

Opinion

Chen's rural economics helped transform China

by Xue Muqiao

(Editor's note: 200 scholars recently gathered in Beijing to congratulate Chinese economist Chen Hansheng on the sixtieth anniversary of his starting academic research.)

Today a contributor's article explains why Chen enjoys high prestige in academic circles. The writer is also a noted economist.)

Dr Chen Hansheng, born in 1897, ranks high among China's early Marxist rural economists. He pioneered the use of Marxism in rural-economics investigation and research. And his influence is still recognized.

In 1915, he went to the United States to study. In 1924, he received his doctorate in Germany.

The same year he returned home to become a professor at Beijing University, where he accepted Marxist ideology and was admitted into the Communist International.

At the end of 1925, Chen assumed the leadership of the Research Institute of Social Sciences of the Academia Sinica (Chinese Academy). He led a group of progressive young people in research on the rural economy.

After an investigation in the northeast, they wrote several reports on peasants, landlords and refugees.

They went on to study Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, Baoding, Hebei Province and Fanyu, Guangdong Province.

They gathered data on land distribution, and feudal exploitation. This laid the groundwork for future study.

In 1932 and 1933, in the name of a government organization, they conducted large-scale investigations into the economies of Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Henan and Zhejiang provinces.

Also in 1933, Chen studied tobacco-producing areas in Henan, Shandong and Anhui provinces, exposing the imperialist exploitation of Chinese peasants.

Chen conducted these studies not just for academic purposes. His investigations were closely coordinated with the Chinese revolutionary movement.

In 1927, the revolution, begun in



Dr Chen Hansheng

1924, was quelled by the Kuomintang. A 10-year civil war began.

In 1928, the Chinese Communist Party held its Sixth National Congress, which affirmed that China was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and that the Chinese revolution at that stage was bourgeois-democratic in nature.

Land problem

Comprador scholars tried to portray imperialist economic aggression. They claimed that such aggression was boosting China's capitalist economy. Participants in the rural reformist movement denied feudal exploitation in China. They regarded the agrarian revolution, led by the Chinese Communist Party to solve the land problem, as merely peasant riots.

Trotskyists in China claimed that since the bourgeoisie had taken over the political power after the 1924 revolution, China had become a capitalist society. So, they said, the bourgeois-democratic revolution should be liquidated.

All these ideological trends were against the programme of the Communist Party for democratic revolution. The Party refuted these ideas in its underground publications. Nevertheless, as these publications had a very limited circulation and at that time not many factual data were available, the results were not satisfactory.

Under these circumstances, it was of great political significance

that Chen Hansheng produced proof that Chinese society was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in nature and that solving the land problem was the key to saving the countryside from bankruptcy.

Early in the 1930s, the Kuomintang government frequently sent troops to encircle the revolutionary base areas, in an attempt to suppress the Communist Party's revolutionary political power. In 1934, the Red Army broke through the encirclement and started the Long March to the north.

During these hard days, Chen Hansheng wrote, in English, an article entitled *The Land Problem in Modern China*. He used all available data to argue against the Kuomintang's justification of the blockade and suppression of the Agrarian Revolution.

Chen's article was then printed and distributed by the Institute of Pacific Relations. At a symposium in Canada Chen described the situation in China's rural areas to scholars from many nations. It established his reputation as an authority on China's rural economy.

Many bourgeois scholars at that time also conducted investigations in the rural areas, but they usually neglected to study production relations. They classified peasants in a superficial way: land-holding peasants, partial land-owners and tenant peasants.

In contrast, Lenin's way of classifying peasants was applied in rural investigation led by Chen Hansheng. Class exploitation was used as a yardstick to classify rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and farm hands. The correct methods plus examples enabled Chen's investigations to vividly illustrate the complicated nature of China's rural economy.

In 1933, Chen was forced to resign his job at the Research Institute of Social Sciences. The next year, in Shanghai, he established a Chinese Society for Studying Rural Economy.

In October, the society's publication *Rural China* was launched. This journal exerted wide influence on those engaged in rural work.

In 1939, Chen, then in the United States, wrote and published his book, *Industrial Capital and Chinese Peasants*. The book was

reprinted in the United States in 1980.

Chen's rural-economics investigation in Guangdong Province also had a great impact in the United States. His work convinced many progressive readers that it was unwise for the US Government to continue to support China's feudalistic forces.

Through Chen's hard work, many influential Chinese books, especially those on land questions, and articles in the journal *Rural China* were published abroad. In this way, American readers came to know the situation in China through the introduction of Chinese progressive scholars.

In 1950, shortly after the Liberation of China's mainland, Chen returned to Beijing to become an adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and vice-president of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.

It's good to hear the bad news

It seems to me



In recent years we have read about quite a few things that are unpleasant, such as officials' corruption and increase in divorce. We were seldom told by news media about such things before and during the "cultural revolution."

But that is not because there was little bureaucratic failure or unhappy marriage in those years. It was the result of an approach to journalism that tried to categorize every piece of news as good or bad. Such a task is highly unrealistic and cannot benefit society as journalism should.

Once an unpleasant event occurs, nothing can be done to prevent it from having occurred. It is of no use, is irresponsible to society, even ridiculous, not to let it be known. Maybe there are similar events about to take place, which could be prevented if the news was passed on. People could be warned of the problem before it was too late. Unpleasant news reports may thus aid progress.

In the process of China's modernization, many problems will arise, mostly from our nation's lack of experience and the slow rationalization of the legal system. Mistakes over imports and bad organization of exports should not be brushed under the carpet. It is important for anyone who knows China's cur-

rent problems to tell his compatriots that, in order to achieve our nation's goal, we should not only work hard, as did our ancestors, but also learn hard, save hard, invest hard.

Economic development is not a process of "sailing" or "leaping" forward. When hotel waiters have yet to understand how to prepare ice cubes for Westerners, it is simply ludicrous, for instance, to try and open thousands of luxurious hotels around China. As the 14 coastal cities expand their potential for foreign investment, it would be sensible to concentrate first on those cities with advantages over the others. Shanghai and Dalian seem to be the places where foreign investors are most keen to invest.

Appearing to encourage great leaps forward would cause a "tangle of trouble," and might lead China into the well-known Third World dilemma, that is, the combined effect of heavy foreign debt and weak exports.

In fact, in the field of economics, China is trying hard to improve.

They have solved and are solving problems specialists who have visited China have described. The picture is a basically optimistic one, although the specialists have also made criticisms, which China truly needs.

I tend to agree with some Western management studies, which show that cultural differences may cause misunderstanding. For example, the word "experiment" seems to suggest something that can be easily given up and discarded — though that's not the definition in English dictionaries. In Chinese, it more often means something, worthy of persistent, though difficult, effort.

Chinese statesmen who call the special economic zones "just an experiment" do so because of their cultural background. This is a far remove from the sensational "news" Chinese people used to hear some years ago, when "miracles" were said to have resulted from certain political campaigns. That sort of language would really give cause for concern.

(Zhang Bian)

Our candid camera



A bumper harvest brings a smile.

photo by Zhang Yinzeng

Letters to the Editor

Tighten up rules of road

Editor:

I read an article about traffic accidents in China Daily. I want to write my thoughts and feelings about this.

In recent years, traffic accidents have increased. There are many reasons: The population and the number of vehicles continue to grow, yet most roads are still narrow. More and more farmers come into the city with their trucks, but they usually are not good drivers. Some, especially soldiers, drive too fast.

The result is chaotic. Some people get killed and public property suffers heavy losses. But I don't think it very helpful for people to make a speech about traffic rules standing beside the roads.

Violators of traffic laws have not gotten heavy enough punishments in the past. For instance, a traffic accident caused by the driver's wilful violation of regulations killed three persons. But he was only sentenced to two years' imprisonment. That is obviously unreasonable.

For the sake of the people's safety, road conditions must be improved. Otherwise, in a few more years, the traffic problems of our capital will become unthinkable.

Beijing

Lu Lihua

Forbidden habits

Editor:

When I arrived in Beijing three weeks ago, the first thing I did was to go to the Forbidden City. I had long wanted to visit one of the world's most dazzling examples of art and architecture, steeped in thousands of years of culture.

I must, however, express my shock and dismay at the attitude of many of the Chinese visitors. On both of my visits, men and women spat into the palace garden lotus ponds, trying to frighten the goldfish.

Should these revolting habits really be permitted to continue, and turn away visitors respectful of the Forbidden City's inestimable value?

Beijing

Michele Cone

African leaders demand more action on Namibia

UNITED NATIONS (Xinhua) — African countries called on the international community to exert greater pressure on South Africa to bring about Namibia's independence in the general debate of the 40th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mozambican President Samora Moises Machel said Namibia was the "last colony" in Southern Africa. He denounced South Africa for frustrating international efforts to bring about Namibian independence by linking it with the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, and for repeatedly threatening the security of its neighbours.

"It is our duty to give firm support to the struggle of the Namibian people under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), their sole and legitimate representative. We

must provide SWAPO with all necessary means to emerge victorious in its struggle for a free, independent and United Namibia," he said.

W M Mangwende, Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe, stressed that the now over-delayed independence of the illegally occupied territory of Namibia represented "one of the most glaring failures of the United Nations" since its inception. While condemning South Africa for its refusal to implement Security Council resolution 435 of 1978, he said the government of the United States bore "a special responsibility in delaying Namibia's independence."

Mangwende pointed out that the presence of Cuban troops in Angola had nothing to do with independence for the struggling masses of Namibia.

Ismael Gaspar Martins, Angolan Minister of Foreign Trade, said the

South African regime was the main cause of tension and destabilization in southern Africa. He called for an early end to the illegal occupation of Namibia by South African troops.

Tanzanian President Julius K Nyerere called for "mandatory economic sanctions" against South Africa, because it had defied the United Nations over Namibia.

Somalian Foreign Minister Abdurahman Jama Barre noted that the only peaceful means of preventing the tragedy of a protracted and bloody racial conflict was to isolate South Africa, particularly through the imposition of mandatory economic sanctions by the Security Council. Stronger action was needed to implement Security Council resolution 435, which, he added, remained the only legal basis for Namibia's independence.

Abdul Karim Koroma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone, said: "South Africa's latest arrogant action on Namibia is the establishment of an 'interim' government which totally precludes the participation of SWAPO, regarded by the international community as the sole, legitimate representative of the Namibian people."

In the face of South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia, he added, it remained the responsibility of the United Nations to "impose forthwith comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the illegal colonial regime."

Obed Asamoah, secretary for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, said Namibia and its people were still held under the oppressive and illegal colonial yoke of racist South Africa and thus the process of decolonization was still not complete.

He condemned South Africa for intending to "hold Namibia firmly under its colonial grip by installing the so-called interim government."

"That act confirms South Africa's determination to set up a puppet regime in Namibia," he added.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Abdelatif Filali called for a redoubling of efforts for the total emancipation of the Namibian people.

Textile bill barely alive

special to China Daily by Kathleen Connors

NEW YORK — The US Senate's textile import quota bill barely survived a Senate vote here. After a heated debate, the vote on the bill was postponed for at least another week. Though a slight majority voted to keep the bill alive, it is generally considered a symbolic gesture of Congress concern over the US trade situation. Most of the Senators who supported the bill "really didn't like the legislation" and "understood its effect on the trading system," said Senator John Danforth. They supported the bill because of their "total exasperation with the trade policies of the administration."

A Republican from Missouri, Senator Danforth called the bill "terrible legislation" that would "sent shock waves throughout the world trading system." He estimated that the bill would cost American consumers \$14 billion in higher prices and risk retaliation against \$33 billion of US exports.

During the Senate debate, Senator Boren of Oklahoma expressed his concern about the tex-

tile bill's impact on the agricultural sector.

"The Chinese have made it perfectly clear that if this amendment is enacted they will stop buying US agricultural products," said Boren. Senator Daniel Evans, a leading opponent of the bill, explained the dilemma for developing countries: "If a developing country cannot earn American dollars, cannot sell into the American market, how in the world can it pay for American goods?" he asked.

Senator Evans pointed out that the US represents half of China's textile market. He urged Congress to look at the long term effects of the bill. China was "potentially the largest market of the 21st century," Evans told Senate. In addition, the US does not have a substantial trade imbalance with China, he said.

The opponents of the bill feel that time is on their side and that the more Congressmen examine the bill and understand its ramifications the more likely they are to oppose it.

"Looking at the facts they will be convinced that this is a bad bill and a bill that is not good for America," said Senator Gramm of Texas.

'Tap visitors' spending power

Every day, some 900,000 people from outside areas stay in Beijing, affecting the city's traffic, scenic spots and commerce already overburdened with 5 million Beijing residents, according to the newspaper *Economic Information*.

In the past, it was held that the inflow of people added to difficulties of transport, dining, bathing and other services. Much was done to control the numbers of the mobile population: to set up as many barriers as possible to reduce the pressure on the capital.

But whatever the visitors' occupations and purpose in coming to Beijing, they have to eat, shop and travel. They are very generous consumers. If each spends 15 yuan per day, the daily expenditure of the 900,000 people will amount to 13.5 million yuan, 80 per cent higher than that of Beijing's 5 million inhabitants. The city can raise 0.5 billion yuan more per year in tax revenue and profits turned over to the state, said the newspaper.

However, the present service trade in Beijing cannot meet the demands of the mobile population. They cannot spend all they want to spend. In Wangfujing, Dazhalan and Xidan, the three busiest shopping centres, there are only four bathrooms, seven barbershops, and a dozen restaurants. Most of the restaurants only serve expensive dishes while snack counters are few. They are insufficient for Bei-

ing's own needs, let alone the visitors.

As for accommodation, many hotels have sprung up in recent years, but most are luxurious ones. So often the ordinary hotels are packed while the top-class ones are vacant. In 1983, the number of hotels in Beijing was 78 per cent less than in 1956, but the mobile population more than tripled.

Transportation is also a big problem. Bus and train passengers in

1983 totalled about 3 billion, six times the number in 1957. The number of buses and trains was just 3.5 times more. So at present the public traffic needs bigger development than the taxi service.

Under such circumstances, Beijing still has a long way to go to make the visitors ready and willing to spend their money. To fully make use of the mobile population for commercial purposes, service trade, hotels and transportation should be put first.

Israel pays dear for PLO raid

by Mu Guangren

CAIRO (Xinhua) — By bombing the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Tunis, Israel reaped little but paid dearly.

The Israeli authorities gave two explanations for the raid. The first was that the raid was a retaliation to the yacht incident in Larnaca, Cyprus, in which, Israel claimed, PLO "terrorists" killed three Israeli tourists. The other was that Israel wanted to murder Arafat and other members of the PLO leading body at one stroke.

The first explanation is a lame excuse. PLO leaders had declared that they had nothing to do with the yacht incident and the official Cypriot spokesman also said, "no evidence has emerged to the conclusion that some organization is behind the affair."

However, Israel's second ex-

planation is believable.

Further explanations can be found in the context of the latest development in the Middle East. Twenty days ago British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher invited two PLO members to visit London. This heralded a new development in the European community's relations with the PLO, though it does not mean formal recognition. Western Europe seems to be interested in taking a more active part in the Middle East peace process.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Hussein of Jordan, who attended the current UN General Assembly meeting, held separate talks with the US administration in order to give a new impetus to the stalemate peace process.

King Hussein even declared at the UN assembly that he is prepared to negotiate with Israel

"promptly and directly" under international auspices. In the face of a reactivated peace momentum, Israel became so desperate in its attempt to prevent it that it launched the savage raid on the PLO headquarters.

In fact, Israel also failed in checking the development of the peace momentum. The leaders of Egypt, the PLO and Jordan have all reaffirmed that they are resolved to get the peace process going. US President Ronald Reagan, widely criticized after he issued a statement justifying Israel's raid, was forced to let his aide declare US readiness to continue its peace efforts.

Israel has reaped nothing but world-wide protest against its air operation. The PLO, which Israel has tried its best to describe as a "terrorist organization," has won strong international support and sympathy.