

# Book Reviews

## Hindsight and Prospects

**The China Cloud.** America's Tragic Blunder and China's Rise to Nuclear Power. WILLIAM L. RYAN and SAM SUMMERLIN. Little, Brown, Boston, 1968. xiv + 309 pp. \$7.95.

Two veteran Associated Press newsmen, William L. Ryan and Sam Summerlin, point up what it cost the United States to permit the narrow-minded "anti-Communist" frenzy of the early 1950's to determine the treatment of various outstanding Chinese scientists then resident in the United States. In essence, they condemn the political sin of ideological rigidity. Given the patent current need for reappraisal of our China policy, their work has a special timeliness.

Ryan and Summerlin presented a preview of their story in an article in *Look* of 25 July 1967; now we have the matter in detail. The authors relate how, during World War II, Tsien Hsue-shen (Ch'ien Hsueh-sen to the purists) and some of his colleagues in the American scientific community experimented, far ahead of their time, with rocketry and jet propulsion. Tsien in particular demonstrated real genius in that field and received various official awards and citations for his services to the United States.

But the war's end was followed by a Communist victory in China, and American bureaucracy under the whip-lash of Senator Joe McCarthy and the sting of the taunting demagogic question "Who lost China?" turned to a witch-hunt for Communists among State Department personnel, scholars, and scientists. Tsien and various of his scientific colleagues, American and Chinese, were shadowed, detained, and interrogated.

In 1955, after five years of harassment, Tsien was deported from the United States to China. Many other Chinese scholars departed the United States for the same destination, some doubtless for reasons which would have prevailed in any event, others as certainly because of American official at-

titudes. In an appendix, the authors list 80 scientists, including mathematicians, aerodynamics experts, and nuclear physicists, who thus returned "home"—to make up, in large proportion, the scientific cadre for a Chinese nuclear-weapons program.

This was of course not the end of the story, but in a sense the beginning. In 1964, much earlier than expected, China exploded its first atomic device. It has now exploded eight, including (in 1967) its first H-bomb. Its first guided-missile test was performed in October 1966. China is on the way to becoming a nuclear power. In their *Look* article the authors in conclusion put the question: "When, years ahead of expert forecasts, a Chinese missile with a nuclear warhead landed on target in the desert wastes of Sinkiang, Americans could look back and wonder: what was the security percentage in driving into enemy arms a man who could fashion such instruments of destruction?" In the light of the evidence Ryan and Summerlin have marshaled, the question must be viewed as purely rhetorical. The whole logic of their book leads inescapably to the conclusion that the U.S. government, by alienating through blundering ineptitude certain important Chinese scientists in the United States, rendered substantial service to Communist China's aim of becoming a nuclear power.

The book has a major relevance to present developments. Ryan and Summerlin endeavor to place Tsien and his fellow scientists within the context of Mao Tse-tung's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Here, the text is knit less closely around the central theme. The reader gets a picture not so much of scientists at work in China's nuclear establishment as of the political convulsion in process, with informed speculation on the probable effects for China's nuclear-arms program. The interest lies in the steady progression recorded in the estimates: even allowing for the dislocating effects of Mao's political mania, the United States will probably soon confront a hostile, nuclear-armed

China in the West Pacific. A current estimate (*New York Times*, 3 Feb. 1969) suggests that China may test-fire a 6000-mile-range rocket in 1969 and that at the present rate of progress it should be able to deploy 15 to 20 ICBM's by about 1975. That, of course, is (at least in part) what the American ABM project is about.

The political application of all this is clear. American officialdom has its strategic thinking locked in an anti-Chinese position. The Chinese nation, of which the Tsien's are a part, therefore cannot expect to find sympathetic official attitudes on this side of the Pacific; and one may venture the assumption that they do not in fact expect that American understanding of their problems, their needs, or even their thinking will be forthcoming. The militarization of China's national strategy already in course will consequently probably be continued. The problems facing the Chinese on the way to becoming a major military power are immense. But, as Tsien Hsue-shen wrote on a flower sketch he sent to a friend in the United States, "This is a flower that blooms in adversity" (p. 270). Chinese recollection of past "wrongs," some fancied but some real, and not-ungrounded fears for the future, will be a goad to accomplishment even in adversity. American suspicion and animosities will be reflected in Chinese reactions, with corresponding influence on the scale of probabilities that there will be a thermonuclear World War III. The "tragic blunder" of the 1950's cannot be undone. But the present book evokes in the reader's mind a final crucial question: can the U.S. government find the understanding and wisdom to avoid a Sino-American war and the disaster this would bring upon all humanity?

O. EDMUND CLUBB

*East Asian Institute, Columbia University, New York City*

## Not a Cause for Jollity

**Overweight.** Causes, Cost, and Control. JEAN MAYER. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968. x + 214 pp., illus. \$5.95.

Considering all the unhappy events that can mar human existence, it is perhaps arbitrary to label some as diseases and to regard other events as the result of a bad choice or immoral action on the part of the afflicted individual. In Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, disease is a criminal offense and what we call crime