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No. 4 – April 2022

April meeting **A History of Chinese**

Alex Fraser

5:30 p.m., Friday, April 29



Alex Fraser is a teacher, member of Christchurch Branch, and has worked in China. He has an interest in the development of the language and the peoples of China.

He intends to begin his talk with the 'original' people of the region and discuss how the language began and evolved there. Mention will also be made of the Han people, who are what most people at this time would consider to be the Chinese and are the vast majority of the population of China. There are a considerable number of ethnic minorities too, and Alex will identify some of the most important of these in his discussion.



The meeting will be at the usual place, Hearing House, 354 Trafalgar Square (next to Synagogue Lane). We start the meeting at 5:30, the meal arrives at 6p.m. and the guest speakers may begin after 6:45 p.m. Visitors are welcome.

If you wish to have the catered meal it costs \$15. Pay cash at the meeting or by Internet banking to our new NZCFS Nelson account, 03-1354-0490726-00, use your name as reference, and contact Barbara Markland as below.

**To arrange catering, please contact Barbara Markland
by Monday, April 25.**

ph. (03) 544 4712 text: 021 447 180 e-mail: erm@xtra.co.nz

Please make sure she knows you are coming!

The History, culture, and capabilities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Notes from an extremely interesting and informative talk by **Air Commodore (Rtd) Peter Guy MNZM**

Peter began his talk with a quote from Napoleon Bonaparte 'China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep. If she wakes she will shake the world.'

Peter's interaction with China began in 1999 when he studied with PLA officers at the PLA National Defence University in Beijing and continued with language training at Victoria University from where he escorted PLA delegations from China. After a time at Luoyang PLA Foreign Languages University he became the NZ Defence Attache to China, based in Beijing. There he represented the NZ Defence Force and answered to the NZ Embassy. From 2009-2012, he hosted PLA delegations to NZ involved with military intelligence and liaising with the embassy.

We were shown a picture of a cat walking upstairs, or downstairs, according to your point of view. The point being made that the only one who knew which way it was going, was the cat. This was related to the global view of China.

The origin of the PLA followed the Nanchang Uprising in 1927, a rebellion of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against the Nationalists. There was a truce during WW2 and then a brutal civil war which resulted in the Nationalists decamping to Formosa.

A quote from Mao - 'the people are like water and the army is like fish'. The army was there to support the people and the people to support the army, like a family.

In 1982 Deng Xiaoping began military and economic reforms with a Military/Civilian Combination policy and the PLA rapidly diversified into civilian profit-making businesses. Further reforms in 1985 led to budget cuts and the loss of 1 million soldiers. In 1989, after Tiananmen Square, US arms sales to China ceased and it was then the PLA began producing their own. By 1990 the PLA had a business empire comprising 15000 enterprises, including in USA. At this time PLA Generals were amassing huge private profits and the PLA was rumoured to be linked to drug smuggling and piracy on the high seas. Heavy reforms in the 1990s meant the PLA had to start handing over businesses to the government. Although this process is now complete, the PLA still has tremendous influence.

Xi Jing Ping's 'Great Purge' resulted in 1.34 million prosecutions. Village chiefs, factory managers, government ministers and more than 60 Generals were investigated, sacked or imprisoned. An example was made of high-ranking officials.

Modernisation: Prior to 2000 the PLA was sizeable but archaic, focussed solely on land warfare on the borders. After 2 decades of modernisation China has 'world-class' military resources, technology, and political will. It is now a leader in shipbuilding, land based missiles, IADS - integrated air defence systems. Sweeping restructuring has produced a force capable of developing new concepts, and expansion. 'Think Tanks' are powerful institutions, interacting with top political and military leaders. The aim is to fuse economic and social development with national security strategies.

PLA Command structure:

- Headed by the Central Military Commission chaired by Xi Jing Ping;

- PLA of 2 million, also responsible for Civil Defence;

- People's Armed Police of 1 million;

- PLA Reserves 1.5 million;

- Chinese Militia 8 million, auxiliary and Reserve force for PLA; complete production tasks and defend frontiers.

China is the largest contributor of peace-keeping forces to the UN with a very professional, highly regarded force.

A cartoon illustrating US positions was shown, with the caption - 'it is China's fault for having its country too close to our military bases.' The US has 132000 troops in the Pacific, aiming to contain China. In the next 4 years the USA may no longer be able to totally dominate the South China Sea at its free will. We were told that at present 10.4 million barrels of oil pass through the South China Sea each day.

Peter concluded with a comprehensive overview of China's current ground, air, sea, and space resources which highlighted how far the modernisation programme has come.

From South China Morning Post

China was the world's biggest COVID-19 vaccine exporter - Six months ago, China was the biggest exporter of Covid-19 vaccines to developing countries. That was partly down to its huge production capacity, but also because other major vaccine manufacturing countries were less focused on exports.

Most of the Chinese vaccines were supplied through bilateral commercial deals and priority was given to Asia, where Beijing wants to expand its soft power. But China also ramped up donations from late last year – either through bilateral arrangements or the World Health Organization-backed Covax Facility – as the United States too began to donate more doses after its domestic needs were met.

But this year, the picture has changed. China's vaccine exports – both commercial deals and donations – have dropped sharply since January. Chinese vaccines no longer make up the bulk of supplies in low- and middle-income countries, according to the Unicef Covid-19 Vaccine Market Dashboard and other major vaccine trackers.

One reason for this is the availability of other vaccines with better efficacy data than the Chinese ones, according to analysts. However, a slump in vaccine exports across the board in March also points to a new situation: developing countries now have more than enough vaccines but their vaccination rates remain relatively low.

All of this is affecting China's vaccine diplomacy, analysts say.

Why Shanghai's COVID crisis could have wider political implications - Shanghai's struggles to contain the current COVID-19 outbreak and get back to normal have not only greatly embarrassed the city's leaders but have also cast a shadow over their prospects ahead of a major shake-up of the Chinese Communist Party leadership.

The country's financial capital has been in effective citywide lockdown for almost three weeks, causing serious disruption to its 25 million residents and the economy.

The latest wave of infections in Shanghai – with 270,000 recorded since March 1 – was the most serious in the country since the disease first emerged in Wuhan two years ago.

In spite of a growing public backlash, officials have insisted that China's "dynamic zero-Covid" policy, which relies on lockdowns, frequent mass testing and travel restrictions, remains the best and only strategy for Shanghai and the rest of the country to defeat the disease.

But the strategy and its accompanying draconian control measures have fuelled growing anger among the local population, with many questioning why the authorities have been so ill-prepared and insensitive to public demands.

Some also compared Shanghai's prolonged struggle with the relative success in Shenzhen, which managed to snuff out a recent Omicron outbreak within weeks.

While any public discussions and sharing of criticism of officials are tightly censored in China, reports of sporadic protests and run-ins between Shanghai residents and quarantine staff have continued to circulate on social media.

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