

Letters on the US-China conflict

19 April 2001

Hi Editor,

As an American Chinese, I wish I could read more articles like the one Pat Martin wrote on 4/15/01. I don't believe 100 percent of what the Chinese government tells their people in China, but I am also very tired of Bush's administration and the public media of the US over this spy plane incident (or accident).

I suggest American people should read more articles like the ones Pat Martin or Richard Reeves write. Thank you.

RS

16 April 2001

Dear editor,

I've just read Patrick Martin's latest article, "US adopts aggressive anti-China posture in aftermath of spy plane crisis". I'm a socialist from Australia and am currently teaching English at a university in Shanghai and briefly wanted to add to the responses you've received regarding your analysis of the plane collision off Hainan.

While generally agreeing with you in apportioning blame squarely at the feet of the US government, and sharing your concern about the xenophobic backlash in the US, I want to add my two cents about the attitude of the Chinese population from what I've experienced here.

Certainly, such surveillance flights in themselves touch a raw nerve among people who know well about imperialist domination. However, I think that Beijing itself is fast becoming an imperialist power in the region, and that the stance of revolutionary socialists in China should not merely be to fan the nationalistic flames that arose both spontaneously and via Beijing—at least for the first week of the crisis.

Instead, as you said in one of your replies to a previous letter, socialists should always seek to differentiate between the government and the working masses of a nation and to analyse the situation through the prism of the interests of the international working

class.

I have found the strong sense of nationalism here very difficult to challenge in China. Partly due to the history of imperialism, I have found that the sense of "we" and of a "common national interest" among my students is greater than anywhere I have previously lived.

I naturally talked about the issue with my students in some of my classes last week, and I found that some of the students who'd previously been better on other issues were the least bellicose about saying "I would go and fight a war now if we were a stronger nation", and the ones who were least pushing the idea of massively upgrading the armed forces.

On the contrary, your article portrays the Chinese people as champing at the bit to have a go at the US, only to be restrained by Beijing's ban on anti-US protests—which got out of hand after the bombing of its Belgrade embassy. In truth, while angry, many of my students said that this time it was an accident, and that there was no need to protest because "this time we've got the US pilots here".

The nationalism of the Chinese CP has long ceased to be the progressive force that it was during the war against Japanese occupation during the '30s and '40s and against the Kuomintang-US from 1945-49. It is a corrosive influence that helps to tie workers, students and the unemployed to their bureaucratic state.

The day-to-day experience of living under Chinese capitalism—whether in its previous state form or its increasingly market form—can make many aware of the polarised class interests that exist within the nation. However, the plane crash incident has served as an opportunity for Beijing to divert some of the people's anger away from itself and towards an external enemy, and to bolster its own position at home. Hopefully this effect will be temporary.

To conclude, the position of genuine socialists in China shouldn't be to be the most militant anti-imperialists, especially when China itself is on the way

to becoming a regional power. In this situation we should instead be seeking to reduce the power of the Chinese armed forces, and to advance workers' interests against both the state and against the swathe of foreign investors getting ready to exploit them.

MG

15 April 2001

Although a thought-provoking piece, you would do better to keep the polemics out of your otherwise well-written piece. Appreciating the fact that you have an axe to grind, you fail to point out that despite the “right-wing pressure” and the reported “fact” that US foreign policy is controlled by former military officers, no provocative military action was in fact taken by the US during this nearly two week crisis. Whether Bush is a “hands-on” leader or has issued general guidelines and lets the subordinates execute his intent is moot. The crisis was handled well and the US has a right if not duty to ask some difficult questions of the Chinese over their part in the accident.

You also fail to address (for obvious reasons) the fact that there is nothing illegal about US planes (whether collecting intelligence or not) flying in international airspace adjacent to the Chinese coast. The US deals with foreign collectors outside the US international waters and airspace on a regular basis without feeling the need to bump or otherwise seriously hinder their legal and internationally protected rights to be there.

Finally, you fail to point out the fact that China is a totalitarian regime despite its capitalist leanings which is likely (not necessarily will) challenge stability in the Asian region. Whether we are talking about mass arrests of the Falun Gong or the threats to invade Taiwan, China is entering a dangerous period of transition which the Bush administration is justified in characterizing as a competitor and not partner.

Your form of anti-American, anti-imperialistic rhetoric goes down well with the oppressed people of the world ... unfortunately these are also the ones who desperately need a good strong dose of American freedom. Sincerely,

KD

Germany

15 April 2001

Mr. Martin made a lot of sense on his analysis of the spy plane crisis. One possibility that has never been discussed is whether there exists an agenda to derail

Chinese President Jiang's visit to South America by keeping him home to handle the crisis. After all, the incident took place on the eve of his visit, and the Chinese side claimed that the US spy plane changed course to ram the Chinese fighter plane on April 1, a rather foolish incident on an April Fools Day.

I wonder what is Mr. Martin's view on this?

WY

14 April 2001

Dear Editor,

The Article “US adopts aggressive anti-China posture in aftermath of spy plane crisis” by Mr. Patrick Martin superbly demonstrates the weak Foreign Policy of the Bush administration, the role of the American media in crises like these and the craze of the American Government to rule the whole world.

Such type of articles should keep on coming to open up the eyes of the people.

KM

14 April 2001



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