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1949-1970

Stephen Fitzgerald

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China and the Overseas Chinese

A study of Peking's changing policy
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by

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521298100

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First published 1972

First paperback edition 1980

Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 77-177938

ISBN 978-0-521-08410-9 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-29810-0 paperback

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Abbreviations

ACROCA	All-China Returned Overseas Chinese Association
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
<i>CNS</i>	<i>China News Service</i>
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
KMT	Kuomintang
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
NPC	National People's Congress
OCAB	Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau
OCAC	Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, or Overseas Chinese Affairs Committees in the provinces
OCTS	Overseas Chinese Travel Service
ROCA	Returned Overseas Chinese Association
UFWD	United Front Work Department

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*For my parents
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Preface

For more than two decades the Chinese Communist government has had to contend with unusual difficulties in its foreign relations, because of its failure to attain a minimum objective of winning universal recognition, and because of the political climate which bred hostile attitudes and antagonistic interpretations of its foreign policies and produced the policy of quarantine and non-recognition. Perhaps it was the fact that the CCP had been in power for longer than the total period of Kuomintang rule that finally persuaded the United States and other like-minded governments of the absurdity of their position on recognition. Whether they are also persuaded that some of the arguments which they used to justify non-recognition may have been equally indefensible, is another question. It may be accepted that Chinese foreign policy cannot be characterised now in such fear-raising simplifications, partly because of the incredibility of early arguments about China's role in the Vietnam War. But the record of China's foreign policy actions before Vietnam is still dominated to some extent by the arguments and viewpoints which sustained the policy of exclusion and containment. This tends to exercise a continuing influence on appreciations of China's past performance. There is, therefore, an historical question, which perhaps may be answered more satisfactorily with the benefit of a twenty-year perspective. But there is also a contemporary question, in that if these arguments of the 1950s and early 1960s are accepted as valid, if the underlying suppositions or beliefs persist, they must also condition present theories – and future policies.

Overseas Chinese policy is in some respects an untypical aspect of China's foreign policy. But it is also fairly representative in terms of popular beliefs about the international behaviour of the Chinese Communist Party. A re-examination of the historical question of the CCP's Overseas Chinese policy, therefore, is relevant both to present interpretations and to wider questions of Chinese foreign policy. There is also a more specific relation to the present state of Overseas Chinese policy. Most of the discussion in the following pages concerns the pre-Cultural Revolution period, but it is also related directly to the post-Cultural Revolution situation. It is not simply that Overseas Chinese policy appears to be moving in the same direction as it was before the Cultural Revolution, but that the fundamental nature of China's Overseas Chinese problem remains the same and does not warrant or, with a rational government in power, even allow significant changes. This is not, therefore, simply an historical account; it also seeks to offer an explanation of the motives underlying present policy.

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The two basic questions in the CCP's Overseas Chinese policy, which have determined the focus of this book, are the nature of China's own Overseas Chinese problem, and the extent to which the Overseas Chinese are or may be deployed in the service of the Party's foreign policies. Whatever other factors are involved, the answers will depend ultimately on the perceptions and evaluation of the Chinese government itself and not, even for the second question, on the political behaviour of Overseas Chinese. For this reason, I have concentrated on the China side of the relationship with the Overseas Chinese and the internal evidence furnished by the special nature of Overseas Chinese affairs. Nor has it been my intention to examine in detail the period before 1949 for evidence of CCP policy. It was only after 1949 that the Party was in a position to come to grips with the problem and put its policies into effect, and this is where the import of the subject lies. It is apparent, moreover, that the CCP had given little thought to the Overseas Chinese before 1949; and it was not in fact until the mid-1950s that positive lines of policy began to emerge. Similarly, the policies of the KMT are discussed only where this is necessary to the central subject. It might be interesting to examine, for example, the KMT struggle to preserve its position among the Chinese in Southeast Asia, but that is a separate subject in itself and not necessarily fruitful in terms of analysis of the CCP's objectives.

The use of the term 'Overseas Chinese' is in many ways unsatisfactory. The implied emphasis on the word 'overseas', particularly as it relates to the word '*ch'iao*' (sojourner) in the Chinese term for Overseas Chinese, '*hua-ch'iao*', may suggest unintended political implications. The CCP itself has had some difficulty with this term. At first it seems to have included all ethnic Chinese outside China. By the mid-1950s it was narrowing to a category comprising mainly Chinese nationals but also including all those who still maintained some attachment to the Chinese homeland. To underline the distinction, the CCP tended to refer to those to whom its policies were directly addressed as 'patriotic Overseas Chinese'. But it also continued to use the term *hua-ch'iao* in reference to Overseas Chinese in general, apparently because the alternatives were equally imprecise or else too unwieldy. In dealing with the policies of the Chinese government it has seemed appropriate to follow its usage, particularly since these policies have been concerned mainly with those who are in fact still 'overseas' Chinese by virtue of some kind of association with China. But in the Southeast Asian context this term seems increasingly inappropriate, and it would seem preferable in English to follow the usage among the Chinese themselves of such terms as *hua-jen* and *hua-tsu*, meaning simply 'Chinese', with a Southeast Asian national identification, and the general term Nanyang, or Southeast Asian, Chinese. For similar reasons, I have avoided using the term 'host countries' because of its judgment about the position of the Chinese in these countries.

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The principal sources are the official Chinese media and the Hong Kong and Overseas Chinese press. For national dailies and journals other than the *Jen-min jih-pao* (*People's Daily*), and for the provincial press and the special newspapers and news sheets for Overseas Chinese dependants, I have used the holdings of the Hong Kong Union Research Institute, which amount to some 50,000 items on Overseas Chinese affairs and relations with the Overseas Chinese for the period 1949 to 1968. A separate examination has been made of all items on Overseas Chinese affairs appearing in the *Jen-min jih-pao* from 1949 to 1970, of the *Ch'iao-wu pao* (*Overseas Chinese Affairs Journal*) from the time of its inception in 1956 until it ceased publication in December 1966, and, with some gaps, of *Chung-kuo hsin-wen* (*China News Service*), the Chinese government's newsagency for the Overseas Chinese press. Translations from the Chinese are my own, except where otherwise indicated by footnote references to English or translation series sources. In the case of some Red Guard newspapers for which I have not been able to trace the original Chinese, I have had to make do with English quotations which appear to be accurate literal translations but which sometimes are a little stilted.

Most of the research was conducted during a year in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. In January and February of 1968 in the course of a visit to China, I endeavoured to check some of my findings, but this was not a particularly suitable time for discussing what had been a controversial subject during the Cultural Revolution. I did, however, have an interview with an official of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in Peking, and a series of discussions with another official who was well-informed about Overseas Chinese affairs. I am particularly grateful to these and other Chinese officials for their efforts to meet my requests and answer my questions.

This book owes much to the encouragement, guidance and support of a number of people to whom I wish to express my deepest gratitude. To my wife, who helped support us both, who shared my involvement with the subject and who gladly endured its problems, and in doing so gave up opportunities of her own. To Gregory Clark, a friend and former colleague both in External Affairs and at the Australian National University and now correspondent for *The Australian* in Tokyo, who helped me from the very beginning, and whose example underscored the necessity for re-examination of long-standing appraisals of China's foreign policy, particularly as they contributed to policies towards China and the enormities of the Vietnam War. To Dan Tretiak of York University, Toronto, for his friendship and unfailing interest and support, and for hours of discussion and detailed and critical comments on the manuscript. To Mrs C. L. P'an, formerly of the University of Hong Kong, who enriched my understanding of politics and society in contemporary China, who painstakingly culled the pages of the *Jen-min jih-pao* without any other reward, and who gave unstinting

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friendship, as did John and Alice Shih and T'ang Hsiang. And to Jack Harris, philanthropist and friend.

I am indebted also to those who read all or part of the manuscript and offered helpful comments and suggestions: Professor C. P. FitzGerald, Mr J. L. S. Girling, Mrs Ann Kent, Professor J. D. B. Miller, Professor Wang Gungwu, and Mr Ian Wilson, all of the Australian National University, and I am grateful to Mrs Jill Hardy who untangled my impossible manuscript and transformed it into a typescript. And I wish to express my appreciation to the Australian National University, which provided me with a scholarship and with funds to conduct the research in Hong Kong, China and South-east Asia, to the staff of the Universities Service Centre in Hong Kong, and to the Union Research Institute, whose collection of materials was invaluable.

Some of the information and conclusions in this book have already appeared in the following publications: *The China Quarterly*, no. 40, October–December 1969, and *ibid.* no. 44, October–December 1970; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol. LIX, no. 13, 28 March 1968; and *Papers on Far Eastern History* (Department of Far Eastern History, Australian National University), no. 2, September 1970.

STEPHEN FITZGERALD

Canberra
April 1971