

## Reading Comprehension

- 1 According to “Eyes on the Prize,” what do Democrats have to do to counter what it calls the latest “sputtering bomb” dropped by the right wing?
- 2 What did President Obama recently announce on television regarding the war in Iraq? Why does the editorial writer believe that his speech is unlikely to have an impact on the November elections?
- 3 How has United Auto Workers president Bob King sought to resurrect the spirit of former UAW president Walter Reuther?
- 4 In what ways does Katha Pollitt believe that life in Germany is better than life in the United States?
- 5 What does Melissa Harris-Lacewell think is the important lesson for the GOP in the 1964 presidential campaign?

### YOUR TURN TO DECIDE

■ Research the major provisions of New York’s Rockefeller-era drug laws. Should they have been repealed? Why or why not?

■ Do you feel that strong unions are beneficial or harmful to America as a whole? Explain. If you were asked to rebuild and strengthen a union such as the United Auto Workers, how would you go about doing it? Would you take a more hard-line or a more conciliatory attitude toward management? Explain.

■ After reading “Ten Things” on page 8, come up with your own historical event that you think can provide an important lesson for our future. Explain your choice and how we could learn from it to improve our society.

■ Katha Pollitt (p. 9) wonders why the US has such a weak safety net. What do you think are the reasons for it?

■ After reading “Unequal Sacrifice” (p. 26), should the draft be reinstated? Why or why not?

### CHECK THE FACTS

Do additional research to find the answers to these questions:

- The editorial on page 3 mentions the Koch brothers. Who are they? Find out more about their background and their reasons (both financial and political) for backing the Tea Party movement. What does their story reveal about the movement?
- The article on the United Auto Workers refers to the careers of Walter Reuther and Robert La Follette. Compare the legacies of both men. Discuss their greatest accomplishments and failures and the reasons for both.
- What was the China Lobby? Who was behind the group? What was its primary purpose? How did it influence American foreign and domestic policies?

### VOCABULARY

DEFINE THE TERMS IN BOLD.

[PAGE 4]  
“But Obama, saying it is time to put disagreements over Iraq behind us, **blithely** declared...”

[PAGE 4]  
“By now, in much of the mainstream media it’s become part of the **catechism** that the surge ‘worked’...”

[PAGE 5]  
“...New York’s **draconian** Rockefeller-era drug laws...”

[PAGE 5]  
“Schneiderman is also dedicated to protecting voting rights, having introduced legislation to end prison-based **gerrymandering**.”

[PAGE 9]  
“You might think, as Geoghegan points out, that this **cornucopia** of rights and benefits is unsustainable.”

[PAGE 9]  
“The Tea Party movement suggests that **trope** is alive and well.”

[PAGE 11]  
“...a palpable challenge to the dominant post-World War II **paradigm** of American-style development...”

[PAGE 15]  
“...the **heterodox** economist and professor at the University of Texas.”

[PAGE 21]  
“...they’ve already experienced **ignominious** cuts to the adult diaper program.”

[PAGE 28]  
“...Slavoj Zizek’s cheerfully messy and **ineluctably** provocative pocket book *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*.”

# The Nation Classroom

For the Teacher

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## Reading Comprehension:

**1** The author says that the Democrats must explain to the American public what it is they want to achieve. At the same time, the writer says, Democrats need to embrace the policies of the progressive left, which was so crucial to President Obama's 2008 victory.

**2** The president announced the end of the American combat mission in Iraq. The author doesn't believe the speech will have a major impact on the fall elections, because the economy is still performing poorly. Also, while our combat troops are being withdrawn, there will still be a large US military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**3** In the 1960s, UAW president Walter Reuther actively supported the civil rights movement. Current president Bob King is also pushing a progressive social agenda for the union by building coalitions with environmental groups and other left-leaning organizations and causes.

**4** Pollitt says that Germans have a much stronger safety net than Americans do, with among other things, free or nearly free college education, excellent job security, health care and retirement pensions

**5** In 1964, the GOP nominated conservative Barry Goldwater as its presidential candidate. He was soundly defeated by Lyndon Johnson, who convinced the American people that Goldwater's extremism made him an unsuitable choice for the White House. Harris-Lacewell says that Americans may decide the same is true of the Tea Party's candidates in the upcoming fall elections.

## Vocabulary:

**blithely:** lacking due thought or consideration • **catechism:** a rote response or formulaic statement • **draconian:** cruel; severe • **gerrymander:** to create a district or pattern of districts out of political considerations • **cornucopia:** an inexhaustible store; abundance • **trope:** a common or overused theme or device; cliché • **paradigm:** an outstandingly clear or typical example or archetype • **heterodox:** contrary to or different from an acknowledged standard, a traditional form or an established religion • **ignominious:** marked with or characterized by disgrace or shame • **ineluctable:** not to be avoided, changed or resisted; inevitable

## FURTHER READING AND ACTIVITIES

**EYES ON THE PRIZE, p. 3:** Have students research the background of the Muslim group hoping to build in downtown Manhattan. What exactly do they want to build there? Why? Have students study a map of the neighborhood. How close would their center be to Ground Zero? How many Muslims were estimated to have been killed on 9/11? How did most of the Muslim world react to the attack? Do students favor the center being built in downtown Manhattan? Why or why not? What would be the ramifications if permits are ultimately denied? Do students feel the center is a legitimate campaign issue? Why or why not?

**OUR IRAQ DEBACLE, pp. 4, 6:** Have students research the Bush administration's stated goals when it began the war in Iraq. Which, if any, have been achieved? Has the war put a crimp in terrorism? If so, how? If not, why not? Do students agree with President Obama's conduct of the war? Why or why not? According to the story, the "surge" was not the success that both the president and the GOP claim it to have been. Have students research the issue and draw their own conclusions. Have students watch a rerun of the president's speech. How well do they think he articulated his policy regarding Iraq? Do students think the Democrats will benefit in November from the withdrawal of combat troops? Why or why not? Have students imagine they are Democratic strategists. Have them write a memo, outlining a strategy for exploiting the war's end. Students can also imagine they are GOP strategists. Have them create a line of attack against the Democrats on this issue.

**CHINA IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT, pp. 11–18:** Have students create a timeline that highlights the major developments of the Sino-American relationship over the past century. Have them pay special attention to the role the United States played in the period leading to China's communist revolution. What were America's primary interests in China during the period? Why did the country support the government of Chiang Kai Shek? How might our relationship with China be different today had we not opposed the communist takeover? According to the author, there are differences of opinion about our response to China's emergence as a great power and whether "the country's ascendance is promising or ominous." After reading the story, have students do their own research and then in an essay answer these vital questions. As part of their essay, have students outline what they think American policy should be — economically and politically — on China. If China does try to strengthen its military position in the Pacific rim, what should be the American response? Could tensions over the Pacific escalate into war? What would be the outcome if they did?

**NEVADA GOES BUST, pp. 20–24:** How are the federal government and the major political parties at least partially responsible for Nevada's precarious situation? What can the federal government do to help states close their budget gaps? Can a state go bankrupt? Who is suffering most from Nevada's budget problems? Why are state governments so reluctant to raise taxes to help close budget gaps? Should they be raised? If so, how would students go about it, and how would they generate support for a tax increase? Have students research the financial situation of their own states and compare them to Nevada's. What are potential long-term dangers if a state's health and welfare funding is drastically cut? What can we do as citizens to make sure that states get the funds they need to protect the welfare of their citizens? What will be the result if we don't?

**BUSTED, pp. 28–32:** In the movie "Wall Street," the trader Gordon Gekko famously declared "Greed is good." In terms of our financial system, is it? Why or why not? Have students connect the dots between the issues raised in the review, the financial crisis in Nevada and the Iraq War. Do students feel that capitalism is a superior system to a planned socialist economy? Have students research examples of the latter before deciding. Would we benefit from a financial system that took the best ideas from both systems? If so, what would they be?

From *The Nation*, April 30, 1949

# The Chinese Revolution

BY ANDREW ROTH

*Sea, Leaving Tientszn, April 13*

**S**ITTING in Peiping, new capital of Communist China, I got considerable entertainment out of following the controversy in the editorial columns of American and other foreign newspapers over the character of the Chinese Communist movement, now moving into the leadership of the world's most populous nation. After two months in Communist China I am firmly convinced that the movement owes its tremendous momentum and distinctive character to the three great ideas that inspire it — Marxism, agrarian revolt, and nationalism — but that the explosive force of agrarian revolt provides the main motive power.

**THE NATION DIGITAL ARCHIVE**  
AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY...SINCE 1865

For a century there have been sporadic revolts against the intolerable conditions in the tens of thousands of rural villages where 80 percent of China's population lives. Through agrarian reforms the Communists have harnessed the accumulated frustration of the peasant millions. There has been considerable redistribution of land, and usurious interest rates have been scaled down. In exchange for these benefits the Communists have expected the peasants to volunteer for the "People's Liberation Army" or to supply it with grain, shoes, carts and animals. In the main people have responded well, partly out of gratitude, partly because they are resigned to government exactions. The good treatment the soldiers have received in the army has made them receptive to Communist indoctrination, and now they regard the United States as the enemy of land reform, because it supports and arms the Kuomintang "landlords' army," and the USSR, of course, as the peasants' friend.

Students, intellectuals, and city middle classes have been brought to the Communist bandwagon by the appeal of nationalism. The heavy emphasis placed on nationalism by the Communists can be seen in the slogans painted on all the walls of Peiping. Roughly three-quarters of them accuse the Kuomintang of "selling" China to the "American imperialists." The Kuomintang is now attacked more for its subservience to the United States than for any of its other misdeeds.

Chinese nationalism is rooted in the traditional idea that China is the great "Central Country" and that all non-Chinese are "foreign barbarians." It has matured in the last century of struggle against the special privileges demanded by the Western nations. Today it would be difficult to overestimate its influence. The strong nationalist bent of the Communists is explained in part by the fact that fully 95 percent of them have been recruited since 1937 and a large section of these came from the nationalistic youth who felt that the Communists in the north were really fighting the Japanese

while the Kuomintang was sitting out the war.

The United States has made itself very vulnerable to criticism by Chinese nationalists. American marines were kept in North China long after the excuse for their being there, the evacuation of Japanese troops, had ceased to have any validity. Similarly the United States navy has retained its unofficial base at Tsingtao without any apparent purpose — except to infuriate the Communists. There are material evidences of America's aid to the Kuomintang in virtually every wayside market — canned food, uniforms, boots, and other goods, sold as army surplus, stolen from army stores, or contributed by UNRRA. The Communist army's automotive transport consists mainly of captured American trucks and jeeps, and its summer uniforms are made of American uniform cloth obtained in the same way. Many Chinese feel the United States has also used its aid program to pry economic concessions out of the Kuomintang government, such as easing foreign trade restrictions and opening China's inland waters to American shipping. And there is bitter opposition to plans to revive Japan, which is still feared.

The Russians, whose diplomacy has been so heavy-handed in many parts of the world, have played a very careful game in China. The active period of their China policy was largely limited to 1945, when they secured their Siberian flank by a treaty with China which gave them rights to the naval base of Port Arthur, the warm-water port of Dairen, and the Russian-built trans-Manchurian railway. Having gained this strategic objective, they were satisfied with stripping almost two billion dollars' worth of Japanese installations from Manchurian plants and permitting Chinese Communist troops in Manchuria to "find" large stores of Japanese arms. Denying China to the United States as a base for a possible attack on Siberia was left to the army of Mao Tse-tung. The Soviets apparently believe that the Chinese Communists would be hurt rather than helped by any intervention. The Soviet ambassador at Nanking was so eager to disclaim any official link with the Communist regime that he led the other ambassadors in following the Kuomintang government to Canton.

In the Peiping-Tientsin area, the only Communist-held territory I have visited, I have seen few indications of Soviet influence. Some fifteen Russian mechanics were in the tank unit of General Lin Piao's army, but they may have been recruited from the Chinese-speaking Russians who have lived in China since 1917. The few Soviet trucks in Lin Piao's motorized section were vastly outnumbered by captured American equipment and were kept discreetly in the background. Probably all the trucks were moving on Soviet gasoline obtained in exchange for Manchurian grain.

It is possible that the Soviets have antagonized Chinese

nationalists by intervening in Chinese affairs in Manchuria. Reliable information from that area is almost unobtainable, owing to the strict security regulations which have been in force since July, 1947. One of the persistent but completely unconfirmed rumors is that Li Li-sin, who preceded Mao Tse-tung as head of the Chinese Communist Party and has spent more than a decade in Moscow, is now top man in Manchuria. If there have been objections to Russian influence in Manchuria, they have been prevented from affecting other areas by the "silence" policy of the Chinese Communist publications. An examination of back files of the Hong Kong-based *China Digest* shows that in all the talk of Japanese and Kuomintang damage to Manchurian plants there has not been a single allusion to Soviet removals.

Chinese Marxism has both molded the forces of nationalism and agrarian revolt and been molded by them. Its policies have been substantially modified by conditions in the Chinese countryside, but the Chinese party is unquestionably an orthodox Communist Party of the Leninist-Stalinist variety. Like other parties of this type, its motto is "Moscow can do no wrong." The haste with which Chinese Communist papers denounced Anna Louise Strong after Radio Moscow had accused her of being a spy was almost indecent. She had spent the past quarter-century eulogizing the Chinese Communists, but they turned against her overnight.

The discipline enforced in the party is no mean accomplishment in a country in which family discipline is virtually the only kind discernible. Its three million puritanical zealots may well become the hard core around which flabby China will be unified for the first time in a century. That the party is governed from the top is apparent from the number of questions which officials have to refer to their superiors and from their frequent ignorance of the reason for decisions. When the foreign correspondents were silenced last February, nobody knew for certain why the leadership had taken this step.

The party's flexible and pragmatic domestic policy contrasts strikingly with its intransigent attitude toward foreign affairs. Back in 1927 Mao Tse-tung learned it was necessary to abandon the doctrinaire Moscow approach to China's domestic problems, and since then the Communist movement has thrived by adapting its theories to its experience. In the foreign field the Communists have been willing to view affairs through Moscow-tinted glasses. Almost all their foreign news dispatches carry a Tass credit line. The tendency to accept Moscow's vitriolic attacks on America and its allies has been strengthened of course by American attempts to buy the obliteration of the Chinese Communists.

Edgar Snow has suggested that since only the Chinese and Yugoslav Communists have carved out their own armies and administrations virtually without Moscow's help, Mao Tse-tung may follow in Tito's footsteps. At present no one can say whether Communist China's course will diverge from that of the USSR. The only way that the United States could help to break the ideological link would be by totally abandoning the Kuomintang and recognizing the claims of Chinese nationalism — particularly in the field of economic reconstruction.

The importance of the agrarian revolution carried out

by the Communists in the rural areas which they have conquered may eventually be surpassed by the industrial revolution whose first faint beginnings can now be noted in the cities. The party's decision to make increased industrial production its prime objective was taken at the end of January and was reemphasized in March at a meeting of the Central Committee in Shihchiachuang. The striking importance of this shift was underlined in the *People's Daily*, Communist organ for North China, in an editorial of March 17:

During the past twenty years the emphasis of our work has been first on villages and only secondarily on cities. This has been because the counter-revolutionary forces in the villages are relatively weak, so that it is easier for a revolutionary force to exist and develop.

But now the cities, which are changing from counter-revolutionary fortresses into revolutionary fortresses, are entering the period in which they belong forever to the people. Therefore...we must reverse our twenty-year-old method.... If we cannot do our city work well...it will be impossible to transform China from an agricultural nation into an industrial nation. Without this the people's revolutionary rights cannot be safeguarded, and the people themselves will be unable to work toward a completely new and better life.

The Chinese Communists, the editorial pointed out, hope to convert the cities from centers for the import of foreign industrial goods and the export of cheap raw materials to real industrial bases:

Then the cities can supply the villages with the cheap industrial products they need and receive agricultural products in exchange. The cities and villages will be transformed from mutual enemies into mutual dependents. In this way the city workers' lives can be improved, resistance against the economic aggression of imperialist nations can be built up...the workers and farmers' unions can be supported, and the People's Democratic Government can be strengthened.

We have made a mistake in that we have not paid sufficient attention to this question in some cities we have had in our possession for upwards of a month.

The criticism in the last paragraph is one in which many foreign and Chinese business men and industrialists will concur. Business men complain that at the outset the Communists stopped all trading until regulations could be issued and then the regulations proved too onerous for trade to be profitable. Thus the ship on which I left Communist China sailed 95 percent empty because it was not worth the exporters' while to ship their goods. Some of the exchange regulations are also keeping out needed imports. The Communists have set up a government trading corporation and have reserved for it many of China's best exports, such as hog bristles, but they are hampered by lack of contacts abroad.

Another difficulty is that many of the political workers

assigned to handle industry and foreign trade have been young Communists without any commercial or industrial experience and very suspicious of any attempt to educate them about the facts of economic life. And in addition there is the very touchy nationalism of the new administrators. For example, although they have promised protection to foreign interests, they clearly resent the fact that the Kailan mines, North China's most important mineral asset, are a joint Sino-British concern, and in consequence they have made it difficult for the mines to operate. There are signs, however, that economic pressure is already reshaping policy. When the Communists found the Kailan mines had a million tons of coal above ground and a large force of hungry miners, trade was reopened with Kuomintang-held Shanghai in order to obtain flour for the coal.

The "New Democratic" economy which the Communists want to establish is a kind of state-supervised capitalism. Since they believe that China must have a much stronger industrial base before a Socialist society can be erected, they have limited their expropriations to government firms or those owned by the so-called "bureaucratic capitalists" — the fabulously wealthy Kuomintang tycoons, the Chiangs, Kungs, Soongs and Chens. Other private business, whether Chinese or foreign, they have announced, will be encouraged. However, it is clear that there are limits to their encouragement of private enterprise. An editorial in the March 17 *People's Daily* said:

It is wrong, of course, if we pay attention only to private enterprises and neglect government enterprises, or if we support those kinds of private capitalism which are harmful to the plans of the state or the people's livelihood.

Among the "harmful" types of private capitalist activity are speculation and the use of scarce materials for unnecessary luxuries.

But it is also wrong [the editorial continued] to impose too great or improper limitations on private enterprises, thus preventing them from developing or perhaps putting them out of business. It has already been decided that at present we need the development of private capitalism. We should keep it within proper limits and lead it in the proper direction.

## QUESTIONS

■ How does the story foretell the difficult political and economic relationship between the US and China that continued long after the revolution? Were the Chinese justified in their mistrust of the West? Why or why not?

■ What does the author suggest about China's economic future? How prescient was he? How did China move from an agrarian society to an industrial one and become the industrial world power it is today?

■ Find out more about China's economic relationship with Russia. How has it changed since the revolution? What is its current status? How does that relationship affect both China's and Russia's relationship with the US?