers at the close of the 19th century wished to build a rich and powerful China based on the participation of the people. In the Revolution of 1911, it was this Chinese nationalism that asserted itself against the oppressive system of the Manchus and the invasion of foreign colonial powers.

The evolution of the concept of patriotism did not stop there. A third form now exists which links it to the ideologies of social and economic development. Ever since the 1920's, Chinese nationalism has a strong ideological flavour.

Many "isms" fermented in the spirit of the May 4th Movement, but

the key words of the hour were "Science" and "Democracy". Whereas certain intellectuals like Hu Shi sought scientific and pragmatic solutions to China's problems, there were others who became fascinated by the "isms" of ideologists. Systematic ideologies offered global solutions in terms of economic, social and political transformation. The initiative for taking a radical ideological option came from the communist revolutionaries. A Li Dazhao or a Mao Zedong thought that they had found in Marxism the scientific law of history which would free the Chinese from their fatalistic beliefs. In the historical necessity of the proletarian revolution, they saw the assurance of a bright future for the Chinese people, who up to that time had suffered much humiliation. China, one among those nations oppressed by the imperialism of capitalistic countries, would rise up and overthrow their oppressors, inevitably bringing about a new, independent and strong China.



Chairman Mao's ideal was to free China from feudalistic structures.

Faced with this new ideological force from the Communists, the revolutionary Party of Chiang Kai-shek was obliged to respond in kind by setting forth its own basic principles. These served to reinforce Chinese nationalism by joining it to the great Confucian tradition. The New Life Movement, launched in Nanchang in 1943, criticized ideological communism as being a foreign import. It emphasized a nationalism that was purely Chinese and in which all the traditional virtues reside. If these opposing positions have remained virtually unchanged up to the present day, the actual realities have continued to evolve in both the People's Republic and Taiwan. Despite official devotion to the "5,000 years of Chinese Culture", the population of Taiwan is becoming more and more westernized. And in spite of the "Red Flag of International Communism", the China mainland is rediscovering more and more the traditional values of the past. On both sides of the Taiwan Straits, patriotism is de rigueur. (It is the same "sacred love of the motherland" for which European nations have somewhat lost their enthusiasm.) On one side it is nationalistic and communist, on the other it is nationalistic and anti-communist. But on both sides, ideology is the primary instrument for promoting China's greatness. And it is solely by the decision of the party in power that ideology and patriotism are identified.

(3) AN OPEN VERSUS A CLOSED PATRIOTISM

The Bergsonian distinction between an open and closed moral system when applied to the concept of patriotism may serve a useful purpose here. Communist ethical manuals, along with the Wenhui Bao article, all agree in acknowledging that patriotism must have links with internationalism to avoid becoming chauvinistic or auto-centric. It is a question here of a Marxist ideological imperative. The proletarian revolution is global as well as national. Nationalism, which according to Lenin is destined to disappear, can be tolerated only as a provisional strategy in underdeveloped countries suffering from oppression. This is, however, a theory rarely confirmed in actual practice. Further, an openness to the international world of workers and to Third World countries also requires going beyond narrow national interests.



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This demand of Marxist ideology is only the actualization of an internal conflict found in all forms of patriotism. Patriotism for one's native land can easily become narrow and constrictive, preoccupied as it is with the interests of family and clan. The Chinese central government has always had to struggle against regional particularisms destructive to national

unity. Family, school, and village relationships, in short, the whole network of guanxi (關係) weigh heavily against reform programs and also can provide a convenient blanket for covering over serious social necessities and economic misdemeanors. In the face of such secular atavism, slogans about serving the people and sacrificing for the collective carry little weight. Only a mystique of disinterested love for others can help to shatter the barriers of egoism. A mental block requires a spiritual remedy. Theoretical considerations about the collective interest are powerless in such concrete situations.

The sense of national belonging and national independence are also

susceptible to the same kind of chauvinistic deviations, which Lu Xun has exposed in his writings as efforts in futility. Economic and political failures can be compensated for by artificial "moral victories". The burden of national misery can then be shifted onto the shoulders of the foreigner while the country continues to glory in her rich moral tradition and her "national essence" (guo cui:國粹). Thus, the wart on Ah Q's head becomes completely red. He is proud to have been beaten up by good-for-nothings. The assertion of Chinese values in the structure of the modern world calls, rather, for a great opening to international exchanges. A nation's light can shine forth in the world today only to the extent that there is mutual respect and mutual appreciation for the positive contributions of all cultures. To actively promote economic and technical openness while at the same time remaining selectively closed to outside cultural influences is to court an illusion. It ignores the direct link that unites scientific development with culture. National values that are strong and positive need fear nothing from the strong winds of international exchange. A policy of cultural protectionism is not a sign of a healthy patriotism.

The kind of patriotism associated with communist ideology finds in proletarian internationalism a safeguard against convoluted auto-centricity. However, it still runs the danger of cultural isolation if it tries to assimilate its own cultural values into the proletarian revolution in too narrow and restrictive a manner. The result of such an effort is the blind condemnation of the cultural values of non-communist civilizations under the pretext that they have been completely corrupted by "bourgeois liberalism". The recent campaign in China against "spiritual pollution" seems once again to focus full attention on the indiscriminate condemnation of foreign values while turning a blind eye to the interior failings of the Chinese system, thereby revealing weaknesses in a structure formed from lumping together ideology and patriotism.

(4) PATRIOTISM AND RELIGION

It is surprising that the Wenhui Bao article cited above makes no mention of Chinese religious traditions, since they have played, as in the West, an important patriotic role, either by sanctioning the existing political power, or by fostering "heretical" opposition to it, as in the peasant uprisings. One need only recall here the important place of ancient religious rites in establishing and maintaining the imperial cult, or the ritual honour paid to Heaven and to ancestors to insure prosperity and long-life to the reigning dynasty. In their critical opposi-

tion to those in power, the egalitarian sects inspired by the Taiping Jing and the Daoist tradition have in the past often been at the centre of popular revolution, as in more recent times has the Taiping Uprising with its mixture of traditional and Christian beliefs. Also, China abounds in religious shrines which are now shown with pride to foreign and local tourists alike as part of the rich national patrimony: the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, the Buddhist sanctuaries of Longmen, Dunhuang and Yungang, the Lamaist temples of Beijing and Chende, the Mosque of Xian and many other places sacred to the national minorities.

Christian holy places do not offer the same artistic value, especially in the eyes of Westerners, who tend to see in them only gothic and byzantine forgeries of recent vintage. However, they, too, belong to Chinese history and are now being restored under the care of the Catholic "Patriotic" Association or by the Three-self "Patriotic" Movement.

The word "patriotism" does raise a problem more specifically for Christianity in China. In the history of the Church in China, especially that dating from the colonial period, being "patriotic" has been qualified for Chinese Christians to mean principally the obligation of Chinese Christians to struggle against foreign imperialism. And although Christians have given ample proof of their patriotism throughout the war against Japanese aggression, with the occasional support of missionaries such as Father Lebbe, they have, in general, been accused of compromising with the foreigner. In more recent times, the word "patriotic" has been imposed specifically on the Catholic Church in order to force it to break ties with the Vatican - the Vatican being considered a champion of imperialism because it continues to have ties with the "reactionary" government of Taipei.

Despite the suspect status of their citizenship, Chinese Christians have continued to labour in the service of their country, often without remuneration and under the most arduous conditions of the work camps. It may well be one of the "errors" along the "winding path" of socialism that patriotism, which should be assumed as a most beautiful ideal, has been imposed as a burden on one group of Chinese citizens. To accord recognition while cutting them off from the universal dimension of their faith is, in effect, to reject them, placing them in a position of opposition, and formenting people's opposition is the last thing a People's Republic should want to do. With a profound love for their country, Christians continue to show themselves to be patriotic whether they belong to the Patriotic Association or not. Those that put distance be-

tween themselves and the Patriotic Association bear witness to the universality of the Catholic Church. How can they be expected to cut themselves off from their great Christian family that is spread throughout the entire world?

The patriotism of Christians represents in fact a reality that is complementary to proletarian universalism. Christians know how to love their country while still remaining open to the positive human values found in the cultures of other peoples. Their faith helps them to discern what is corrupt in "bourgeois liberalism", errors roundly condemned in the public statements of the popes. They seek to preserve, on the other hand, that which is essential to the Christian tradition: moral education, a balanced and stable family life, a sense of the dignity of workers, genuine concern for others and service for the common good. The teachings of bishops and popes on these subjects represent a valuable spiritual gift which they sincerely desire to put at the service of China. And in so doing, they offer an excellent antidote to harmful foreign influences. To deprive the country of this rich and unique gift of Christian patriotism, is to give evidence of one's own obscurantism and is, in itself, a sign of a lack of a true patriotic spirit.

The pragmatic interpretation of Marxist thought currently prevailing in other areas ought to be able to find a useful application in dealing with the religious question as well. The Christians of China can make their fullest contribution to service of their country on the day that they are allowed to become fully patriotic -- not only as Chinese citizens but also as Chinese Christians.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) An allusion to a special interpretation of Chinese history that prevailed during the years 1973 - 1975, where history was seen as struggle between a current progressive legalist and a current Confucian reactionary. The attacks on Confucius were in fact attacks against the "mandarin" Zhou Enlai.

(2) Lu Xun (1881-1936). This great modern Chinese writer always denounced pretence and servility. He immortalized the "fake foreign devil" in the True History of Ah Q.

(3) Hong Xiuquan: hero of the Taiping Uprising which was a revolt against the corrupt administration of the Manchus in the middle of the 19th century.

(4) Qu Yuan: poet and political figure of the country of the Chu who lived during the 3rd century B.C. Having fallen into disgrace, he composed a famous elegy, "Li Sao," and then drowned himself in a river.

(5) The May 4th Movement of 1919 was launched by university students in Beijing the day after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which betrayed Chinese interests to Japan. Besides being a political protest, it was a liberation movement, both individual and collective. Marxists regard it as an echo of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, pointing to a great wave of socialism and humanism breaking over Asia.