

FROM INSIDE CHINA—Three Reports

THE PRESENT cultural revolution in China is a vast and complicated mass movement impossible to report adequately in the limited space of SACU NEWS. But papers with much more space at their disposal rarely succeed in giving a clear picture or, if they do, it is almost immediately shown to be false.

Without the opportunity of studying ungarbled Chinese statements and their historical background, most newspaper readers, radio listeners and television viewers in this country, as in many others, have perforce to look at China as through a glass, darkly. One example will suffice. The BBC's Far Eastern correspondent, bemoaning the difficulties of covering China from Hong Kong, and implicitly apologising for his own earlier reporting, was introduced one day in mid-January as being 'somewhat disillusioned'. Yet the same BBC reported as its lead item in the 8 am news on 22 January that an army of anti-Mao peasants and workers were in control in Kiangsi Province, said in the 1 pm news on the same day that the news could not be confirmed, but used it again as lead item in the 6 pm TV news!

In the belief that readers will be more interested in first-hand reports from China than in third-hand reports which interpret everything, whether rumour or fact, in terms of personal power politics, we are printing short extracts from letters written recently by three American and British teachers living in China, each of which throws light on some aspect of the revolutionary scene.

Peking, 12 November

'I've been studying to try and know about the events that happen almost daily, and then to understand them as fully as I can. For this it is necessary to know background material, particularly Chinese history and the writings of Mao Tse-tung, and also to

come to an honest and conscious analysis of one's own views and feelings on a myriad of questions. The fact that I do not speak Chinese limits and hampers direct involvement in activities which would lead to greater understanding more quickly. Nevertheless I feel that I am getting the most wonderful education imaginable. . . . The Chinese write that the great proletarian cultural revolution "touches people to their souls", and I concur'.

About the Red Guards: 'The clippings that have come to me from the 'Western' press give me one of the most profound lessons in understanding the extent of the distortion of news that is widely known to exist, but which we rarely feel and know personally.

'I have never seen such responsible youth, such warm and friendly people in such numbers. And remember, my work at home was work with masses of people!

'The Red Guards are definitely

breaking things, demonstrating, and attacking all kinds of ideas in their myriad forms of outward expression, be they idols and churches, or antiques and land deeds, or the names of streets and stores. The breaking and demonstrating and attacking is primarily done ideologically, i.e. nothing is done without a political principle that can be explained, discussed, and argued. There are also concrete actions, based on these principles, which broke through some areas of inhibitions that "shock" upper classes and people who defend "law and order" but do not get upset about the problems of masses of oppressed people. And yet the masses of workers and peasants truly welcome these actions, which are "ill-mannered", rough, sometimes even violent! There is the quotation which so well expresses this process: "A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing a fine embroidery; it cannot
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THE ARTS in SOCIALIST SOCIETY

ON THE 3 January at 24 Warren Street, a most interesting discussion was held on the subject of 'Art and Culture in a Socialist Society'. The subject was introduced by Paul Lewenstein who returned from China in October after working there for two years. Mr Lewenstein limited his introduction to art — he felt that culture was too vast in scope and definition to discuss in so short a period of time — confining himself mostly to aspects he had seen, and always in relation to the broad political background of present-day China.

Regarding the Peking Opera — the only theatre form familiar to Western countries — he spoke of the attempt to transpose this form into theatre more directly concerned with the problems experienced in China today.

Mr Lewenstein, and others from the audience who had been in China, explained that Peking Opera originated as an entertainment of the court and had always had a limited appeal because of its unreal subject matter and highly refined form. In trying to apply this form to present day themes, Mr Lewenstein felt that, although in the example he had seen there was a certain success in moments when a theme struck a note of universality, on the whole the form did not lend itself to the vital realistic treatment required by present day themes.

Developing in contrast with this esoteric form over the years, the local, regional theatre — e.g. Pingju opera — had always been of a different order, always attracting an enthusiastic and
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be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another." (Mao Tse-tung, in March 1927.)'

Shanghai, 10 December

Of an exhibition of things found in the houses of ex-capitalists: 'It was a fantastic exhibition—the quantity of jewels, especially, was staggering. To a Westerner from the other world who lives well at home it would not be so shocking. But if you keep in mind the way the Chinese workers and peasants are still living, the simplicity of their life, it is not hard to understand why they were so disgusted when they found all these amounts of money, gold, jewels and silks hoarded away. In any case, I think in our country people do not live as well as all that, when you think that in this family of six people they had a huge radiogram, TV sets, refrigerator and everything.

'These things in New China are far cheaper than they could ever have been before, but still, TV sets, radiograms, ice-boxes, are beyond the reach of the workers. It wasn't so much the objects themselves which were so horrible, but the accumulation, the quantity which these people were keeping in store, and the gold bars, and the weapons. It was glittering with gold, silver, diamonds and jewels of all kinds. Maybe some day the figures will be published for the whole of China.'

Shanghai, 20 December

'I think that during the movement probably all people in positions of leadership, at all levels, have been or will be criticised. The aim of criticism is, if they have made mistakes unintentionally, to help them to change, and, if they are enemies, to expose them.'

Kaifeng, November

'All young China is travelling. Now free train service is stopped except to get them home—it will take five weeks to clear Shanghai; Peking has had nine million visitors! But the idea of "Little Long Marches" spread before this, and thousands are travelling on foot. I can describe one of these from its inception.

'In October five girls (Li-li, my granddaughter, is one) and five boys, all of them athletes conceived the idea of a march. By the 22nd these 17- and 18-year-olds had . . . laid

plans to walk to Peking via Yanan. . . . Now to talk it over at home, and with the City Party Committee for sanction and a letter of verification.

'Not one family held back, which shows the spirit universal today. For Li-li and another girl are the only two not needed at home for work, or to lighten the load of the breadwinner. Eight families pulled in their belts and gave whole-hearted support. But the Committee hesitated with paternal forebodings, and nearly drove the youngsters mad before coming through handsomely with the letter, red arm-bands, and ten yuan a month each for food. . . .

'The girls included a dancer and a cross-talk team; the boys—musicians and a speaker. They took stencils to use on village mimeographs and, to add to their loads, paper for propaganda and for news in isolated spots. Quilts in place of sleeping bags. Padded clothes . . . two pairs of shoes. . . .

' . . . Evenings they studied till past midnight: the "16 Points" action guide for Red Guards, and the army rules Long Marchers pledge to follow—don't accept as much as thread or needle from the people, be polite, return anything found, do not swear, or annoy, never hit anyone, do not cross fields, or in any way hurt property, pay fairly for anything you buy, and pay for what you break. These were discussed in depth with writings of Chairman Mao. Their own motives were probed: was this only fun-adventure to any of them? If so, hardships and difficult jobs they found in villages might deter them, some might turn back at the nearest railroad depot. They came to a united decision that they were out to serve the people and to steel themselves.

'6 am, 2 November, Li-li left home in a last-minute flurry to meet the others in town, and take the pledge they had written before the Revolutionary Martyrs' monument. . . . They looked so young, so determined when they marched past briskly, heavy packs on their backs, flag waving and children following. . . .

'Later a boy returned on business for villagers who could not come themselves; he took train early next day to meet the group further on. Yes, they all developed blisters on their feet at first. They chose the hardest routes, had crossed a terrifying bridge of chains with no solid footing. Reception everywhere was wonderful; had at times been forced to accept meals, but left money with a note of thanks, explaining their pledge, to be found when they had gone; had done thirty miles on their longest day and expected to reach Yanan in twelve more days. . . .'

Books Received

The First Years of Yangyi Commune, by Isabel and David Crook. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966. 42s.

THIS BOOK, which has been described as 'the most authoritative and detailed account of a Chinese people's commune yet published in English', is based on a 1959-60 study of the area where 12 years earlier the authors had seen the completion of land reform (see their previous book *Revolution in a Chinese Village*).

The Pattern of Chinese History, edited by John Meskill. Heath Harrap, 1965. Paperback. 14s 6d.

AN ANTHOLOGY of differing views, ranging from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese, Japanese and Western historians.

The Yangtze, by Cornelia Spencer. Frederick Muller, 1966. 16s.

ILLUSTRATED account for young readers.

A Visual History of China, by A. B. Jeffries. Evans Brothers Ltd, Montague House, Russell Square, London, WC1. 1966. 5s 6d.

A MODESTLY priced introduction for junior forms, illustrated with line drawings and useful maps. Generally well balanced and informative, despite some inaccuracies.

Peking Opera; a short guide, by Elizabeth Halson. Oxford University Press, Hong Kong. 1966. 17s 6d.

A CAREFULLY written and well-produced (in Japan) introduction to the subject, well illustrated with colour plates and many excellent drawings. Mainly devoted to the classical tradition, with only very brief mention of the new operas now being staged.

The Frontiers of China, by Francis Watson. Chatto & Windus, London, 1966. 30s.

A SUMMARY of the subject by an unfriendly non-specialist who explains Chinese policies in terms of conventional power politics. The maps are very inadequate to such a subject, and the wording on them sometimes glaringly prejudices the issues in dispute between China and her neighbours. Despite these serious defects the book has some value as a summary of frontier agreements reached and matters still in dispute.

It is the aim of **SACU NEWS** to encourage the free exchange of ideas. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Society.

LETTER BOX

FURTHER to the discussion between Frida Knight and Gilbert Longden, I wish to draw the attention of Mr Longden to some of the reports, which were published in periodicals that Mr Longden would no doubt consider to be reliable, such as the **Herald Tribune** (New York) and **Life**, on the subject of the People's Communes. Mr Longden will find a representative collection on pages 137 and 138 of the book **The Wall Has Two Sides** by Felix Greene (Jonathan Cape Paperback JCP 23). When Mr Longden has compared these reports with the reports of on-the-spot observers such as Professors René Dumont, Charles Bettelheim and Joseph Needham; and Felix Greene (see pages 140 to 171 of the same book) perhaps he would like to venture to express an opinion as to which group of writers was nearer the truth.

I was one of many people who conveyed their congratulations to the People's Republic of China on the occasion of their successful guided weapon nuclear test. And why — because nuclear weapons in the hands of the Chinese people are powerful weapons

for defending world peace and security and for opposing the policies of aggression and war pursued by the United States of America, aided and abetted by some other countries who lack the wisdom and the courage and the determination to pursue an independent, peaceful, policy.

It is well to remember that Britain has developed her nuclear weapons and that at least one British physicist has been knighted for his work in this field.

The Government of the People's Republic of China has stated: 'We solemnly declare once again that at no time in no circumstances will China be the first to use nuclear weapons. China will continue to carry on an unswerving struggle, together with all the other peace-loving people and countries of the world, for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons' (**Peking Review**, Number 44, p ii — 28th October, 1966). Furthermore, when the United States of America made use of atomic bombs towards the end of the second world war one of the very few voices raised in protest was that of the Communist Party of China which declared that the pur-

pose of the war was to defeat Japanese militarism and not the murder and maiming of thousands and thousands of Japanese civilians.

Three cheers to the Red Guards who have made a notable contribution to the revolution.

Lionel Gay

Weekend at Plaw Hatch

AT THE REQUEST of the First Trade Union Country Club, **SACU** has obtained speakers for a weekend school to be held at the club (Plaw Hatch Hall, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead) during the weekend 24-26 February. The programme will include a historical introduction by Bernard Martin, and other talks on economic, social and political developments by Ernest Roberts, Stanley Hutchins, Nicholas Oulton and Colin Penn. Fee £3-10-0 (Apply directly to Plaw Hatch, Tel. Sharpthorne 373).

NEWS WANTED

WE NEED NEWS. News from the branches — and the only persons who can let us know what is going on are the branches themselves.

This then is an earnest appeal to all Branch Committees and working groups to appoint one of their numbers to have the specific responsibility to keep **SACU NEWS** informed.

If a branch is planning a meeting or activity — specially one which may attract members from other areas — this is news for **SACU NEWS** . . . and may thereby provide a better attendance.

If a working group is in need of help, this too can provide an item for us . . . and will probably result in the required help being offered to the group.

When special events are being staged by a branch, this is likely to be of interest to many persons outside the branch's own immediate area. There have been cases of members travelling fifty or more miles to attend a meeting of particular interest to them.

Like all mediums of communication, **SACU NEWS** must be a two-way avenue — news for our members and from our members.

SACU NEWS editorial staff can chase up additional information about items of which they know, but they cannot print items that no one has even mentioned to them.

So, please let us know. Don't worry because you think that the item may be too insignificant or of too little general interest to warrant space in **SACU NEWS**. Neither is there a need to write about it as a news item. Just let us know the details and we'll do the rest. But, let us know . . . PLEASE.

The Arts in Socialist Society

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large audience, and today is widely written and performed. Mr Lewenstein described one which had been written and performed by the wives of the Daqing oil workers dealing with their problem of developing useful working lives in relation to the development of the area in which they found themselves. In this connection he spoke of the very real and moving interplay between the audience and the stage (a goal frequently aimed at by the serious theatre of the West).

Another of the subjects touched on, developed in the following free discussion, was the recent criticism of Sholokhov's works. Mr Lewenstein did not completely agree with the criticism in China of **And Quiet Flows the Don** because he himself had accepted the objectivity of the writer. Others joining the discussion strongly upheld the Chinese criticism that to portray a novel's hero in a revolutionary situation as one whose inner problems so separated him from the main national revolutionary struggle was of necessity a distortion and fundamentally an untruth.

Several in the audience who had been working in China over the past years brought their knowledge and experience to the discussion. The very

live and flourishing 'story-telling' form of theatre was described by the same person who described his experience in using the text of **The Quiet American** in teaching English to the Chinese. He pointed out that his Chinese students were not clear as to the good and bad of Grahame Green's characters — that this ultra-sophisticated approach could have no meaning to a people so thoroughly and basically involved in their own destiny. Conversely, it led to the conjecture that people in the West with their alienation from society could not understand the Chinese frame of reference.

The discussion also touched on the particular complications of the last hundred years of Chinese history, in which even art had reflected the Western influence over China and her political-economic history. The conscious self-determination today to eschew this foreign domination even in this section of the superstructure — art — is apparent.

At the end of the discussion all seemed to agree that in China an indigenous art would not develop from existing artists, writers, composers merely working among the people, but that it would come from the workers of China helped and trained to create their own expression.

K. Allan

WEEKEND SCHOOL

at

HUGH STEWART HALL (BUILT 1792) IN THE GROUNDS OF NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY

Friday evening, 31 March to Sunday afternoon, 2 April, 1967

Programme :

China before Mao.	Bernard Martin
Land and People of China	Dr T. R. Tregear, Biographer of Sun Yat-sen Author of 'A Geography of China'. Formerly Professor of Geography, Huachung University, Wuhan.
China in the World	Derek Bryan
Two Years in Peking	Delia Jenner Lived in China 1963-65.

COST : Accommodation and Meals :

SACU Members	£5 10 0
SACU Student Members	£5 0 0
Non-Members	£6 0 0

To register — Send ten shillings (10/-) deposit to :
SACU, 24 Warren Street, London, W1, by 24 February, 1967.

ABOUT SACU

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Dr Nicholas Kurti

Secretary: Mr Derek Bryan

OFF THE CUFF DISCUSSIONS

CHINA is in the news! Every day reports appear in the press, often confusing, contradictory, and distorted. It is more than ever important that SACU members should equip themselves with accurate factual information.

There is no better way of doing this than by participating in one of the weekend schools organised by the Society, where experts deal with different aspects of Chinese life and policy, and members can exchange views and elucidate problems in a pleasant country setting. Not the least important part of these weekends are the 'off-the-cuff' discussions in leisure

periods.

One of the problems of organising these schools is created by members applying for places at the last moment and thus making it difficult to know whether or not accommodation booked can be fully utilised. We urge you to study the 1967 programme of weekend schools, which has been planned to cater for members in different parts of the country, and to make your reservations without delay.

We are always interested to receive from members suggestions for subjects they would like to see included in schools' programmes.

Council of Management: Mrs Mary Adams, Mr William Ash, Mr Roland Berger, Mr Geoffrey Carrick, Mr Raymond Dawson, Mr Andrew Faulds, MP, Miss Margaret Garvie, Mr Alec Horsley, Dr N Kurti, Professor Joseph Lauwerys, Mr John Longstaff, Mr Evan Luard, MP, Mr Ewan MacColl, Dr Joseph Needham, Mr Ernest Roberts, Professor Joan Robinson, Sir Gordon Sutherland, Mr Jeremy Thorpe, MP, Dame Joan Vickers, MP, Mrs Ethel Wormald.

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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 central office, call upon the Society for information and participate in all activities of the Society.

Annual subscription: £1.0.0. Reduced rates for old age pensioners (5s), and full-time students (7s 6d).

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SACU DIARY

February

- 7 **London Discussion Group:** Discussion of the film 'Red Detachment of Women', 24 Warren Street. 8 pm.
- 10 **Camden Spring Festival,** Burgh House, Hampstead, NW3. 8 pm. Social evening with entertainment.
- 12 **Chinese Dinner and Social Evening,** Kong San Restaurant, 10 Covent Garden (off Water Street), Liverpool 2. Tickets 15s including seven course dinner and gratuities. Licensed bar. Merseyside and North Wales branch secretary, F. R. Brunson, 118 Beckett's Lane, Chester, from whom tickets may be obtained.
- 13 **Cambridge Branch:** Lecture by Owen Lattimore.
- 15 **Barnet Branch:** Public Meeting. North Finchley Library. 7.45 pm (details from Secretary, Peter

Warland, 9 Sefton Avenue, NW7. Tel: MIL 4815).

- 18 **'China Today':** One-day School under joint auspices of Merseyside Branch SACU and Chester Branch WEA. Tutor, William Jenner. Felix Greene's film 'China!'. Chester College, Parkgate Road, Chester.
- 21 **London Discussion Group:** 24 Warren Street. 8 pm.
- 22 **Film Show,** 'The East is Red', at Friends Meeting House, Heath Street, Hampstead. Camden branch. 7.45 pm.

March

- 1 **Film Show:** 'Letter with Feathers'. University College, Dept. of Medical Sciences, Gower Street, London, WC1. 7.30 pm.
- 4 **Meeting** at the Royal Institution, Liverpool, addressed by Mr E. A. Roberts, assistant general secretary, Amalgamated Engineering Union. 3 pm. Arranged by the Merseyside and North Wales branch of SACU.