

DECEMBER, 1965

China—A Consumer's View

MARY ADAMS (Independent Television Authority, Consumers Association, National Association for Mental Health), recently returned from a three-week visit to China where she was the guest of the Chinese Foreign Cultural Association, a trip sponsored by SACU. Commenting on aspects of the daily life in China which she found particularly interesting, Mrs Adams emphasised that she felt it would be absurd to make generalisations after only a month in a country which was at once so vast, so different from our own, and so immersed in a process of change.

One of the subjects which most interested Mary Adams was communications. 'I didn't actually see much television, but I did go to the Broadcasting Authority and talked to them in some detail about their activities. They have two alternative programmes, one is entertainment, the other is educational — which they call the University of the Air. These appear to be equally balanced in time allotment, though the educational programme is supplemented, of course, by closed circuit television in the universities. Anyone may participate in this sort of education-by-broadcast, that is, one need not actually be a university student to get a degree. This method is obviously an expedient form of supplementary education for the Chinese at this stage in their development. Practically everyone has a radio, transistors are very popular, but television sets are mainly found in club houses, halls, schools, hotels, and such places of gathering.'

In the same sphere, Mrs Adams was especially intrigued to find the concentrated attention paid to the English language. 'The Chinese have made up their minds that English is the world's language, consequently every effort is being made to teach it, not only to children, but to adults. We met, on the way out and on several occasions during our stay, teachers from Britain who had been attracted by the conditions being offered by the Chinese government. They must agree to stay for two years, are excellently paid, and in some places are given a car, but of course the situations are often very isolating. In Sian, for instance, we met a couple living in a large, bare hotel — one which had been vacated by Soviet technicians. It is difficult for these teachers to move into Chinese circles because most of the young students are living in dormitories and hostels. So it is a lonely life, which is a pity, and the teachers must make most of their friends among the other foreign teachers. However, I think that they enjoy their work and find it very rewarding, for the students are avid to learn, do so very quickly, and seem to speak English extremely well phonetically. The students realise that in ten years time they will have to know English to get a good job. Clearly, this has been a purely technological decision on the part of the Chinese government.'

Written translations of the main speeches were always provided for the delegation, produced in clear and contemporary English. Mary Adams was impressed with the high standard of translation and interpretation. Very cheap editions translated into English are available in all the bookshops, including a wide variety of good dictionaries for all kinds of technicians and books for learning by wireless. She brought back several of these as well as a special 'find' — a version of Alice in Wonderland.

'Certainly propaganda elements permeate the written and spoken word, and may perhaps get the visitor down a bit. But after all, one must be mature about this. The Chinese have a consistent philosophy and are very anxious to express it, anxious that we should understand it. The intelligentsia see its expression as their mission, while to the peasants and workers, it is part of their expression of happiness and satisfaction in their way of life. For people not only looked

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SACU Branch Formation

IN THE few months since the inauguration of SACU, it has become clear that the welcome and support for the organisation extends far beyond the London area, where our first activities were inevitably centred.

Although the first local branch to be formed was in London, many other areas are now preparing to launch their own organisations.

These include Plymouth, Birmingham and Liverpool.

Apart from these, head office has received many enquiries from individual members anxious to help launch a branch in their localities.

SACU staff are now busy sorting out these enquiries and putting members in touch with others in the same area.

Explained Derek Bryan, the General Secretary, 'The actual formation of a branch requires thorough preparation and presupposes the existence of a small working group of active members.' These, he said, were those 'ready to take on the hard slogging involved.'

Drawing upon the experiences of the Hampstead branch, it had been found that this working committee should be drawn from the widest circles possible.

Organisers there said that failure to draw in other people at the very beginning was self-defeating. All SACU members should be invited to participate from the moment the idea of a local branch is first mooted.

The Hampstead committee members also warned about separating members into a 'working committee' and a 'general committee.' In practice, the latter seldom functioned effectively.

Once a preparatory committee has been formed, said Mr Bryan, its first task will be to draw up lists of people prominent and active in the community. These would include Mayors,

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BOOK REVIEW: *The Crippled Tree*

THE CRIPPLED TREE by Han Suyin, published by Jonathan Cape at 35s. DAUGHTER of a Chinese scholar turned railway engineer and a Belgian mother of respectable middle-class origin, Han Suyin, travelling freely between both worlds, is placed uniquely to interpret both for us and by reason of her talent and artistry, added to an enormous capacity for hard work in formidable researches and assemblage of factual history, she has

made a fascinating and illuminating literary contribution to our understanding of her father's country. This is her most important book yet and a most significant work in relation to contemporary China.

In 461 pages she condenses the story of the agonising and courageous struggles of the Chinese people over the turbulent years from 1885 to 1928 through the medium of her family background and in the light of

A CONSUMER'S VIEW (continued from page 1)

happy, well-fed, and well-clothed, but were. The contrast for many between then and now would inevitably produce happiness, would inevitably incline them to accept the revolutionary philosophy as the springboard which has made this higher standard of living possible.'

The great variety and high quality of ordinary consumer goods to be had at remarkably cheap prices was a great surprise. 'The Chinese attitude to quality control is quite different from that found here in England, where one of our principal problems is to control the quality of goods from the factory. Visiting a paper factory, for example, I found that every sheet of paper was carefully examined over a lamp by a woman worker. Now this wasn't particularly fine paper and didn't seem to me to be necessary — but they emphasise this kind of control in everything from tractors to exercise books. Of course they do have lots of unskilled labour now and the situation will have to be reckoned with when they are more highly mechanised. The same emphasis exists in the shops where the assistant makes a thorough examination of each article to check for flaws before it is sold.'

Industrial Design

The problems of industrial design is a subject Mrs Adams wanted very much to discuss, but was unable to do so with anyone knowledgeable. She was also disappointed that the implications of the gift that was taken from SACU were not grasped. 'We took the Duke of Edinburgh's award for elegance for 1964, a large glass bowl suitably inscribed, designed by young David Queensberry — a piece which is specifically designed as capable of mass production. The fact that it was the work of an artist produced on a mass scale did not seem to get across, but it is the sort of problem which ultimately will have to be met in China. Nonetheless, great care is taken to consult consumers — not using the

same kind of research that we conduct here, but consultation through the trade unions, among factory workers, committees and so forth. This process of consulting the people creates a relationship, a unity and a wholeness which enters into every part of life and, indeed, is one of the most impressive aspects of China.'

Struck by the fact that she saw relatively few pregnant women, though there are enormous numbers of toddlers, Mrs Adams asked for the explanation. It was that the movement for birth control, particularly by means of inter-uterine devices, began about two and a half years ago. 'I was very interested to find that they have a most coherent philosophy about birth control. Some parts of China are definitely underpopulated. Their policy for family limitation is based mainly on the health and welfare of women, and family as a unit. 'Finally,' they say, 'it is the decision of the husband and wife concerned. We can persuade, advise, offer techniques, but in the end it is a personal choice. Still we would hope the people will understand that this is the correct policy for now... This is a very intelligent and sophisticated approach — the results, of course, vary in different parts of the country.'

Mrs Adams admitted she was as irritated by the self-righteousness of the Chinese as were other members of the party. 'They are not interested in Britain, not curious about our habits of thought or culture. For this reason cultural exchange is going to be difficult. They've got a saying which we often heard: "China must learn from the past — China must learn from abroad." We joked with them, saying "Obviously you've got a great past and are learning from it, but what are you learning from abroad, except technique?" Of course they are really interested in the Afro-Asians, because they feel that they can teach them something — teach them for instance, how to make a successful revolution. They do not feel that they can teach Britain anything.'

personal experience, and if she feels a stronger sympathetic identification with her father's family, that is all our gain.

The personal sufferings of her parents through inter-marriage in this most cataclysmic period of Chinese history must, for us, be counter-balanced by gratitude that at least one of their progeny has the insight, compassion and ability to trace for us, in highly readable form, the relentless march of events which inevitably brought today's Chinese People's Republic into being. She faces us with our undeniable share of guilt for the past but, like a good analyst, does not leave us in the morass but points the way forward with true optimism born of enlightenment.

She writes:

'Today, although England is reduced to a minor power, while the young bristlingly armed United States of America has taken her place, gunboat diplomacy still tries to crush the spirit of man by a show of force. And though for the last eighty years these methods have proved self-defeating, they will continue until a new generation, crippled by their own ferocity, come to a new awareness of our one world and one humanity.'

And thus affirms her own faith that good must ultimately prevail over evil in the universe.

Faithfully and with consummate skill she has obeyed the injunction of Third Uncle, now retired in his native country, content to see at last 'China for the Chinese.'

'You must write it all down exactly, for future generations to read, and to know all, the evil and the good, to know The Great Change.'

Moreover, we are promised further volumes to bring us up-to-date.

Roma Gelder

Two Doctors Look at China

SACU has been fortunate in being able to arrange meetings in England for Dr J. H. de Haas, Professor of World Health at Leyden University. Professor and Mrs de Haas will be giving illustrated lectures on China at Nuffield College, Oxford at 8.15 pm, on Friday, December 3, and at Cambridge on Sunday December 5 in the Union Society Debating Hall at 3 pm.

Members in London are invited to hear Professor de Haas on Saturday, December 4, at 7.30 p.m. at SACU premises, 24 Warren Street, London, W.1.

A View on Four Views

The four sponsors who made up SACU's first delegation to China reported back to members at a special meeting at Church House, Westminster, November 16. Here, two members of the Editorial Committee of SACU NEWS, Nan Berger and Bill Habets, give their impressions of the meeting.

AN ORGANISATION which sends to China a delegation of four sponsors of such widely differing backgrounds and viewpoints as Mrs Mary Adams, OBE, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, Mr Ernie Roberts and Mr Robert Bolt, knows that in providing a public platform for the delegation it is likely to get four very different reports, a situation which makes for controversy and the exchange of views, all of which is part of SACU's brief.

The decision to provide a platform becomes harder when one of the delegation has already committed himself to print as Trevor-Roper had done in the Sunday Times under a headline as misleading as could be—though it was said not to have been chosen by the author—with criticism of the Chinese way of life being expressed in the most unfriendly and subjective terms. Nevertheless, SACU took this decision and the result was a lively and controversial meeting. Despite harsh words about the rectitude of selling an article to the Press before reporting back to those on whose behalf you had been accepted as a guest in a foreign country and some equally harsh words about criticism offered in an unfriendly and sensational way, there was no doubt that the audience of two hundred and fifty left Church House with a clear picture of what had happened to whom in China. Be it noted, however, that no one took Trevor-Roper to task for making his criticisms of China, only for the manner in which he chose to make them.

Mary Adams, as leader of the delegation, spoke first. Her general impressions of China are published in an interview on the front page of this bulletin. As did all the other speakers, she emphasised that, despite reports to the contrary, China in her view showed no signs of being an aggressive country. So far as world peace was concerned, she felt China to be definitely non-aggressive.

She was however disturbed—as were Robert Bolt and, on a different plane, Trevor-Roper—to find that Chinese children were taught to hate imperialism and especially American imperialism and wondered whether it was possible for them to distinguish adequately between the American people and the American imperialists.

Trevor-Roper, who spoke next, made it plain that in his opinion the Chinese were not interested in Britain. He

based this view on the fact that during his tour the Chinese had not addressed any question to him about his assessment of Briatin.

He felt that the Society, set up to further Anglo-Chinese Understanding, must content itself with trying to understand the Chinese and not expect to be understood by them. He considered that he had been treated to a 'horse drench' of Chinese propaganda and was expected to 'evacuate it in this country.'

Addressing himself to prospective members, he said that if SACU could provide an 'objective study of Chinese circumstances, it deserved their support. If not, not.'

Ernie Roberts said that he had been given the opportunity of seeing everything he wanted to see in China. He had also found the Chinese keenly interested in many aspects of the British way of life. As an example in his own field, he cited the several delegations of Chinese trade unionists now visiting England.

'Wherever I went there was an atmosphere of freedom and security,' he reported. 'Freedom from foreign or nationalist oppression, security from hunger and the kind of poverty they had suffered before the liberation.'

He had met and exchanged views with numerous Chinese trade unionists and visited several different kinds of factories. A fuller report of his experiences will be published in a later edition of SACU NEWS.

Playwright and author Robert Bolt said he had been deeply impressed by the egalitarianism he had encountered in China, such as finding a factory director sharing identical housing with his workers.

He had also experienced difficulty in meeting people he had wanted to see. Despite his many requests, his Chinese hosts had been unable to arrange a meeting with other writers and playwrights.

He agreed with Trevor-Roper that the Society at this stage would primarily have to concern itself with understanding the Chinese. Mutual understanding was not made any easier by the fact that the present mood of the Chinese was immaculately self-righteous.

He however did not think this any reason for believing that the Society did not have a useful function.

CHINA NEWS

The drive to produce more chemical fertilisers—and persuade peasants to use them—has been an important feature of the 'Aid Agriculture Movement' of recent years. In general the efforts has been very successful, and according to Peking reports output this year should be two million tons higher than in 1964. Most of this increase will be sent to grain and cotton regions. This year has also seen the construction or expansion of 28 large-scale fertiliser plants, as well as the building of many smaller plants on the communes.

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Shanghai newspapers recently commented on the success of a remarkable operation on a hunchback performed in the Hsinhua Hospital earlier this year. The hunchback's deformity was largely caused by chronic rheumatoid-arthritis. His chest caved inward to an angle of 97 degrees. Eventually eating became painful for him and he had difficulty in breathing.

The operation was performed in April. It involved not only osteotomy but also syndesmotomy (dissection of the ligaments that joined the deformed bones), and called for great skill, as any damage to the spinal nerve would have resulted in paralysis of the lower limbs. Now, after several months in splints, the patient can stand erect and walk normally.

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Representatives of British port installation and equipment firms visiting China have already secured certain contracts from Chinese purchasing agencies. Among the firms represented are General Electric Co., Stothert and Pitt, and Priestman Bros.

A report from Dairen, the North-east China port, stating that 75 per cent of loading and unloading is now done by machinery, indicates how far China has already gone in the direction of port mechanisation.

WEEKEND SCHOOL

ONLY A FEW places are available at the weekend school to be held 9-11 January at the White House, (University of Sussex) Haywards Heath. (For full details see SACU NEWS, November issue). Anyone wishing to reserve a place should send a deposit of 10s or the full fee of £4.10.0 (non-members £4.15.0) to SACU, 24 Warren Street, London, W.1. Those who have already made a reservation should now send a deposit or the full fee.

LETTER BOX

DEAR EDITOR,

As is well known, the Chinese People's Republic has always maintained that the liberation of China could never have been achieved but by applying Marxist ideology to Marxist practice which implies also the correct analysis and interpretation of any Chinese past history in the light of Marxist thinking. That is to say Confucianism and Taoism were not considered as the underlying doctrines with which to guide the people to liberation and progress. In fact the Chinese are bound to consider Confucianism and Taoism as specifically historic conditions of mentality mirroring the feudal social setup of China of bygone ages. I doubt, therefore, whether we are justified—when promoting Anglo-Chinese understanding—to suggest (as the Chairman of SACU maintained in his Inaugural Address as reported in SACU NEWS, No. 1) that 'the age-old traditions of Confucianism and Taoism were still, and always would remain (my own emphasis) the background of Chinese mentality'.

At a time when subjects become rulers and wives independent of their husbands it seems incongruous, with present practice still wanting, to apply the Confucian conception of the 'five relationships'; the entire nation takes part in government at all levels; and this, by the way (to comment on SACU's first brains trust's reply to a question about bureaucracy and the 'restrictive' aspect of government as such) overcomes and overrides all problems (in time) of bureaucratic hardships and failings—perhaps for the first time in Chinese history. We would fail miserably if we would not make this clear to our friends who want to understand China of today, of yesterday and of tomorrow; and it would be equally erroneous to suggest that 'however Marxist the Chinese may be' the old traditions of Confucianism and Taoism would prevail and Marxism as an exigency of the struggle for liberation would soften down or water down to normal thinking, as people in the West seem to hope.

All the reports from China point to the contrary: every effort is made to ensure the continuity of Marxist education in the next and following generations, which goes to show that the present generation knows too well that Marxism was and is the means to emancipation and the maintenance of a clear mind of the people—and Confucianism is the mentality of the past as it was in its time the contemporary superstructure of a given society, alas, defunct by now. I think we should

not allow any room for any other interpretation of and any misconception about the background of Chinese mentality.

Fredy Brandler,
London, N.2

* * *
Asked for his comments on the above letter Dr Needham made the following points:

I FEAR that Mr Brandler's ideas on Confucianism are rather superficial. Let him read Msü Shih-Lien's 'The Political Philosophy of Confucianism' (London, 1932), H. G. Creel's 'Confucius, the Man and the Myth' (London, 1951), and Vol 2 of 'Science and Civilisation in China' (Cambridge, 1956). There was far more to the Confucian world-outlook than he thinks. The essential thing for us to realise is that owing to Confucianism, Chinese culture had two thousand years of high morality without dependence upon supernatural sanctions. This may yet be of profound importance for the world. With affluence comes the disappearance of all faiths and all ideals, 'teddyboyism', 'juvenile delinquency', the contracting out of the beatniks, and so on.

If Mr Brandler's analysis were so 'correct' as he thinks (the very word gives him away), these things would presumably not be happening in the Soviet Union as well as in the capitalist countries. Could it be that only a culture with Confucianism in its moral circulation will be able to show us how to overcome the temptations of affluence? Last year I spent a fascinating afternoon floating round the lake at Hangchow discussing Confucianism and Taoism with two 'high party bureaucrats'; in the end they freely agreed that the Chinese would take all that was best from these creations of the Chinese spirit in the past. I prefer to agree with them than with Mr Brandler—but when he knows more about Confucianism he will perhaps find himself agreeing with us.

Joseph Needham

SACU Branch Formation (continued from page 1)

Members of Parliament, political, religious, and trade union leaders, to be asked to sponsor the local branch.

The inaugural meeting should be planned well in advance. Speakers need to include local personalities as well as national figures.

Invitations should be sent out to as many individuals as possible—as well as to every known local organisation. For example, the Hampstead committee wrote 1,250 letters of invitation to individuals and drew 120 persons to their inaugural meeting.

B.H.

ABOUT SACU

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Believing that understanding between Britain and China is of the highest importance, SACU aims to make information about China widely available in order to help every interested person in Britain to make his or her own assessment.

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Membership of SACU is open to all who subscribe to the aims of the Society. Members are entitled to receive SACU NEWS monthly free of charge, use the library at head office, call upon the Society for information and participate in all activities of the Society.

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