

Chaos and hunger in China will deluge region with refugees

by Mary McCourt Burdman

People's Republic of China supreme leader Deng Xiaoping threatened to deploy China's ultimate weapon, in an astounding statement to foreign visitors to Beijing on June 15. But Deng's threat—that if civil war broke out in China, it would create such chaos that *tens of millions* of Chinese refugees would flood the nations of Asia—was made out of real desperation. Years of looting by the communist regime have wrecked China's agriculture, the basis of the economy, where 800 million of her 1.1 billion people work. Water and soil conservation projects, vital to agriculture, collapsed. Already there are at least 100 million unemployed people, most of them peasants, wandering north to south in a great *manu liu*, or “blind wave,” seeking work, or at least food. Industry is going under, due to the gross deficiency of energy and transport, and the vast growth of debt, adding to the army of internal refugees.

Southeast Asia has already been flooded with refugees. It is estimated that 2 million Vietnamese have fled their impoverished country since the fall of Saigon, although only about 1.6 million ever reached the ports of first asylum in Southeast Asia. The rest died of hunger, exposure, or were murdered by pirates. Thailand alone houses 500,000 refugees, some from Vietnam, but most from the two decades of war and genocide in Cambodia. With the refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong filled to overflowing, impoverished Vietnamese and Cambodians are now trying to reach Indonesia and even Australia, where 200 Cambodians have arrived since November. Even Western Europe is now seeing its own “boat people”: A number of Vietnamese “guest workers” in Eastern European countries, whose contracts were canceled with the overthrow of the communist regimes, fled through East Berlin to the West, to avoid being sent back to Vietnam.

The situation in Southeast Asia is a tragic reenactment of events of 50 years ago, when European Jews fleeing the Nazi regime sailed all over the world trying to find a refuge and were turned away by the United States, Canada, and other nations. Right now, there are two ships, one Taiwanese and one Honduran, whose captains rescued “boat people” foundering at sea. The ships are sailing the South China Sea looking unsuccessfully for a port which will take the refugees. U.N. officials now fear that if the situation continues

unresolved, ships will no longer pick up refugees at sea.

So far, the Chinese authorities have sealed their borders, keeping the “blind wave” inside. Indeed, the number of Vietnamese refugees reaching Hong Kong, most of whom are ethnic Chinese from desperately poor northern Vietnam, has fallen off drastically this year, because the Chinese authorities have sealed off their escape route. Last year, many thousands crossed the Vietnamese-Chinese border and took buses or walked to the coast, where they set sail in ramshackle boats for Hong Kong. The Chinese have intervened to block the exodus, partially due to an agreement with the British colonial authorities in Hong Kong, but also undoubtedly aware that millions of Chinese could soon start pouring out of any open escape route. Last August, more than 600 southern Chinese, claiming to be Vietnamese, landed in Japan, only to be repatriated by the Japanese government.

In the midst of this crisis, it is a bitter irony that Deng's pleas and threats will net him nothing from the Anglo-American oligarchy with which he is trying to deal. The Chinese are now under even greater pressure to destroy their economy. The oligarchy's pagan “earth worshippers” are pressing China and other impoverished nations to further cut back development to “protect” the environment. The specter being raised by the environmentalists—of millions of “environmental refugees” fleeing barren land—is the environmentalists' own creation, and the creation of such faithful malthusians as the Chinese communists.

“Stabilizing” China, as George Bush wants to do, will only add to the agony. The only solution to the crisis, a massive development program, is something the current Beijing regime, by its very nature, is utterly incapable of realizing. What is happening now in China is full confirmation of the urgency of the “Food for Peace” movement, which U.S. economist Lyndon LaRouche and his associates called for in autumn 1988. One year ago, in Bangkok, *EIR* co-sponsored a Food for Peace conference on the time bomb of hungry China.

‘Chaos will break out’

Civil war in China could threaten the stability of the entire world, Deng Xiaoping told a group of foreign visitors, the Hong Kong publication *Wen Wei Bao* reported June 16. Sta-

bility "is of overwhelming importance for China," Deng said; and without a stable China, the whole world will not be stable. If civil war breaks out in China, "Who could stop it?" Deng asked. If China is in chaos, there will be an exodus of millions of refugees, which will mean chaos for the other nations of Southeast Asia. Suppose "10 million Chinese go to Thailand, 100 million to Indonesia, 500,000 to Hong Kong," Deng said. "Chaos will break out." The refugees would resort to armed rebellion in Hong Kong if they had to; therefore, Hong Kong should be the first to support stability in China, and "responsible politicians should understand" this, Deng said. "Stability, order, and productivity" are the three key issues for China now, he added.

Japanese leaders also fear the crisis in China, and a number are calling for a renewal of aid for China.

"If Beijing loses the ability to rule its 1.1 billion people, that will cause large-scale migration of poverty-stricken Chinese overseas," a senior Diet member of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party said recently, the *Japan Economic Journal* reported June 9. "We cannot rule out the possibility that millions of people may set sail for neighboring countries, in particular, rich Japan. To prevent this from happening, we have no option but to resume helping the Chinese government promote economic reform. I fear the prolonged economic sanctions against China will destabilize its political and economic situation."

A Foreign Ministry official told the *Journal*: "There are tens of millions of Chinese migrating from rural to urban areas, looking for better-paying jobs. The Chinese government has been making efforts to prevent them from leaving the country. And yet, hundreds of Chinese impersonating boat people from Vietnam have arrived in Kyushu in the past year. The U.S. Congress should understand that the most immediate task for Beijing is not introducing democracy, but feeding its people."

Chen Yizhi, an adviser to former Communist Party head Zhao Ziyang, who fled China after the June 4 massacre last year, said in East Berlin in April that the great task facing China now is solving the disasters created by the communists. In 1950, mainland China's level of development was higher than that of Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Korea. Now, it has fallen far below. China is the biggest concentration of human poverty in the world.

The *Pai Shing Semi-Monthly* of Hong Kong estimated in its Feb. 1 issue that at least 26% of China's population—over 250 million people—live below the official poverty line, which is less than \$70 per year.

China is becoming a desert

Feeding its 1.1 billion people is indeed a great problem for China, but not because there are too many of them. Forty years of communist rule wrecked agriculture, and created an environmental disaster which must rival the disasters of Romania and the Soviet Union's Central Asian republics.

The official National Environmental Protection Agency reported June 2 that despite "tight environmental management and pollution control . . . the environment is still worsening, although the speed has slowed. Every year 1.3 million hectares of grassland are lost. The area of farmland polluted by industries totals over 6.7 million hectares," causing the loss of 10 million metric tons of grain output.

Vice Minister of Agriculture Liu Jiang said June 2 that China has been practicing "ecological farming," but despite progress in recent years, "China's agricultural ecological condition has not fundamentally improved." The area affected by soil erosion has reached 1.6 million square kilometers, *one-sixth* of China's total territory. Some 50 million hectares of grassland are endangered by serious desertification and deterioration, Liu said.

Northern China has always had a severe water problem, and China's per capita water consumption is one of the lowest in the world. Rainfall has been scarce over the past 20 years—undoubtedly due to the process of desertification, as in the Sahel region of Africa. Chinese government agencies estimate that by the year 2000, China will be short 70 billion cubic meters of water, while rivers, lakes, and reservoirs will be severely polluted. Japanese scientists reported at a United Nations conference on the environment in Nairobi, Kenya last year, that they fear that half of China will be a desert by the year 2050. Per capita grain production has shrunk steadily since 1974, in part due to soil erosion. A region approximately the size of the state of Connecticut is destroyed every year due to soil erosion.

The Beijing regime is right now afraid for its own survival. He Kang, the minister of agriculture, said May 14, "The grim situation in agriculture has aroused serious concern in the whole party and among the people throughout the country." A release by the official news agency Xinhua on Jan. 16 shows why: "The proportionate relationship between the growth of industry and agriculture has suffered grave damage, with agriculture in its current condition entirely unable to sustain any large-scale increase in sectorial production. . . . Over the past few years, agricultural production has been slow, with grain output falling for four years in a row. Figuring in the increase in population [about 15 million a year], per capita grain production has fallen to 365 kilograms, and cotton production has also fallen dramatically. . . . With the increase in industrial production, the nation's safety blanket is being spread that much further and wider.

"Among other problems is the pervasive state of disrepair of the regional irrigation and water conservation systems, many of which have become unusable and have actually been put to other uses. The peasant, the collective, and the nation has reduced its investment in the land. One can say, China's agriculture has already entered the precarious condition of being balanced on a weak foundation with no back-up strength to call on in a crisis."