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Reports from China: 1953~1976

Joan Robinson



Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute

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Joan Robinson — Reports from China, 1953-76

Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute
1977

THE AUTHOR

Joan Robinson, Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Cambridge, has visited China six times, the first in 1953 and the latest in 1975.

She is the author of many publications on economics and other subjects, including 'The Cultural Revolution in China' a Pelican Original, Copyright Joan Robinson 1969, excerpts from which are reprinted on pages 79-102 of this Collection by permission of the original publishers Penguin Books Limited.

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Introduction

In May, 1953, one economist — Joan Robinson — and seventeen British business men entered China, constituting the first West European commercial mission to visit new China. I was one of that group. I had known Joan previously but for most of the others this was their first encounter with a rather unusual character who never failed to surprise us.

We all knew she possessed world-wide eminence in her profession, hence the group expected her to resemble the usual picture most have — perhaps unjustly — of the typical University academic — somewhat pompous, always ready to sound off and polemicize at every opportunity. Instead they discovered her to be quiet if not reticent, a straight-talker, no jargon, no frills, no small talk, no postures.

In Peking she spent her time nosing around, asking questions, visiting factories and institutions, grilling government spokesmen and generally gaining a significant impression of the fresh currents and trends which were blowing through a new Chinese society then in its very infancy. Since then I have seen her in action in China many times, and she has never been different. Economic in words but never limited in her range of enquiry, she dives straight into the roots of any problem she deems worth investigating — never allowing herself to be put off by bland talk or bumptious generalisation that conceals ignorance or avoids truth. As a researcher her directness makes her a lucid and penetrating analyst.

This collection of her past articles is not an exercise in China-watching. In the West no self-respecting national newspaper, no serious political and economic journal, no political party can do without its China 'expert'. They generally fall into two categories — the first are the former and discredited prophets of famine, devastation and chaos who still harbour hopes that the Chinese march to socialism will be blown off course and fail, whilst the second, much smaller in number, are the romantics who feel their conscience demands immediate endorsement of every 'Peking Review' editorial.

Joan Robinson falls into neither category; as these writings demonstrate, some of her attitudes and judgments have changed over these twenty-odd years as her own perceptions have sharpened within the great events and experiences she recalls. She is not neutral, she does not bring to her articles the passionless judgment of the uncommitted who cares nothing about the outcome. They reveal her as a woman of great compassion, deep intellectual honesty and sound political judgment which gives her a special place as an interpreter of contemporary history.

The importance of this anthology is not what it reveals of Joan Robinson — though that is interesting enough — but how matters appeared to her as the great events in China were unfolding — an historical play-back. These articles deal with questions, events, incidents, opinions and judgments which were the subject of wide controversy at that time — in and out of China.

Fascinating, now, is her description of the Chinese isolation in the fifties and their dependence on Soviet help, influence and example, and how this led to the Soviet blackmail, intimidation and threats of the early sixties. Recipients of Soviet 'aid' and all believers in the purity of Soviet motivation will learn much from a perusal of these pages.

Here we have a kaleidoscope of some of the most significant events that have helped to shape the energetic, innovative, revolutionary China we now perceive. Moving through the fifties and sixties the distinctive phases are graphically described with an instant if cautious judgment with which now, with hindsight, few will quarrel. In particular the Great Leap Forward period and the reverberations of the Cultural Revolution, of which she was an eye-witness, demonstrate how fundamental these two historic events are in understanding the great moral force unleashed in China which is the distinctive hallmark of Mao Tse-tung.

When the history of this first 25 years of Chinese struggles to build socialism comes to be written, these writings by Joan Robinson will provide a graphic insight into the beginnings of probably the most influential period of the 20th century.

JACK PERRY

1: Foreword

I have had the good fortune to be able to visit the People's Republic of China a number of times over the last quarter of a century, first in 1953. I have no special knowledge of Chinese history and none at all of the language; I am very far from being an 'authority'; yet I thought it a duty to tell the world whatever I could. I therefore decided to write down, very naively, just what I saw in China and what I felt at the time. Now that so many visitors are going from the West, it may be of interest to see some earlier impressions, and some reflections of the dramatic changes that China had been going through before they began to come.

The first paper, *Letters from a Visitor to China*, records the overwhelming impact of the first contact not only with the fresh dawn of the revolution but with China itself. At that time, the land reform had just been completed and agriculture was in the hands of private peasants; the reform of education had hardly begun; there were still classical operas to be seen and there were still Soviet advisers about — I remember the Ambassador shaking his head over the slow pace of collectivisation.

The report which I wrote in 1957 cannot be traced. (If any reader comes across it, please let SACU know where it was published.) I have supplied 'Reminiscences' instead. In the high tide of socialisation in 1956, higher-form cooperatives had become general. I visited several in 1957. In 1958 came the Great Leap forward, when the communes were formed, followed by the three bitter years, 1959-61, in the midst of which the Soviet advisers were suddenly withdrawn. The paper included here under the title 'Economic Recovery 1963' records what I could learn about these events and gives some observations on the communes, which I recognised as being a brilliant invention in agricultural organisation.

At home, as usual, I was in the midst of a barrage of hostile propaganda. As a protest, I published 'The Chinese Point of View' in *International Affairs*. I feel that I understood China's foreign policy then better than I do now, in 1976.

For the first three visits I was the guest of the Chinese Council for the Promotion of International Trade. I must once more record my gratitude to them, and to the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations and Friendship with Foreign Countries which sponsored the rest.

Looking back, the piece that I wrote in 1964 for *Eastern Horizon*, 'What's new in China?' seems rather superficial. At that time there were

symptoms, which I did not quite take in, of the spread of Confucian attitudes that made the Cultural Revolution necessary.

My attempt, in 1967, to find the meaning of the Cultural Revolution is obviously superficial too, but it throws some light on the origin of the struggle between two lines, especially in education and in industry, which has recently broken surface afresh.

1972, when I made my next visit, was a period of reconciliation and transformation after the great upheaval. I was extremely fortunate in being encouraged to try to make a study of Chinese methods of planning and industrial organisation. The pamphlet, *Economic Management in China*, published separately by the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, reports on what I was able to discover.

The last piece in this volume, 'National Minorities in Yunnan', dates from 1975, when I could see a fascinating glimpse of the manner in which Chinese socialism deals with a problem that seems to baffle all the rest of the world.

'Letters from a visitor to China' was published as a pamphlet put out for me by the Students bookshop at Cambridge.

'Economic Recovery' is partly taken from *Economic Weekly* (Bombay) February 1964, and partly from *Eastern Horizon*, May 1964.

'The Chinese Point of View' was published by *International Affairs*, April 1964.

'What's new in China' was published in *Eastern Horizon*, January 1965.

The section on the Cultural Revolution comes from the Pelican book *The Cultural Revolution in China*, published in 1968.

The last item, 'National Minorities in Yunnan', appeared in *Eastern Horizon*.

2: Letters from a visitor to China

1 New China

I must re-read *Erewhon* as soon as I get back. In New China crime is regarded as due to maladjustment, resulting from wrong thinking which has to be cured by understanding its cause; and hygiene is very much a matter of public duty. The results are remarkable.

It is quite true what we were told about flies having been eliminated. Just think of any oriental city you know. I looked in at the fish market at Colombo on the way out, and every stall was black with flies. Peking is full of open-air eating places, from three stools, a stove and a board, shaded by a bamboo awning, to nice little restaurants under trees in the park. There are street markets selling meat, fruit, and cakes; shops are mainly open stalls; all are perfectly clean — no flies and no litter. The same is true in villages, as far as I saw, and at country railway stations, where peaches and roast chicken are sold on the platform.

If an odd fly does turn up, it causes quite a commotion. One appeared at a restaurant in the Summer Palace (excusable as it is right out in the country). The piece of bread on which the fly had alighted was promptly thrown away and the waiter sent for a swatter, which he used with speed and skill. Another time, when I was deep in talk with a professor, his secretary did not like to interrupt us about a fly, but dealt with it by turning on an electric fan. As for mosquitoes I did not see (or feel) even one.

There are no ghastly sores, such as make other oriental crowds so distressing a sight; instead one sees a number of people with bandaged eyes or patches of gentian violet on their arms (road workers have their faces greased white to prevent injury from tar).

One of our party whose inoculation certificate was two weeks out of date was hauled off to be given an injection at the frontier station. But I must admit that some of the hygiene is over formalised. You have to get a medical certificate before being allowed into the grand new municipal swimming baths in Peking, and an Englishman who applied told me that he was turned down for high blood pressure, but that no one inspected his feet (the real menace, of course, is 'athlete's foot', here named after Hong Kong).

Every Sunday is a Bank holiday for crowds in the parks and palaces of Peking, yet never a scrap of litter. But people evidently have to learn one

thing at a time: they have not yet mastered the habit of hawking and spitting all over the place.

It is also true that China has turned honest. People leave property about in public places without any fear (but I did hear of a dynamo being stolen off a bicycle in the Legation Quarter); there are fixed prices in all the shops — even the curio and junk dealers in a sort of Caledonian Market — and foreigners fumbling with notes, still in confusingly astronomical denominations since the inflation, can rely on being given the right change. A resident Englishman told me that he dropped a wad of money in the bazaar without noticing and had it given back to him a week later when he happened to go down the same alley. A curio dealer — a profession that one would not expect to be particularly enthusiastic about New China — when asked how he finds things after the Liberation, said that it saved him money; his shop has three doors, and formerly he had to have three assistants to stop pilfering; now he can manage single handed. The respect for public property is such as exists nowhere else. I wonder if even in Denmark the railways could provide bedroom slippers in the sleeping cars without fear that passengers would take them for keeps? As for large-scale crookery, everyone, even the least sympathetic foreign observer, agrees that it has been totally abolished.

It may seem tiresome to harp upon the clean-and-honest theme. But it is something new to meet a people who combine the boring though necessary Protestant virtues with the light touch, the sensibility and the flair for enjoying life of the Chinese.

Besides, the high public morality is the 'outward and visible sign' of a very remarkable phenomenon — the state of mind of the people. Chinese themselves are amazed and ask each other: How is it that we can perform miracles? Changes in social habits — the freeing of women, economic achievements like the stabilisation of prices, feats of construction like the great river barrages, which might reasonably be expected to take ten or twenty years of struggle and experiment, smoothly accomplished in two or three.

The secret lies partly, I believe, in the technique of 'criticism and self-criticism' as it has been developed in China. Before I came here I thought of it as something like the Group Movement or a Dostoevskyish wallowing in repentance, but it is nothing of the kind. I get an impression of how it works from one or two Chinese friends with whom I am on terms to discuss intimate questions and from a number of foreigners who are working here and who are put through it like everyone else.

Each office or group such as a university faculty or the staff of a newspaper is constantly reviewing its work and discussing how to improve it. Everyone, beginning with the boss, is criticised but it is against the spirit

of the thing to introduce a personal note — all is concentrated on how to do the job better. The individual has to examine himself to see why he fails in this or that way to help the work as well as he might. It is not required of people who cannot take it — an old fogey who really hasn't a clue is allowed just to run on, and anyone who has the misfortune to have an incurably sensitive temperament is dealt with gently. The more 'advanced' the person is, the more frankly he is discussed.

Short-comings are diagnosed as due to one or other of the recognised propensities, such as 'commandism', 'individual heroism', 'hard bureaucracy' (red-tapery) or 'soft bureaucracy' (letting things slide) and when the patient has agreed to the diagnosis, the group helps him to get over the complaint.

The result is not to make people uneasy and self-conscious, but, on the contrary, to build up confidence. With all the tasks that have to be done, half the jobs are filled by people too inexperienced for them, by any ordinary standard, and the knowledge that they will not be allowed to go wrong prevents them from getting into a state of feeling helpless and inadequate. It is natural enough for young people to take to this way of life — after all it is very much how we treated each other as undergraduates (though we were more catty withal); what impresses me is the way that middle-aged people whom I have talked to have evidently been re-vitalised by it. Here the adage that everyone over forty is a scoundrel no longer applies.

On the various visits which I have made to schools, cooperatives, a hospital, a prison, the spokesmen who explained the methods of work and the results achieved (particularly the women) had an air of assurance and unegoistical pride in what was being done. In this half of the world you always join in clapping yourself, to show that you do not take applause personally. That spirit runs through everything.

I came across one or two slogan bores, who could not go beyond saying the correct thing, refusing to admit any drawbacks or shortcomings, and they seemed to me precisely people who lacked inner conviction, who were resolved to be on the safe side when speaking to a foreigner or who perhaps needed to reassure themselves of their own orthodoxy.

The Chinese must have been well prepared for the new life by their old tradition of education. They have smooth unneurotic faces and calm gestures. (In this, a foreigner who lived under the occupation remarked, the Japanese were just the reverse, going about frowning and muttering to themselves, looking like so many psychopathic cases.) I noticed long ago that Chinese students were remarkably free from the mental egoism and desire to show off that make so many young men tiresome to try to teach. But whatever the ancient foundation, the present state of mind is

something new and powerful. It is like a great technical discovery — a source of energy hitherto unknown.

The clean and honest phenomenon illustrates another point: the leap-frog principle, by which the most backward economy, when it begins to move, jumps ahead of the formerly most advanced. Chinese towns used to be, I suppose, as filthy as, say, Bangkok is today. Formerly highway robbery was too common to be worth mentioning. And China was a country where dishonesty was not confined to crooks. Every decent man felt it a duty to scrounge and wangle for the benefit of his family.

Another thing about it is that I already feel that when I get home I shall begin to wonder if I have not really been visiting Erewhon backwards. But one must face facts, and the absence of flies and of swindlers are solid facts, which no one denies and which have to be accounted for somehow.

2 Marx-Leninism

What has all this got to do with Marxism? The importance of a doctrine lies in what it denies. For the Chinese, Marx-Leninism is denying the complex of ideas and attitudes which they call Feudal. It means that children must not be sold to pay the rent. It means that widows can re-marry and young people betroth themselves. It means that the police must treat everyone alike and everyone helpfully, instead of kicking the poor and fawning on the rich. It has brought a release of creative energy by teaching people to look towards the future that they are building instead of regarding the present as a state of degeneracy from a pre-Confucian golden age. What have long been commonplaces to us are new revelations to China, and Marx-Leninism gets the credit since it was the medium through which the revelation came.

It means, also, denying the sophistries of classical economics by which the doctrine of comparative advantages was used to justify the foisting of a permanent colonial status on the primary-producing countries, and has revealed to China that she can become a great industrial nation.

It does not mean a root-and-branch objection to capitalism as such. Private capitalism in all but the key positions of transport and heavy industry is being fostered and encouraged to make a contribution to industrialisation, and so is handicraft production, which is still a very important element in the Chinese economy. The present position is often compared to the N.E.P. but there is an important difference; N.E.P. in Russia was a step back from an over-hasty rush towards socialism. The present phase in China is intended to lead smoothly into socialism without wasting any scrap of useful resources meanwhile. (The Old China Hands

complain, with some justification from their point of view, that their goodwill and know-how was scrapped wantonly; but perhaps that was a necessary element in the revolt against colonialism.)

On the intellectual plane Feudalism means scholasticism and respect for authority, so that Marxism, in denying it, imports the scientific, empirical spirit and respect for results. (In China, therefore, it is the very opposite of the obscurantist dogmatism that I find so maddening in English intellectual Marxists.)

For the rest it is a matter of learning from the achievements and from the mistakes of Russia and adapting the lessons to Chinese conditions, without any Hegelian metaphysics to cloud the operation of common sense. Indeed, metaphysics goes off the practical Chinese mind like water off a duck's back.

This saves them from the mental contortions of trying to apply Marxism out of the book to their problems. Marx thought of Communism as arising out of the explosion of capitalism at its most developed point. China seems to me to provide the final proof that Communism is not a stage beyond capitalism but a substitute for it. There is nothing surprising in the historical meaning of a creed turning out quite different from the ideas that its founder put into it. The aggressive, worldly, individualist West organised itself under the name of Christendom; what could be more un-Christian than the Crusades? Fortunately in China the evolution from creed to practice seems to be going in the opposite direction.

3 Midwifery

A striking example of the leap-frog principle is the mass diffusion of painless childbirth. You might think this a tall story: Under the leadership of the Communist Party and the guidance of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, we have overcome the problem of labour pains. Or you might believe the old tale that Chinese women do not feel pain in any case. But I know that it is authentic because a young friend of mine at home used the same method. It turns upon understanding the process and learning to relax at the right moment so that the muscles do not resist (with her, it was so successful that she could not persuade the nurse that her labour had begun until the baby's head appeared). At home it is practised by a few people who happen to have heard of it in good time; here it is being broadcast as fast as they can get nurses trained to teach it.

The maternity hospital that I was shown serves a district in Peking of 200,000 people, with 120 beds, four doctors (all women) and sixty nurses. They reckon to be able to bring in all maternity cases in their district and the painless technique works in 97 per cent of the cases that come in.

Medical services are free to government employees — others pay a small fee, but most people in case of need can get help from their trade union, cooperative or street housewives' association.

Nurses are being trained to go out to country districts and the old village wise women are being taught the new technique. I asked if it was hard to break them of their old superstitious practices and was told: At first they might object to the modern method, but they are soon convinced when they see how it works — a typical Chinese answer.

4 Education

One of my first visits was to an elementary school, where the headmaster told me that since the liberation all the children passed their examinations. I was inclined to think this rather comical, but when I had some talk with university people I realised that it did not mean what you might think. Since there is such a great demand for trained people of all kinds, it is necessary to avoid any wastage in the educational process. All students are carefully nursed through their courses and the colleges reckon to guarantee a certain minimum of competence for everyone who comes to them. More advanced students help the more backward (the best possible education for the clever ones) and special extra courses are arranged for those bright enough to do the standard stuff in less than the standard time. The authorities are aware of the danger of levelling downwards, and try to meet it in this way. They are also aware of the danger of neglecting 'pure' subjects in the rush for technical training, and, under the re-organisation recently carried out, Peking University is devoted to the more philosophical subjects, such as economic theory and mathematics, physics and biology (perhaps this is going too far to the other extreme; it might be better for both to keep pure and applied subjects under one roof). In the Western Languages department literature is rather neglected at the moment in favour of utilitarian language teaching, but there is evidently a revival of Chinese classical studies (out of the half-dozen English-speaking undergraduates from Canton provided as interpreters to get the British party to Peking, two were studying Chinese literature).

The system of examination, copied from Russia, is a development of the old style that Tolstoi describes. The candidate is handed a question, but instead of having to make a snap answer he is given half an hour to prepare his reply and to make notes. Then by cross-examining him, the professors get an idea of how much he understands. They try to find his level by asking harder questions to the one who has done well, and easier questions to the one who is stumbling, and thus to probe to the bottom and top of each one's competence. 'Individual heroism' is discouraged in undergraduates as well

as elsewhere and the bright boys are not allowed to feel themselves outstanding, so that the dim ones do not feel inferior. If it really works as described it must be an excellent educational system. The drawback is that it throws an exhausting strain on the teachers and leaves them no time for original work, but that is probably a necessary sacrifice in present circumstances.

I was told that there were seven vacancies for every student graduating from Peking University this summer. Education is free, including keep (the whole university is residential). Graduates are directed to jobs; account is taken as far as possible of the man's or girl's own preferences, family circumstances and so on, and transfers are arranged later in case of misfits. In any case, it is such an agreeable change from the 'intellectual unemployment' of the old days that no one seems inclined to complain.

Criticism and self-criticism is the rule in the university. Professors attend each other's lectures and discuss them. I raised a laugh by asking if it did not make the lecturer nervous, but one of the few surviving foreign professors (who was a useful witness for me, because he could understand what I found surprising) told me that one soon gets to take it as a matter of course and to benefit from criticism. The students have their own meetings and the class spokesman passes on their collective opinions to the lecturers. This in itself is a great revolution. I remember long ago a Chinese pupil telling me what a shock it was at Cambridge to find that undergraduates were expected to have opinions and to defend them against the dons. 'In China,' he said, 'we are taught to respect our professors and to believe what they tell us'. (This spirit still prevails in the undergraduates at Hong Kong, in spite of the efforts of the English staff to poke them out of it.)

It is the aim of policy to raise the proportion of peasants' and workers' children at the universities, but this process has not gone very far yet, as it has to begin at the school level. At a secondary school for girls in Canton we were told that half the places were given to workers' and peasants' daughters. At a school in Peking (co-educational) I was told that they regard a rigid percentage as undesirable but see to it that the proportion is kept high.

Another type of institution that I was shown is a residential nursery school, of which there are a great number in Peking, minding the children of families where both parents are working. The children go home for the week-end. The idea seems to be partly to make it possible for married women to work (there are day nurseries as well, but not everyone is conveniently placed to take a child to one every day before going to work) and partly to save a certain number of children from being spoiled at home (a prevailing weakness of the Chinese) and to get them interested in national life at an early age by taking them on expeditions to farms,

explaining how the tramways work and so on. They are also taught to love foreigners, i.e. Russians. I felt rather a swindle (as often with urchins in the street) at being embraced as a Soviet aunty.

I do not know what our psychological pundits would say about all this. I can only report that (apart from their black hair) they were just the same plump, merry, friendly little darlings that you would find in a nursery school at home.

There is a great deal of adult education going on. Peasant women, soldiers, pedicab drivers were all learning to read like mad, and everyone from the top down belongs to study groups discussing everything from the theory of evolution to the Marriage Law (all under the name of Marx-Leninism).

A quick method of learning characters has been invented. I was told that it has been found that the lack of an alphabet does not turn out to be such an obstacle to mass education as was at first feared and that there are technical difficulties in romanising Chinese, so that the project has been dropped, for the time being at least. The characters are extremely elegant, and make even a neon sign look pleasing, but there is no doubt that they are a damn nuisance. To look up a name in the telephone book is quite a work of research, and you cannot take an address down over the phone; there is no way of spelling A for apple in characters, and names that sound identical are written quite differently. A Chinese typewriter is like a small printing press, and typing is no quicker than writing (it is useful only for duplicating).

Perhaps the very difficulty of learning to read Chinese makes it all the more exciting. Certainly people are tickled to death to be allowed to try. I was told that you hear two pedicab drivers comparing notes about their studies as they ride along, and they have picked up the modern jargon. If one is bumped into by another, instead of abusing his grandmother and starting a fight, he calls out: 'Please exercise self-criticism!'

5 Meeting foreigners

It is a convention to pretend not to know English and to speak through an interpreter, though the speaker often blandly helps the interpreter out with a difficult phrase. At formal occasions this is fair enough, but it becomes rather farcical in a private interview. I suppose the reason is to mask the difference between the sophisticated Western-taught intellectuals and ex-peasants who got their education in the cave schools of the guerilla army. Perhaps also it is a mild tease at the expense of the English people who in the old days spent thirty or forty years in the country without learning a word of the language.

The standard of interpreters is very high (I was particularly fortunate in my intelligent and indefatigable companion). They have a corps for Russian, French, German and English, and are now training one in Spanish.

The populace are always friendly; if one is not taken for a Soviet elder brother one is, at any rate, an emissary of goodwill, besides being an interesting human oddity. In official quarters there is a certain amount of suspicion of foreigners (very natural if you consider the state the world is in). It is necessary to get a pass to go out of the city. For us, all such regulations are concealed with Chinese tact, but residents find the red-tapery tiresome.

The western diplomats live in isolation in the Legation Quarter chewing over their grievances and feeling superior about being white. (The Indians just feel superior.)

The few remaining foreign business people find themselves rather cut off from their Chinese friends, but those who are working in institutions such as the language schools are perfectly at home.

I found that some people preferred to meet me in a formal manner when I would much rather have had a private chat, but others came popping round to the hotel, so I cannot generalise. (No one asks one to the house, but I think that is mainly because people who formerly kept servants, and are now making do, feel that they could not live up to the proper standards of Chinese hospitality.)

There was a comic little scene when I visited the economists at the university. I was shown into the reception room and introduced to those I did not know, and I promptly started chatting about this and that, as one would at home, with two old Cambridge men. This was a *faux pas*; I should have waited for the speech of welcome from the Dean. With usual Chinese delicacy, they let me run on for a bit and then said 'Would you like to hear something about our university?' I then had the speech in translation. But as soon as I began to ask questions of a shabby nature the translation was naturally a bit slow, and we dissolved into English by tacit consent.

Taking it all round, in spite of the language and in spite of being inescapably foreign with my large nose and my greying hair (Chinese people seem not to go grey till seventy at least) I do not feel at all like a stranger; certainly less so than I do in posh or philistine circles in England. This is partly because New China is anti-posh and anti-philistine to my heart's desire, but mainly because of the exquisite intuitive good manners of the Chinese (without over-formal politeness or over-pressing solicitude) and the subtle skill with which they catch and magic away the bricks that one drops before they bang on the floor.

You have a wrong conception of 'face' if you think of it as a touchy kind

of pride like *izzat* or *Ehre*. The Chinese concern is just as much for his interlocutor's face as for his own, and for his own partly to save his interlocutor (credited with equal refinement) from feeling embarrassed.

This deeply ingrained tradition of courtesy is carried into political questions. No one mentions Korea until we bring the subject up, though with the Rhee affair going on it would be easy to score, and when the subject does come up both parties by tacit consent ignore the fact that Rhee has any allied troops except Americans on his side of the front. In the trade talks the embargo is referred to as 'present circumstances'.

But in official propaganda Chinese manners are somewhat infected by the shrill name-calling tradition of Continental Marxism.

It is clear from the posters that the germ warfare scare was used for all it was worth in the campaign against insects. If only T.B. could be represented as an American disease it would speed up the campaign against spitting.

6 Minorities

There is a College of the National Minorities in the western suburbs (halfway between Peking and the Summer Palace; this is being developed as a university area, and various colleges and research centres are being built all around). The buildings are in an agreeable adaptation of the Chinese style to modern uses — curved roofs in grey tiles, grey brick work and bright red window frames; the main door-way with red columns and painted beams in the palace style, with peace doves instead of dragons in the painted ceiling.

My contact there was an old pupil of Malinowski's and we have mutual friends, so he did not try the interpreter gambit, and we got straight down to real talk.

The National Minorities include peoples, such as the Tibetans, the Mongols and the Moslems of Singkiang, with an old history and literature of their own, the Miaos (pronounced like a cat's noise) who have come down to the present day with a pre-feudal agricultural economy, and a number of tribes from various parts of the country with a more or less Stone Age culture. Many speak languages which have never been written and which no one but themselves knows. (In effect, even Tibetan is an unwritten language, as classical Tibetan is quite remote from the vernacular.) There is an educational problem for you!

The method of solving it is rather like the Chinese method of building dams with spades and baskets — taking on a gigantic task with imagination and courage and your bare hands. First the tribesman must teach his language to a Chinese expert, then the expert explains to him how to teach his language to a class of students, and so the Chinese students at the

college learn enough of the language to become teachers of Chinese to the tribesmen. At the same time the language is studied and provided with a Roman phonetic script and the tribesmen are taught to read their own language. Thus the foundations of the dam are built by basketfuls until it is ready to supply a power station of newly released knowledge and talent. My friend's eyes were fairly popping with enthusiasm when he talked of the treasure-house of anthropological and historical material that their research department is opening up. They also have a medical department studying certain diseases to which the minorities are subject, from which Chinese are immune, and finding the scientific interpretation of their traditional remedies. He said that it is too soon to train the minorities as anthropologists of their own cultures, but that, as well as various folk-arts which the college tries to preserve, many, particularly among the Tibetans, have a remarkable literary talent which blossoms when they can write their own vernacular.

Great care is taken to cater for their customary and religious prejudices. Mongols are given their own food — huge half-raw steaks. There is a separate dining room and kitchen for the Moslems, to avoid contamination with pork (similarly at schools and colleges; and there is a Moslem table at all public banquets. This is Chinese dialectic. I can imagine a Moslem lad begging to be allowed to dine with the others, while if he were obliged to, he would starve rather). I was told (not by my anthropologist friend) that one of the Tibetans lost a sacred talisman that protected him from accidents and his fellow students found out that he was afraid to leave the building without it. Instead of trying to talk him out of his superstitious ideas, the authorities went to great trouble to get him another talisman blessed by the right kind of lama.

This careful respect for other people's nonsense is an important part of Chinese policy. I was told that formerly the Moslems in Peking used to make themselves inconspicuous but at the time of the liberation they defiantly put on their distinctive white caps. The Government took the hint, and made it an offence to insult anyone's religion. Formerly the Moslems used to be teased to the point of bloodshed by people eating pork in a marked manner outside the mosques or driving pigs in the way of feast-day processions. Now the Moslems are treated with respect, and wear their caps without causing any remarks to be passed.

I did not try to see any Christian institutions; I should have been in a false position, not being a church-goer at home. It must be rather disconcerting for a Christian in China to see professed atheists acting as Good Samaritans, while he has to explain away co-religionists such as Chiang Kai-shek and Senator McCarthy.

The Lama monastery in Peking is in a palace of one of the Manchu

princes who got the throne by murdering his relations and gave his house to be a monastery by way of repentance. The Kuomintang housed troops there and it is in a very dilapidated condition, now being repaired at Government expense. An army of building workers is housed in a temporary barracks nearby. (Restoration has not the same disastrous meaning in Peking as with Gothic churches, for the crafts such as glazed-tile making and painting which went into the old palaces are still alive and it is possible to reproduce the original work exactly.)

The halls of the Lama Temple are dark and cluttered and full of ferocious painted demons. The monk who showed me round, a Mongol, seemed rather an earthy type. At the Chinese Buddhist monastery in another part of the city everything is neat and orderly and full of lucid calm. Their ancient treasures were unfortunately lost long ago in a fire, and the embroideries, paintings and bronze vessels are modern pastiche, but all seemly and harmonious.

There I talked with a learned monk whom it was a privilege to meet. We spoke through an interpreter but I suspect that he understood what I was saying because he got the point of my questions in a flash. He gave me some very good answers. In describing how their position had been affected by the liberation he said that formerly Buddhists had no status, now they send representatives to the municipal and national assemblies. I asked if he thought it right for a monk to take part in politics; he said: When the Government is for the few and oppresses the people we can have nothing to do with it, but a government which cares for the people is consonant with the Buddhist doctrine of charity.

I asked if it was difficult to reconcile Buddhist doctrine with modern scientific ideas. He said: We do not believe in one God who controls the universe, so it is not so difficult for us. There are different ways of interpreting life, and ours is not the same as — (I do not know quite what he said, but it implied, as Marx-Leninism) but we are free to preach and practise our own. Another point that he mentioned is that there is a revival of interest among scholars in the philosophy of Buddhism and its influence on Chinese culture.

The monks live on donations from the faithful, with help from the Government for the upkeep of their buildings. It was never the custom in China, he told me, for monks to go out begging as they do in Burma, and they only resorted to begging when driven by necessity; now they do not need to beg.

Monasteries in the country which owned estates were not treated as landlords in the Land Reform and are allowed to keep enough land to support themselves.

7 Erewhon

It has not been possible to build a prison suited to modern ideas. They have made do by knocking the cells into long dormitories, enlarging the windows (but they are still barred) and planting gardens in the courts.

The guards (soldiers) remain outside and are not in contact with the prisoners. About ten per cent of the prisoners are women (a fair reflection, I was told, of the sex ratio in crime). Two thirds are counter-revolutionaries and the rest are in for ordinary crimes such as theft, traffic manslaughter or (among the women) beating their daughters-in-law.

The treatment consists in discussion and self-examination and in learning to work. Five trades are taught, including printing and metal work. Conditions are as near as possible the same as in factories outside. There is an eight-hour day. I saw the off shift playing basket-ball (with one of themselves as umpire) and sitting around under the trees drinking tea. Each group fixes a work norm, and the score of every individual is kept on a coloured chart on the wall. Warders stand around in the workshops; all wear mufti and the warders are distinguished only by greater neatness and a little red badge. The women, with wardresses, work in a group in the middle of the textile and stocking rooms. The prisoners get no wages but they have an allowance of pocket money and a co-op to spend it at. Their families may visit them every fortnight. They seemed a bit glum — the universal happy smile of New China was not to be seen — but otherwise the scene looked much like any workshop. The Governor who showed me round pointed out with a twinkle that the cement mixers that they are turning out are on the United Nations embargo list.

Sentences range from one year to life, five and ten years being the most common. When a prisoner has reformed his thoughts the sentence may be reduced.

Question: How do you judge whether a man is reformed? Answer: Partly by the way he works, by the tone of his letters home, by whether he is willing to confess all he has done (for many of the counter-revolutionaries we have a list of crimes supplied by the police, and if they are willing to own to one or two only, we know that they are not yet cured). But the main thing we go by is whether he understands what made him a criminal.

The emphasis on understanding — 'going to the roots' — is part of the criticism and self-criticism technique. (I was told that since opium was abolished, old addicts are helped to cure themselves of the craving by understanding what made them smoke.) I assume that understanding is in Marx-Leninist terms. My hunch is that the secret lies in learning to take a detached attitude to oneself, and it may be safer to learn it in terms of one's class origin than in terms of one's œdipus complex.

Question: What punishments do you use in case of misbehaviour?

Answer: Should prisoners commit any mistakes during the period of their reform through labour, they receive different punishments in accordance with the individual cases. They will be criticised, warned, forced to wear handcuffs or be confined to a cell. Generally speaking they are being reformed by means of education. The man concerned will be criticised by members of the group to which he belongs. In this way most of such problems are solved.

8 Seeing the sights

The palaces of Peking are like an enormous permanent Festival of Britain, with glories from the past instead of fancies for the future. A great deal of repair work is going on, and only the central part of the great Imperial Palace is open. (The Coal Hill, tree clad and surmounted by a deliciously Chinese pavilion, seems all the more romantic for being inaccessible.)

If you have seen pictures of the Forbidden City, forget them, for they do not seem able to convey the effect of august massive grandeur combined with bold colour and rich intricate ornament.

A number of museums have been arranged there. One, in a side corridor, leads from the Peking man to modern times much in the manner of the People Pavilion at the South Bank Exhibition. One of the great halls is devoted to art from primitive pottery to the Ming period (when the palace itself was built). It is beautifully laid out — three or four first-rate masterpieces in each glass cabinet. The next hall is devoted to the later stuff, which is too fussy and ornamental to enjoy in a museum, though some of it would be fun to have in the house.

I asked after some of the treasures that I remember to have come from Peking to the Burlington House exhibition, and was told that they were purloined by Kuomintang officials and no one knows whether they are now in Taiwan or in the U.S.A.

There is a museum of architecture (photographs and models) and two of recent finds. (Archæologists are in great demand at the moment because the railway building and river conservancy projects are constantly opening up new sites which are sealed and kept till the experts can get at them.)

The first two courts of the Palace are open, and are used as a short cut by bicyclists, a playground for schools and convenient shade for students writing their essays or workers conning their primers.

You pay a small sum to go through the inner gate and to visit the museums. At all hours there is a sprinkling of individuals and parties going round — on Sundays a throng — elderly women tottering on bound feet, peasants in wide straw hats, soldiers, students, family parties — grandpa

carrying the baby — all sorts and conditions. When I was taken round the art museum by a guide on a hot Sunday morning a crowd gathered round to hear his explanations so that I was encased in a close ring and seemed to see the Chou bronzes and Tang figures through a haze of garlic breath.

The garden to the east of the palace, containing the hall where the emperor worshipped his ancestors, is now the Workers' Palace or Park of Culture, equipped with a theatre and indoor and outdoor concert halls. On the other side is another park (everything in Peking is perfectly symmetrical) but do not think of grassy glades; think of painted pavilions and flowers in tubs elegantly arranged on marble terraces, and mounds of curious contorted rocks (a Chinese taste that I cannot take much pleasure in) and basins of goldfish and avenues of ancient juniper trees beside the stone-lined moat of the Palace. Here there are open-air restaurants, and even in the Palace itself you can have a cup of tea on the terrace of the great hall (one of the advantages of sightseeing under Chinese guidance is that you are always invited to sit down and have some tea half-way round).

I came into the park early one morning and found a number of portly old gentlemen doing some ancient Chinese slow motion exercises and the younger generation doing physical jerks.

The Temple and Altar of Heaven in the outer city are indescribably magnificent, so I will not try to describe them.

The Winter Palace is a large pleasure garden beside an artificial lake. From the time that schools and offices close till nine o'clock when the park shuts it is crowded and the lake full of gay amateurish boating parties.

The Summer Palace, out in the country beneath the Western Hills, is a great wild garden full of temples and curious relics of the villainous Dowager Empress and a lovely cool breath coming from the great lake. Here there are always some parties swimming and boating; on Sundays it is crammed to bursting.

These were all opened to the public in 1925 but were neglected and allowed to decay. Now they are being repaired and protected and are enjoyed to the full. One of the results of raising a country's standard of life and of culture, of course, is to overfill such places and to rob the fastidious of the pleasure of having them to themselves.

As much as visiting the great monuments, I enjoy just smooching about and looking at the people. Visitors to China always remark that the first thing that strikes them is that the landscape paintings which seem so fanciful at home are perfectly realistic; the shapely mountains, the misty distances, the delicate feathery vegetation. The same thing strikes me about the figures. I noticed it first at Canton, where the traffic on the great turbid river is an endless delight to watch. That peasant bringing up a load of vegetables in a little boat roofed with matting, standing up and leaning

forward on the sweep; the family squatting, rice bowl in hand, on the deck of a huge, fantastical, painted junk, with the washing hanging out and a tame monkey playing on the rail; or, out of the train window going north, a child sitting sideways on the quarters of a buffalo; an old man in a mackintosh cape of reeds — they are perfectly familiar figures. The poses that seemed mannered in a painting or on a porcelain vase are in fact quite natural. That *is* how the people stand or sit or move.

But the girls of New China do not come out of the pictures. Wearing, like the men, blue cotton jackets and trousers, with bobbed hair and frank open faces, bicycling to work or playing games in the parks on Sunday — these are not the simpering ladies in porcelain or lacquer. An English visitor complains that the crowds are so drab — by which he means that the girls are not trying to catch his eye. So far I have seen one smartly dressed woman — an elegant slim figure in a straight frock of the Chinese style, split up to the knee. It gave me quite a turn, it was such an unusual sight. (I was told that she probably came from Shanghai where *mondaine* life is still kept up.)

The old style high-necked tunics, however, worn by both sexes, with elegant little frogs instead of buttons, are neat and becoming, and once in a way you see an old gentleman looking very old and very gentlemanly in a long Chinese robe.

To my eye the crowds are anything but drab. In a block — in the football stadium at Canton or at a concert in the Workers' Palace — the blues and blacks and browns compose into a mass of colour that makes me long to be a painter. And in detail the differences of physiques and complexions, the contrast between the generations in dress and demeanour, the mixture of country and city types, make a kaleidoscope of variety. It is fair enough to stare, for a foreigner gets stared at; the children point and laugh (it is the nose that gets them) and their grown-ups smile as though to say: You don't mind us thinking you look funny do you?

People live a great deal in the street and there are everywhere charming little scenes — two baby ducklings being let out for a swim in a puddle; building workers deep asleep in the shade of a cart at the lunch hour; an old woman setting out her portable tea shop of an urn and tall blue mugs and little stools under the wall of the Palace.

There are very few cars on the streets; those that there are (for instance those put at the disposal of the British visitors) hoot their way continually through streams of bicycles and pedicabs. (The noisiness of Chinese cities is trying to foreign nerves; wireless blares into the street loud speeches and strident high-pitched operas, itinerant vendors bang on little drums, neighbours shout from door to door, and, at the hotel, the building work on the new wing is clanging from dawn to dark.)

A pedicab is a tricycle with a rickshaw seat behind the rider. (The barefoot trotting rickshaw coolie still exists only in Hong Kong.) I was told that when the Liberation Army first came into Peking the authorities took the view that they were an affront to human dignity and that no government personnel should ride in them. The pedicab men formed a Union and protested that there was no sense in taking away their livelihood when there was no other work for them to do. The decree was rescinded, and an expedition was arranged to Tientsin for the drivers to see industrial workers in their factories and flats. Many decided to stay, but there are plenty left in Peking. (In industrial centres they have almost disappeared.) Policy now is to let them die off by natural wastage (some of the cabs look pretty far gone already) and meanwhile to develop the bus service.

As the procession goes by you see one with a pile of sacks; next a woman with three babies; then a fat old gent looking very *ancien régime*, lolling back with one foot on the other knee; then a dapper young fellow — why is he not on a bicycle? then a workman with his tools.

Lorries are also rare. The bulk of transport is done by Peking carts: two-wheeled wooden drays, mostly drawn by a mule and a donkey, sometimes a pony or five sweating men. The old-style wheels were iron rimmed and studded; now most run on tyres looted from derelict lorries during the war. They bring in country produce and building materials. Earnings from cartage are quite a substantial proportion of the income of villages round Peking. Many of the carters are ex-landlords.

This kind of traffic is possible because the site of Peking is perfectly level (apart from the artificial mount at the Winter Palace and the Coal Hill). The main streets are wide and straight, the rectangles between them filled with little greybrick walled mud lanes. An old-style Chinese house turns a blank face to the street; hidden inside are charming gardens in the court-yards between gaily painted wooden door-frames. The modern western-style building (including a new row of massive government offices) are lumpish and dreary. Apart from the great gate-houses in the city wall and some comically picturesque old shop fronts surmounted by plaster lions, the townscapes are undistinguished at street level. But leaning out of my window at the hotel I can see the golden roofs of the Palace outlined against the grey-green Western Hills, and the panorama from the roof garden looking out into fields beyond the city is a daily pleasure.

A small excursion from the beaten track was into a village in the hills (but the permit which had brought us out to see a temple would not allow of a scramble along the ridge). In the village (a scatter of houses on the sides of the little valley filled with orchards) we bought some apricots from an old beldame and chatted with her while children gathered round to gape at us.

She could not say anything about the Land Reform as they are a village of freeholders. She approved of the Marriage Law because it stopped the beating of daughters-in-law. She had obviously had a gruelling life but could still come up with a grin to enjoy any scrap of interest or pleasure that offered.

And one Sunday I had a mild adventure. I went out to the Ming Tombs with my faithful interpreter girl (a series of splendid monuments in an exquisite setting at the foot of the hills). A new road is being built, not yet surfaced, and a downpour turned it to impassable slimy mud. Providence sent us rescuers in a jeep, so we left the chauffeur and car and had a hair-raising swimming drive to a railway station. It was a change for once to escape from being a V.I.P. and to travel third class after an hour among the populace sheltering in the waiting room.

9 The arts

It is a lean time for creative literature — nothing but moral stories popularising the Marriage Law or celebrating heroes of work and battle, and easy-reading primers for young and old. Patriotic writing is always a bore — I do not know why. Perhaps literature requires an element of satire, of protest, or at least of detachment from the world. We can take *Henry V* from Shakespeare because he also wrote *Troilus and Cressida*.

It is not so much that satirical writing could not get published (though that may be so) but that it would be completely out of tune with the times; and to belabour the bad old days is already out of date. There should be, however, an interesting crop of autobiographies a little later, especially from characters such as members of National Minorities, or peasant women, who have suddenly become articulate.

The same law does not seem to apply to painting. Captains and kings and orthodox theology have been the subjects of master-pieces, so why not the model worker or the repentant mother-in-law?

The revolt against colonialism has led to a revival of native arts, but at the same time the immense prestige of the Soviets attaches itself to a style of painting which in Russia is at the level of the Chantrey Bequest and in Chinese hands comes out at the level of Sunday-school cards. Judging by the glimpses I caught of it, art teaching from the nursery school upwards is fostering this tendency.

At the same time there are many people who realise the situation and are working away at trying to revivify traditional styles and adapt them to modern uses. For them it is a desperate race against time, but they have scored some successes already, and are full of hope. The movement to

develop native styles has the backing of Chairman Mao, and, in respect to architecture at least, of the Soviet experts themselves.

Handicraft industry is very much alive and will play a big part in the economy for some time to come, providing consumer goods while investment goes into heavy industry. Handicrafts are not just fancy work, like carving balls within balls within balls out of solid ivory (prodigious skill that might be lavished on a better cause); they produce all sorts of everyday objects — straw hats, paper umbrellas, plaited bamboo mats, fans (which are useful as well as fanciful), earthenware storage pots — all made with an innate sense of form that comes out even in the way a market woman arranges a heap of eggs on her stall.

There must be many people in the interior and among the Minorities who are living before the Fall — who have never seen an ugly man-made object. If only industrial design and propaganda art can be rescued from its present confusion in time, we might see one more Chinese miracle — people going straight from the unconscious good taste of folk art to sophisticated good taste without passing through a phase of vulgarisation in between.

I spent a delightful old-world Sunday evening with C. going round the art dealers' shops. Here you see everything from priceless Han jades and Chou bronzes ('Many of them are genuine') to modern paintings. You sit down and drink tea while the dealer and his brothers and his uncle (goodness knows how a shop without customers can support so many fat men) hang up one scroll after another. No indecent importunity to buy — just look and enjoy yourself. C. is a connoisseur and I felt that I learned a lot by looking with him. He told me that the great period for picking up bargains from treasures sold by distressed families is now over, supplies have dried up and the market has hardened.

The fashionable modern painter is noted for being ninety-three years old and for having begun life as a carpenter. But besides this, he paints in a free bold style (though with great age and great fame he is growing careless) that is perfectly Chinese, yet is something fresh and in the spirit of the times.

In music the Russian influence is nothing to complain of; modern singing of cheerful vigorous patriotic tunes exists side by side with the various traditional styles of Chinese music. (This is quite beyond me, though I have got as far as understanding that one could learn to appreciate it.) At the concert in the Workers' Palace we heard examples of every style; from the applause the traditional ones are evidently still more popular than the modern.

The pure classical opera is being fostered, though it has been slightly westernised, the property man and orchestra being concealed behind

curtains, and there is sometimes even a painted backcloth. I got acquainted with an opera fan who spoke strongly against this tendency. I quite agree with her. It is perfectly easy to accept the convention that an actor walking round the stage is going for twenty miles along a road, but against a stationary painted landscape the illusion is lost. Moreover part of the art lies in exquisitely detailed miming, which fills the bare stage with horses or marching armies or a boat crossing a river.

The piece that I enjoyed most was almost pure ballet with superb costumes and wonderful leaps and acrobatics — an episode from *Monkey*. I am a devotee of Waley's translation so that it gave me particular pleasure. Dear Monkey!

The opera form is also used for modern subjects. I saw a piece about the struggle between the generations over the Marriage Law. Though stylised, the acting is perfectly lucid and full of feeling. As far as an outsider could judge the adaptation of traditional form to modern content was successful; at any rate to me it was a moving and memorable theatrical experience.

They also have straight plays in the western manner, which I heard praised by foreigners (I have not had time to see one myself).

The Cantonese opera is coarser, noisier and more gaudy than the aristocratic opera of Peking. It was a popular art played in the open air in villages and has only in recent times been brought into the theatre.

Both in Peking and in Canton there is a real public for the opera, composed of all classes and brows, something like the Vic in old days, before it went to the West End.

10 The dam

You have no doubt read accounts of the great river control projects. The first stage of the main ones has now been completed. (The Pearl River still gets out of hand as we know to our cost; we were delayed several precious days by the railway between Hong Kong and Canton being cut by floods. It was a grim sight to see miles and miles of inundated land, but we were told that, whereas in old days whole villages would have been ruined, now the people are fed and helped to begin reconstruction as soon as it becomes possible.)

There is a scheme under construction a night's train journey from Peking. The scheme as a whole is a relatively small one, but it has one of the largest individual dams — 30,000 workers are employed on it in continuous eight-hour shifts (under arc lamps at night). We drove up (a lorry ride from the station) just as the morning shift was going on — a mile of moving men from the great camp on the plain to the work site. The tunnel which will ultimately be harnessed for a power station is completed

and the concrete-lined over-flow slipway is half made. The main work is the huge dam. It catches the river as it enters a gorge in a range of scraggy hills and will make a great lake in the plain behind. The soil is moved by men each with two baskets hung from a pole over his shoulder, or in a hand barrow fastened to a bicycle wheel. For stones, two men carry one basket on a pole. It is a fantastic feat of organisation; the work goes on at a steady easy rhythm; you never hear a ganger shouting or see the processions getting confused. Each group of workers is briefed before the shift and knows just what to do. Four spiked rollers were pressing the sand; otherwise no mechanical equipment to be seen. At narrow places where the rollers cannot work, teams press the earth with heavy wooden tamps, two men to each, keeping up a steady tom-tom beat for an hour without a break.

The dam is 1,300 feet across the base and will rise to a height above ground of 150 feet. About two-thirds remains to raise, basketful by basketful.

Dull would he be of soul that could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.

The young engineers who explained things to us were also an impressive spectacle. At present China leans heavily on the advice of experts supplied by her 'Soviet elder brother' but evidently she is rapidly building up a generation of technicians who will be able to stand on their own feet.

The workers have been recruited from the villages which will benefit from the scheme; they are volunteers, but each county has a quota, so presumably if one failed a certain amount of pressure would be put on to get the numbers up. The men are paid on piece-rates (a chit for each barrow load) with bonuses for good work allocated by the group among its members. There are medical services and education and entertainment provided at the camp. Many are learning to read in their spare time.

On the way back, appropriately enough, we had a sight of the Great Wall, which must have been built by much the same technique under very different human conditions.

11 The land reform

'I thought before I went that there must be some good landlords, but I did not find one.' Many intellectuals and students went into the country to help with the land reform. The general principles were laid down in the law, but the detailed application was worked out in each village. The reason for sending the intellectuals was partly to help the peasants with the sums involved in counting up the acreage, but still more to open the eyes of the

highbrows to the true state of affairs and to cure them of sentimental feelings about the hard fate of the landlords.

Now the hurricane has blown out and the landlords who have survived it have settled down to work with their neighbours. They retained the same share of land as was given to the poor peasants and after five years they will be eligible for restoration of their civil rights.

You must not think of dukes, nor yet of village squires. Here ten or twelve acres was a large estate and the landlord was not much better educated than the peasant. A large part of the income that the landlords squeezed out of the country came from usury and from cuts out of taxes that they were responsible for collecting (not to mention exactions compared to which the *droit du seigneur* seems moderate).

When I visited a village near Peking, I was taken to see an ex-landlord's family; the man was out with a cart and the wife and daughter talked to me. They had evidently been let down lightly as they had a better house and furniture than the peasants. I found it rather shy-making and of course they had to say the right thing in the presence of the village elders who were showing me round. I had the impression that mamma was a bit too eager to say her piece and earn some good marks, but the girl seemed to regard the whole business as a joke against her parents. 'It is much healthier to work. Formerly father had no appetite, but now he is always hungry for his meals.'

It was exhilarating to talk to the peasant leaders — the head of the village, the secretary of the co-op and the leader of the women's federation — because they were so keen and interested themselves. The improvement in crop yields, sales from the village shop, the organisation of their first co-operative farm — it had all opened a new world of intellectual interest, as well as the solid satisfaction of having more to eat, and was calling out talents they had not known that they possessed.

The head man was a hearty shrewd blunt-featured type. The secretary of the co-op. with a brown, bony face and fine hands, might have been a don with his precise exposition and his sense of evidence (the decline in consumption of coarse grain as a symptom of prosperity).

Chinese poverty is something that a western imagination can hardly take in. Formerly many of the villagers had only one suit (and I was told elsewhere of sisters with one pair of trousers between them so that they took it in turns to go out) now each has two at least. I was shown cake made from the husks of beans after the oil has been extracted, which formerly people ate and is now given to the mules.

When it was the woman's turn to speak it was like taking the cork out of a champagne bottle — flooding with words to make up for years of silence.

Will the transition to collective farming be made smoothly? That is the

great question — the great test of the whole affair.

A once and for all distribution of land is no permanent solution. It was made on the basis of so much per head, man woman and child (in some villages a baby not yet born was counted); in a few years births, deaths and marriages will have made family sizes out of line with holdings. And sales of land are permitted (with certain restrictions) so that, left to itself, inequality would emerge again. Land reform was intended to be a break with the feudal past, and the foundation for a socialist future, not a new system in itself.

There has been a big jump in crop yields already, due to better work and to investing the surplus formerly paid away in rent in fertilisers, insecticides, draft animals and better ploughs; but clearly a thorough-going reorganisation of agriculture will be necessary to increase yields further and to release man-power for industry. The great plains seem to cry out for mechanisation. Will the peasants be ready to co-operate by the time that industry is ready to provide the machinery?

The policy is to use no compulsion but to educate the peasants to want the change.

Apart from some experimental State farms and a few collectives already organised in the North East (Manchuria) there are at present three stages of development — mutual aid teams formed *ad hoc* to get in a harvest, permanent teams, and co-operative farms. In my village out of 449 families, 42 had formed a co-operative, pooling their land, organising the crop programme and the work in common, but retaining private ownership of the individual holdings. The co-operative owns the animals and tools and some carts with which supplementary income is earned for the group. The division of the distributable product is made as to 30 per cent in respect to land contributed to the pool and as to 70 per cent in proportion to work done, calculated on a system of points given for hours worked weighted by the skill required. The accountant is one of the peasants. At the monthly meeting each family is told its score of points and laggards are urged to increase their share. Geese and vegetable gardens are private, but the co-operative is beginning to experiment with vegetables.

Land Tax is on a sliding scale with various allowances. It works out at about 15 per cent of the main crops. Apart from this, agriculture contributes to the national economy through the element of tax and state profit in the prices of the goods bought. The prices of manufactures are still high, but, besides clothes and bedding, villagers are buying gumboots, bicycles, fountain pens, watches and thermos flasks.

A village so near Peking is favourably placed for outside work and for marketing, and I presume that a good specimen would be chosen for the foreign visitor. I have no means of telling whether my village was above the

average. It seemed to fit fairly well with whatever overall statistics are available.

I was told by an old Shanghai resident that villagers down there complain that the Land Reform has not done them any good. Many wealthy industrialists owned land there, and, having other sources of income, they were not always exacting about rent, and spent some money in the villages, so that part of the juice from industry was distributed to the countryside.

There are stories too, of tax collectors being rough and arbitrary but here 'criticism and self-criticism' has been brought into play to correct the evil.

Taking it by and large, the substitution of 15 per cent taxes for 50 per cent rents, the provision of cheap loans, the organisation of marketing through the co-ops, the provision of health services and of relief in floods and famines, the taming of the rivers, the elimination of bandits and the substitution of the disciplined, helpful and chaste Liberation Army for a soldiery hardly distinguishable from bandits, makes up a substantial list of benefits to the countryside. Least ponderable but not least important is the access to education. The Chinese never lost the tradition that learning characters is the key to advancement, and now everyone from grandma downwards is eagerly seizing the opportunity to have a try.

12 Demography

China is bubbling over with babies. In Canton the women, who work in the fields and on the boats, carry their babies in a scarf on their backs (imagine never being able to lean back all day!). On the river it is a common sight to see four or five children in a small boat, their only home, the baby on the mother's back and the next youngest tied by a string to stop him falling into the water. (There are schools afloat now, as the river children would not go ashore.)

Round Peking, women work less (one of the new rights the village woman was rejoicing in was being allowed to work out of doors) and the baby-minding is done by elder children. In the city you often see a man carrying a baby, and there are a few low double prams in wickerwork (wasteful in a Chinese family to have a pram for one). The streets are lined with toddlers playing about, very free and chirpy.

The first complete census ever to be taken is now being prepared in connection with the forthcoming elections. People are speculating as to whether the population will not be nearer to 600 million than to the traditional figure of 400 million.

The death-rate, particularly infant and maternal deaths, has fallen sharply with the new health measures and there are no signs of the

birth-rate having fallen, so that natural increase must have risen with a bound; there is also a trickle of immigration of overseas Chinese (we travelled with a train load from the frontier, looking wayworn and grubby compared to the New Chinese).

No one will hear of Malthus. Birth control is too much associated with a pessimistic, defeatist, anti-Marxist view of life; they say that the cultivable area of China can be doubled (of mere space there is no lack, as the train journey through the North East and into Inner Mongolia brought home to me) and yields can be increased on existing land by scientific farming. But this is only to meet the Malthusian argument in its crudest form. It does not counter what seems to me the most cogent point, that the standard of life in physical consumption and in culture and amenities can be raised the faster the more investment goes into raising capital per head, as opposed to catering for more heads.

There is a boundless internal reserve of labour waiting to be released by substituting capital equipment for the fantastically man-power-using methods of production now in operation, so that there can be no question of not having enough people to utilise the natural resources of China.

But it is of no use to argue with the economists. No doubt in time the universal unofficial trade union of women will take the matter in hand.

13 Economic discipline

Railways and the bulk of heavy industry are nationalised; there is quite a large area of pure private enterprise in miscellaneous industry and trade. The mixed part of the economy, in staple products, is controlled through state wholesaling. The major part of all the main crops is bought from the peasantry (apart from the portion contributed as taxation) by a network of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives and sold to government corporations. Prices are fixed by the corporations, price ratios being calculated to give an incentive to produce industrial crops such as cotton and tobacco (in both of which China has changed since Liberation from an importer to an exporter). Raw materials are partly sold to private industrialists, partly manufactured by them on commission and partly used in government factories. Staple manufactures (cloth, soap, fertilisers) are also partly wholesaled by the corporations. Retailing in towns is predominantly private enterprise, but there are enough state department stores and urban consumer co-operatives to keep margins within bounds and set standards of quality. Retailing in the villages is more and more becoming dominated by the Supply and Marketing Co-ops. There are also a growing number of handicraft Co-operatives beginning to organise the great mass of artisan production.

The system depends on carrying sufficient stocks to be able to kill speculation. Under this method of control there is no need for price regulation by decree and no scope for a black market.

The inflation was mastered in March 1950 and prices have been substantially stable ever since.

We hear some echoes of the great drive against the Five Vices and the Three Evils. This, like the Land Reform, was a hurricane that has blown over. The Five Vices of private enterprise were bribery, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts, and stealing information for private speculation. Accusations were brought by the workers against their employers and in the prolonged investigations there were many suicides, not so much from fear of the consequences of conviction as from shame at exposure.

An English industrialist who had been through it told me that the trade unions, as might be expected, showed excessive zeal in making accusations and were rough and high handed. He himself had had some pretty nasty moments, and every business lost money during the paralysis of trade while the hurricane was blowing, but a man with patience and a clear conscience got pretty fair treatment in the end.

There is no suggestion that malpractices have crept back to any appreciable extent; the trade unions are on the look out, though co-operation between labour and management for the sake of production is now the watchword.

The affair provides a commentary on the old liberal adage that light is the best antiseptic. We know what that amounts to when the light flickers from a Royal Commission once in twenty years; to have it turned on permanently from below is a very different matter.

The Three Evils among Government employees were corruption, waste, and bureaucracy. These also were hunted out to the smallest detail. There is a new drive against bureaucracy going on now, which entails civil servants spending a certain proportion of their time in the field to learn the reality of what they deal with on paper.

The anti-bureaucracy campaign is a necessary corrective to the Chinese passion for exact detail. The by-word for a bureaucrat is the man who ordered the mosquitoes to be counted.

14 Technology

On the way up I visited an exhibition at Mukden of local industrial products. The display of machine tools was impressive; all the more so when you consider that these massive docile robots will be for many years fellow producers with the little sweating blacksmiths of Peking.

China is a wonderful museum of economic history. A foreign engineer told me that he was startled to recognise a cupola from the first chapter of the text book of his student days illustrating how pig iron was made 2,000 years ago, working next door to a huge automatic steel mill.

Another feature of the exhibition was a number of inventions made by miners and steel workers. One was a seamless chain (for greater strength) the links cut out from a solid bar of iron on the same principle that chains are made from jade.

An architect told me of numerous devices for speeding up construction that building workers have introduced (I leave you to draw the moral).

15 Travel diary

Well there you are. I have had a little glimpse at this huge event and I tell you what I can. It does not add up to a great deal, but in the prevailing state of ignorance at home I feel that any crumb of information is worth sharing.

To end, I will give you an outline of my journey, so that you can see how these snippets fit together.

I went to China with a group of business men organised by the British Council for the Promotion of International Trade. As I had no business to do, I attended only the formal meetings and banquets and some group expeditions. Most of the time I was scouting around on my own.

I flew out to Hong Kong, overnighing at Colombo and Singapore. It was a startling experience to fly half round the world in four days, but it has become such a commonplace that I will not enlarge on it. Hong Kong is a very beautiful place to look at where the rich live in particularly elegant flats and the poor in particularly horrible slums.

Crossing the frontier was dramatic. On one side we sat outside a restaurant too grubby to enter, eating sandwiches we had been warned to bring with us, or rather not eating them, for they were begged from us by pathetic scabby children, encouraged by their grown-ups. Through a fenced passage we came into a well-swept station, where waiting passengers were sitting on rows of benches reading. We were shown into a V.I.P.s waiting room, charmingly furnished in the Chinese style and provided with fans and cups of tea. An emissary of our opposite number, the China Committee for the Promotion of International Trade, had come down from Peking to look after us, and we were introduced to the student interpreters from Canton.

We were delayed some days in Canton where we were taken to see the museums in the Palace of Culture, a girls' school and to the famous ivory carvers' shops, saw an opera and a football match and had a fascinating trip down the river on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival.

I began to get something of the atmosphere of New China from the students. They travelled up with us to Peking and it was a pleasure to find that we earned them a sight-seeing weekend there, which they lapped up as eagerly as we did.

The first day north from Canton is through lovely landscapes of rivers and green hills, the valleys full of rice fields. We spent some hours at Hankow, where the special coach provided for us was ferried over the Yangtse. Chinese official hospitality is organised with imaginative foresight and minute attention to detail. We were taken to a hotel and shown into rooms provided with every possible requirement down to a dressing-gown and bedroom slippers. (In the same corridor were a delegation of Tibetans looking totally dazed.) After bathing, we were given an excellent European lunch and drove round the town, which is westernised and undistinguished apart from the great river (there was not time to go out to the famous East Lake) then back to our train. A day and a half more through landscapes less beautiful but interesting for the different types of farming, the mud or brick-built villages and the neat new houses of the railway workers.

So to Peking. Just over three weeks crammed with visits to the sights (on my own as well as conducted tours) and to institutions, talks with old and new friends and a series of interviews with economic experts from various departments. I had a good deal of chat with English residents of various political complexions — a useful short-cut to much information about current affairs and about the bad old days.

The I had a day in Mukden, which is much like any great industrial town except for a miniature Forbidden City in the centre. As in every country except Scotland, the northern type is more dour than the southern, but here too you see the smiling faces of New China.

Finally, a day between trains at Manchouli, a bleak railway town dumped down in the wild empty steppes of Inner Mongolia, a little humanised by gardens being planted and a great theatre in the Palace of Culture.

This lap of the journey was made in a new Chinese train — two-berth sleepers with every convenience, well chosen colours, and, needless to say, spotless. The other trains were about at the standard of our third-class sleepers, though of course cleaner.

I am writing now bowling across Siberia. I suppose I must prepare to meet sceptical smiles at home. It is more inconvenient to be disbelieved when you are lying, but it is more annoying when you are not.

1953

3: Reminiscences

In 1957, I had a magnificent tour, with Chi Chao-ting and Sol Adler, to Sian, Chengtu. Chungking, down the Yangtse through the famous gorges to Ichang, on to Wuhan, where the bridge over the Yangtse had just been completed (it is now put into the shade as a great feat of engineering by the still greater feat of the bridge at Nanking), back to Peking via Shanghai.

I first met Chi on the preparatory committee for the World Economic Conference in 1952. It was the meeting of the British and the Chinese groups in Moscow that led, some years later, to the movement to found SACU. On returning from the conference, the British group, which was led by Lord Boyd Orr, set up a Council for the Promotion of International Trade. The Chinese set up an organisation with the same name, headed by Chi, to promote trade with capitalist countries. I was not of much use, myself, for promoting trade, but I had the good fortune to be invited by this organisation in 1957 and 1963, as well as for the visit in 1953 described above. Chi died, alas, in 1963, before SACU was founded but his memory and his influence is still alive in the work of his English friends.

Chi was an ideal guide for the journey, for he had lived in the old world and the new, in the West as well as in the East, so that he could help us to understand what we were seeing from every point of view. His father was a mandarin, one of the last batch to pass the Hanlin examination before it was abolished in 1905, so Chi was brought up in the cultivated traditions of the old *literati*. He was a connoisseur of Chinese art. On our tour, when visits to factories and farms around each city were over, he would poke about the local antique shops in search of scrolls of calligraphy. (At that time, treasures were still sometimes to be found.) He had old tales to tell of every place we visited and every dish we ate. Withal, he was a lifelong revolutionary. He took part as a student in the May 4th demonstrations. He had to conceal his political convictions from his family. Once his uncle was suspicious and asked him directly if he was a Communist. He got out of it by replying: Do you think I am mad? He twice escaped an arranged marriage by demanding unacceptable conditions: from one girl that she should write to say that she accepted him, and from another that she should be seen in a box at the opera so that he could take a look at her.

He had an education in the USA and received a Ph.D. at Chicago for a thesis in the economic history of China. He bummed around for some time and kept himself by taking small parts in the theatre, such as a Japanese butler.

During the war he was employed on the American currency control

commission in Chungking. It was there that he and Sol Adler became fast friends. When the Communist leaders came to Chungking to attempt to negotiate with the KMT, Chi slipped out at night to see them. His English flat-mate was quite distressed: 'I never thought Chi was the type to go out on the tiles like that.'

He was able to throw off the mask and join the PLA only at the end of the civil war. He took part in the liberation of Shanghai, but as he had the strange idiosyncrasy of being allergic to rice, he was ill most of the time. (At home in Shansi he was accustomed to have millet for breakfast and he much regretted the so-called rise in the standard of life that has put it out of fashion.)

These tales, interspersed with discussion of socialism and current affairs, entertained us as we travelled together.

For Sol, the most interesting moment was the return to Chungking. As we climbed through the crowded terraces on the way up the cliff (followed by a pied-piper's crowd of children) he exclaimed: It does not smell any more!

At Wuhan the foundations of the great iron and steel complex were being laid. A whole army division had been absorbed into the labour force. (The general had to be given an office job.) Housing had already been provided, dormitories for single workers and flats for married men. When we asked how they got married, we were told that a textile factory had been set up nearby and evening socials were arranged with the women workers. Some men were given leave to go home to their villages to find brides. Of course, these marriages were made under the new law — the couple have to declare that they are marrying of their own choice — but perhaps in the villages, parents made helpful suggestions.

Chi was a lover of the old Peking Opera. At Chungking we saw the intensely dramatic story of Susan. A male singer slipped into the heroine's part for the big scene. At Ichang, a famous player of black-face roles was visiting the theatre. The audience was gripped, as in the old London melodramas, hissing the villain and cheering the just judge. At Shanghai we saw a Butterfly troupe in which all the parts are played by girls. It was deliciously pretty, but too much like chinoiserie to be in tone with the times.

On my first visit (in 1953) China was in the stage of New Democracy. In 1956, in the great wave of socialisation, the higher-form co-operatives had become general and all remaining capitalist business had been absorbed into the state-private system. This was the period of a campaign against rightists, which succeeded the 'hundred flowers'. It was afterwards described as 'walking the horse' before the Great Leap.

At Shanghai, we got some sidelights on these developments. First, our

hosts said: We do not want you to go home and say that we have only shown you our best. We want you to visit a place where there have been difficulties. The difficulty was an individualist who had exercised his legal right to leave the co-operative and work on his own holding of land. (This right still exists. One effect of the mechanisation of agriculture is to put a ratchet behind co-operation by making small-scale individual cultivation obviously inefficient by comparison.) This was a rare phenomenon and the local people were just as much intrigued by it as the foreign visitors. The wife appeared to be a strong-minded character. (Her cottage was neater and better kept than most.) Perhaps she had egged her husband on to withdraw from the co-operative. He had some quarrel with his team-mates, whom he accused of under-valuing his work, and he said that he could earn more by himself as, being near the city, he could bicycle in to sell meat. When we asked what would happen when the children grew up (there were three around our feet): That is all right, he said, they can join the co-operative then.

Even more strange was to meet a capitalist. He had been the owner of a large textile mill, now absorbed into the state-private system. He was getting the usual five per cent on the value of the assets and a salary as well. He was living in an exquisitely furnished house, with a garden, in the middle of Shanghai. He looked round the room and said: Why should I enjoy all this luxury? I have not done as much for the country as a simple worker. He told us that his children had joined the Communist Party and despised his wealth. He spoke fanatically against the rightists. (Perhaps he had to make a good impression on Chi.)

In Shanghai there had not yet been time for much housebuilding; the old slums had been cleared up meanwhile. We walked down lanes branching off a street where, we were told, corpses used to be thrown out into the drain at night. Now there was a standpipe for water at every corner, and neighbours had helped each other repair the rooves and clean the place up. Through a doorway, we saw a schoolboy sitting at a table, evidently doing his homework — a symbol of the New China at a spot where the Old had been at its most abysmal.

Back in Peking, we enjoyed the great procession on October 1. I shook hands with Chairman Mao on the balcony of Tien An Men, but was too shy to make a remark and he passed on to the next visitor.

1957

4: Economic recovery

The summer of 1963 was an interesting time to visit China. Every day some fresh revelation about the behaviour of Khrushchev was being discussed — no question of reticence in the presence of a foreigner.

I have always been lucky to have friends in Peking that I could talk to as freely as anywhere, but chance acquaintances were apt to be tiresomely correct. Now there was a topic for conversation that melted reserve.

Among dozens of interviews and chats I recollect only two slogan-mongering bores. Moreover a feeling of sober self-confidence, after coming through a severe test, made people ready to discuss their difficulties as well as their triumphs.

I had not been in Peking since October 1957. A lot of history had been lived through meanwhile. 1957 was the year of the Campaign against the Rightists and there was a little nip in the air after the thaw in which the hundred flowers bloomed. It was a time of consolidation after the general adoption of 'higher-form' co-operatives in agriculture and the absorption of the remains of private enterprise into the socialist system. In 1958 came the Great Leap Forward with its fantastic feats of construction, its exaggerated claims that had to be corrected, the sudden formation of the Communes. There followed the three 'bitter years' of natural disasters. Little news was coming out, but it was evidently a time of hardship. Tension with the Soviets rose and fell incomprehensibly. The border war struck an ominous note. The Chinese propaganda relayed abroad sounded harsh and dogmatic. I wondered what I should find. How had people reacted to the setback of the bitter years after the exaltation of the Great Leap? Had the ideological rigidity of the propaganda worked inwards and stiffened the formerly flexible, commonsense approach to administration at home? Was it true that the birth control movement, in full swing in 1957, had been called off in a return to Marxist orthodoxy? Had the extraordinary standard of honesty survived a period of serious shortages? How were the Communes working out? Were there still no flies in Peking?

Look down the street. There are more bicycles and fewer pedicabs. The bus service is evidently much improved. About half the girls are wearing skirts and half trousers — there are frocks to be seen, too, on Sundays. Clothes are simple and neat ('poshism' is still a vice to be avoided). Faces are plump and bonny. The children are playing as perkily as ever in the puddles left by the water cart that lays the dust. The back lanes as well as the main streets are clean. Yes, the flies have not come back.

Poking and enquiring as best I could, I learned that the bad times had

slipped into the past. Rations were now ample except for oil and cotton cloth. Vegetables and fruit were selling at every street corner for next to nothing.

Rationing system

During the bad years, it seemed, the rationing system worked; the rations were tight, but they were always honoured. There was no inflation. This, surely, was as grand an achievement as any Great Leap.

Prices of basic necessities were held steady, and of inessentials set sky-high to mop up purchasing power. For grain, oil and cotton cloth there were specific rations, calculated by categories of consumers according to needs (a heavy worker, a school child were favoured — the elderly sedentary workers had it pretty hard). Other things, from fresh eggs to alarm clocks, were on coupons, on a points system. Coupons were allotted to every household in proportion to its legitimate income, so that there was no advantage in earning black money. There was a small free market as a safety valve. It was evidently a remarkable feat of administration and evidently the public had observed a remarkable degree of self-discipline. In England we were rather smug about the public efficiency and private honesty of our war-time rationing system. The Chinese have overtaken our famous civic morality, only ten years away from the chaos and degeneracy of life under the Kuomintang.

So far as common (I mean uncommon) honesty is concerned, the standard is far higher than in England today. I do not know if it is as high in Sweden. No one dreams of locking his car in the street or counting his change in a shop or offering a tip in a hotel. And it is impossible to lose something even if one wants to.

Building

There has been a great deal of building in Peking. The western side, all the way out to the Summer Palace, is devoted to education. Parks and gardens alternate with great blocks housing technical schools, research institutes, colleges, students hostels. To the east the sky-line is dotted with factory chimneys. The great assembly hall in Tien An Men Square is seemly rather than distinguished as a piece of architecture but it is a very remarkable fact that the huge and delicately finished edifice went up in ten months. The great hall (wired for simultaneous translation) holds ten thousand. In the interval, at a meeting, there is room for everyone in large parlours, each furnished in the style of a different province. At the end, the whole crowd

dissolves and melts easily away down the great staircases.

In the Great Leap they were building for the future. At the main-line station there are not yet twenty trains a day each way. But it is built like a palace, with a grand entrance hall and large waiting rooms, airy and comfortable, with racks of magazines set out for passengers to read. The waiting room for children is provided with cots and toys.

One great advantage has followed from the quarrel with the Soviets — posters and furnishings are now in Chinese style. The even more deplorable imitations of deplorable Russian socialist art are no longer in favour.

Marxism and Buddhism

There is great enthusiasm everywhere for archaeology. The Imperial Palace is being carefully restored. The severe massive simplicity of the lines of the great pavilions once more set off the riotous detail of crimson and gold under shining ochre roofs. The palace treasures are shown in a series of exhibitions. Every city now has its museum (often in an old temple) constantly being enriched by the finds from recent excavations. For the time being they have stopped opening tombs because many things fade and disintegrate when exposed to the air. (A set of T'ang figures illustrating ladies' costumes, all the colours of the rainbow when first seen, are now pale and dingy.) They hope to get technical advice about preservation before they go on unearthing the fabulous treasures that await recovery.

The old handicrafts are kept alive — ivory and jade carving, embroidery and cloisoné ware (too rich to my taste).

Many of the intellectuals condemned as rightists have had 'the hat taken off' and are free to work in research institutes.

There are plenty of talented painters. Literature, however, seems still to be stuck in piety. Even the heroic stories of the Long March are somehow reduced to Sunday-school tales.

In the course of sight seeing I visited several monasteries in different parts of the country. A handful of *bikkhus* carry on the old life. There is an aged man intoning the scriptures. There is a shaven lad watering the flowers in the exquisite courtyard. Local worshippers assemble for the great festivals. The monasteries are allowed enough land for their company to support itself. (The great Lama monastery in Peking, it seems, keeps some house property.) The buildings are kept up at government expense as art treasures. There seems no reason to doubt that they are sincere when they say that they are well satisfied with the new regime. It ensures them a peaceful life that they did not enjoy under the Kuomintang or the war lords, and gives them representation in local and national government.

Worldly intriguers have now nothing to gain and true religion can flourish. I tried to get up a philosophical conversation about whether Marxism could be reconciled with Buddhism. I think the answer was that a government which cares for the people is in accord with the Dharma, but my interpreter was defeated by the religious terminology and we did not get very far.

Imperialism

The background to all conversations about foreign affairs is the situation of China *vis-a-vis* the United States. The rest of us have an ambivalent attitude to America. We see on one side generosity, simplicity and sincere devotion to democratic institutions; on the other, cynicism, duplicity and support for corrupt and cruel tyrants. The Chinese see only one side. The People's Republic is the object of the implacable hostility of the United States — hostility arising not from the behaviour or policy of the Republic, but from the mere fact that it exists.

For the Chinese there is no distinction between their national and their ideological interests. America represents imperialism, neo-colonialism, capitalism, and a powerful, unscrupulous, hostile power. They see Khrushchev's move to placate successive Presidents at the expense of their interests both as treachery to a national ally and as compromise with ideological principles. It is not that they drag ideology in to support a nationalistic position — they do not recognise the distinction; or rather they see the duty of all socialist countries as being to put whatever national power they may have into the service of a supra-national cause.

The enemy is always described as Imperialism, primarily American imperialism, not America. It is an ideological dogma that *the people* are on the right side. They see the future as a gradual erosion of the sphere of capitalism as the people in one oppressed country after another 'stand up'. Finally the remnant of capitalism will collapse from within. But the last chapter is only very vaguely sketched. The immediate problem is the liberation of Asia, Africa and Latin America. National liberation from imperialism and economic liberation from capitalism are two aspects of the same thing.

Economic policy

The dogmatism that appears in Chinese propaganda to the world is in no way reflected in internal policy, which is empirical and follows economic common sense. The Chinese broke with Soviet economic doctrines, which they had at first accepted as indisputable, in two decisive steps.

The first concerned the problem of collectivisation of agriculture. According to Soviet doctrine, the purpose of collectivisation is to make it possible to mechanise agriculture. From this it followed that there was no point in pressing on with the formation of co-operatives ahead of the provision of equipment. By 1956 the Chinese Party had come to the opposite conclusion. Since it would be a long time before equipment would be available, the only hope of improving productivity lay in mobilising labour. The 'higher-form co-operatives', corresponding more or less to *kolkhosi*, were established all over the country (except for some national-minority areas) with whatever equipment they happened to have. To this day men are pulling carts and women weeding the fields by hand, though electrification and the supply of tractors are gradually bringing mechanical power into agriculture.

The second break came during the 'bitter years' of harvest failures — 1959-61. In Soviet theory, the priority of heavy industry is the first law of socialist development. The Chinese woke up to the fact that the limit to investment in industry is set by the agricultural surplus. The plan of development was re-directed under a new slogan: Agriculture the foundation; industry the leading factor. Moreover, to get a surplus from agriculture it is necessary to give the peasants something to buy. Investment was switched partly into light industry (a shocking heresy in Russian eyes).

It was no doubt because he thought that the Chinese economy was in a groggy condition owing to food shortages in 1960 that Khrushchev believed that he could force the Chinese authorities to accept his policies by threatening to withdraw the Soviet technicians (there seems no other way to account for this extraordinary episode).

It was not a particularly effective moment to choose, because in any case there had to be a sharp cut in investment and a large dispersal of population out of the cities to meet the food crisis. The effect of the technicians leaving, taking the blueprints with them, and of the breaches of contracts for equipment, is being felt now in slowing down the recovery. Some of the most important technical problems have been cracked by Chinese experts, and in one or two cases Russian engineers wrote to their late colleagues on the quiet and gave them some useful tips. There are no statistics being published at present but the general impression is that Chinese industry is creeping back on to the trend from which it was so abruptly knocked down, while the trend itself has been slightly flattened to permit more balanced development.

The communes

The most interesting of all the economic experiments being carried out in China is the establishment of agriculture communes. I devoted most of my visit to studying them, and I shall devote the rest of these notes to a summary of what I learned.

I will begin by trying to remove some misapprehensions.

First, the idea that the communes attack the family. The Chinese Communist Party carried out a campaign against what they call the 'feudal family' — the idea that the mother-in-law should be allowed to beat her son's wife, the tyranny of husbands and so forth. Now young people are encouraged to marry whom they like. Family life is all the more warm and human as a result. The family is a very important economic unit and is fostered and protected by the commune system. The usual plan is for three generations to share the family house. (The story about putting men and women to live in separate dormitories was, of course, completely absurd.) The new style mother-in-law, the grandmother of the babies, has a very important role to play. When you go into a peasant house you will find an old lady with her small feet who is doing the cooking, looking after the children, so as to allow the young married woman to go out and earn labour-days with her husband. There has been a good deal of building of new houses in the traditional style. In some parts of the country the village houses are quite spacious with a garden and fruit trees. They can keep pigs, rabbits and chickens, or a goat (this is over and above the private plot which is allowed to every family.) They are keen to earn so as to buy a radio or a bicycle.

A second misconception is that the Great Leap was a failure: the Chinese certainly do not regard it so. During that period there were very solid achievements of industrial construction, of building, of land improvement and so forth, and the realisation of the tremendous power that it released is something which remains with them as a feeling of a reserve of strength.

A third misconception is that the communes broke down during the bad years; I think the reverse is the truth. It was the existence of communes which made it possible for the authorities to see the country through. In the old days it would have been quite normal for ten or twenty million people just to die from starvation and millions more to disperse about the country becoming beggars in towns or living on roots in the woods. This time the whole country was looked after, communities were kept together, the bad areas were supplied with grain, the rationing system looked after the cities. In coping with these huge problems the organisation of the communes played an indispensable part.

Economic experiments

The element of truth that there is in this talk about a breakdown of the system is that there was one important change which had to be made from the Utopian conceptions of the Great Leap in 1958. They started then with the idea of giving people their ration of food irrespective of the labour-days that they worked, that is to say, everybody's ration was calculated so much for a worker, so much for a child, etc, and a sufficient amount of grain to supply these rations was deducted from the output of the co-operative (generally about 30 per cent) and the remainder was distributed in respect of labour-days earned. (People could take their ration at a canteen or take it and have it cooked at home, whichever they liked.) This turned out to be wasteful, and to leave the economic incentive to work too weak. They have had to go back to paying everything out in respect of labour days. (Also the canteens have gone quite out of fashion. The only ones I heard of were set up just for convenience in the rush season, for the midday meal only.) Under the present system the income of a family depends on their earnings from work (and they do their cooking at home in the ordinary way). It is a great strength of the Chinese system that they proceed by trial and error, and when they find they have made an error they admit it and correct it. The system works as a kind of qualitative 'operations research' — the nearest thing to an application of the scientific method to economic policy that exists anywhere. The fact that they have tried some rather extreme things which didn't come off is a point on which they should be congratulated because, after all, they might have been successful. Some very bold moves, such as the formation of the communes themselves, have turned out well.

Organisation

I had a very useful preliminary briefing in Peking. Although the achievements of the Great Leap in 1958 are a matter of pride and satisfaction to the Party and the people, it is admitted that serious mistakes were made and that over-investment occurred which put the economy into an unbalanced position. In the normal way this would have been corrected over the course of a year or two without any great disturbance. But as bad luck would have it, the three 'bitter years' of natural disasters followed, and the unbalanced state of the economy made them all the harder to meet.

In the course of struggling through the years of bad harvests, an important change in basic policy was made. The Soviet dogma of the permanent priority of heavy industry was abandoned. Concretely, the new line is embodied in a redirection of the economic plan to promote a faster rise of agricultural output both by more direct investment (especially in

fertilisers) and by increased production of goods to sell in the rural areas (bicycles, radio sets and sewing machines are the favourites at present).

During the bitter years the commune system was hammered into shape. The wild Utopian talk of jumping straight to communism was repudiated by the Party already before the end of 1958. On the philosophical point, it is proclaimed that the communes are a *socialist* form of organisation (to each according to his work) not a *communist* one.

The three-tier system of teams, brigades and communes has been grafted on to the ancient roots of rural life. On the one hand the staff of the commune has taken over the functions of the lowest rung in the old ladder of the administration — the *Hsiang*. It is the channel through which the villagers deal with higher authorities for planning production, sales, purchases, taxation and so forth. On the other hand, the individual household is fostered and encouraged as the basic unit of economic life. (The propagandist stories about the destruction of family life are very wide of the mark.) A team consists of the workers of twenty or thirty neighbour families. The land allotted to them is, in the main, the land that their forefathers worked, with some modifications for convenience in cultivation. Eight or ten teams are grouped in a brigade. In the plains, where villages are large, the brigade usually comprises a single village. There is emulation between brigades which enlists old village rivalries in a constructive cause. The commune comprises two or three dozen brigades and covers an area of anything from a thousand to fifty thousand acres, depending upon the nature of the terrain.

The change from the unitary co-operatives (generally set up in 1956) to the triple organisation of the communes corresponds to economic common sense. The co-operative, usually identical with the present-day brigade, was found generally to be too large a unit for the management of labour, and too small a unit for the management of land.

The problems of day to day direction of some thousand workers, in the co-operatives, of accounting for the labour-time of each, and of reckoning the distribution of the product, proved to be a strain on the managerial capacity available. Moreover sharing in the product of such a large group weakened incentive. For these reasons it was found more practical to make the team the accounting unit. Each team has at its disposal a particular area of land, with implements and animals. It undertakes a particular part of the annual plan of production and of sales to the state procurement agency. From the year's gross proceeds in cash and kind are deducted costs, land tax, and contributions to the welfare fund and the accumulation fund of the team. The remainder (usually about 60 per cent of the gross proceeds) is distributed to the members of the team in proportion to the labour points that each has earned. Thus what the workers bring to their household

income depends on the work they each put in and upon the value of a work point in their own team. There is a wide variation in the value of a work point between one team and another. It is the business of the commune staff to find out the causes of low earnings and to help the weaker teams to improve.

The problems of day-to-day operations are found to be more manageable at the level of the team than they were in the co-operatives of 1956. On the other hand, the co-operatives were inconveniently small from the point of view of investment in land. The commune movement originated in a number of co-operatives getting together to organise water control. This has remained a major function of the commune organisation. It proved its worth also as a method of organising relief during the bad years. The brigade is responsible for the allocation of land to teams, and for the annual crop programme. At each level subsidiary activities are carried on. In the typical case, the household carries out handicraft work and rears pigs and chickens. The team breeds pigs. The brigade breeds draft animals, runs a brick kiln, and grinds corn for the household and for sale in the village shop. The commune runs a tool factory and repair shop and is responsible for the transmission of electric power. In some cases the commune owns a park of tractors. (In other cases contract ploughing is undertaken by the county authorities or a neighbouring state farm.)

Marketing

The marketing system, also, has been developed in such a way as to fit the scale of organisation to the conditions of supply. Cash crops, such as cotton and ground-nuts are all sold to the state procurement agency (apart from a small amount that teams are allowed to keep for their members' own use). The proportion of grain to be sold is agreed in advance when the annual plan is fixed. It is worked out in such a way as to leave enough for home consumption if the plan is fulfilled. Thus a short-fall squeezes consumption, unless it can be shown to be due to 'natural disasters', in which case the deliveries are waived, and if necessary relief supplies provided by the authorities. There is no private trade in the staple crops.

A net work of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives covers the whole country (these came into existence immediately after the land reform, before agricultural co-operatives had been established). They provide a channel through which both teams and households can sell meat, eggs, vegetables, sauces, wine and so forth, for retailing within the village or supply to neighbouring towns. Minor raw materials, such as hog bristles are supplied to industry. These sales take place at fixed prices.

Finally, there are local fairs where free-market prices prevail according

to conditions of supply and demand. Here a team may send in a cart-load of vegetables; households may dispose of small packets of produce — tobacco leaf, eggs and so forth. (It is reckoned that sales from households do not provide more than 10 per cent of total supplies in the nation as a whole). The Supply and Marketing Co-operative runs a restaurant on market day.

The regular supply of vegetables to cities is organised through contracts with particular communes which specialise in market-gardening. Vegetable production involves hard work all the year round and is rewarded with correspondingly higher earnings. The contracts therefore are a much valued privilege. Each town is surrounded by a ring of market gardens. An overall contract for the year is negotiated between the city wholesale agency and a commune. The commune distributes it to its member teams, who enter into detailed agreements with the retail agents in the town. Then the team delivers every day to the shops and street-corner stands. Procurement prices are settled in advance, but selling prices to the public vary with supplies. In the summer glut fruit and vegetables are almost given away. Thus the city makes a loss in the summer, but this is recouped by profits in the early spring. The farmer has the benefit of a secure outlet, the public has the benefit of untrammelled supplies, and the city breaks even.

Social services

The commune provides its members with the 'five guarantees' — food, clothing, shelter, medical care and funeral expenses. A family which has too little labour-power to provide for itself, old people left without relatives, and so forth, are helped from the welfare fund of the team to which they are attached.

There are primary schools in every village; I was told that all children at the age of seven go to school and that the parents are so keen on education that they see to it that all stay the course. There are secondary schools in each district. About one in six of the children goes on to secondary school. At present very few go away for further education to the cities. As the pyramid is built up from the bottom the number will increase.

There is a hospital in most communes, and clinics at the brigade or team level. The provision for these services is partly from commune funds and partly from government. Sometimes only the school house is provided (in an old temple or ex-landlord's house) while teachers are paid by the county and parents have to supply books. Sometimes the whole is paid from the welfare fund of the teams or from profits of commune enterprises. Sometimes doctors are paid and drugs supplied from the welfare funds. Sometimes the salaries are paid by the county. Sometimes the commune

cannot do any more than invite doctors in and let them charge the households for their services. It is characteristic of Chinese administration, from the earliest times, to avoid cut and dried legal schemes of rights and obligations. Now the communes do what they can and the gaps are covered where necessary from outside.

Visiting communes

I was able to fill in a good deal of detail in the above sketch on a series of visits to a dozen communes in seven different districts.

A foreign visitor, depending on an interpreter who is only a little less foreign in the back areas, making each visit for no more than five or six hours, naturally can get only some superficial impressions. I offer them for whatever they may be worth.

On the sophisticated, prosperous market gardens near Peking, showing visitors round is just a chore, but in the country they like to make an occasion of it. We sit round a table loaded with fruit and sip tea (or hot water as a symbol of tea) while a spokesman gives us an account of the structure and achievements of the commune. The headquarters of one commune is in an old temple, more often it is an ex-landlord's house, sometimes a new building. The spokesman may be the Party secretary, the Director of the commune, or the leader of one of the brigades — an ex-poor peasant whose ability and devotion has established a position of leadership, an ex-schoolmaster from the city, or a young fellow trained in the cadre's school. When the leader is a woman no one makes any particular point of it. (In China, it seems, the rule that women are news no longer applies.)

The figures are given in a set form but our questions are answered readily. Only once was there a slogan-monger in charge of the meeting who replied with ready-made phrases about the Leadership, Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, the Three Red Banners and all that. We noticed that the atmosphere in that commune seemed a bit slack. There were even flies in the room!

Usually the spokesman is frank and articulate. Generally the sense of our questions is picked up even when our town-bred interpreter does not understand them himself. Sometimes there is confusion and a lot of argument we cannot follow before an answer emerges, generally because our questions were not clearly put.

After the preliminary meeting, we are taken round the fields and work shops, and visit some houses.

There has been a lot of building. It was a proud count of the number of 'dormitories', i.e. dwelling rooms, built in 1958 that gave rise to the

horror-comic story about families being broken up, which the Russians are now repeating. Round Peking houses are built of brick and commune members who know the trade can earn from their neighbours as bricklayers, but in the country districts building is in traditional style and any family can put up their own house as soon as they can afford to buy the timber and the tiles. The vegetable garden and the pigsty at the bottom of the yard provide the family with some produce over and above what they can get from their private plot. (The private plots are allotted by the team and must not occupy more than 7 per cent of the team's land.)

The usual pattern of family life is for three generations to share a house. When we drop in, granny is at home with the babies while the young couple are both out at work and the older children at school. The supply of grannies to do the cooking no doubt accounts for the fact that the canteens did not prove popular. Perhaps they will be revived in the future when the present generation of active public-spirited girls are the grandmothers.

There are remnants of 'feudal thinking' still; one of the tasks of the leader of the woman's group is to settle family disputes where the mother-in-law wants to bully the young wife in the old-fashioned style and the husband, in the old style, sides with his mother instead of trying to teach her the new ways.

Brigades and teams

The advantage of making the team the accounting unit for the distribution of income is that it increases individual incentive and eases the strain on management. Where one of the co-operatives, however, had sufficient experience, devotion and ability to continue to manage itself satisfactorily, there are obvious advantages in the brigade which it now forms carrying on as an accounting unit. In my small sample, I found three cases of this kind. In each case, natural leaders had come up from the local people (one of them was a 'hero of labour' who had twice been invited to Peking to be honoured) and there was a general atmosphere of pride and enthusiasm.

At the other extreme, we happened upon a commune that is politically rather 'backward', though it is fairly prosperous because it grows cotton and has a cash income per head well above average. Here it appeared that the teams were based upon the old 'lower-form co-operatives' that existed before 1956 and the later developments had not really struck root. The teams ran the breeding station and the primary schools. The brigades appeared to be a mere formality, and the staff of the commune were all paid officials. The commune, however, had entered into a scheme with two of its neighbours for water control in the area, which had much improved their productivity.

Another in my sample conformed exactly to the standard pattern, with appropriate activities at each level — household, team, brigade and commune, topped by a machine shop with its own miniature blast furnace.

On a market-garden near Peking the brigades are the accounting units. I somehow had the impression that the atmosphere was more businesslike and less democratic than in the deep country, which paid off in the high level of prosperity of the households.

The general scheme is a convenient framework within which great variety can develop according to the historical, geographical and economic conditions in each district.

Saving land

In the crumbling loess country round Yen-an (where the cave-house in which Chairman Mao lived is an object of pilgrimage) whole valleys have been saved from erosion and flooding by terracing the hillsides in the manner used since ancient times in the south. The hill tops, which still yield a miserable, back-breaking crop, are to be planted with orchards and coppices.

In a wet plain south of Taiyuan, the commune had cut a drainage canal twenty kilometres long. In the hills to the north a reservoir and pumping station will irrigate a formerly useless area. Everywhere dirt tracks have been turned into truckable roads.

Such works are organised by the communes. In the slack season there is labour-power running to waste. Plans are worked out by experts whose services are provided as part of their normal duties. Outside expenses may be levied from the accumulation fund of teams in proportion to the area of land that will be benefited, or paid from the commune's own fund, amassed from the profits of its enterprises. The labour force is mobilised, each team helping the others, with volunteers from town (who perhaps are doing their own souls more good than they contribute to the job) and the work of a few months makes a permanent addition to the wealth of each team by increasing the productivity of the land that each has to cultivate.

This, like the trading and the social security system in the communes, is an example of how economic common sense can take command when it is freed from the complications and contradictions of a market economy.

Democracy

Is economic efficiency paid for by political regimentation? In one sense, of course, the Party is keeping a tight grip upon the system. But in another

sense there is a kind of grass-roots democracy giving the peasants a say in their own affairs, which certainly did not exist before. For instance, the system of job-evaluation by which work points are allotted to various tasks has to be satisfactory to the public opinion of the workers. The Party and the commune staff want to avoid dissatisfaction which would impair efficiency, and so they must see to it that the opinion of the team members is taken into account. In this, and many such details of organisation, the leadership depends upon the goodwill of the rank and file. Where things have gone wrong, the trouble is usually attributed to young know-alls among the cadres trying to boss the peasants.

The commune system provides a daily education in the scientific approach to technical problems, in economic calculation, and in political organisation. Personal ability and ambition has scope to express itself in more constructive ways than the desperate acquisitiveness of the individual peasant.

There are no police on the communes, and the lads are learning rifle shooting in the militia. The Party, evidently, is not able to push these people anywhere that it cannot persuade them to go.

1963

Postscript

In 1963 the communes were merging from the effects of the bitter years. During the bad times many concessions had to be made to individualistic sentiment amongst the peasants; some communes actually disintegrated into private household cultivation.

During 1964 the campaign for socialist education turned into a struggle for Mao's conceptions against the Liu Shao-chi line favouring the household economy and personal incentives for production.

Ever since the Cultural Revolution, the advantages of Mao's policies have become more and more widely acknowledged. The heroic brigade of Tachai is held up as a model; the campaign to learn from Tachai, which is continuing today, has spread technical and political progress, in greater or less degree, throughout the whole countryside. The report on the

communes as I saw them in 1963 can be brought up to date in a number of details.

Work points

On the Tachai system, an individual's work is recorded by the half-day, without any regard to the jobs involved. There is a single annual settlement at which each member is allotted a multiplier, running from 10 to 6, to be applied to his score of days, with the approval of his or her team mates. based upon morale as much as on physical productivity. (This is advantageous to women members who used to suffer from the weightage given to heavy work.)

Various communes have reached different levels in approximating to this most advanced system. In 1972 I found some in the South still using the job-evaluation method described above. Among the minority peoples in Yunnan the whole commune system is still at an early phase of its development (see p. 000 below). *(p 125 ff below)*

Some communes, returning to a conception that was premature in 1958, now give out a ration of grain (about 1 lb per head, man, woman and child) without requiring any payment.

Private plots and local fairs

A clause in the Constitution safeguards the right of households to private plots, but their importance grows less as the new generations shed the obsessive possessiveness arising from former insecurity. Mechanisation reduces the attraction of individual work. In some cases the private plots are cultivated in common by the team. Sales by private households are also diminishing in importance. It was said in 1972 that they contributed 2½ per cent to national supplies, instead of 10 per cent reported in 1963.

Tractors

In 1966, Mao insisted, against the opinion of Liu Shao-chi, on handing over responsibility for the tractors to the communes. Now some brigades are acquiring their own. There is a general drive going on to increase mechanisation.

House building

Many communes run tile and brick works. In some regions a family may still build for itself. In others, a brigade has a building team which fulfils orders placed by families who have saved out of their money income to pay. The latest thing is for a brigade itself (as at Tachai) to provide housing for rent, in two storey blocks. (As everywhere, convenience is in conflict with the picturesque.)

Education

An important movement in the Cultural Revolution was to give brigades control over rural education in order to make teaching less academic and more useful. Many communes now have their own secondary schools and the proportion of their members now going to universities and training schools is growing.

Terms of trade

National policy is now to make sure that the agricultural section benefits from the increasing productivity of the whole economy. Quotas were fixed for five years in 1972. As production has risen, non-quota sales at premium prices enhance money income. At the same time prices of industrial goods are gradually lowered with the main reductions going to goods sold in the rural areas. Thus the terms of trade are being turned in favour of agriculture.

The whole economy and the whole system has come a long way since 1963, but the main structure of the communes has not changed and they are proving to be a remarkably successful way of bringing socialism in to the organisation of agriculture.

5: The Chinese point of view

China is surrounded by a thunderous barrage of propaganda. In some ways that which comes from within is more damaging to her than that which comes from without. Much of the hostile propaganda is based on such obvious absurdities that it can be readily discounted. But China's own propaganda, for a non-Marxist peace-loving Westerner, produces a very unsympathetic impression.

The method of arguing by quoting the scriptures appears antiquated and obscurantist and seems to justify the accusation of dogmatism; even those who admit the pre-eminence of Lenin must surely agree with the Russian view that the world situation has changed, since his day, so radically that his sayings can no longer provide infallible guidance. The black-or-white pronouncements — everything rotten in Yugoslavia, everything above criticism in Albania — are singularly unconvincing. There seems to be a serious failure of logic in describing USA and USSR as having a monopoly of atom bombs. The expectation that foreigners will be favourably impressed by this line of talk itself indicates gross ignorance of how other people feel.

Inside the barrage however, in Peking in the summer of 1963, I found plenty of people to talk to whom I could understand perfectly well.

I was not interested in discussing ideology. An ideology is essentially a rationalisation — an appeal to high metaphysical principles to justify policies that arise out of mundane necessity. This is just as much true of Marxist ideology as of any other. The very fact that, in this sphere of discourse, *revisionism* is a term of abuse shows that it belongs to the realm of theology, where to prove that a statement is heretical is more damaging than to prove that it is false. The Chinese mentality is not naturally theological. Their empirical, commonsense outlook is much closer to the English than to the Russian or the Indian. They use the ideological style in public pronouncements, I suppose, because they think it is the right thing to do. In private conversation (if one can avoid slogan-mongering bores) political questions are discussed in a very realistic and practical manner.

By this I do not mean to suggest that the Chinese devotion to Marxism is in any way insincere. The leaders, doubtless, are supported by deep convictions which are confirmed to them by the evident miracle of their success; the people generally are suffused by a spirit which has something in common with wartime patriotism and something in common with what

one imagines of a great new religion in its early days, before faith becomes contaminated with cynicism. Marxism is the light that has led them out of the weakness and defeat, out of the moral and physical stink, of the old China. In these matters, it is not the logical content of the creed, but its manifest power, that commands belief.

Even apart from ideology, the views of each of us on world affairs are strongly influenced by the geographical position of our own country and its historical experience. On the spot, it is easier to understand the way people feel. How does the world appear today to a Chinese observer?

The USA

To a Chinese observer of world affairs, it appears that the successive governments of the United States represent the interests of those who are determined to preserve as large a sphere as possible for capitalist exploitation of the labour and the resources of the world. No standards of reason, justice or humanity are allowed to stand in their way. In this campaign, their hostility is directed particularly at China. Their enmity to the People's Republic does not arise from anything in particular, but from the mere fact that it exists. This rules out any possibility of compromise. They maintain the pitiful farce of treating Taiwan as China in the United Nations. They protect and encourage the defeated tyrant, Chiang Kai-shek. They have not so far permitted him to attempt an invasion of the mainland (which would finish him off) but they allow him to send in saboteurs and to get up to all kinds of mischief in South East Asia. They even supplied him with U2s to spy on China.

American forces advanced across the 38th parallel, in the face of the Chinese warning that this would be regarded as a threat to her frontiers, and had to be driven back at great cost to all concerned. (Korea was in the Soviet rather than the Chinese sphere of influence when the frontier was crossed from the North; it was not by their own will that the Chinese became involved.) The US is now engaged in a cruel and hopeless war of repression in South Vietnam. The record in Western Asia and Latin America follows the same pattern. The good, well-meaning individuals sent out to aid underdeveloped countries are in a false position (as, by the way, many of them admit) because the object of the operation is not to aid the people there to develop, but to keep reactionary governments in power.

The Chinese observer is careful to distinguish the 'ruling circles' in USA from the people. The people, even white Americans, will in the long run come out on the right side. But he knows very well that for the time being there are no progressive forces, let alone a revolutionary proletariat, in the

United States, that can be relied upon to restrain their government from no matter what atrocities. Hope lies rather in the struggle for liberation of other nations from the grip of American economic power. The sphere of capitalism in the world will be eroded piecemeal. In the latter end, capitalism will be overthrown in the United States itself; but this seems to be a matter of faith more than reasoned hope; in any case it is too distant a prospect to be of any influence in forming policy today.

Others may distinguish two great conflicts in the post-war world — a vertical division, so to say, between capitalism and socialism and a horizontal division between imperialism and nationalism. For the Chinese, the two conflicts are one. Their own revolution was a patriotic movement led by Communists; the power behind their drive towards socialism comes as much from the determination to make their ancient nation once more strong and independent as from dedication to Marxist ideology. Neither one makes sense without the other. To them it seems clear that the only way of escape for the hungry and miserable is first to assert their national independence and then to build up economic independence. They will soon find that, to this end, socialism is the only way. Anti-imperialism, anti-neo-colonialism and anti-capitalism are various aspects of the same thing.

For China the national enemy and the ideological enemy coincide. It is idle to speculate how their attitude might have been softened if the United States had observed the decencies of international intercourse in their behaviour towards the People's Republic of China. As it is, the issue is only too painfully clear.

The familiar indictment was repeated at the Warsaw Session of World Council of Peace by Liao Cheng-chih.¹

In their recent speeches, have not US government leaders, while talking glibly about 'peace', 'freedom', 'self-determination' and 'co-operation', blatantly revealed their real intentions of stepping up their policies of aggression and war?

They have shouted about 'maintaining strategic deterrents', doing their best to carry on counter-revolutionary wars to suppress national-independence struggles, strangling socialist Cuba, continuing and 'winning' the 'special war' in South Vietnam, 'unifying' Germany according to US designs, marshalling all reactionary forces to 'contain' China, subverting East European socialist countries, and using their position of strength to compel the Soviet Union to renounce communism.

They have also boasted about the achievements of the US arms drive: that the number of nuclear weapons available in its strategic alert forces

had increased by 100 per cent, the number of combat-ready army divisions by 45 per cent, the procurement of its airlift planes by 175 per cent and its special guerrilla and counter insurgency forces by 600 per cent.

How can we relax our vigilance in the face of such a vicious enemy of world peace?

The USSR

The grievances of the Chinese against Khrushchev are on three levels. First, they object to his claim to dictate policy without consulting other Communist Parties in general and their's in particular. Second, they disagree with the policy that he seeks to dictate. Third, they find him personally erratic, undependable and subject to fits of rage. They say: He has no rules.

The Chinese made their own revolution without any military help from Stalin — indeed with some hindrance. They freely acknowledge the technical help that they received from the Soviets before 1960, but the material they received had to be paid for on onerous terms. (Prices charged to the Chinese for equipment were higher than to other countries, and the quality inferior. At one enterprise I was told that the Russian adjudicators had had to admit a claim for one million roubles compensation for faulty machines supplied.) They have no reason to regard themselves as a satellite of the Soviets and they attribute the attempt to treat them so to Russian great-nation chauvinism. They make a conscious effort to avoid great-nation chauvinism on their own account but they regard Mao Tse-tung as the greatest thinker since Lenin and they deeply resent the vulgar abuse that Khrushchev heaps upon him.

Whatever Khrushchev's policy had been, they would have resisted his attempt to impose it upon them. But the most substantial question is the policy that he tried to impose. That is, to attempt to come to terms with USA without taking Chinese interests into account. Instead of insisting that China should be brought into the discussion of disarmament, Khrushchev cancelled an agreement to supply them with atomic know-how in order to placate Eisenhower. He demanded that they should accept a settlement with Kennedy on the basis of Two Chinas. (This I think has been only hinted at in the documents but was freely mentioned in conversation in Peking.) Moreover, it is not only they who suffer. He has withdrawn support from national liberation movements all over the world and called off the struggle against imperialism.

After all this, he only succeeded in getting a pitifully small concession — a partial test ban. The Chinese refuse to see in this any hope of further

improvement. It will, they say, only deceive the decent, peace-loving people in the West, and slacken their efforts (such as they are) to influence their own governments towards genuine disarmament. And the USA having found out Khrushchev's weakness will press him further and further.

The Russian case may be crudely stated thus: The Americans are dangerous. They are quite capable of blowing up the world in retaliation for some minor attack on Imperialism in some small country. Much better to go slow now and avoid danger. In the long run the strength of the socialist camp will grow and national liberation for all will come of itself.

To this line of argument the Chinese reply, first, that the risk is not so great as the Russians make out. The Americans, after all, are not as mad as all that. They must recognise that to intervene in an anti-colonial war with atom bombs is absurd and that an international atomic war would mean the end of capitalism. If half the human race were wiped out, the survivors would rebuild the world on socialist lines. Second, admitting that there is a risk, it is a risk that must be taken. Otherwise atomic blackmail will be used to perpetuate Imperialism indefinitely and keep two-thirds of the human race in subjection and poverty without hope of release. To take a specific example, the Soviet Government refrained from recognising the Algerian Government until their war was over, and the Communist Party in France (under Soviet influence) refrained from supporting their fight for liberation. What good was this to the USSR or to the world?

To counterattack, Khrushchev resorts to twisting Mao's words to suggest that he would welcome a world war, and turning the anti-colonialist appeal to Asia, Africa and Latin America into a racist slogan. The accusation of being warmongers is all the more galling because the Chinese leaders, conscious of their weakness, have been painfully restrained in their policy. They were obliged to defend themselves, as they see it, in Korea and on the Indian border. But at present, over South Korea, South Vietnam, and the offshore islands, over Macao and Hong Kong, they are leaning backwards to avoid provocation. They rely upon building up their own economy and letting time work for them outside.

It might be said therefore (as Khrushchev gleefully points out) that they are pursuing in practice the very same policy that they object to in theory. Their answer is that they have more sense than to run into hopeless adventures but that they have never betrayed their principles, broken their engagements or let down their allies.

In USSR, the Chinese say, the Party has lost touch with the people. A class of bosses and managers has grown up who have become a new bourgeoisie. Khrushchev represents these social forces. He offers his subjects more butter and more lace on their panties. He forgets the hungry

world and allies himself with the haves against the have nots. For this reason he is trying to make a composition with USA so that the two great powers can run the world and keep the have-nots in their place. Chinese propaganda is directed mainly to calling upon the Communist Parties of the world to repudiate this programme.

Large and small wars

In the interchange of open letters with the Soviets, Chinese spokesmen build their case upon the fact that liberation from imperialism is by no means already completed.

Victories of great historic significance have already been won by the national liberation movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This no one can deny. But can anyone assert that the task of combating imperialism and colonialism and their agents has been completed by the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America?

Our answer is, no. This fighting task is far from completed . . .

Consider, first, the situation in Asia and Africa. There a whole group of countries have declared their independence. But many of these countries have not completely shaken off imperialist and colonial control and enslavement and remain objects of imperialist plunder and aggression as well as arenas of contention between the old and new colonialists. In some, the old colonialists have changed into neo-colonialists and retain their colonial rule through their trained agents. In others, the wolf has left by the front door, but the tiger has entered through the back door, the old colonialism being replaced by the new, more powerful and more dangerous US colonialism. The peoples of Asia and Africa are seriously menaced by the tentacles of neo-colonialism, represented by US imperialism. . . . The facts are clear. After World War II the imperialists have certainly not given up colonialism, but have merely adopted a new form, neo-colonialism. An important characteristic of such neo-colonialism is that the imperialists have been forced to change their old style of direct colonial rule in some areas and to adopt a new style of colonial rule and exploitation by relying on the agents they have selected and trained. The imperialists headed by the United States enslave or control the colonial countries and countries which have already declared their independence by organizing military blocs, setting up military bases, establishing 'federations' or 'communities', and fostering puppet regimes. By means of economic 'aid' or other forms, they retain these countries as markets for their goods, sources of raw material and outlets for their export of

capital, plunder the riches and suck the blood of the people of these countries. Moreover, they use the United Nations as an important tool for interfering in the internal affairs of such countries and for subjecting them to military, economic and cultural aggression. When they are unable to continue their rule over these countries by 'peaceful' means, they engineer military coups d'état, carry out subversion or even resort to direct armed intervention and aggression².

The dangers involved in the struggle are, naturally, very differently assessed from different points of view. The case was argued by Dr Joseph Needham in a letter to *The New Statesman* of August 9th 1963, which was welcomed in China as a clear statement of their point of view:

Very many people are afraid of 'small local wars' because of the danger of their escalating into world thermo-nuclear catastrophe. It would be logical, therefore, in an age of nuclear weapons, that the present state of social and political life should be 'frozen' throughout the world. Let no one take any step which might set free uncontrollable forces.

But it is much easier for some people to accept this than others. Those who are relatively comfortable (such as western Europeans, and now, it seems, Russians and eastern Europeans also) are naturally drawn to such a policy of safety. But the greater part of the world (for example Algerian or Indian countryfolk, black Africans in South Africa, the peasants of Vietnam or the miners of the Andes) consists of people who are not at all comfortable, and the prospect of indefinite prolongation of what they feel to be 'colonial' or other oppression or deprivation is not an attractive one. Hence they are not drawn to a fireproof safety policy. When the Chinese say that nuclear weapons cannot halt the process of history, this is surely what they mean.

China's government advocates, and has long advocated, the total prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons; it has now called a world conference to that end. But whether or not this objective can be attained, the Chinese reserve the right to support the people's cause in 'small local wars', in spite of the danger of escalation, because they consider that these will inevitably arise in the course of the general upsurge of the undeveloped countries towards decent minimal living standards, an upsurge which powerful forces will continue to oppose. This does not necessarily imply direct military intervention. Still less does it mean the use of nuclear weapons, which the Chinese do not possess. Above all it is something very different from the wish, often imputed to China, to induce a nuclear catastrophe in order that Chinese

communism may alone emerge triumphant from it.

On the contrary, the Chinese conviction that humanity will control the bomb and that the bomb will not put an end to humanity may be seen as an expression of that profound humanism which has characterised Chinese civilisation throughout the ages. This optimistic belief may well be felt by westerners, whose civilisation embodies so much more of the supernatural and the irrational, to be dangerously unjustified, but its high and rational faith should be recognised if not admired.

The same point was made even more forcefully by Che Guevara in an interview with Cedric Belfrage in Cuba soon after the crisis of October 1962.³ Belfrage asked 'What about the danger of revolutions setting off a nuclear war?' Che Guevara replied:

Well, you have to face that. But what about the people who are dying anyway in what is known as peace? I doubt if you Europeans and North Americans can ever understand how it looks to a Latin American *campesino*. His children die of hunger and disease, his wife is violated, he is beaten and treated as a slave — and you, in your pleasant ambience of security, expect him to do nothing because it might start a war. But he is not interested in your survival. As for himself, he prefers to die for something that's real to him — but on the other hand he might conquer and enjoy life a bit for a change. Anyhow, he is the one with only chains to lose, and the one who will do it; the proletariat is not a shock-force in under-developed countries. In our revolution we found we had done just what Mao wrote without ever reading him — its common sense in any country of our type.

It appears that in Latin America the Chinese point of view corresponds more closely to experience than the Russian.

No rules

The third level of the Chinese indictment — Khrushchev's erratic personality — is not important from an ideological point of view, but it is serious in practice. The most striking example of how the Chinese have suffered from it is the withdrawal of the Russian technicians in 1960. For nearly three years nothing was published about this affair and Chinese people never mentioned it in the presence of foreigners. Now that it all comes bursting out in the spate of embittered controversy, it seems too fantastic to be credible, but there is no dispute about the facts.

Suddenly, just at the time of most severe economic difficulties in China, the technicians were instructed to pack up and come home, taking away with them the blue-prints of the installations on which they were working, and contracts for supplies of equipment were abruptly broken. The only explanation that seems plausible is that Khrushchev, in a fit of exasperation, uttered a threat intended to bring the Chinese Government to heel, and then felt obliged to carry it out.

Some fresh details were given in an editorial article in December:

However, the great achievements gained since 1958 was no plain sailing. As a result of the serious natural calamities in the three consecutive years between 1959 and 1961, there was a great decline in grain and industrial crop output, which brought on very great difficulties. During the few preceding years, because of the lack of experience in construction and in the absence of comprehensive, specific policies, and because some of the work was not done in the spirit of the general line, some shortcomings and mistakes occurred in our practical work; this, too, made difficulties for our economic construction. During that period, we also encountered an unexpected difficulty. In July 1960, the Soviet authorities actually took this opportunity to bring pressure to bear upon us and extended ideological differences between the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties to state relations; they suddenly and unilaterally decided on a complete withdrawal of the 1,390 experts who were in China to help in our work, they tore up 343 contracts for experts and the supplements to these contracts and abolished 257 items for scientific and technical co-operation and since then, they have reduced in large numbers the supplies of complete sets of equipment and key sections of various other equipment. This has caused our construction to suffer huge losses, thereby upsetting our original plan for the development of our national economy and greatly aggravating our difficulties.⁴

As it happens, it was not particularly intelligent to choose the moment of acute agricultural trouble for this blow. Investment in any case had to be cut down. The damage to the Chinese economy was mainly in slowing down industrial development after the agricultural crisis had been overcome. This was not too high a price for independence. Indeed, some observers are apt to count the whole affair as an example of 'a bad thing turned into a good thing' since most of the technical problems have now been cracked by Chinese experts, and self reliance makes them all the stronger. On a less romantic estimate, the damage will be felt for some years yet.

However that may be, it is no excuse for Khrushchev, who evidently supposed that he was attacking the Chinese when they were too weak to survive the shock. Even an American administration, they say, does not behave with such a total disregard for the conventions. Khrushchev has no rules.

Stalin

One of the elements in Chinese propaganda least sympathetic to Western ears is their defence of Stalin. But to them it means something quite different from what it means to us. It illustrates once more the three levels of their objection to Khrushchev's policy.

First of all, the secret speech of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Party was made without any warning or consultation of other Parties, but all were required to accept the new line. The Chinese leaders would object to this in principle even if they had no particular views about the substance of the statement. Resentment at Khrushchev's attempt to dictate to them began to grow from that day.

They also objected to the substance of the new line. They had their own bitter grievances against Stalin, which they had swallowed for the sake of unity. They had taught their people to look up to their 'Soviet elder brothers' and to regard Stalin as a great leader of the movement to which they all belonged. Their public was not ready suddenly to be told that he was a criminal. They felt no need for a destalinisation, since in their view, they had never abandoned 'inner-party democracy' or violated 'socialist legality'. Popular adulation of Mao is not on a par with the 'cult of personality' in the Russian sense; it is the response to a great national leader springing spontaneously from the people, not worked up by sycophants. They had no desire to defend Stalin's crimes, but they did not wish to advertise them.

Finally, the way the revelations were made, the exaggerations, injustice and lack of historical sense, were typical of Khrushchev's irresponsible mentality.

An open letter *On the Question of Stalin* argues the case very sharply.

Comrade Khrushchev completely negated Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. He failed to consult the fraternal Parties in advance on this question of principle which involves the whole international communist movement, and afterwards tried to impose a fait accompli on them. Whoever makes an appraisal of Stalin different from that of the leadership of the CPSU is charged with 'defence of the personality cult'

as well as 'interference' in the internal affairs of the CPSU. But no one can deny the international significance of the historical experience of the first state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the historical fact that Stalin was the leader of the international communist movement; consequently, no one can deny that the appraisal of Stalin is an important question of principle involving the whole international communist movement. On what ground, then, do the leaders of the CPSU forbid other fraternal Parties to make a realistic analysis and appraisal of Stalin? . . .

The Communist Party of China has consistently held that Stalin did commit errors, which had their ideological as well as social and historical roots. It is necessary to criticise the errors Stalin actually committed, not those groundlessly attributed to him, and to do so from a correct stand and with correct methods. But we have consistently opposed improper criticism of Stalin, made from a wrong stand and with wrong methods . . .

While defending Stalin, we do not defend his mistakes. Long ago the Chinese Communists had first-hand experience of some of his mistakes. Of the erroneous 'Left' and Right opportunist lines which emerged in the Chinese Communist Party at one time or another, some arose under the influence of certain mistakes of Stalin's, in so far as their international sources were concerned. In the late Twenties, the Thirties and the early and middle Forties, the Chinese Marxist-Leninists represented by Comrades Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi resisted the influence of Stalin's mistakes; they gradually overcame the erroneous lines of 'Left' and Right opportunism and finally led the Chinese revolution to victory.

But since some of the wrong ideas put forward by Stalin were accepted and applied by certain Chinese comrades, we Chinese should bear the responsibility. In its struggle against 'Left' and Right opportunism, therefore, our Party criticised only its own erring comrades and never put the blame on Stalin. The purpose of our criticism was to distinguish between right and wrong, learn the appropriate lessons and advance the revolutionary cause. We merely asked the erring comrades that they should correct their mistakes. If they failed to do so, we waited until they were gradually awakened by their own practical experience, provided they did not organise secret groups of clandestine and disruptive activities. Our method was the proper method of inner-Party criticism and self-criticism, we started from the desire for unity and arrived at a new unity on a new basis through criticism and struggle, and thus good results were achieved. We held that these were contradictions among the people and not between

the enemy and ourselves, and that therefore we should use the above method.

(I tried to point out to my Chinese friends that, from our point of view, it is rather too mild to describe the Stalinist persecutions as 'errors'. But all their indignation was concentrated on Khrushchev.)

Tibet

The accusation of aggression in Tibet is rebutted by the claim that Tibet is as much a part of China as Wales is of the United Kingdom. At first, when they accepted reunion, the Tibetan administration enjoyed complete internal autonomy, subject to an agreement to carry through some elementary reforms. The reforms were delayed; Peking remained patient and correct, until the rebellion in 1959 — a bad thing turned into a good thing — allowed them to throw out the ancient tyranny and begin to clean the place up. Reform goes slowly even now. The people enjoy 'three abolitions and two reductions' — the abolition of rebellion, *corvée* and serfdom, and reduction of rent and interest. Education and medical services are being introduced. Religion is respected and monasteries damaged in the fighting have been repaired. The rebels never had any popular support and the liberated peasants are happy to be rid of them. (Nothing much is ever said about the Khampas who are generally dismissed as hereditary bandits. I suppose they are one more sad case of wild people who much prefer not to be civilised.)

The few foreigners who have visited Tibet confirm the Chinese account of what is happening there.

What practical improvements has it been possible to achieve in so short a time? There have been three major advances from which all progress can develop. First, the feudal system which paralysed the country and the parasitic power of the church which dominated it have been overthrown by the liberation of the serfs, the distribution of land among the people and the disestablishment of the monasteries, which can no longer live on the taxation of the laity. Second, the introduction of a national education system, which is essential if the people are to be able to use the agricultural and industrial techniques which can now be made available to them. Third, a modern medical service which will maintain the people in better health and increase the birth rate in a country where the population is too low to exploit the potential wealth of Tibet.

The hard labour of serfs and the primitive methods of agriculture

were adequate to provide a minority with immense wealth compared with the poverty of the majority. They could never give a decent standard of living for the present population, let alone a good one.

But by abolishing the feudal system and breaking the economic power of the monasteries the new government released resources of food which, however thinly spread, have raised standards to a more tolerable level. The human energy and enterprise released in freeing the serfs is incalculable and perhaps the most important contribution to the increase of production.⁵

India

The Chinese story of the border question is easier to follow than the Indian version. When two great modern nations, liberated from Imperialist domination, meet at a frontier for the first time, a new situation is created. Many 'problems left over by history' have to be settled. The Chinese side offered to negotiate and meanwhile proposed a demilitarised strip between the two armies, to prevent clashes from occurring. The Indian side would do nothing but reiterate their territorial claims, which, however far-fetched, they insisted on regarding as indisputable and sacrosanct. (An English historian, by no means biased in favour of China, has exposed the flimsy basis of much of the Indian case.)⁶ By setting up advanced posts behind the Chinese positions they invited retaliation, and finally launched an offensive, in October 1962, to which the Chinese were obliged to reply in force.

The explanation is that the Indian Government represents capitalist elements who set class above country. (The Indian mentality is baffling to the Chinese. That a man like Pandit Nehru should be friendly, even grateful, to his late oppressors, suggests nothing but a despicable lack of national self-respect.) They are alarmed at the idea of having the liberated peasantry of Tibet in touch with their own people. They are eager for an excuse to call in American military aid. And they need chauvinistic clamour to keep the minds of their population off their own miseries. In the long run the Indian people will 'stand up'. Meanwhile the Chinese regard them with sympathy and goodwill. (The Chinese seem to be blind to the damage that their spectacular military success did to the progressive elements in India and to the cause of anti-Imperialist solidarity, or at least they prefer to believe that it will all come right in the long run.)

Some Indian politicians flatter themselves that their troubles with China were a cause of the quarrel between Khrushchev and Mao. The Chinese see it the other way round. Khrushchev was making a cat's paw of India in

his efforts to intimidate China. Subsequent developments seem to bear out the Chinese rather than the Indian view.

Western Europe

The Chinese authorities are prepared to behave correctly to anyone who behaves correctly to them. We British get good marks for having promptly recognised the People's Republic (though not much for winding up our Empire, on the whole, peacefully). The possibility of enlarging trade in conditions of 'equality and mutual benefit' is opening up with the forced decline of exchanges with USSR (but Japan seems to be in the way to reap the main benefit). Friendly relations are encouraged but it is necessary to preserve a cautious attitude to nations which are the declared allies of USA.

The bomb

It is not easy for a British interlocutor to meet the Chinese argument that, if any one needs an 'independent deterrent', it is they. For a socialist country, they claim, atomic weapons are purely defensive. One of the counts against Khrushchev is his threat to wipe out Great Britain at the time of the Suez crisis.

We have always maintained that socialist countries must not use nuclear weapons to support the peoples' wars of national liberation and revolutionary civil wars and have no need to do so.

We have always maintained that the socialist countries must achieve and maintain nuclear superiority. Only this can prevent the imperialists from launching a nuclear war and help bring about the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

We consistently hold that in the hands of a socialist country, nuclear weapons must always be defensive weapons for resisting imperialist nuclear threats. A socialist country absolutely must not be the first to use nuclear weapons, nor should it in any circumstances play with them or engage in nuclear blackmail and nuclear gambling.⁷

In the Chinese view it was a stupid and irresponsible adventure to take bombs to Cuba. Once there, it was wrong to humiliate Castro by offering to accept inspection of the withdrawal. The partial test-ban treaty is mere deception; it will only put off genuine disarmament. The Chinese need to have a bomb of their own to discourage USA from attacking them, now that the Russian umbrella has been withdrawn. (Here the argument grows tangled, for they do not admit that it was the Russian umbrella that has saved them so far, and they have been maintaining all along that US administrations do not use atomic weapons because to do so would finally discredit them and bring their hopes of world dominance to an end.) However, it would not increase their security to ruin their economy by setting up as an atomic power. So the argument ends in the air.

The lucky children

If, as they see it, the Russian revolution went wrong, how can they ensure that theirs will not? The generation now growing up are the lucky children who inherit what their fathers fought and suffered to win. They are prone to take everything for granted. They do not realise how much there is still to do and some begin to hanker after 'poshism' and relaxation. Children of literate families pass examinations more easily than those equally able from peasant homes — there is a danger of a quasi-hereditary elite re-establishing itself. Among the peasants, it is necessary to be on guard against the 'spontaneous development of capitalism' from the permitted private trade within the communes. In all the taunting criticism of materialism and corruption in USSR there is a note of anxiety — 'We must not let it happen here'.

Conclusion

Whether the Western observer finds the Chinese point of view sympathetic or deplorable, the moral to be drawn from it is the same. It is we who are disgraced by the United Nations farce. It is we who suffer from restricting trade. It is we who are piling up trouble for the future by trying to organise the world without the largest country in it.

To abuse and attack the Chinese makes them all the more certain that they are right. The only way to combat the view that Imperialism is a menace to peace or that the partial test ban will not lead to genuine disarmament, is to use whatever influence we may have to prove it wrong.

1963

¹ *Peking Review* No 49, December 6th 1963.

² *Apologists of Neo-Colonialism. Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IV)* (Foreign Languages Press, Peking), pp 3-5.

³ *The Man at the Door with the Gun*. (Monthly Review Press), p 246.

⁴ *Peking Review* No 49, December 6th, 1963, p 10.

⁵ Stuart and Roma Gelder. 'The Truth About Tibet', *Eastern Horizon*, October 1963, p 17-18.

⁶ Alistair Lamb. *The China-Indian Border*. Chatham House Essays.

⁷ *Two Different Lines on the Question of War and Peace* (Foreign Languages Press, Peking) p 26.

6: What's New in China?

The economy

First, the *all-round turn for the better* in the economy that set in last year has progressed satisfactorily. They do not like to say that this year's harvest is the best in the recorded history of the country, but probably it is. The food markets were bulging with supplies before the holiday, and no dearth appeared afterwards. Communes have had to cut down the area under vegetables, because yields had risen so as to create a surplus (more canning plant is needed). We hear that further south, cadres are sleeping in the streets so as to make room to store the bumper cotton crop in their houses.

With the agricultural situation in hand, industry is getting into its stride again. Self-sufficiency in oil has been achieved. Last year the withdrawal of the Soviet technicians and their blueprints was still being felt, but now one report after another comes in of solutions found for technical problems under the slogan of self-reliance, all the better because adapted to Chinese needs, so that the withdrawal has proved to be *a bad thing turned into a good thing*. (I was inclined to doubt whether this could really be true until I saw something of what technical self-reliance has done for North Korea.)

In general, the controversy with the Soviets, already, when I first arrived in September, seemed less bitter. Last year the note was becoming distressingly shrill; this year the Chinese leaders seemed to have recovered their former tone of cool irony. Chen Yi, addressing a meeting of foreigners working in Peking, explained that they had invited representatives of all fraternal countries for October the First and assured them that it was to be a holiday; no word would be uttered to spoil their pleasure. 'It would have been discourteous of us not to ask them', he said, 'and it would be discourteous of them not to accept'. Ordinary people, too, seemed less prickly about the whole business and in general more self-confident and relaxed.

Demography

But the census (which has not yet been published) seems to have shown a disturbingly high rate of growth of population. A propaganda campaign is going on for family planning and later marriage. It is never admitted that

this has anything to do with economic considerations. The stress is put on the health of mothers, education of children and the desire of young women to be free to work. Perhaps this is good psychology though not perfectly candid. As usual, the movement catches on well in the cities. As for the country people, some observers say it will take them twenty years to change their views; others that, when a young married cadre is asked by the peasant women if she has children, and she says 'No', they cry 'Aren't you lucky!' This is a change of view indeed. Not, of course, that the women do not want children — but later, and two will be enough. Perhaps the opposite opinion comes from those who have been talking only to men.

Ideology

The controversy between *One divides into two* (correct) and *Two combine into one* (heretical) was in full swing in Party circles. This is an argument in the theological style, when points are scored by striking analogies and apposite quotations from the Fathers, rather than in the scientific style, which relies upon controlled experiment. But theology is necessary when doctrines are derived from the written word, to expound the texts and adapt them to new problems. The argument was started, no doubt, to check any weakening in the confrontation with Khrushchev and to give comfort, after the profound shock of the apparent perfidy of the once revered Soviet Union, by showing that after all there are bound to be contradictions in everything, even in the world Communist movement. Recent events have brought their own comfort, but the argument — more properly it should be called an exercise — continues to rove over every sphere. Some Western journalists were hissing that it portended a purge in the Party. Up to date, the chief heretic is still in his job, and still defending his opinion.

National Day

For a week and more before October the First, infectious excitement was mounting up, like the preparations for Christmas in a house full of children. The outer yard of the Palace was full of lorries being fitted up as floats and troupes of dancers rehearsing for the parade. Every other day some head of state arrived to drive through miles of streets lined by schoolchildren with flags and paper flowers, drums, bands and dancing, brilliant in the clear sunshine. Alas, when the day came, it was grey and drizzly, but everyone was determined to enjoy it all the more, like the Coronation in London. The parade, two hours to the minute, was pretty and gay — massed colours, balloons sailing into the sky, a flight of doves. Young Pioneers, schools,

colleges, institutes, industries, religions, sports and arts — each took their turn. There was a contingent of militia, but no display at all of military might except for the model of a rocket among the industrial floats. Perfect foresight and organisation brought the thousands of foreign visitors to the viewing stands, and back afterwards through the happy crowds melting away without confusion.

Some Western journalists have been hissing recently that Chairman Mao and his colleagues are looking aged and tired. It seems to me that anyone has a perfect right to look aged after living strenuously for 71 years. But, however that may be, Mao imposed on himself the tiresome job of shaking hands with a long queue of the principal guests before the great banquet in the Hall of the People on the eve of October the First. (Forethought again. Each group among more than five thousand guests found a translation in the appropriate language of the menu and the address, laid out on the table allotted to it). There he was, large as life (they hiss that he has shrunk) on the Tien An Men, standing for two solid hours waving to the crowd. There was Chou En-lai, chatting affably till midnight with Western delegations of no particular importance, after the magnificent performance of *The East Is Red* on October 2nd. The journalists must have very exacting standards of mental and physical stamina.

In the evening, under the fireworks, the drizzle now turning to cold rain, the huge square was filled with laughing, singing, dancing students, the wetter the merrier.

Theatre

The Peking Opera and all local varieties have gone modern, taking themes from stories of the revolution. The adaptation of the old conventions is often cleverly done (though scenery is a nuisance and spoils the mime) and the plots are exciting, like a thriller, but they lack the sophistication of the classics. You know from the start that the good guys are going to win. Even in the tale of a heroine of the underground married to a coward, there is no tension; the husband simply turns round and becomes a good guy after all. However, it is a great sign of theatrical vitality to be able to make the change. This is what people like, and this is the level at which they can take it. These are morality plays. The Elizabethans are still to come. When they do no doubt, they will be received with suspicion by audiences whose taste will have been formed on the operas of today, by then grown to be old fogies like me.

But *The East Is Red* was a complete artistic success, for in epic, simplicity of sentiment is no fault. It was also a great feat of organisation — three

thousand performers perfectly rehearsed, including a large contingent of Young Pioneers. A kind of narrative dance, blended of national styles and Peking opera, with the contemporary songs sung by a choir of two thousand voices, set forth the history of the revolution in alternating scenes of heroism and pathos; idyllic (meeting a mountain tribe on the Long March); comic (guerillas popping up behind the reeds); triumphant (dancing before the Tien An Men at the founding of the Republic); grim (the Korean War); and dedicatory (the chorus of the Young Pioneers). Foreigners, not only the Chinese to whom it spoke so near, were enthralled and delighted.

Penology

I visited the prison which Professor Sprott wrote about in 1952. There are now only 1,700 men and 100 women in this prison, which is the only one serving Peking. (There were more women when the Family Law was new and mothers with *feudal ideas* had not yet learned that it was a crime to beat up their daughters-in-law). 40 per cent of the cases are reactionaries and 60 per cent ordinary criminals.

A prison term in China is a course of treatment. The prisoner has to work, to analyse himself to see where he went wrong and to remould his point of view till he is fit for life in a socialist community. Criticism and praise, awards for good work, and remission or extension of sentence are the main sanctions.

The blocks of cells are perfectly clean and fresh and there are flower beds around them. Work is for eight hours a day, six days a week. In spare time they can play basket-ball, get up theatricals and arrange parties amongst themselves. They are taken out on excursions to see the socialist society functioning around them. The workshops have changed since 1952. Now there are two types of equipment, knitting machines for nylon socks and presses for various odds and ends made of plastic. (Is not this rather a niggling kind of work to be good for the soul?) About 300 free workers are employed along with the prisoners — men who had no relations to go to and preferred to stay on at the prison after their sentence ended.

Capital punishment (for ordinary crime as opposed to treason) has virtually ceased. A capital sentence is suspended for two years to give the criminal time to show that he deserves a chance to live. It is then transmuted to a nominal life sentence, which is terminated when the case is deemed to be cured.

Professor Sprott was not allowed to broadcast about this in 1952 in case it gave a favourable impression of China. He published his paper in the *Hibbert Journal*.

A sad story

The prison put me in mind to ask to hear a court case, but it was a civil suit — an appeal for divorce refused in the lower court. In China a divorce judge corresponds to a marriage-guidance counsellor in England. The aim is to find the solution that will do the least damage all round. The court-room and the procedure are as simple and homely as could be. Three judges, two women and a man, sit in a row with their clerk; the parties, seated below them on ordinary chairs, are encouraged, each in turn, to pour out all their feelings and demands. It was an interesting glimpse of *feudal ideas* still surviving. The man had married the girl to provide his old mother with a daughter-in-law while he worked in another province. The mother was superstitious; a soothsayer had told her that the girl brought her bad luck. When the girl quarrelled with his mother, the man had no use for her; but she demanded to live with him away from his family, more, one felt, from injured pride than affection (neither party was a very sympathetic character). The man pretended that he had been forced into marriage by his family, which is impossible under the law; he tried to create prejudice by saying that the girl was posh and wanted to wear a skirt, but that did not score. The judges listened patiently to their mutual recriminations and tried to talk them into a better frame of mind. The divorce was refused for the time being. We were told that much more work has to be done on the case. If it finally proves hopeless, he will get his divorce. It was noticeable that throughout the whole procedure there was never the remotest reference to sex.

K and A

October 16 was a memorable day. In the morning the banner headline of the paper: KHRUSHCHEV STEPS DOWN was being repeated from mouth to mouth with merry grins. But the reaction was realistic: This is all to the good, but the basic situation has not altered. (One into two proves to have been a good education.) I was flapping around trying to get some news of the British General Election, but no one was interested.

An announcement was made to stand by for an important statement on the radio at 5 pm (postponed and postponed all the evening). Our heads were full of K. It seemed odd that the Chinese should have anything to say officially except: No Comment. But we were so full of K that we forgot all about other rumours that had been circulating some time earlier. Still arguing to and fro about K at 11 pm, we were struck dumb by the announcement of the bomb test.

A strange world where one more bomb is a hopeful sign for peace.

The Government statement, appearing in English next morning, was

dignified and humane. The Chinese pledge themselves never to use the bomb first. Let other bomb-owners say the same. Chairman Mao's priceless phrase *the bomb is a paper tiger* was repeated in the statement. Then is China's bomb also a paper tiger? Certainly, for no government in its senses can ever use the bomb. (The danger arises from the fact that not all the governments stay in their senses all the time.) Then was it worth the trouble and expense to test a bomb? Certainly it was. The argument is paradoxical but simple all the same.

English residents in Peking, always *plus royaliste que le roi*, were acclaiming the subtle political timing of the bomb-test on the morrow of Khrushchev's fall, until a Chinese friend of some experience pointed out that you cannot arrange to push the button at a day's notice, and the moment has to be fitted to the atmospheric conditions so as to minimise danger from fall-out.

President Johnson's aphorism *the darkest day in human history* was frequently quoted with the sardonic comment: What about the day of Hiroshima, to go no further back into human history?

Korean miracle

After much importunity, I was able to make a quick trip to Korea.

Rage and chagrin at the partition and destruction of their country have been canalised into a fervour for work and study that is producing an economic miracle, up to now too little known. Its most remarkable feature is to have built up from next to nothing a corps of technicians who can install and operate sophisticated modern industries, adapting methods of their own to utilise their own materials. In this, self-reliance proves superior to the import of ready-made know-how from abroad.

At the same time they have created new cities and towns on sites completely and systematically destroyed. They are rebuilding every one of the villages, substituting neat and pretty cottages of white-washed brick and grey tile for grass-roofed huts of mud. They have put agriculture onto its feet to replace the lost rice bowl in the south and they have a sufficient supply of consumption goods (admittedly not yet of the best quality), along with an all-inclusive network of social services, to provide a tolerable standard of life for everyone, in town and country alike, with prospects of steady improvement.

This illustrates in miniature Mao's thesis that, if the imperialists choose to smash up the world, it will be rebuilt under Communism. Let us hope that the point has been taken.

Returning to Peking, I hear that Premier Chou En-lai is off to Moscow

for the November the Seventh celebrations. Does this portend an all-round turn for the better also in international affairs?

1964

Postscript, 1976

No, it did not.

7: The Cultural Revolution

1. Introduction

It is difficult even to begin to understand the significance of the Cultural Revolution through the medium of translations from Chinese, for not only the phraseology but the concepts in terms of which it is expressed are strange to us. What is the meaning of *a Party person in authority taking the capitalist road*? How can class war persist when there are no owners of private property to exploit the workers? How can the leader of an established government proclaim that *Rebellion is justified*? What are a *Great Alliance* and a *Triple Combination*? How does the thought of Mao Tse-tung make crops grow on a stony hill?

A new revolution

The key to the conception of the Cultural Revolution, as its own spokesmen see it, lies in the Marxist analysis of society, refined and developed by Mao Tse-tung on the basis of his long experience of Communism in China.

Marxist analysis distinguishes between the *base* of a social system and the *superstructure*. The base is a system's economic foundation. The base of capitalism is personal property in the means of production, which yields rentier income and gives private enterprise control over economic development. Similarly, the base of socialism is State ownership and control of industry. A superstructure is the pattern of institutions, organizations, chains of authority, traditions and habits of thought which grow up in society. Inequality in consumption, the love of rank, status and power, untrammelled individualism and a social hierarchy based on wealth, belong to the bourgeois superstructure of capitalism; the superstructure of proletarian socialism requires acquisitiveness to be replaced by a spirit of service.

Accepting the dichotomy between the base of a social system and the superstructure, Mao Tse-tung shows how the superstructure may react upon the base: *Ideas may become a material force*. Contrariwise, when the base is changed, the superstructure will not automatically transform itself accordingly. Dogmatic Marxists might regard this as a heresy, but that is

scarcely reasonable. The meaning of a proposition depends on what it denies. Marx, combating the liberal idealism with which he was surrounded, denied that independent thought, drawn from the blue air, can control events. Once the view that ideas arise out of material circumstances has been accepted, there is no sense in denying that causation runs both ways. If Marx had believed that ideas can have no effect on events, why should he have taken the trouble to write a book?

According to the Chinese view, Russian experience shows that a capitalist-type superstructure can grow up on a socialist base. When there are no capitalists to run industry and direct investment, the State develops organs to take over these functions, and the individuals put into control of them may suffer deformations of character sometimes even more unpleasant, from the point of view of socialist ideals, than those of the old bourgeoisie.

Sometimes a third party might feel that the embittered attacks which Chinese spokesmen make on Soviet 'revisionism' are exaggerated and unfair. But they are clearly right in opposing Stalin's contention that abolishing private property in the means of production automatically creates a classless society. Soviet experience shows that power, privilege, and access to education can form the basis of class distinctions passed on from parents to children. Moreover, in trying to break out of the excessive rigidity of centralised planning, the Soviets and People's Democracies are resorting to economic incentives and market relations which, in the Chinese view, are inimical to building a superstructure of human relations in a genuinely socialist form. There is, certainly, an important difference between using profits as a criterion of success in an enterprise and relying on profits as a motive for activity; but the Chinese maintain that the first will inevitably lead to the second.

The Chinese Marxists maintain that Stalin made a serious and far-reaching error in asserting that class war comes to an end as soon as socialism is established. But the public is taught to revere him as a great socialist, whereas we think of him as the very archetype of the organisation man. (His profile, so grim to us, appears on many a hoarding, as one of the prophets of the Old Testament, with Marx, Engels, and Lenin.) Khrushchev, who to us has certain sympathetic features, is the archetypal traitor to the Chinese, for he abandoned the international struggle against imperialism to butter up the Americans. Perhaps the contradiction can be reconciled by saying that Stalin saved the base of socialism in the Soviet Union, but did irreparable damage to the superstructure; while Khrushchev in trying to repair the superstructure only succeeded in damaging the base. There is a curious convention in Chinese politics of not naming anyone by his name until his status has been officially pronounced upon. As long as he

remains in limbo, Liu Shao-ch'i, the leading target of the Cultural Revolution, is referred to as the Chinese Khrushchev. For us this has wrong associations. Liu represented what we think of as a Stalinist element in the Communist Party.

The Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road, whom we may call the Rightists¹ for short, were accused of imitating the Soviet model. They were accused of carrying out their work in an authoritarian manner, developing a superior attitude to the workers, forming gangs to protect each other, and taking advantage of their position to gain privilege and amenities for themselves. They were taking the capitalist road in the sense that they obstructed socialism in the superstructure. And if a bourgeois superstructure is not pulled down in good time, in the end it will destroy the socialist base. The aim of the Cultural Revolution is to carry socialism into the superstructure and to root out from it all remnants of bourgeois ideas and a bourgeois way of life.

In the Soviet Union, the old middle class was almost completely wiped out. The new class developed afresh. In China, a great part of the middle class welcomed the victory of the Communists over the miserable, corrupt régime of the Kuomintang; they were willing to work with the new government in reconstructing the country; at the same time, they were necessary to it, since the mass of peasants who had won the civil war could not provide the personnel to run the administration, develop industry and, least of all, to man the greatly extended education services that the new régime required. Many middle-class people 'turned over' and believed that they had become socialists, but the change did not always go deep. In China the Rightists in the Party could find sympathy and support in the old middle class, and indeed were often of middle-class origin themselves.

The Chinese conception of class is not quite easy to grasp. The whole movement has been phrased as a class war between proletarians and bourgeoisie, but the old bourgeoisie were only minor auxiliaries of the 'Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road' who were the main objects of attack. Bourgeois intellectuals, except for those 'scholar despots' who were carrying out reactionary educational policies, are treated tolerantly in the Sixteen Points², and special mention is made of the need to protect scientists and technicians who, though bourgeois, have contributed to national development.

Class is not defined by birth. An old mandarin or an ex-landlord may be an honorary proletarian; some of the most vicious of the organisation men were once-poor peasants corrupted by power. Class is defined by a state of mind, and the state of mind is revealed in conduct. When the record of a cadre is being examined, former status as a poor peasant will count in his favour, and a former bourgeois style of life is *prima facie* suspicious, but in

neither case decisive. He must prove a *proletarian* attitude today, not proletarian origin in the past, to be liberated from mistakes and rejoined to the movement.

Still less is class hereditary. Some ex-landlords have been found to harbour dreams of restoration and to pass on to their sons title-deeds and records of the lands they once owned to show them what their inheritance ought to have been, but this is not allowed to tar all landlords' children. When I asked a young functionary for examples of the kind of mistakes that cadres made, he took his own case: 'As I am a poor peasant's son, I thought I had no need to make revolution. I thought I was a superior person, and I protested against landlords' children being allowed to join the Red Guards. Now I realise that that was wrong. We should draw a sharp line between family and individual.' Some of the bad characters who infiltrated the Red Guards and made mischief turned out to come from highly placed Party families — a well-known phenomenon in the Soviet Union. The onus of proof is on everyone to show by his attitude of mind and his behaviour that he is a true proletarian, though as usual hard-headed with all their tolerance, the Chinese workers expect to have to examine the evidence more closely if the individual concerned was not a natural-born proletarian than if he was.

Political argument for the broad masses of the population must necessarily be simplified. To sophisticated listeners it cannot but appear crude. In the course of the Cultural Revolution the Rightists were presented as evil men. Certainly, under attack, they resorted to knavish tricks, but to an outsider it appears that they were not *merely* scoundrels; they had a point of view; it can be glimpsed between the lines of the accusations made against them. It was something like this: Mao's ideas were fine for leading a peasant army but they are not appropriate to running a modern state. The Great Leap of 1958 was an irresponsible adventure, for which a heavy price was paid in the three bad years that followed. (The Rightists refused to recognise the return in increased production later enjoyed on the great investments which threw the economy off balance while they were being made in 1958, or to acknowledge that the communes have been vindicated by the continuous increase in harvests since 1962.) The Rightists insist upon the need for organisation and authority. Every army and every industry in the world is run on the basis of a chain of command from the top downwards. That those in a higher grade in the hierarchy should have a more comfortable standard of life than those below is not only excusable but desirable, since it adds prestige to authority. The workers need tutelage; obedience and diligence are required of them; they are none the better for having their heads full of political wind. The task of industrialisation must be carried out

fast. It is nonsense to wait till the mass of the population are educated. We must build up a corps of managers and civil servants quickly; that means that we must draw upon the old lettered class, even if they were landlords or reactionaries in the past. In the arts, the dominance of politics produces a dreary philistinism and in literature a stupid black and white morality, smothering all the subtlety and grace of Chinese traditions.

Behind this lurks a more solid point. How can China stand alone in the face of the hideous threat of American aggression? Mere prudence dictates some ideological concessions to the Soviets (which, indeed, the Rightists would welcome for their own sake) to regain the support of a powerful ally.

Arguments such as these may touch a responding chord in many Western breasts, but in China today all questions are reduced to one: is this the road back to capitalism or on to socialism?

The struggle

At every level, in the Chinese Party and administration, Rightists were ensconced in positions of authority. At the top was an organised group, evidently with wide ramifications, who were preparing to take power. There was no need for a coup. The President of the Republic, Liu Shao-ch'i, had been appointed as the successor to Mao Tse-tung in due constitutional form. They had only to wait for the moment when they would be free to set about running the country according to their ideas. Meanwhile, Mao was an indispensable figurehead, but the organisation men could gradually get their supporters into place and gain more and more control over policy. This was particularly important in the field of education. In principle, education was being democratised but in practice it was building up an elite. The children of the old middle class naturally had an advantage over the children of peasants and workers as long as the old styles of formal education and formal examinations were preserved; under guise of maintaining academic standards, class stratification was being solidified.

The preliminary skirmishes against the position of the Rightists took the form of articles criticising some literary works which were accused of making attacks upon the Chairman in various disguises. Peng Chen, the Mayor of Peking, had been leading a committee to discuss the question of socialist culture (this was the origin of the name Cultural Revolution, which now has a much wider meaning). He produced a pussy-footing report, without consulting his colleagues, which was repudiated by the Central Committee in a document published on 16 May 1966. This gave a hint to a number of people, whose suspicions had been aroused by troubles in their own work, that there was something wrong on high. The familiar method of venting

individual opinions by writing posters was used for a dramatic attack upon the head of Peking University. The publication of this poster on 2 June 1966 has come to be regarded as the first shot fired in the Cultural Revolution. The movement quickly spread to other institutions, and was soon followed by an outbreak in a number of factories of criticism on leading Party men in their administration.

The Rightists reacted sharply. Using the authority of the Party, they appealed to the biddable majority and isolated the rebels. Their counter-attack, picturesquely described as a *white terror*, for the most part consisted only in abusing the dissidents and confusing their minds with the argument that to attack a representative of the Party is to attack the Chairman himself. In some places it was pretty rough. In some, the Rightists, getting rattled, only made fools of themselves; at one institute, for example, they ordered the service staff to cut off electricity and close the students' canteen. The rebels worked by candlelight and built themselves a cooking stove. In many institutions and enterprises the rebels were pressed very hard, but they evidently had allies higher up. The Principal of Peking University was dismissed, and the Party Committee of the city was reorganised.

All this while Mao Tse-tung was out of town: The only overt reaction he had to the situation was to swim the Yangtse so as to indicate that he had not yet got one foot in the grave.

At the end of July he returned to Peking; on 5 August he put up his own poster, under the title 'Bombard the Headquarters'; on 8 August the Cultural Revolution was formally adopted as Party policy. The Central Committee promulgated the guide-lines for it, which become known as the Sixteen Points.

Rebels took heart; student groups organised as Red Guards flooded into Peking and Mao Tse-tung put himself at their head. The movement, however, was still bubbling up from below, with little control from above. The limits set by the Sixteen Points, which are moderate and humane, were often surpassed.

From the Red Guards, the movement spread to the industrial enterprises. All down the line there were Party members in the highest positions at each level, who, whether they had organisational connexions with the centre of the web or had merely acquired a taste for power on their own, were ready to put up a fight for their positions and for the Party apparatus to which they were attached. Honest Party members at lower levels were bewildered. On the one hand the Central Committee had promulgated the Sixteen Points, on the other hand they had been trained in implicit unquestioning obedience to the direction of the Party conveyed to each from the grade above him. Many remained immobilised by mental

conflict right through. Some saw the light, earlier or later. One important group, the municipal officials in Shanghai, joined the rebels in November 1966. A few declared for the rebels from the start and had to stand the racket of Party discipline for doing so.

There was a long, tough struggle between the Rightists and the rebel groups in the factories, rising to the level of city and provincial governments. There were serious clashes in some places where the Rightists had mobilised mass support for themselves. At one stage they resorted to what is not very happily called economism — paying bonus wages and promoting apprentices to full pay. (The expression is derived from the Russian term used by Lenin in *What is to be done?*) Groups of workers were sent off to Peking for a shopping spree until the favourite luxuries, such as woollen cloth and wireless sets, had to be removed from the counters. The rebels overcame this attack. Workers returned the goods and paid back the money to their enterprises. The fact that economism cropped up at the same time in centres all over the country suggests that it was a move directed from the centre of the web.

The Cultural Revolution is sometimes represented as a Party purge. It is true that a certain group of leaders was deprived of power (though the sanctions against them were not in the Stalinist style) but the movement was carried out in a way unknown elsewhere. The rank and file in every enterprise and institution was called upon to criticise the cadres with whom they had been working. The people were to re-educate the Party and at the same time to learn that the Party was necessary to them.

In the Sixteen Points there is a clear distinction between two kinds of opposition to the Cultural Revolution — the anti-socialist Rightists and the remnants of bourgeois society. The attack is concentrated on the former — the Rightists in the Party. In the course of the movement the bourgeoisie outside the Party were to be weaned from old ideas, culture, customs and habits, but not personally attacked except when they had committed crimes to be dealt with by the law. Bourgeois scientists and technicians were to be protected. These were the principles of the revolution, but in the first uprush of the Red Guard movement they were not always observed; bourgeois intellectuals who had committed no offence except to *be* bourgeois intellectuals were subjected to cruel humiliations. Nor was the principle always observed that: 'When there is a debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.' Throughout the movement, the influence of Chairman Mao, and of all who followed his lead, was strongly opposed to violence and disorder, but it broke out from time to time.

The treatment of cadres in the Sixteen Points lays great stress upon the

separation of the Party as a whole from the small number of enemies of the Cultural Revolution.

In the third section those in charge of Party organisations are divided into a number of categories. Some are playing a leading part in the Cultural Revolution, some are terrified of taking a clear line. Some who are conscious of having been on the wrong side are afraid of being exposed. If they make an honest self criticism they can redeem their position, but if they try to cover it up, they will inevitably make more mistakes. Some are actively working for the Rightists. This describes the position at the time when the document was promulgated. In the fifth section it is stated that in the end less than 5 per cent of the cadres will have to be rejected.

The eighth section gives a summary of four categories of cadres and calls for the complete overthrow of the small number of anti-socialist Rightists. The emphasis is on the redemption of the great majority.

Though the victims of the revolution were all 'Party persons in authority' no suggestion was allowed of an attack on the Party as such. The first and most often recited of the quotations in the little red book is 'The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party.' Individuals who were caught on the wrong side are invited to change their thinking. The directives of the Sixteen Points narrow the target of attack to a 'small handful' and even they are directed to 'remould themselves through productive labour'. At the time of writing the disgraced ministers seem to be living quietly in some kind of house arrest, but in factories the few incorrigible Rightists are working on the very same shop floor where lately they strutted with offensive pride.

After 1 October 1967 when the most turbulent period came to an end, the greatest emphasis was on 'liberating the cadres', reconciling the rebels with those who had at first opposed them, and developing a new kind of relationship between the people and the Party, such as has not formerly been seen in any socialist country. The conception is that in the future, when the whole people have been imbued with the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, they will not allow the cadres to depart from it.

The adventure of launching the revolution and allowing the popular movement to boil up as it might was not so dangerous as it may seem, for all the while the People's Liberation Army was at hand, in case things should go wrong. In the first phase, troops intervened only occasionally to separate rival groups who had come to actual blows; the soldiers were without arms, so that they suffered more casualties than the contestants. When production or transport were disorganised, army units came in to get it going and key installations were guarded to prevent sabotage. It was not until the end of January 1967 that the PLA was openly brought upon the scene and instructed to support the left.

Intervention by the PLA is not at all like what we understand by calling out the troops. In a typical case (described to me by a foreigner in the institute concerned), where a dispute between rival groups was interfering with production (for normally production was kept going pretty well and argument took place after hours) five young men turned up with no equipment but some bedding, and held discussions and meetings for three days. Sometimes a reconciliation reached by these means came unstuck after they left and had to be made up again. (Another chore was to get the children back to school after their heady adventures, for which the army man would use the glamour of his name and enough exercise to sweat the mischief out of them.)

When the leading Rightists in an organisation had been isolated, the main problem was to reconcile the various groups, each claiming to be the true supporters of Chairman Mao, that had formed in the course of the struggle.

With 1 October 1967 the dramatic period came to an end. Posters were cleared from the hoardings, processions with drums and gongs were heard no more. Reconciliation and reconstruction were the order of the day. This marked the victory of the revolution in its revolutionary phase.

At this stage Great Alliances had to be formed between contending groups. Alliances had to be formed not only at government level but also in every enterprise and institution. Intervention by representatives of the PLA was often called upon to bring the groups together.

The next stage after the formation of an Alliance was the process of 'liberating the cadres', that is, examining the behaviour and attitudes of Party members in executive positions to see who could be accepted as a supporter of the Cultural Revolution and who belonged to the 'tiny handful' of anti-socialist Rightists.

When the process of sorting out the cadres had been completed in any enterprise or institution the next stage was to call upon the cadres who had passed the test, representatives of the rebel groups, and members of the PLA to form a Triple Combination (in smaller establishments, the militia stood in for the army) and to set about working out a provisional organisation to supervise the activities of the institution and to carry the revolution through to the next phase.

(It was at this stage that I visited China. The various reports below date from that time — November 1967.)

There were many dramatic episodes in the year-long struggle up and down the country, many strange personal tales, many reversals and counter-reversals. Much is obscure even to those who lived through it, but the main line is clear enough. What took place between June 1966 and October 1967 certainly was a revolution, in the sense of an abrupt reversal

of political power, carried out by a popular movement, as opposed to a *coup d'état*, an inner Party purge, or a general election. But it was a popular rising instigated and guided by the leader of the very régime which was established before it and which remains in being.

Red guards and rebels

The most picturesque and startling feature of the Cultural Revolution was the part played in it by school children and students.

They are referred to in the Sixteen Points in August 1966:

Large numbers of revolutionary young people, previously unknown, have become courageous and daring pathbreakers. They are vigorous in action and intelligent. Through the media of big-character posters and great debates, they argue things out, expose and criticise thoroughly, and launch resolute attacks on the open and hidden representatives of the bourgeoisie. In such a great revolutionary movement, it is hardly avoidable that they should show shortcomings of one kind or another, but their main revolutionary orientation has been correct from the beginning. This is the main current in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is the main direction along which the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution continues to advance.

When Chairman Mao gave them his blessing, the movement spread over the whole country. At one time, it is estimated that two million young people from the provinces were visiting Peking.

They took a great part in the protests and discussions conducted by posters and home-made news sheets. They were allowed to criticise all and sundry, high and low, no holds barred. From Ministers to school teachers, they picked out all that could be accused of bourgeois thought or reactionary attitudes. There are tales circulating about Chen Yi, the Foreign Minister, known for his dry humour. One is that he had been sitting on a platform for some time wearing a dunce's hat, being criticised, when presently he looked at his watch, and said: Please excuse me, I have to go to the airport to welcome the President of Guinea. Or that, opening the quotation book, he intoned in the usual form 'Chairman Mao teaches us that Chen Yi is a good comrade'. The Red Guards cried out: Take off that hat. I won't, says Chen Yi: You put it on, you can take it off. There were some posters even against Chou En-lai, but these are believed to have been put up by a gang of young Rightists who infiltrated the Red Guards, or else by a group infected with anarchism and 'down with everything'ism for

which Red Guards also had to accept criticism. (The view of some China watchers that Chou's position was seriously threatened seems to have no basis whatever. He was kept busy the whole time going round from one ministry to another seeing that the business of government was not interfered with during all the hubbub.) Violence was not in the rule book, but it broke out from time to time.

Why was the revolution conducted in this unorthodox way? In one sense it was led and instigated by Chairman Mao himself, while in another sense it was spontaneous and unregulated. At any moment the Chairman could have used his enormous prestige to crush opposition. Why did he rely on the young people to open the attack for him?

The answer seems to be that, first, if Mao had cleared out the Rightists and attached the Party more firmly than ever to himself, he would have created the very situation that he was most anxious to avoid — a personal struggle for the succession, such as followed the death of Lenin and the death of Stalin. He wanted the succession to go to the people, that is to a Party who had been broken in to serving, not ruling them, and to a public that had learned to watch the Party, at every level, for signs of ambition, corruption and privilege sprouting again. The slogan 'Rebellion is justified', which sounds strange in the mouth of the leader of an established government, becomes the equivalent of: The price of freedom from Party bosses is eternal vigilance.

Second, it was impossible to know, looking down from the top, who all the Rightists were and through what ramifications they were linked, or to seek out their allies and sympathisers among the old bourgeoisie and ex-landlords. They exposed themselves by their reactions to attack, and by their demeanour under criticism or in confrontation with records of their past behaviour which the student rebels dug out, as well as by cruder indications, such as stocks of arms or the title deeds of old land holdings found hidden in their houses. (The famous case of the nun who was maltreated and expelled is explained in China by the allegation that Red Guards found a wireless transmitter and a wad of dollar notes in her cell.) A decorous, legal procedure could never have done the job.

The melodramatic and sometimes farcical aspects of the Red Guards movement have distracted attention from its importance in political strategy. By calling in the youth, Mao disguised the inner Party conflict and made it possible, by isolating a few top figures at each level while rescuing and redeeming their followers, to disintegrate the opposition without splitting the Party. The Rightists were used to patronise Mao as a peasant leader, too simple-minded for the exigencies of politics in a modern state. Perhaps they are still wondering what hit them.

There was another aspect of the movement. Bringing out the Red

Guards was killing two birds with one stone. For some years there has been talk of the problem of the third generation, the lucky children who take New China for granted and begin to think of what they can get out of it for themselves more than of what their fathers gave to build it. Their elders had begun to fear that cynicism, sloth, and self-indulgence would creep in before the economy was able to provide modest comfort for the whole people. There was some danger that trying to mould them by means of continual preaching would only produce a set of little prigs. Now another generation of teenagers and students have been plunged into the revolution and become committed to it. Running their organisations without the aid of grown-ups, and later on Long Marches, they learned more about politics and about their own country in a few months than they could ever have learned out of books. The education that the revolution gave to them was no less important than the political contribution that they made to it.

After power had been seized, trouble broke out between rival groups thrown up in the course of the rebellion. (Actual violence seems to have continued longest in Canton, though most of the foreign 'eye-witness reports' of it would better be described as mouth witnesses.)

Once more the question arises, why did Mao allow it to happen? Why was the PLA allowed only to advise instead of to suppress the outbreaks by force? Once more, it was to let the people learn for themselves. The rebel groups had to realise that without the aid of the Party they could not form a stable administration. After asserting the right to criticise the cadres, they had to find out that they needed their help before they were willing to accept it.

The spectacle of the head of a government (which the Chairman is in fact if not in form) inciting rebellion against the administration does not fit in with the constitutional notions that we are used to. This is what has most caused misunderstanding in the West and has permitted the press to represent the whole affair as mere chaos and disintegration. For the Chinese, who think of politics in terms of moral content not legal form, it is sufficient to say that it is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, led by Chairman Mao. Since it is a unique event, there are no preconceived categories in which to place it. To the historian of the future it will appear as the first example of a new kind of class war — a revolt of the new proletariat of workers in socialist enterprises and peasants turned commune members against the incipient new class of organisation men in the Communist Party.

The thought of Mao Tse-tung

Comfortable foreigners, however sympathetic, cannot know in their bones what it means when the young soldier, bursting with health and energy,

tells them how his little sisters were sold during a famine to keep the rest of the family alive, or when the well-read Party secretary tells them that his mother was a beggar. They may guess, but cannot feel, the wave of gratitude, at once intimate and exalted, that goes out to all that the name of Mao Tse-tung stands for.

The younger generation, who did not know the old China, are being steeped in the same emotion; all China is steeping in it, apart from the scattered few who refuse to be redeemed. There is an element in this of personal adoration which would be highly dangerous if its object were affected by it. But nothing could be further than Mao's style from the vanity and paranoia of Stalin's last years. The prestige of Mao is a national asset and he is using it, very coolly, to preserve unity in the face of sharp political conflict; indeed, it is hard to see how he could have turned the trick without it. The main emphasis, however, is not upon the mortal man but on the immortal scriptures.

There is pasture for subtle minds amongst the *Selected Works*, but the pieces chosen for the widest popularisation were simply written to touch the hearts and confirm the resolution of peasant soldiers in the long hard wars that led to the Liberation.

The Thought teaches us that we must serve the people whole-heartedly, without calculation of loss or gain; that we must be on guard against the sophistries of disguised self-interest. It teaches that problems can be solved; to solve a problem it is necessary to analyse it correctly; mistakes must be examined so as to draw lessons from them; failure must be met with fresh determination. Problems must be discussed with others and mutual criticism frankly accepted, whether the problem is terracing an eroded gully, setting up a political organisation or rooting out false conceptions from one's own mind.

The power that moves mountains does not lie in these unexceptionable precepts, but in the resolution simply and sincerely to carry them out.

All this may sound idealistic or even sentimental, but it has a very practical advantage. China still has long years of toil and accumulation lying ahead before she can establish an unassailable position as a great modern nation. High morale is much more economical than incentive wages.

The claims of the ideal seem much less extravagant in a socialist setting than they do to us. Of course it is not quite historically accurate to identify self interest with capitalism. Other economic forms are not immune from it. Besides, a modicum of self interest is indispensable in human life. Ambition and love of praise make a baby learn to walk. All the same, it is true that in a commercial society, everyone, not only the great exploiters, is under a constant pressure of competition which sharpens egoism and

blunts generosity. When this is combined with a religion which preaches, Love thy neighbour; and, Take no thought for the morrow, public morality develops a horrible squint.

Moreover, the Chinese were well prepared by their past traditions to find a morally coherent way of life. Their religion was never theological, but based upon right conduct in this world.

A young Englishman who worked in China during the period of social disintegration under the Kuomintang, made these prescient comments on the generation he learned to know:

... one thing is certain: the collectivisation of conscience which in the present anchorless state of society is China's greatest source of danger, will also prove to be her very precious heritage and a unique source of strength just as soon as new and more vigorous ways of thinking come up from the people to break the bonds of bureaucracy.

... the Chinese people's great flair for democracy is seen very clearly in the workings of the *pao-chia*³ system at its lower levels; for in its practice, the Old Hundred Names⁴ give constant proof of their amazing reasonableness, tolerance, and gift of practical coordination.

But the real hope for democracy lies in these characteristics themselves and not in the system which, for want of a better outlet, now gives them expression. At its worst, the *pao-chia* system is almost pure fascism, and may well have served as inspiration for the system by which Hitler brought party discipline into German families. In its best and fortunately still most common form, it is no more than a democratic distribution of the class burden — a government of the people by the people for the officials. The Chinese peasant takes it because he is the Chinese peasant, and because, by nature of the society in which he lives, once he can read enough to understand what is going on, he *ipso facto* no longer belongs to the Old Hundred Names, but is a member, however humble, of the privileged classes.

The identification of literacy with privilege is still, after thirty-five years of the Republic and state education, the No. 1 enemy of Chinese democracy. For it utterly precludes that most essential condition of all democracy — not, surely, the existence of wise and privileged rulers, but the existence of a self-confident, opinion-forming, idea-generating people.

Losing itself in its work for the people, Chinese youth, afraid no longer of wearing straw sandals and overalls, or of being seen reading too much in public, will find itself. Patriotism will be based on popular national achievement instead of on half-baked uppercrust Westernism. Modern ideals of democracy and productive efficiency can be brought

safely down to Chinese earth, and linked with the peasants' amazing aptitude for democratic forms of action — an aptitude now but half seen through the dark glasses of the *pao-chia* system. And who knows that a new form of collective face will not quickly emerge, under which everyone competes with his neighbour to get a reputation for unstinted social effort.⁵

It is precisely this that the Cultural Revolution aims to supply.

A people's army

One of the main issues between Mao and the Rightists, going back to the removal of Peng Teh-huai from the Ministry of Defence in 1959, was the character of the Army. (This episode was the target of Wu Han's play, *Hai Jui Dismissed from Office*, a thinly disguised attack on Mao.) The Rightists supported orthodox military conceptions and dismissed Mao's ideal of a truly proletarian army as a romantic day-dream inspired by nostalgia for the caves of Yen-an, holding China back from building the modern armed forces that she needs. Under Peng's influence, the Soviet model was followed and even uniforms imitated the Russian. Lin Piao reversed the trend. At one stage, commanders were required to serve in the ranks from time to time in other units, so as to learn the soldiers' point of view. Now the return to the old Yen-an style has gone much further; there are no badges and no permanent ranks; the necessary hierarchy is created by appointing suitable men to the appropriate positions of leadership. All eat, sleep and study the Thought of Mao Tse-tung together. When men positively want to learn, military training does not take up so much time. The soldiers run farms to feed themselves and go out to help the commune members when they are short-handed. The old guerrilla tradition, that the Army are fish swimming in the waters of the people, is cherished more than ever.

No one has suggested that this peculiar way of doing things undermines discipline, for even the least sympathetic student of Chinese affairs has to admit that no army in the world has such perfect discipline as the PLA. Let us hope that no one is seriously thinking of testing them again as a fighting force.

Like many aspects of Mao's policy which seem extravagantly idealistic, there is a practical side to the concept of a people's army. Consider recruitment. The communes offer complete economic security, at the level that each has succeeded in reaching. No one will turn to the Army for the old reason — as a refuge from misery. Selective service, when the boys

chosen bitterly envy those that remain at home, is not good for morale. For the officer class in any country, however, the attitude is quite different. The men are taught to feel that it is natural for officers to be drawn from amongst their 'betters', who cannot be expected to rough it as they do. A conventional army preserves something of the traditions of feudalism. For officer cadets it promises an honourable career, with social status and a tinge of glamour. Candidates are not lacking, and a conventional army can pick and choose the most suitable.

This situation exists in China for ordinary recruits. Young men in the militia in every village are eagerly equipping themselves to qualify for the honour of being chosen to serve. Thus the apparently romantic idea of a classless army fulfills a very practical purpose.

The concept that every kind of service is equally honourable is instilled into all ranks by the study of Mao's writings. The book of quotations is in daily use, and the little article 'Serve the People' is a source of inspiration. Nowadays foreigners are taken to visit a unit of the PLA to learn about the study of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung. A recent recruit recounts his case. He joined the PLA from junior high school and thought of himself as an educated man. He expected to be a tank driver, or at least to learn rifle-shooting. But to his chagrin he was detailed to the piggeries. He was so much ashamed that he avoided meeting his old school fellows and he could not bring himself to tell his girl friend what he was doing. The political officer got him to read 'Serve the People' and talked it over with him. He learned to feel that there is no low or high in service. He came to love his pigs; he saved the life of one that was sick by nursing it day and night. When his girl friend came to visit him, the first thing she asked was what work he was doing. Putting on a solemn air, he said: My work is very onerous and very honourable; I am serving the people by minding pigs. She laughed: Why are you so pompous? Why don't you say simply that you are working in the piggery? I don't believe that you have read 'Serve the People'.

When the PLA men go out to help commune members with the harvest, they show them by example and precept how to carry the Thought of Mao Tse-tung into daily life.

The economy

There were moments during the turmoil of the struggle against the Rightists when production was disrupted in some places, and after the Rightists had been dismissed, bickering between rebel groups caused fresh trouble. On the whole, however, work was kept going in a remarkable way. The great release of energy, the determination of the rebels to show that they were fulfilling Mao's demand to 'grasp revolution and stimulate

production', and the possibilities of cutting out red tape and reducing the ratio of administrative personnel to productive workers, led to such high rates of output that many enterprises overtook arrears and fulfilled their planned assignments for the year two or three months ahead of schedule. Our China experts, of course, will deny that this is possible, but let any British factory manager ask himself what would happen to output if his operatives actually *wanted* to increase productivity, without demarcation problems or fear of redundancy, and would freely exchange ideas with his engineers about how it could be done.

In the countryside, far from impeding production, the Cultural Revolution helped to make the harvest of 1967 'the greatest in the recorded history of China'. There has been a succession of ever-improving harvests since 1962 and in 1967, though the weather was favourable, there is no doubt that high spirits contributed something extra. (Imports of wheat, which save transport in feeding the great coastal cities, are offset by exports of rice.)

No doubt 'natural disasters' will come again, but every year the area of land in which water is under control is extended; bit by bit, stocks of grain are being built up all over the country and technical methods improved, so that the old helpless dependence on the weather grows less.

The old tale that the agricultural communes collapsed after the Great Leap dies hard. The communes were formed by linking neighbouring cooperative farms all over the country in 1958, in a rush of enthusiasm. They were invaluable during the three years of disaster which followed, for they formed an administrative network which could deal with rescue operations and control relief where harvests failed. But they had been formed very hastily; the necessary psychological preparation had not everywhere been made, and some extreme ideas, such as abolishing private plots and distributing food according to needs rather than on work points, proved to be far ahead of the times. During the bad years, reorganisation took place. The extremist policies were abandoned. The team, a small group of twenty or thirty families, became the accounting unit for the distribution of income and the control of manpower; local fairs were organised to encourage private household trade. The direction of national investment was changed to favour agriculture and supplies of consumer goods were made available so as to induce the peasants to want to earn money. This might be regarded as a kind of New Economic Policy; but Lenin intended the NEP as a temporary device in face of difficulties, which was to be reversed as soon as they were overcome. The Rightists in China advocated these measures as permanent and wanted to push them further. Recovery, starting from 1962, and the fruits of the huge effort of investment made in 1958, began to show that the Great Leap was not a

failure after all, but the Rightists were reluctant to admit it.

In 1964 the campaign for four clean-ups, in respect of political, ideological, organisational, and economic aspects of life and work in the communes, was a kind of dress rehearsal for the Cultural Revolution; it smoked out corruption among cadres and dangerous intrigues among ex-landlords, and it reversed some of the measures of the bad years — local fairs were given up, so that the sale of household products reverted to the Marketing Cooperatives and the regular State channels of trade. But in some places the movement was deflected into other channels.

There is a famous brigade at Tachai, in northern Shansi, which is held up to the nation as a model. Here, as often happens, a cooperative that had been successful carried on as a unit within its commune, on its own lines. The terrain was the most hopeless imaginable — stony hills and eroded gullies of loess. The brigade set about creating cultivable land for themselves by the laborious process of building walled terraces on the hillside and filling them with soil. In 1963 they were struck by a deluge which washed away most of their work and completely wrecked their village. Refusing State aid to which they were entitled, they rebuilt both fields and village and then extended the work, so that now they have ample land to support themselves and to contribute to feeding the nation.

The Rightists in the Province found all the song about these achievements gall and wormwood. They took advantage of the four clean-ups to challenge the figures of crop yields put out by Tachai, saying that they had understated the area of their land and overstated their harvest. The villagers, saying: Is this four cleans or four dirties? stuck to their statements. Chou En-lai heard of the affair, and declared that national honour was involved — the matter must be cleared up. A huge team was sent in to measure every plot and count every grain. The brigade was vindicated.

They are now advancing towards some of the conceptions which were premature in 1958. They have simplified the workpoint system and have one grand day of settlement every year, instead of nagging over them every evening (other communes, following the light of their example, have got down to once a month.) Private plots were given up after the flood. This autumn, grain was distributed by asking everyone how much he would need for the following year instead of doling out the official rations. Needless to say, these achievements were due to personal leadership — the Party secretary was a local peasant of heroic mind. But the example can be reduced to a system once it has been pioneered.

There is another aspect of the Tachai story. There are very great differences in the level of income per head obtainable in different communes for reasons of economic geography. This gives rise to 'socialist

rent'. Moreover it sets up a cumulative movement. Land tax is negligible for an area where output has been rising, as it was fixed on the basis of yields at the time of the land reform. A rich commune saves and invests in land improvements and in installing small-scale industry, while a poor one struggles to feed its members. It would be politically dangerous to penalise the prosperous commune, and economically extravagant to deflect investment to the poor one. The Tachai example appeals to the poor commune to pull itself up by its own bootstraps and offers rewards in pride and honour that (once food and shelter are secure) may be preferred to anything that money could buy. Thus apparently starry-eyed idealism is found once more to be based on solid Chinese common sense.

The old socialist slogan 'Production for use and not for profit' is not at all easy to implement when it comes to the point. A socialist enterprise in the consumption-goods sector has selling prices, the wage-bill and material costs fixed for it, and is instructed to achieve or, better, surpass a planned profit. It is impossible to set prices so delicately as to steer production into the right channels to meet the consumer's requirements in the best possible way, and directives in physical terms are even more clumsy. On the other hand, if enterprises are allowed to manipulate prices for themselves (as in some of the new experiments in the European socialist countries), the vices of a market economy — monopolistic competition — quickly creep in. The system of planning in China from the start has been more favourable to the consumer than in other socialist economies; the local branch of the Ministry of Internal Trade, in every centre, acts as a wholesale agent, placing orders with factories in response to the demand from retail outlets, so that the 'product mix' is continuously controlled by the requirements of the market. (Consumer's sovereignty does not always have a good effect upon design, for, alas, in China as much as anywhere else, the natural good taste of the peasant collapses at the first sight of industrial products. Only the 'national minorities' still keep up some resistance and insist on traditional patterns.) Even so, control cannot be perfect. Under the policy favoured by Liu Shao-ch'i the profit criterion was dominant and sometimes conflicted with human needs. For instance in a knitting factory, children's socks carried a smaller profit margin than larger sizes, so that under the Liu policy the shops were starved of them. To remedy this by raising the factory price of children's sizes and then subsidising them would be the correct solution according to market principles, but it is much simpler for the workers to decide to produce them because they are wanted.

To take another example — shops in the cities cannot yet afford to run delivery services, but the girls serving in the vegetable markets make it their business to find out if there are lonely old people in the district who have no one to shop for them, and carry them supplies without extra

charge. The commune cooperative shops send out to remote uplands when workers are too busy in the fields to come in to the village. In such ways the neighbourly spirit of country life is carried into commerce. The aim of Chinese socialism is to make use of all the technical achievements of modern industry without the dreary boredom and dehumanisation of personal relationships that accompany it everywhere else. There is no point in arguing *a priori* about whether it is possible. They have got some way already and they do not mean to turn back.

The arts

Devotees of Chinese history and art must hibernate for a while. Among the quotations in the little red book we find: 'Works of art which lack artistic quality have no force, however progressive they are politically. Therefore we oppose both works of art with a wrong political viewpoint and the tendency towards the "poster and slogan style".' But for the time being the latter point is not observed.

In the West the greatest art lovers are generally unbelievers, yet they can enjoy a Madonna or a Crucifixion, not merely with appreciation for its technical skill but also with a sense of communication with the artist as an artist. This kind of detachment from content is not possible for the young enthusiasts of the Cultural Revolution. Political content is all; the only form to be seen derives from a debased socialist realism which was imported by the Russians before they were repudiated as revisionists. Appreciation of their Chinese heritage no doubt will revive when the young generation have made the break with the feudal past so completely that they can look upon its works without revulsion. Meanwhile the museums are closed and the antique shops are out of business.

During the campaign against Four Olds — ideas, culture, customs and habits — iconoclasm broke out, in the tradition of the English Puritans. It seems to have been checked, but not before some harm was done. However, I can testify that the rumour that the Summer Palace has been wrecked is untrue — the only damage is that some of the little paintings in the long corridor that were felt to be glorifying feudal life were whitewashed over.

External affairs

The Chinese are sometimes accused of xenophobia, by which is presumably meant that they have a sense of superiority (damaged during the semi-colonial period) equal to that of the English. In the present movement, the danger is rather the reverse. The patriotism of the Chinese,

which runs very deep, is so completely fused with socialist ideology that they do not notice that there is a national element in it. When the young things are singing of Mao Tse-tung as the leader of all the peoples of the world, it does not occur to them that their neighbours, who have national leaders of their own, might think them arrogant or fanatical. Trained to distinguish between the people of a country and its Government, they are unaware that *Russian* feelings are wounded by diatribes against Soviet revisionism. Thus they make enemies for themselves out of pure goodwill.

In non-Communist Asia complaints are often bitter. China is accused of isolating herself by stiff diplomacy, sharply worded notes and fanatical ignorant comments on the affairs of other countries in the official Press. It is hard to know how much of this is intentional and how much a question of mere manners. During the period that they were on good terms with the Russians they took over the heavy, offensive style of controversy among Western Marxists. It is to be hoped that in the present campaign against revisionism it will be recognised and corrected.

We must keep a sense of proportion, however. Those very newspaper readers in Asia who are most indignant about Chinese pronouncements, learn that the CIA is corrupting their students and arranging to murder their statesmen with amused detachment. 'Of course, Americans are funny that way.' If the Chinese record in deeds, not in words, is fairly assessed, it seems that they take a great deal of provocation very calmly. (The myth of 'unprovoked aggression' in 1962 is, of course, still cherished in some circles in India and abroad, for obvious reasons.)

As for the diplomatic gaffes of the Red Guards, it is easy to see that the enthusiasm of youth, fed on a strong diet of anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism, would inevitably overflow the bounds of correct behaviour between sovereign states. Episodes such as the burning of the British Chancellery in Peking were certainly not in the programme outlined in the Sixteen Points. The authorities were evidently in a dilemma. Correct diplomatic etiquette demanded that the Red Guards should be checked even if it meant using armed police. The conduct of the Cultural Revolution demanded that they should be free to make mistakes and that they should not be confused by any contradiction of the simple doctrine that imperialists and revisionists are representatives of an evil thing. The solution was to let them shout in public and give them a dressing down in private for violating the strict injunctions against violence in the Sixteen Points.

So far as the campaign against imperialism is concerned, the Chinese leaders are calling more emphatically than ever for worldwide revolt, but they are also insisting more emphatically than ever that each nation must liberate itself by its own efforts. At the same time they have declared that if

they are attacked 'frontiers would have no more meaning'. Who is willing to stand as a hostage for the USA?

Meanwhile China continues in her policy of refraining from all but verbal protests under provocations that grow more and more blatant. She has everything to gain by keeping out of trouble. No régime in the world is less in need of foreign distractions.

There is certainly a military element in the Cultural Revolution, but it concerns defence in the literal sense, not in the double-talk sense that we are used to. The PLA, for all its civilian work, is kept at constant combat readiness; to train a militia, to build up stocks of grain in every village, to inculcate self-reliance, so that local units can carry on when the centre is disrupted — these are preparations to frustrate an attack on their own soil. The H-bomb is a warning not to attempt it.

The military-industrial complex in the USA has an interest in representing China as aggressive in order to excuse themselves; it is not easy to make their case sound plausible. The Chinese authorities are building up the economy of a huge country, still poor but well equipped with natural resources, and now they have committed themselves to doing so without taking any short cuts, in a genuinely democratic manner. The Cultural Revolution makes the accusation of aggressiveness less plausible than ever.

The way ahead

To overthrow and discredit the Rightists and form new organs of power was only the first round of the Cultural Revolution. It was removing a blockage to the socialist road that now is to be followed.

The first necessity, adumbrated already in the Sixteen Points, is to reconstruct the educational system, so as to cut at the root of class privilege and to prepare the young generation to 'serve the people' with knowledge and skill as well as political enthusiasm. It is easy enough to denounce what was wrong with the old mandarin style; it is not so easy to establish the system of selection, methods of teaching, the syllabuses, and the tests of qualification that suit the new society. All this is in the melting pot with pupils and teachers experimenting together.

At the same time, the new relations between the Party and the people at every level have to be accepted on both sides, consolidated and formalised.

The eternal conflict between the needs of organisation and the claims of democracy cannot be settled at one blow. To develop a modern industrial state, especially under threat from a powerful enemy, needs planning, coordination and unified command. A government hierarchy working through a bureaucratic apparatus cannot be dispensed with. However

much the leaders may be dedicated to revolutionary principles, authority breeds love of power and bureaucrats become 'bureaucratic'. The Cultural Revolution has swung the balance violently against organisation towards popular spontaneity; how can it be kept from gradually creeping back?

The conception which underlies the Cultural Revolution is that the reconciliation of democracy with good order can be made by imbuing the whole nation with the ideology expressed in the phrase 'serve the people'. Ideology is necessary in any administration. It is impossible for every detail to be covered by a book of rules. There must be an accepted attitude which makes everyone know which is the proper way to decide individual cases. The overpowering emphasis on the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, in education, propaganda, entertainment and art is intended to develop an attitude of mind and habit of work that will put, as it were, a ratchet behind the achievements of the Cultural Revolution and prevent them slipping away. (Mao himself is realistic, however, and cheerfully remarks that it may well be necessary to have another Cultural Revolution after fifteen or twenty years.)

In the winter of 1967 the movement had turned inwards; the directive was 'We must combat self interest and eradicate revisionism in our own minds'.

None of the great religions has succeeded in producing a satisfactory society. The purpose of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung is to create a setting in which the claims of the ideal are not at variance with the necessities of daily life.

¹This expression is used in a specific sense for those who were the object of attack in the Cultural Revolution, described in the Sixteen Points as 'anti-Party and anti-socialist Rightists'. In English conversation in China they are usually referred to as 'capitalist roaders'.

²See p 000. p85

³An organisation of groups of ten households, through which the KMT controlled the populace.

⁴The Chinese man in the street.

⁵*Fruition. The story of George Alwin Hogg*, by Rewi Alley. Caxton Press, Christchurch, New Zealand 1967. Pp 107, 133-4 and 145.

2 Reports and conversations

The atmosphere at a visit to a factory or an institute has changed since the Cultural Revolution began. Formerly the foreign visitors were shown into a special room, often furnished with upholstered chairs with lace antimacassars. Cups of tea were served and cigarettes offered. Several representatives of the enterprise were present, but only one speaker, the director or secretary of the Party Committee, gave the prepared report and answered questions. The rest sat silent, taking time, presumably, from other duties.

This ceremony and waste of space and time was one of the objects of criticism at the Second Machine Tool Factory at Peking. Now the visitors sit on benches and the room is evidently used for working meetings. The visit opens with reading some quotations from the little red book. (The interpreter finds the place in the English edition for the visitors.) Workers from the new rebel committee are the hosts. The conversation is informal. One speaker leads but others chip in. The atmosphere is frank and open. At a college, the students have no hesitation in giving their views in front of professors, who were formerly treated with deference and awe. On the other hand, a large part of the conversation is in set phrases and generalisations. This is not, I think, a cover for individual opinions. It is rather that, for the speakers, to be able to analyse their own experience in terms of 'the choice between two roads', 'eradicating revisionism', or 'avoiding the ultra-left line' is for themselves a source of enlightenment and they think it more important to give the generalisations than the concrete experience. It only needs a little probing to bring out the details. A comical example from a commune:

'Formerly we fed the pigs on grain; that is the rich way. Now we contribute to national development by feeding them economically.'

'How do you feed them?'

'We feed them diligently and economically.'

'Yes, but what do you give them to eat?'

'We give them one quarter of the grain, and we cut green food in the ditches.'

'How do the pigs like it?'

'They put on weight faster than before.'

The following are a few typical examples of reports on revolutionary experience given to me in October and November 1967.

A machine tool factory, Peking

The movement in this factory took light from the publication on 2 June of the poster at Peking University. Thousands of posters were put up criticising the authorities. One in particular, who was considered a bag egg, was the Deputy Chief Engineer, who had a suspicious past — he had been an officer under the Kuomintang and he was a capitalist, receiving interest. (Under the state-private system which was introduced in 1956, many capitalists received interest on the value of assets in the factories which they formerly owned, and many were employed in executive jobs. There does not seem to have been any decree winding up this system, but it seems to have generally melted in the fire of the Cultural Revolution.) The authorities were criticised for their personal attitude. They made themselves superior and lived in a bourgeois style. There was an accident when a worker was drowned in trying to save a boy who fell into the river, while one of the cadres who was having a swim near by gave no help and behaved in a heartless manner. One of them used his office car to go fishing on Sunday. He arranged for his wife to have an administrative job for which she was in no way qualified. When they were expected to do the regular stint of manual labour in the factory they chose clean and light work for themselves and arranged to be in the workshop that has to be kept at a steady temperature for technical reasons. They were accused of an undemocratic style of management, which was inherited from the Soviets, relying on experts and giving orders without explanation to the workers. They were accused of misusing the factory funds — spending money on repairing the swimming pool and prettyfying the office, not caring for production.

(The mildness of the degree of corruption which raised so much indignation is typical of the high level of probity generally established in China.)

The outburst of criticism led to a work team being sent in by the Peking Municipal Party Committee, on 8 June. (This is an old established method in the Chinese Communist Party. Where there is trouble at one level, a work team is sent in from a higher level to investigate and settle the problem.) The work team met the workers at the factory; they declared that they had come to help to carry on the Cultural Revolution. 'Your Party Committee in the factory,' they said, 'is basically revolutionary and good; the Cultural Revolution is primarily concerned with cultural matters. It is an affair of the universities not of industry.' The rebels were indignant. The work team was defending the Party Committee. They were refusing to respond to Chairman Mao's call. That night hundreds of posters went up criticising the work team.

Since the rebels were not silenced, a second work team was sent in. They had been briefed by the first, and learning by that experience, they changed their tactics. They pretended to support the revolutionary movement. They set up a committee of twenty-three members. It was in name a Revolutionary Committee but the members were carefully chosen by the work team. Its members were Party cadres and staff of the factory, leaving no room for workers. It soon became clear that this work team, like the first, was trying to smother the revolutionary movement.

On 23 June the workers organised a committee of their own of eighteen members. They called a meeting to dissolve the committee of twenty-three and to expel the work team. At 10 o'clock that night a third work team was sent in. This team, without pretence, attacked the rebel workers. They branded the group of eighteen as counter-revolutionaries and described the incident of 23 June as a small Hungarian rising. To oppose the work team, they said, is opposing the Central Committee, and opposing the Central Committee is opposing Chairman Mao. Many workers were astonished at this attack. The work team, however, succeeded in organising groups of workers who were blindly loyal to the Party (the rebels describe them as conservatives or royalists) to criticise the group of eighteen and to oppose those who put up posters critical of the authorities.

The work team on 24 June held a great meeting. They called on the eighteen to recant. They tried to make them confess that they were mere self-seekers aiming to set themselves up as leaders. They visited their families and urged them to have nothing to do with such counter-revolutionaries. The work team, throughout the argument, took on themselves the mantle of the Party. They exploited the loyalty of the workers to the Party and their devotion to Chairman Mao. Many were taken in by them.

This was the period described as the white terror. The rebels were under heavy pressure — the hardest thing to bear was the attempt to get at their families. A small resolute group stuck to their opinions.

At the beginning of August the scene changed. Chairman Mao returned to Peking. After a stormy meeting of the Central Committee lasting ten days, the Sixteen Points were issued. While the session was going on Chairman Mao put up his own poster — 'Bombard the Headquarters'. Now it became clear to the workers that the work team had turned things upside down. The work team were unrepentant when they finally left the factory on 13 August; they maintained that, though they might have had some shortcomings in matters of detail, there was no mistake in their line. They advised the authorities in the factory to concentrate all their forces to discredit and crush the rebel group.

The rebels, however, were heartened by the lead that chairman Mao was

giving to the Cultural Revolution; a new group was set up with at first five members. They re-examined the incident of 23 June and restored the good name of those who had been branded as counter-revolutionary. The group quickly grew ('A single spark may start a prairie fire') but all through the summer contention went on. While they argued, the workers kept up production. The rebels put in extra work to make up for time lost at meetings. They were under high pressure. Sometimes they got only two hours of sleep. The authorities resorted to 'economism' and tried to get the apprentices on their side by offering them full wages, but they did not have much success.

By November a majority of the workers had been won over by the rebels; on 25 November the workers, on their election 'in the manner of the Paris Commune' set up a Revolutionary Committee but the management of the factory was still in the hands of the authorities. It was not until January 1967, following the 'January Storm' in Shanghai, that the workers seized power and set up their own management.

In October 1967, when I visited the factory, authority was in the hands of the Triple Combination. The first element in this is revolutionary cadres. Some had early been condemned by the work teams — that is to say, they sympathised with the rebels. Some had followed the authorities but had since admitted their mistakes. Only two of the old bosses had been finally condemned, and were then working on the shop floor, being given an opportunity to 'remould their thoughts by productive labour'.

The second element in the Triple Combination is representatives of the workers — these were men who had come to the fore during the struggle. The third is representatives of the militia. The emphasis at that time was on unity and reconciliation.

The Revolutionary Committee was in charge of management. The work was carried out by three offices, Politics, Administration, and Production. The head of each office serves on the Committee.

The State plan is given to the office of production; the workers, technicians and cadres consult with each other to improve efficiency. The factory is proud to claim that during the period of struggle in July 1967 they produced a new type of grinder, of an international standard.

Production generally has increased. Instead of the artificial system of the staff being required to put in a month of work during the year, the technicians and cadres now regularly work a full shift once or twice a week, so that they have a real knowledge both of the workers and of the technical problems that crop up. Decisions can be taken quickly and a lot of red tape has been cut out.

The workers hope to continue to increase production as well as to carry forward the reorganisation of political life. 'To seize power is difficult. To

use it well is still more difficult.'

A sweet factory, Shanghai

At the other extreme of the industrial spectrum is a small sweet factory in Shanghai employing 250 workers. It belonged to a capitalist and was taken into the state-private system in 1956. In September 1966 it was taken over completely. The capitalist who, under the state-private system got his 5 per cent amounting to 360 yuan per month, has been expropriated, but he is still allowed 160 yuan per month, which is considered adequate for him to support a family of six, taking into account the fact that one son is earning.

When the factory was taken over in 1956 all production was by hand. Technical innovations were made in 1958; now it is about 40 per cent mechanised. About 30 per cent of the output is exported to South-East Asia.

The course of the Cultural Revolution in this small enterprise followed the general line in the city. The workers began to criticise the cadres. The Party branch took a reactionary stand. In November 1966 the rebels in the factory appealed to the Headquarters in the city for support. In January 1967, in the 'great storm', they seized power.

At first the workers tried to run everything themselves, but they found that it was necessary to make use of the experience and ability of the cadres. The question now came up, how to treat cadres who had been on the reactionary side during the struggle. The workers studied the directive in the Sixteen Points, articles in the press on the question of cadres and the quotations from Chairman Mao's writings. They understood that it is necessary to allow the cadres to correct their mistakes. They analysed the history and attitudes of their own cadres.

The Vice Director (who was sitting at the table while this conversation went on) had been on the wrong side; he had fermented disputes among the workers; but when the rebels took power he came over to them. They looked into his past life. He came from a poor peasant family and he had been a child beggar. At the age of 13 he became a landlord's servant (a kind of domestic slave). At 16 he joined the PLA. He became a Party member at 18. His work in the factory had been under the guidance of the Party and he could not be too much blamed for loyalty to his superiors. He was classed, in the categories of the Sixteen Points, as comparatively good.

The Secretary of the Party branch had taken a strong line against the rebels. She sowed dissension among the workers and branded the leaders of the rebels as 'ghosts and monsters'. (This phrase of Mao's, an allusion to folk lore, is intended to apply to evil remnants of the old feudal and bourgeois society.) When she was accused of having made mistakes, she

resisted stubbornly, and abused the rebels and Party members who were supporting them.

They analysed her life story. She had been a child worker and had suffered bitter oppression. When she joined the Party she set herself up as a superior person, she divorced herself from the workers and carried out her responsibilities in an undemocratic style. They decided that she was not basically anti-socialist; she was placed in the third category, as one who had made serious mistakes. In the end she recognised her mistakes and made a self criticism. She was brought in to the Triple Combination, and is now in charge of propaganda.

The former Director of the factory made serious mistakes. He was slack in his Party work and let in untrustworthy ex-bourgeois characters. He believed in co-existence with the old capitalist and allowed him to run the supply department of the factory. He was accused also of putting 'feudal' designs, of dragons and fairies, on the wrapping paper of the sweets.

In management, he followed 'revisionist' policies. He did not take the workers into his confidence. He told them to trust the capitalist and built up his authority. He told the workers that without the capitalist they could not produce sweets, though in fact they had improved the quality of their products since the factory had been taken over. He did not put politics first, but, following the Liu-Teng line, subordinated the workers to the technicians, and set up profits as the criterion of success; also he made use of a system of incentive wages. He came from a bourgeois family and lived in a bourgeois style. He had close relations with capitalists — dined with them and exchanged gifts.

He was graded as a man who had made serious mistakes and as a bourgeois who had not sufficiently remoulded himself, but he was not branded as an anti-Party Rightist. They propose to help him recognise his mistakes. He is difficult to help because he is afraid of losing face, but they consider that he has made some progress. He and the old capitalist are now working on the shop floor.

The system of management has been simplified and the number of cadres reduced by 42 per cent. Each team of workers has a leader who looks after production. Unnecessary rules have been abolished. Both quality and quantity of output have been markedly improved; the annual plan of output was being overfulfilled. Even in the hectic month of January 1967, output was above the planned level.

The wage system has not yet been altered. The average wage is 70 yuan per month. A worker who has been with the factory for fifteen years has a right to a pension on retirement of 75 per cent of earnings. Veteran workers receive full pay during sickness; others, 50 per cent of earnings.

The former Trade Union worked on the Liu-Teng line and has been

repudiated by the workers.

The factory is now managed by a committee of eleven members. Some 60 per cent of the workers are women but there are only three women on the committee.

The story provides a picture of the high degree of devolution and workers' self-management that is being established in the process of the Cultural Revolution. The workers accept guidance from the cadres because they find that they need it.

This kind of self-management is very different from the Yugoslav system which gives representatives of the workers control over prices and the commodities to be produced, and it is different also from the experimental systems in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies which instruct the management of enterprises to earn profits. Prices and supplies are given to an enterprise in China; in the case of this sweet factory, the plan is given by the Shanghai Food Corporation; the product mix is controlled by market demand; if actual costs are kept below the planned level, the extra profit is not kept by the enterprise, but costs and prices are reckoned to include the social security payments for which the enterprise is responsible. Management is not concerned with commercial affairs, but purely with production and human relations within the factory. 'Putting politics in command' means that pride rather than money earnings gives the incentive to the workers and management alike to maintain and improve production.

A factory for blind and deaf workers

The Welfare State in the West has something of the condescending atmosphere of charity. The emphasis in China is not on helping the unfortunate, or even on helping them to help themselves, but rather on calling upon them to contribute something to building socialism. In every quarter of Shanghai there are factories employing blind and deaf-mute workers — those who were formerly an intolerable burden on some poor family, or who scratched a living as fortune tellers and beggars — the discarded scrap heap of a cruel society.

The factory which I visited in November 1967 was started in 1958 with four helpers, four blind workers and four deaf-mutes. They worked by hand with very simple equipment. Now there are 460 workers, of whom 130 are normal. The handicapped workers have succeeded in learning to manage mechanical equipment. The work is ingeniously arranged so that the blind can signal to the deaf by switching on a light when help is needed to repair a machine. The deaf communicate with the normal by finger language. The blind can not only read but also write by pricking out characters in a kind of Braille.

The Cultural Revolution penetrated even here. The workers felt that the Party branch was contaminated with the reactionary line. The management of the factory was undemocratic. The Secretary of the Party branch did not consult with the workers but behaved like an officer giving orders. The blind workers led a rebellion. At first the Party tried to repress them, but they came to the conclusion in the end that their cadres were not really anti-socialist, but had followed the Liu line out of mistaken loyalty. Now a Great Alliance had been formed and work was going ahead in a good spirit.

It was evident that in the problem of making unfortunate people feel that they are not rejected, that they can be of use not only to their own families but the nation, that they are playing a part in a grand movement, the Cultural Revolution is a great help. Every success in learning to overcome a handicap was not only an achievement for the individual, but a vindication of socialism and the Thought of Mao Tse-tung. The normal workers, also, whose tasks must sometimes be exasperating, were evidently buoyed up by the general release of spirits which the Cultural Revolution has brought about.

Educational institutions, Peking and Shanghai

The indictment of the rebel students against the teaching that they were receiving was, first, that the courses were too long, too formal and too little directed to practical application; second, that the object of education was to build up an elite, divorced from the mass of the people; and third, that students from worker and peasant families were discriminated against instead of being helped to make up for their lack of literary background.

I

At the Geological Institute in Peking the old style of teaching was largely based on Soviet text books. The courses were highly theoretical, permitting little scope for field work. Political discussion was discouraged, and slavish loyalty to the Party was inculcated.

At the Medical Academy the teaching was intended to produce the elite of the profession but it was not at all well designed for that purpose. The course was of eight years; the first three were devoted to general science, and the fourth and fifth to pre-medical training; only in the last three years was any clinical work introduced. Emphasis was upon the individual patient and there was no discussion of the social aspects of medicine and its relation to politics.

At the College of Construction and Civil Engineering at Shanghai the

students of architecture complained that they had to make drawings of Notre Dame in Paris, the Law Courts in London and ancient Chinese palaces, and that they were taught highfalutin theory, such as that a door both separates and joins two spaces. After a course of six years, it was necessary to have two years of practical work before they were of any use. Personal ambition to excel as an artist was inculcated. The freshman was told that an architect must have the brain of a philosopher, the eye of a painter, the ear of a musician and the soul of a poet. The students felt that they were being trained to serve an aristocracy, not to meet the urgent needs of the people.

The college was an old one which had been founded by Germans in 1907. With Liberation it had been enlarged and the style of teaching altered but much remained of the old tradition. The majority of teachers were bourgeois intellectuals, many of whom had been educated in the West. They controlled all the faculties and imposed their conceptions upon the courses.

In 1949 not more than 4 per cent of the students came from the families of workers and peasants, now there are more than 50 per cent. But the teachers discriminated against them and jeered at them. In the bourgeois atmosphere some students from poor homes, instead of being proud of proletarian origins, tried to conceal them. There was a pathetic tale of a lad whose mother pulled a cart refusing to recognise her when she came by the college.

Some of the younger teachers and some students had made several attempts to challenge the professors and to introduce Chairman Mao's ideas on education. They had some successes, but each time the old guard frustrated them and undid their reforms.

II

In these three institutions, and in many others, the course of the Cultural Revolution followed mainly the same lines, with individual variations.

The rebel movement began in June 1966, following the lead of Peking University, with posters criticising the authorities.

At the Geological Institute a work team was sent in. The work team maintained that they were representing Chairman Mao; it was only later that the students learned that they were sent by Liu Shao-ch'i while Chairman Mao was not in Peking. Next, the Ministry of Geology sent a team of two hundred members, led by the Vice Minister. There was a member of the Party Committee of the Institute who was on the side of the rebel students. He organised a demonstration of 2,000 students against the work team and drove them out. A new team was sent in by Po I-po, the Minister in charge of economic affairs. (He was afterwards recognised as

one of the chief supporters of Liu Shao-ch'i and disgraced.) With this authority behind it, the work team made a sharp attack upon the rebel students. They branded those who opposed them as counter revolutionaries. They demanded that the rebels should make self-criticism. Many, confused and intimidated, complied and wrote long self-criticisms. Party members who had sided with the rebels were dismissed. Students were forbidden to take part in national demonstrations. But the leader of the rebels refused to submit and kept up the struggle. This period of 'white terror' continued till the end of July, when Mao returned to Peking and the work teams were recalled.

Now the students, encouraged by the publication of the Sixteen Points, carried the war into the enemy camp. They marched to the Ministry of Geology, chanting slogans against the Vice Minister. A second march was organised on 5 September. More than a thousand students, and teachers who sympathised with them, occupied the Ministry. The staff were incited against the demonstrators, and cooks refused to feed them. They camped in the Ministry for three days without food. Their chief enemy, the Vice Minister, was dismissed. (The Minister of Geology remains in office.) Red Guards compiled an indictment of Po I-po, which they believed to show that he had been an anti-socialist at heart even before the Liberation. (When asked how it was possible for a traitor to remain hidden for so long, students replied that it took time to expose his crimes.)

In the Institute, out of 800 teachers only two or three were finally exposed as 'taking the capitalist road'. The rest, in the autumn of 1967, were accepted by the Red Guards and those who had first been hostile were admitting the necessity to change their ideas and methods of work.

At the Medical Academy events followed somewhat the same course, except that the Director, a world-famous surgeon, early accepted the rebels' criticism and came over to their side, so that he himself was attacked by other Party members in the administration of the Academy and by the work team sent in to quell the rebels, who branded him as a counter-revolutionary.

The movement began with a poster put up on 2 June criticising the style of teaching in the Academy. A work team was sent in on 4 June; they convinced some students but the rebels succeeded in driving them out.

The reorganisation of the Ministry of Propaganda on 25 June was an important victory for Chairman Mao's supporters at the level of national government, but unfortunately the new Vice Minister, Tao Chu (the Party Secretary for the Southern Region) who camouflaged himself as an ultra-leftist, turned out to be one of the most obstinate opponents of the Cultural Revolution.

He made a report to the Academy defending the Ministry of Health and

accusing the rebels of opposing the Central Committee and taking a counter-revolutionary line. The students refused to applaud the report and shouted: 'Down with the top Party person taking the capitalist road.' They put up posters deriding Tao Chu. Some students, however, were taken in and sharp disputes broke out. The rebels encouraged each other, finding support in the book of quotations. They wrote a letter to chairman Mao explaining the situation in the Academy.

When Mao returned to Peking the work team was withdrawn. After the publication of the Sixteen Points the students demanded that the work team should come back to submit to criticism and that Tao Chu should come back to answer for his report.

On 23 August he came back. Liu Shao-ch'i had not admitted defeat and was still encouraging the work teams who were trying to suppress the movement.

Tao Chu tried to protect the students and teachers who were opposing the rebels. The counter-revolutionaries had made a list of students who were active in the Cultural Revolution and whose names appeared on posters Tao Chu castigated the rebels, not sparing the Director, whom he described as a cadre in the fourth category of the Sixteen Points — an anti-socialist Rightist who should be expelled from the Party.

The Sixteen Points vindicated the rebels, but the power of finance and administration was still in the hands of the reactionaries. They tried to frustrate the students by cutting off supplies of paper and ink for writing posters. On 11 November (which is winter in Peking) they ordered the staff to stop the heating and electricity and to close the canteen.

The students defiantly worked by candlelight and built themselves a 'protest stove' to cook their own meals. (This became known as the 11 November incident.) Such tactics only disillusioned students who had been deceived by the reactionaries. In a series of meetings in November the rebels gained a majority. The Party Secretary of the Institute was attacked and heavily criticised. (In the end, he was the only cadre to be condemned as 'taking the capitalist road'. In November 1967 he was in the stage of being 'given a chance to turn over a new leaf'.) At the end of June 1967 a Revolutionary Committee was set up on the basis of a Triple combination of cadres, revolutionary students and teachers and representatives of the students' militia.

The Director was now evidently on excellent terms with the rebels. He was a man with a sufficient sense of humour not to mind being taught to suck eggs by his young pupils and also with a sense of dedication which made him feel that their revolutionary enthusiasm could be harnessed to build up the kind of medical profession that China needs.

In Shanghai the students were not so much in the vanguard as they were,

in Peking; they followed and supported the workers and they played a part in the January Storm which led to the seizure of power in the City.

At the College of Construction there had been earlier attempts to reform education along the lines advocated by Chairman Mao; each time the movement was frustrated; the successes which had been gained were reversed and teaching relapsed into the old style. The Cultural Revolution was a great opportunity to try once more. A group of Red Guards was formed, at first with 700 members. It was countered by a conservative organisation with 4,000 members, but as the struggle in the city raged through the summer and autumn of 1966, the rebel students gained adherents, and in December the conservative organisation collapsed. Rebels seized power in the University. In June 1967 a committee took charge of the college under a chairman who was a student 23 years old.

In the autumn of 1967 their discussions of the reform of education were amongst the most advanced in the country, and were being published as an example to other institutions.

III

In the spring of 1967 many schools reopened but serious reorganisation did not generally begin until the autumn, after another long summer holiday. When the students came back to academic work, most of the time was devoted to a discussion of how to embody the principles of the Cultural Revolution in education. Students have completely lost their old awe of professors, and some professors, though not opposing the new ideas, find it hard to accommodate to them. Some, however, like the Director of the Academy of Medicine, recognised the need for change and are helping to work out reforms. Many young teachers, moreover, wholeheartedly supported the students against the 'scholar tyrants' and the old mandarin style of teaching.

The main point is to make study more practical and to shorten courses so as to speed up the supply of young recruits to all professions, and at the same time to break down the concept of an educated man as a superior being to whom society owes more than to any simple worker.

At the Geological Institute classes had begun in the autumn of 1967 and students were undertaking revision to pick up the thread of their interrupted courses. At the same time discussions were going on, carrying out a critical review of the Soviet textbooks that were formerly in use, and making plans for a new system of selection to overcome the handicaps of workers' and peasants' children, and a new system of examinations with more emphasis on practical work and less on mere memory.

At the Academy of Medicine the discussion of the length of courses was still going on. There was general agreement that eight years was far too

long, that book work should be cut down and that students should be brought into contact with the problems of peasants and workers and their families at an early stage in the curriculum. In the course of the Cultural Revolution there had been a great extension of the system of sending out medical teams from the cities to visit rural areas, giving a boost to the work of the health service in the communes. The proposal at the Academy was to send out students with the qualified doctors and surgeons, to observe their work, act as bottle-washers for them and become acquainted with the conditions of rural life. Returning to books and lectures, they would learn much faster when they had had some contact with reality. The system was already being tried out. Classes had begun; about one third of the time was being spent on formal teaching and two thirds on the study of application of the principles of the Cultural Revolution to the work of the Academy.

Chinese traditional treatments are studied along with modern medicine. In the countryside the older generation still have more confidence in them and some have been proved to produce cures which are still unexplained by science.

At the College of Construction at Shanghai, which had reassembled in July 1967, discussions on the same lines were going on. Education must be made more practical and oriented to meeting the needs of the people.

The earlier attempts at reform were being analysed to see what their purposes were and how they had been frustrated. Teams were being sent out to compare experiences with the most advanced institutions in Peking and into the country to find out the needs of the people and to get ideas from the peasants.

The proposal to combine research, teaching and production was criticised by some old-fashioned technicians with bourgeois ideas, who considered it Utopian but it was approved by the workers and peasants with whom the students discussed it.

A scheme was being worked out to reorganise the system of faculties so as to reduce the absolutism of the professors. The course was to be reduced from five years to three. In the first year, half the time would be devoted to productive work and militia training, half the time to basic theoretical studies. In the second year, two thirds of time should be spent on the study of design through practical work in the research institute. The third year should be devoted to the theory of a specialised subject and the design of a complete project in the appropriate field.

Methods of examination were being discussed. In some subjects, it was said, an examination was not necessary as the student could be judged on his general performance. In some, reference books should be used, so as to prevent an examination from being a mere test of memory. In some cases, several students might discuss their answers together and present a joint

paper. In this way examinations would cease to be, as Mao put it, a surprise attack by the teachers on the students, and become a test of real proficiency.

Above all, the students were to be imbued with a new proletarian spirit, to overcome the bourgeois prejudices in which they had been infected in the past.

All this is still in the melting pot. It remains to be seen whether so much emphasis on politics will undermine the devotion to hard study which technicians cannot dispense with, or whether, as the Red Guards claim, it will on the contrary enhance it.

November, 1967

3 Retrospect

When I revisited China in 1972, I had many conversations about what had happened meanwhile, of which the following was the most vivid.

'You ask about the Cultural Revolution. I'll tell you my own experiences'. The chairman of the revolutionary committee, that is the director, of a textile factory in Peking, is speaking to foreign visitors. 'I was deputy director at that time, a Party member since 1956. When it all began in 1966, I did not understand what was going on. I didn't know how to take it. I could not grasp the issues. Two lines, two headquarters, it did not make sense. When I was criticised by the workers, I was aggrieved. Didn't I work hard, come early and leave late, carry out all my duties conscientiously? The more they attacked me, the less I understood. I became quite bewildered and could not carry on. The workers cried: stand aside. They made me go to work on the shop floor. I was working as a machine minder from January to November 1967. I thought to myself: Let's see how you manage the factory. I felt it was just as well to be working on the shop floor, for I knew that I might have made mistakes and as long as I was in a prominent position I should be fired at. The workers criticised my methods of management; they said I was a boss. They linked me with Liu Shao-Ch'i. I could not understand it but I lost my self-confidence. What was it all about? Hadn't I been a good Party member? I was quite confused.

'There were two factions among the workers: East is Red and Red Rebels. A work team had been sent (as I realise now) by the Liu party and had set up a so-called Cultural Revolution committee. The factions formed in disputing about it, but they soon forgot all about criticising revisionism; they were only interested in criticising each other. When it came to

discussing the cadres in the factory, the East is Red group thought that I might still be useful, but the Red Rebels were "down-with-everything" boys. They were against all cadres. "Suspect all, depose all" was their watchword. I tagged along with East is Red. I just had to do as they did and keep quiet.

'I am glad to say that it did not come to blows with us as it did in many places, but the situation was really absurd. Both groups were working, but they would not speak to each other; one would not pass a tool to another. Each lot said to the others: We can carry on production without your help. There were two factions in every workshop. All the cadres were doing manual work, and the workers were carrying on as they pleased. All rules and regulations were defied. There were rival loud speakers set up on the premises, blaring away at each other all the time. Some output was produced, but of course it fell far below normal.

'Then in June 1967 a group of Liberation Army men came in. They were really amazing; they were so calm and patient. They did not begin by shouting at anybody but settled down to study and investigate to find out what had caused the trouble. They came to the conclusion that both factions were good revolutionaries, but that both had some faults. They set about to get them together. It was hard work. Neither gang would admit that the others were any good. The army men had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to sit on the same bench.

'On September 14, 1967, came the Chairman's new instructions, saying that there was no fundamental cause for conflict within the working class. The P.L.A. men had it printed and distributed copies not only in the work-shops but to the workers' homes as well. They kept on talking to the workers, in groups and one by one. Sometimes they would have 12 or 15 interviews with one man.

'On September 19 the army men got the workers to unite formally, but they were still not agreed ideologically. The army men held study courses on the theme "combat egoism". They got each faction to make self-criticism. In November, the revolutionary committee was formed. There were wrangles till the last minute; it took three days to choose representatives. It was decided to have 15 members and one faction claimed the right to appoint 11. However, in the end it was settled at 8 and 7. All the same, some ultra-left ideas remained. It took a long time to get things straight.

'As far as I was concerned personally, I know now that I had a lot of wrong ideas. The army men instituted study of the question of cadres early in August. They put us through it for two months. They made us study the Chairman's "Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan". I thought: Goodness, I read that years ago. I did not like the idea of having to

criticise myself. I still thought I had always done a good job. Besides, this article was all about the wicked landlords. Am I a landlord? But the army men persisted and got us to read seriously. It took me two and a half weeks. Then one day we came on the passage; "In a very short time several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them. To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticising. Or to stand in their way and oppose them". It suddenly struck me with terrific force. Yes, I had been dragging behind; I had been an obstacle to the revolution. "Without the poor peasants there would be no revolution. To deny their role is to deny the revolution. To attack them is to attack the revolution". Now it had a meaning for me. I saw everything in a new light. The workers had attacked me, but the main point was to overthrow revisionism. What did personal gain or loss count besides that? The socialist state must not change its colour.

'I also re-read the three beloved articles. How did I compare with Norman Bethune? Was it right to be offended and to stop serving the people because I had been criticised. I had a struggle with myself and I admitted that I had made mistakes and I determined to correct them. I came to understand that I had ultra-left ideas myself. Then I had to go to the workers and find out what they thought of me. I took a portrait of the Chairman in my hands and a quotation about combatting egoism, and presented myself to one group of workers after another. I felt foolish at first and I was frightened at what they would say. But, to my delight, they welcomed me. They said: "It was a pity you did not start coming to us sooner". They said: "We only criticised you to make you one of the Left instead of the Right". They hoped I would not lose touch with them again. It took me three days to go round all the workshops. In the end I was elected to the revolutionary committee and now I am chairman. Most of the high and middle cadres were also rehabilitated.

'But the problem of ultra-leftism was not completely solved. It came up during the process of purifying the class-ranks and in the reorganisation of management.

'The main reason for the persistence of ultra-left ideas was that we had not studied well, but there was also the influence of "May 16" agents. They opposed chairman Mao's line, they were counter-revolutionary but they put on the cloak of the ultra-left. There were some sinister elements right at the top. Most of their followers were simply misled.

'From the winter of 1970 there was a campaign against the ultra-left. Their ideas were criticised and the "May 16" elements were exposed and repudiated. The principle was followed of educating the many and eliminating the few; of drawing lessons from past mistakes to avoid them in

the future, and curing the disease to save the patient.

'As far as our factory is concerned, there were some workers who followed the ultra-left line, but they were influenced by leaders from outside. We organised a course of study and over a year most of those who had been misled saw that they had been wrong. There is only one man still left in the study course, and we do not believe that he is a real counter-revolutionary.

'After this the problem of ultra-left ideas was much less serious. Now we have established the socialist democratic style of management. Of course, it is not perfect. There is still work to be done.'

The period of my visit in the autumn of 1967 was in something of a lull, when educational institutions were preparing to resume normal work. In the summer of 1968, it became clear that sharp political conflicts were still unresolved. There were sporadic outbursts of violence and even bloodshed, but in September it was announced that Revolutionary Committees had been established in all provinces (except Taiwan, as the Chinese spokesmen are careful to add).

There was not only conflict with the enemies of the Cultural Revolution but also problems within the ranks of its supporters. All along the spontaneity of the movement had been held within certain limits. Mao Tse-tung's appeal to the people in general: 'To rebel is justified!'; 'Occupy yourself with State affairs!'; 'Go into the whys and wherefores!' and the appeal in the Sixteen Points: 'Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative. . . . In the course of normal and full debate, the masses will affirm what is right, correct what is wrong and gradually reach unanimity' mean that he had great faith in the basic common sense of the Chinese people. But from the first it was necessary to guard against the disruptive tendencies of individualism.

The stress, in the period leading up to October 1968, was more upon the need for discipline than on the need for rebellion. 'We must oppose the theory of "many centres", that is the theory of "no centre", mountain stronghold mentality, sectarianism and all other reactionary bourgeois trends which undermine working class leadership.' The swing back to an emphasis upon discipline does not appear to be an inconsistency with the principles of 1966 but rather a natural development from their success.

The celebrations of October the First 1968 acclaiming the victory of the Cultural Revolution were followed by a meeting of the Central Committee. A communique adopted on 31 October 1968 was evidently intended to wind up the period of struggle. It finally named Liu Shao-ch'i by his name and announced his expulsion from the Party (nothing has been said about the fate of the man, as opposed to the symbolic figure); and it

announced the decision to hold the Party Congress.

The Congress opened on 1 April 1969. Lin Piao, who was at that time the accepted successor to Chairman Mao, gave the main address and seemed to be winding up the Cultural Revolution, though stressing the need to maintain vigilance in the struggle between two lines.

When I visited China in May 1972, Lin Piao had disappeared (though foreigners had not yet been given an account of what had happened).

At that time the atmosphere was relatively relaxed, without the tension and the extreme moral strenuousness that I had experienced in 1967. The conversation reported above was one of several covering the same ground. There was no lack of references to 'the period of anarchy' and a senior man would recount to inquisitive foreigners how he was criticised by the workers and returned to his position only after recognising his mistakes.

In the Sixteen Points, which set out the scenario for the Cultural Revolution, it is stated that 95 per cent of cadres are 'good or partly good'. Whatever may have happened at the top, at lower levels of administration it seems that much less than five per cent have been finally got rid of.

It is to be observed that in the story of the textile factory there is no distinction drawn between the Liu line and the ultra-left. One stood for deference, hierarchy and money incentives, the other for 'Down with everything', yet they are regarded as essentially the same because the consequences of both were equally counter-revolutionary.

The mysterious 'May 16' conspiracy is generally blamed for violent excesses and for fermenting factional strife. When Chou En-lai apologised by implication, for the burning of the British Chancery in Peking, saying it was the work of 'bad elements', he is taken to have been referring to the 'May 16' group.

1972

Postscript

After the death of Chou En-lai, unresolved conflicts broke out again. Indeed, it is impossible that the 'struggle between two lines' should ever be finally settled. In administration there can never be a completely satisfactory balance between the requirements of good order and proper bureaucratic procedures on the one side and democratic spontaneity on the other, or, in education, between the claims of academic standards and of the widest spread of opportunity.

Now, in the spring of 1977 a new chapter is opening, but whatever

happens next, the lessons that the people learned in the Cultural Revolution will still be remembered.

8: National minorities in Yunnan

A brief visit to Kunming and the Tai autonomous prefecture of Hsishuangpanna provided a glimpse of a fascinating scene that could well repay years of study — the relations of the Chinese Government and Party to the small and weak communities of twenty and more various nationalities scattered about the southwest of Yunnan. They form more than one third of the population of the province as a whole (about 8 million people) and 60 or 70 per cent of the population of the southwest, with autonomous districts for several of the nationalities.

The coming of liberation

According to their state of political development in 1950 at the time of Liberation, the various peoples were classified into three categories: an economy of land lords and peasants, manorial feudalism and a somewhat degenerated form of primitive communism. Some, of whom the Hani was the most important group, were exploited by landlords in much the same way as the Hans in what the border people refer to as the interior, that is, the rest of China. The Hani had a fairly high level of cultivation, with entire hills carved into terraces, but they preserved a separate existence, with their own language and customs. For them, land reform, on the same pattern as for the interior, was carried out in 1953 and 1954.

Remnants of primitive communism and some forms of slavery were found hidden away in remote mountain regions amongst a number of nationalities and clans, often at war with each other.

The method of cultivation was slash and burn on the mountain slopes, supplemented by hunting and collecting wild plants. Some had iron axes imported by barter with Han merchants, but their main implement was the digging stick. In China, even a digging stick has a characteristic elegance — a bamboo is sliced across to make a point to press into the ground and a seed is dropped down the tube.

These people (with some exceptions) were patriarchal and most had a system of clan chiefs. (The surplus they could produce was too small to permit of much exploitation.) Generally men and women both took part in cultivation while men hunted and women raised pigs and did the cooking. As the cultivated patches were shifted around the mountains, the settlements followed.

The Tsing people had large permanent houses. There were still instances of whole clans living together in a single house. There was a big room in the

centre; the young people could disport themselves there and exchange visits with the big room of other clans; upon marriage, a couple was given a kitchen to themselves, partitioned off inside the house, and expected to observed marital fidelity. The first partition was for the chief of the clan. Whatever came in was divided absolutely equally among the group, except that the chief got a larger portion.

The Nu people were found in a state of transition. Under primitive communism, an area of forest was owned in common and parcelled out by the chief for cultivation each season; when they were discovered, many of the clans had split up into families, who formed groups for cultivation in common in combinations shifting from season to season.

Some of the forest people had almost reached the stage of separate family units. Among the Penglung, houses, gardens and livestock were owned individually but cultivable land was still the property of the group as a whole.

When the People's Liberation Army came into the region, ten or more groups of these wild people (some of whom have not yet been classified as nationalities) were found amongst the mountains and high plateaux. They were difficult to get in touch with for they had had bad experience with Han people under the Kuomintang. Sometimes 'mistakes' were made. It was a strict rule in the PLA that force must not be used against minority people, but when fierce tribesmen captured some of their companions, the rest were provoked into breaking the rule. But this was rare.

Gradually the PLA men and cadres established their good faith. Bandits were cleared out of the country. A militia was raised to help the army to push the remnants of Kuomintang forces over the frontier. The nationalities were given new titles, according to their wishes, to get rid of the opprobrious names that they had been calling each other. They were gradually converted to the doctrines of equality and unity.

It was not easy to introduce settled cultivation, to improve the livelihood of the people and save the forests from the devastation of slash and burn. That method gives a low yield (sometimes not more than twice or three times the seed sown) but it demands little effort. Continuous cultivation on terraced hillsides requires hard and regular work. Armymen provided the example of wet paddy cultivation besides the settlement of the wild people, to demonstrate high yields; they began to copy, but if in any season the crop was disappointing they went back to slash and burn; indeed, it has not yet been entirely eliminated. Houses were built for tribesmen in the lowlands but they did not like that style of life and escaped to the mountains again.

The Wa people had a special custom. They thought it necessary every two or three years to cut off a man's head. The victim to be caught was selected by a ritual procedure. He might be a member of another clan or a

chance wayfarer. A moslem head was most prized because of the beard. The head was kept in a basket on a pole, treated with respect and offered sacrifices. Ashes caught the blood that dripped from it and seeds to be planted were treated with this to secure a good harvest.

When the army men got a good crop, the clansmen accused them of cheating — they must have taken a head in secret. They tried to persuade their reluctant pupils that a human head was not necessary, a chicken would do. Nowadays they are content with a paper-cut head.

After twenty years, as roads have been built, fertilizer and walking tractors are being supplied and education spreads, the shift to settled cultivation is finally being completed.

The political forms that were met with amongst the various peoples included some remnants of primitive communism, where class exploitation was only just beginning to intrude. It was held that these could make a direct transition to co-operatives without needing to pass through the stage of land reform. At first these people could not grasp the idea of payment according to work done. They were accustomed to equal distribution for all. A hunter who kept his catch to himself was much disapproved of. With time and patience they were converted to the co-operative system of cultivation. But when the land reform was going on in the Tai areas, these people thought that they were missing something. The name 'direct transition' was dropped and democratic reforms were emphasised.

The Tais in Hsishuangpanna were a much more highly organised community. Their level of culture was above not only that of the wild mountaineers but also of the Han minority living in the lowlands. Their system was a form of feudalism said to date back to the age of Confucius. All the land was owned by a class of hereditary lords. Each estate comprised a number of villages with a chief appointed by the lord for each. The best land was kept as the lord's demesne and the rest let out to the villagers on service tenancies. There were three classes of villages (this helped the lords to maintain their power by setting one against another). The highest class cultivated the lord's demesne land; the second class provided household servants to the manor; and the third, various specialised services — one village to herd horses, one to build boats, one to tend the tombs of the lord's family, and so forth. Peasants today bitterly recall the humiliation of having to carry the lord's boots, or accompany him with banners when he walked out. When a man became old his children took over his duties. (A childless man was thrown out of the community and became a pariah.)

With innumerable special taxes and levies the serfs were screwed down to bare subsistence. It is calculated that the rate of exploitation was 70:30 or even more.

From the Yuan dynasty onward the Emperors appointed a governor and a hierarchy of officials from among the feudal lords, who were responsible for collecting tribute. The Tais in turn raised tribute from the smaller nationalities. When the Kuomintang took over this system it became still more oppressive.

In the lowlands, as in the mountains, shifting cultivation was practised but here there were settled villages so that often it was necessary to walk for a prodigious distance before work could begin. The change to settled cultivation, here, saved labour rather than requiring more. Without weeding or manure, and depending on rainfall for water, yields were low and precarious. The advantages of intensive cultivation, when the time came, were not difficult to demonstrate.

Some scions of the aristocracy had visited the outer world, but Hsishuangpanna was in general completely isolated. It took a month to walk to Kunming along mountain trails, and people had to go in large groups for fear of bandits. Almost the only trade was the export of Pu-erh tea, a speciality of the district, and import of cloth and salt. During the long rainy season salt could be brought in only as brine, in bamboo tubes, and the price rose sharply.

The only education was elementary literacy in the Tai script, provided by the monasteries for the sons of the lords. Every boy had to pass some time as a monk but class distinctions were as rigid within a monastery as outside. A serf's child who entered there was only a servant to the upper class monks and learned nothing.

When the Liberation Army came in they avoided taking the short cut of raising the serfs against the lords and village chiefs. They began a gradual process of education. They first got in touch with the lords and chiefs to approach the people through them. There were some relatives of aristocratic families who were quite poor but free men and some of them were useful intermediaries. The second in command in the local government hierarchy was ready to work with the PLA. They began very gradually to teach the serfs the meaning of class and of democracy. Since the army was there in force there was no scope for rebellion of the reactionaries, but they were handled with kid gloves. The serfs were encouraged 'to speak their bitterness' but not to accuse their oppressors face to face. The struggle was carried on 'back to back'. When land reform was being carried through, the lord who had proved helpful was sent to Kunming. His serfs carried on their protests while he was out of the way. Their complaints were brought to him in the city. He had to think over his position and to accept the division of his estate with as good a grace as he might.

The monks seem to have been quite willing to return to their families as

soon as they had some land to work. Religion — Hinayana Buddhism — does not seem to have had much hold. It was merely a convenience for the feudal class and an extra burden on the poor. Sorcerers were more important but they were soon discredited by medical workers with a reliable cure for malaria.

An autonomous prefecture: Organisation of agriculture

The autonomous prefecture in Hsishuangpanna was inaugurated in 1953. Over the next two years institutions at the prefecture and county level were set up and cadres trained from among the various nationalities. All nationalities had representatives on the People's Congress and on the Consultative Commission of the prefecture. Investigations and education were carried out to make the people aware of the class structure of their society. The feudal system was somewhat in decay; commercial sales of land and the market economy had begun to intrude. In the class categories there were ordinary landlords and some rich peasants as well as the feudal lords. As the consciousness of political change sank in, the serfs and poor peasants began to ask for land for themselves. Discussion went on at the level of the prefecture and regulations were drawn up for land reform which was carried out in 1956. The feudal class, of course, tried to oppose it, but they could not resist the people's demand. Power, though held in the background, was in the hands of the authorities, with the PLA, and they were obliged to accept the position. When the land was distributed in each area, the lords and chiefs received the same share as everyone else. Since the countryside had been much depopulated the shares were larger than in most of the interior at the time of the main land reform in 1951 and 1952. The highest allotment was 5 *mou* per head (this would mean a holding of a little more than 4 acres for a family of five) and the lowest 1 *mou* per head of irrigated land. The year 1957 saw a great improvement in the harvest.

The usual bodies were now organised — the Party, the Militia, Youth League, Women's Federation, and the Poor Peasants' Association, Hans and minorities working together.

The year after the land had been distributed, mutual aid groups were started and one or two higher-form co-operatives (in which income is distributed according to work points earned). By 1958 almost all the villages of the prefecture were organised in lower-form co-operatives (in which part of income is allowed for land and property put into the pool).

This proved too hasty. In the bad years in the interior (1959-61) the 'evil wind of revisionism' was blowing. The example of the readjustments that had to be made in the communes in the interior led to many of the newly formed co-operatives in the prefecture being split up and many were

reduced to individual family holdings. The harvest in 1961 and 1962 was poor.

In 1963 the socialist education campaign got under way. The revisionist line was criticised; indignation was roused against the doctrine that the minority people were too poor and ignorant to run co-operatives. By 1965 the co-operatives were restored and advanced to the higher form.

Next, the wind of the Cultural Revolution began to blow from the interior. Red Guards from Hsishuangpanna set out on long marches, and Red Guards from Peking marched in. There was trouble and dissension. Old national enmities were tinder that reactionaries could set burning. There was a wave of big-nation chauvinism amongst the Hans (nowadays blamed on Lin Piao) saying that the minority cadres were no good, only a few should be kept and the rest dismissed. But these troubles did not go deep. Ex-serfs could tell who their true friends were.

In 1969 communes were established over all the lowlands and in many mountain regions as well. Communes in the interior then had ten years of experience behind them which could be put at the disposal of the local cadres, and they had learned also from analysing their own mistakes of 1958. This time, it seems, the movement went smoothly. Communes with the well-tryed, three-level organisation (with the team as the basic accounting unit) are held to be working satisfactorily. All the 27 communes in the prefecture are of mixed nationalities, but some brigades and many teams are of a single group (apart from 'educated youth' from the cities of the interior working with them).

Almost all the chairmen and Party secretaries of communes are now minority people. Often a Han cadre would be in the top place at first, with a minority deputy. As soon as the deputy had learned the ropes, the Han stepped down and put him into the top place. Sometimes there seems to be some back-seat driving still, but many of the leaders from amongst the minorities are men and women of forceful character, combining vision and competence, and with a kind of extra glow that comes from realising how much their world has changed.

Twenty years of work has transformed the hills and rivers of Hsishuangpanna. Motorable roads now link the communes to each other and the whole region to the world outside. The area of cultivable land has more than doubled, 45 per cent is now irrigated and there has been a spread of double-cropping which was quite unknown before. Water conservancy is combined with electrification. Medium and small-scale schemes provide power for 80 per cent of the communes. (A mountain stream can be made to yield 5 kw. — enough to light the houses of a hamlet and work the flour mill.)

The standard of life has risen from rock-bottom poverty into moderate comfort with complete social security for all.

One of the most remarkable features of the transformation of serfs into modern agriculturalists is the way in which Tai men and girls have grasped the principles of scientific experiment. One team has produced a promising high-yield strain of rice which is being popularised. Methods of direct seeding are being developed; this cuts out the most laborious of all process — transplanting rice. The technical revolution which promises to make this possible consists in mechanised preparation of the soil — perfect levelling and fine cultivation — and in chemical weeding.

Water control, mechanisation and scientific farming put a ratchet behind collectivisation by giving it obvious technical advantages over family farming, but it is still necessary to keep a sharp eye out for symptoms of individualism and money-mindedness.

The work-point system is at the elementary stage of a price-list for various jobs, with a reckoning of the score every ten days and a grand settlement once a year. With rising prosperity, there are temptations. If the grain ration for a family (handed out in advance and paid for with work-points at the annual settlement) is more than they need, the margin might be used outside legitimate purposes — for instance, to get builders from the town to put up a house. Tractor drivers get large ideas about their skill and importance and will not muck in with the heavy jobs. Some cadres are apt to fiddle about with unnecessary detail at meetings so as to have less time for working in the fields. The current movement to study the dictatorship of the proletariat is translated into the question of checking abuses such as these.

At the same time, a lot of trouble is taken to provide legitimate conveniences for the villagers. Private plots of 0.1 *mou* per head are allowed, provided that the total for a family does not exceed 1 *mou*. Rearing of fowls and pigs is encouraged. Manure is purchased for work-points by the team. The sale of a fattened pig gives an entitlement to an extra ration of grain. The price of the pig is paid in money and meat coupons are given for half the weight so that the family can enjoy their share whenever it suits them. Green meat for the pigs is sold by the team at nominal prices and there is a ration of coupons for vegetables for the house. They can be used as required and paid for in work-points at the annual settlement.

The street market on Sunday mornings in the county town is a charming scene — Hans in their dark blue jostling with the bright colours of various traditional minority styles, buying vegetables and cakes from the old women squatting on the kerb.

The money economy is to be kept within bounds but it is not to be swept away for a long time yet.

Industry has not yet got very far. Before Liberation there was literally none and not much even of handicrafts. Such manufactured goods as came in were bought by merchants and sold at exorbitant prices. A single needle exchanged for a chicken, and a hoe for 300 catties of grain. Now, every county, as in the interior, has a repair shop for tractors which produces spare parts and some agricultural machinery. There are altogether 107 enterprises in the prefecture — some small iron and coal mines, engineering works, chemical fertiliser and packing-paper plants, timber from the forests, building materials and herbal medicines. Altogether there is a mining and industrial labour force of 5,000, one third drawn from minority peoples — the first generation of the working class of Hsishuangpanna. There are two or three small-scale enterprises such as tile works and food processing in each commune. An indispensable base for future development has been laid by the network of roads, as well as a postal and telephone service.

Social Services

The most immediate task after Liberation was an attack on disease, especially malaria. As far as historical records go back this region has been known as a land of miasma. People outside had a saying, if a man wants to go to Szemao (in the neighbouring prefecture) he should get another husband for his wife before he leaves, for he will never come home again. On top of almost universal infection with ordinary malaria, there was a lethal form of the disease which had been raging for some years, depopulating whole villages. Some people managed to survive by climbing up some thousands of feet to the mountains in the evening and coming down to cultivate holdings in the lowlands by day. There was no medical help and no medical knowledge. When a man became delirious with high fever, he was said to be possessed by the Pi Ba devil and thrown out of his village. Some who recovered got together and set up Pi Ba villages on their own.

The PLA gave first priority to health work and sanitation and medical teams were sent in from cities in the south-west region. After the co-operatives were set up, health workers in the villages were trained in diagnosis and there was a mass movement to stamp out mosquitoes. By 1962 malaria had almost disappeared, but it is not quite unknown even now, because of infection from across the frontier. Plague, smallpox and cholera have been vanquished, and polio is being got under control.

The whole prefecture is now covered by a network of medical services. The 'revisionist line' in the early 'sixties was to concentrate on modern well-equipped hospitals in urban centres. With the Cultural Revolution this was seen to be wrong, but it has left a useful legacy in the form of a teaching hospital in town where doctors and nurses are trained. Every commune now has a clinic served by a dozen qualified medical workers. There are co-operative clinics and barefoot doctors at the brigade level and health workers with the teams to keep an eye on sanitation, give first aid and diagnose cases needing further examination. In the lowlands there is the now usual system of health insurance, with a payment of 50 *fen* or 1 *yuan* per head which supports the co-operative clinics, but the health centres in the mountains are paid for by the state.

Liberation is a psychological process as well as a political one. Medical work entailed getting rid of cruel superstitions and substituting experiment for arbitrary beliefs such as reliance on auspicious days and hours. At the same time, a number of effective remedies, unknown to Chinese medicine, were discovered amongst the minorities and are now being incorporated into the pharmacopia.

With a dramatic improvement in health conditions, the population of the prefecture made an upward bound. It is now 600,000 where it was estimated as 200,000 twenty years ago. (Part of this increase is from immigration.) Some minority groups that seemed to be in danger of extinction have been growing rapidly. The Tsino, for instance, increased from 4,000 to 8,000 over ten years. It was found in 1965 that the birth rate for the prefecture as a whole was 46 per mil and the death rate 10 per mil, giving a rate of natural increase of 3.6 per cent per annum, one of the highest in the world. It has tailed off somewhat. In 1974 the annual growth rate had come down to 2 per cent (a birth rate of 26 per mil and death rate of 6 per mil).

It was a matter of policy not to press family planning upon the minority peoples for fear they should feel that the Hans were trying to smother them. Now, with a low infant death rate and with the emancipation of women, the people are asking for sterilisation and contraception. Whatever they ask for is not denied. As is usual, however, the birth rate is still higher in the rural areas than in towns. The campaign against male chauvinism has evidently made headway; it seems, in any case, to have been less marked among the Tais than the Hans, though very much greater among some of the minorities, such as Tibetans. It is not unusual to see the husband, instead of the wife, carrying a baby strapped to his back.

Elementary schools began to be set up immediately after Liberation. Now there are 1,300 in the prefecture, taking 85 per cent of the age group. There are 19 middle schools, some with courses of 3 years and some with 5.

Apart from the teaching hospital and a normal school for the nationalities, there is no further education in the prefecture but nowadays many pupils are sent to colleges and institutes outside. There is a special college for minority cadres in Kunming.

Finance and commerce

The Chinese financial system is set up in such a way as to channel funds from more to less developed areas in the country. Each province has a planned revenue, from taxes and the profits of its enterprises; this does not represent the funds that it is entitled to spend but the contribution that it is required to make to the central budget. The funds that it has to dispose of are specified in its plan for expenditure. (The financial plan runs side by side with planning in physical terms of the various activities for which it is responsible.) For wealthy provinces, that is those that have relatively high value of production per head of population, revenue exceeds expenditure and for poor provinces, expenditure exceeds revenue. (For the richest unit of all, Shanghai, revenue is ten times expenditure.) The province of Yunnan is relatively poor and it is required to subsidise the still poorer minority regions within its boundaries. At present its revenue is equal to about 85 per cent of its expenditure.

Certain regulations favour Yunnan as compared to provinces in the interior. The reserve fund which is allowed for contingencies is 5 per cent of total expenditure instead of 3 per cent. The province is allowed to keep at its own disposal the whole of any excess of revenue over the plan and saving of planned expenditure. Moreover, planned expenditure includes a special fund for subsidies to the minority areas, a payment of 5 per cent of their administrative costs, a special subsidy for high altitude areas and for the frontier districts. These allowances are, in effect, earmarked for the minority and frontier areas, and paid out of central funds to them through the province. Thus they are not at the expense of outlay on the Han areas in the province and do not give any cause for grievance.

The state finances large investment projects directly, outside the provincial plan. A case in point is the highway linking Hsishuangpanna to Szemao and Kunming which has ended its millennial isolation from China and from the world.

Taxes in the autonomous prefectures and counties are at lower rates than in the rest of the province. For instance, in Hsishuangpanna the agricultural tax now takes between one and three per cent of grain output while in the province as a whole it takes five or six per cent. The rates of tax which enter into the cost of products such as sugar refined by the indigenous method, liquor and tobacco are lower, and more than half the

items usually taxed are exempt. There are special concessions, such as rescinding the tax on slaughtering meat during important local festivals.

Financial autonomy does not mean that the prefecture can raise its own taxes to regulate its own expenditure. That conception is quite foreign to the financial system of the People's Republic. Autonomy means that the prefecture works out a self-contained plan, within the bounds of the funds at its disposal, after discussing its own problems and making its own choices independently, and reports the plan to the province, without having to get its approval. In the ordinary case a prefecture is mainly only a rung in the administrative ladder between county and province.

Corresponding to the financial subsidies that the prefecture receives is a surplus of imports over exports — almost all manufactures that it uses have to be brought in from outside. Because of the formidable transport costs, there is a further subsidy to permit ceiling prices to be set for goods imported, and floor prices for exports.

The commercial bureau of the province sees to it that the special products that the various nationalities require are made available. There is an allotment of silver from the central reserve to provide for traditional ornaments.

Taking it all in all, here is a remarkable story of colonialism in reverse. It seems hardly necessary to point the moral for the rest of the world.

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