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Introduction to China

Innes Herdan



Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute

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The Author

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The cover picture shows rice transplanting at Tengchiao Production Brigade in Hainan Island, Kwangtung Province.

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Foreword

by Derek Bryan

The writer of a recent book has found in Britain a profound, almost subterranean sense of the great import of what has happened in China. People want to find out because they feel that China represents two things, the revival of hope in the possibility of change, including very radical and revolutionary change, and a fascinated interest in the detailed lineaments of the Chinese model itself.

Originally conceived of as a simple introduction for students, the present booklet has been produced to meet the demand for a short but comprehensive treatment of a vast subject. At first sight this might appear to be a simple matter, given the wealth of information now available on contemporary China, and the many books on the historical, social and cultural background. In fact, however, the richness of the material, and the complicated strands of China's revolutionary history, make the task of writing a balanced introduction within a reasonable compass an exacting one.

Most people in Britain know very little indeed about China, and when they start to 'discover' the country they become uncomfortably aware of their lack of knowledge. They, and indeed anyone who feels the need for some introductory orientation before embarking on a visit to China, or on a study of any aspect of its rapidly developing socialist society, will find in Innes Herdan's work an excellent and readable introduction to the 'new world of the red star'.*

*Peter Worsley, *Inside China*, London 1975, p.11.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Introduction

Since October 1971, when the People's Republic took its rightful seat at the United Nations, interest in China has been growing rapidly. Their 20-year isolation, since the birth of the People's Republic in 1949, was not the choice of the Chinese; it was the West, led by the United States, which blocked contacts. United States citizens were not permitted to visit China, Chinese products were not allowed into America and the American people were deliberately kept in ignorance of what was really happening 'behind the bamboo curtain'. But as time went on, the voting pattern at the United Nations was changing; support for Taiwan fell away steadily until, largely under pressure from Third World countries, the US had to accept the fact of China's representation by the People's Republic.

The British government had from the first maintained an ambiguous position, with some degree of recognition both of the People's Republic and of the exiled Chiang Kai-shek. Even now, when we exchange ambassadors with China, our ignorance of her past and present is extreme. For many people in the West, the Chinese are still seen as an aggressive uniformed horde presenting a threat to the 'Free World' – as the yellow section of the red peril. Stereotyped ideas like these have changed over the years; for our empire-building Victorian grandparents, the Chinese wore pigtailed and smoked opium (which, incidentally, the British had forced on them).

Setting prejudice aside, we still have a lot to learn before we can appreciate what the Chinese are doing today. China's history differs radically from ours. Whereas Europe since the Renaissance was a melting-pot of many cultures and races with a fluid exchange of ideas, the Chinese traditionally thought of China – *Zhong-guo*, the Middle Kingdom – as the centre of the world and within its vast territory developed a unique civilisation largely un-influenced by any other culture. China now presents the longest continuous tradition known in the world and its achievements such as printing, paper-making, sericulture and porcelain were admired and emulated throughout the historical period. Then, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the government of the originally alien Manchus grew steadily weaker, the Chinese had to meet the impact of the West. Their relative isolation was broken by the armed forces of Britain and France, followed by the US, Russia, Japan and others, all bent on opening up China to their trade. The prestige and wealth of the Western nations soared as the raw materials and cheap labour on which they fed were systematically drained off from China and the other countries of today's Third World. It was from this situation of poverty and humiliation into which their country had sunk that the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party rose to guide the people to independence and self-respect.

Perhaps the most difficult thing for us to understand is the belief of the Chinese today that the world is moving towards the ultimate disappearance of classes. A class system necessarily means the oppression of one class by an-

other or, in our terms, that workers by and large do not share the profits which their labour produces. For the Chinese, the present task is that which Mao Tse-tung described in his article *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*, one of 'working hard to create the conditions in which classes, state power and political parties will die out very naturally and . . . human society will move to a higher stage . . .' This higher stage is communism where 'the free development of each is the pre-condition for the free development of all' (*Communist Manifesto*). The Chinese do not yet claim to have a communist society; they are still building socialism.



NW China: the new Szechwan-Tibet highway.

The Background

To begin to understand how the Chinese reached this point of working towards a selfless socialist ideal, we need to know something of China's past, of her people, their forms of government and their geographical situation; in particular their history in the last hundred years.

Geography and population

The third largest country in the world – almost 4 million square miles – with one-fifth of the world's population, China stretches from the Pamirs of Central Asia to the shores of the Pacific; from the Amur and Ussuri rivers in the North-east to the Gulf of Tongking in the South. The West, which includes the Himalayas, is mountainous and sparsely populated: the greater part of Tibet is a high plateau with a bitterly cold climate and to the north of Tibet the huge province of Sinkiang is largely desert. North and East of these two areas is another great desert, the Gobi. Thus not much more than one-tenth of the Chinese earth is cultivated at present and this is mainly along the river valleys and coastal plains of east China.

Two great rivers flow from west to east: the Yellow River rising in Tibet and flowing 3,000 miles to the sea, and the Yangtze farther south which enters the sea at the great port of Shanghai. The Yellow River passes through the loess area of North China where this light yellow soil, carried as silt, gives the river its name. Changing course 26 times in about 3,000 years, causing fearful floods, this mighty river had earned its other name, 'China's Sorrow'. Over the last 20 years, engineering projects carried out by local people have not only made the Yellow River plain safe from flooding but ensured better water supplies in the North so that even in the worst drought years crops were no longer completely wiped out. The Yangtze, which the Chinese call 'the Long River', is the fourth longest in the world. In its middle and lower reaches, where it winds through the Central Plain, most of China's rice is grown.

Although China as a whole lies within the monsoon zone, its climate varies dramatically from North to South. In the North rainfall is uncertain, making agriculture difficult in a potentially fertile area. The yellow earth is extremely productive but does not hold water well, so irrigation is of prime importance. Typical crops include millet, wheat, maize and soy beans. The extent of suffering in times of drought can be gauged from Edgar Snow's account of his visit to the North-West in 1929, where, it was estimated, up to six million had died in three terrible famine years, (*Red Star over China*, Part 6.2).

South China by contrast has an almost tropical climate and plentiful rain, producing as many as three annual crops of rice and other tropical products such as tea, cotton, oil palm, rubber and cocoa. Here also are the mulberry trees for silk production. The main draught animal in the South is the water-

Europeans tried to imitate it but without success until the secret reached Meissen in the 18th century. In a great variety of fields, Chinese discoveries ante-date those of the West by several hundred years. The great Ming traveller, Cheng Ho, led expeditions to Africa and Arabia, starting in 1405.

To the 12th and 13th centuries, belong the great masters of Chinese landscape painting such as Ma Yuan and Hsia Kuei – as great in their kind as any in the whole history of art. In their majestic scrolls, the huge forms of nature and the immensities of space dwarf tiny human figures. Much of Chinese classical poetry, best known to the West in the work of the T'ang poets Tu Fu and Li Po, through numerous translations (Arthur Cooper's in the Penguin Classics, 1973, is a good example) has the same spirit of quietism and humility before nature. Profound inwardness and contemplation inform the massive Buddhist images carved on the sandstone cliffs of Yunkang in north Shansi (4th and 5th centuries AD), in the limestone caves of Lungmen near Loyang in Honan, and at Tunhuang, a station on the old Silk Road where merchants and pilgrims halted before starting westward across the desert.

We may look for the source of these particular qualities of Chinese art in two religions or schools of thought which worked upon the Chinese mind with varying force at different periods of history: Taoism and Buddhism. The latter penetrated China from India around the end of the 3rd century AD. Monasteries were built, often in the mountains, and the sacred texts were brought from India and translated into Chinese. The monk Fa Hsien (319-414) travelled from Central China over the Hindu Kush into India and returned by sea with a quantity of these Buddhist scriptures, a journey of 15 years.

Buddhism taught men to find spiritual peace through eliminating desire; to live apart from the world in a state of purity and simplicity with the aim of reaching Nirvana, where the spirit merged with the eternal. The teachings of Taoism, traditionally attributed to a sage of the 5th century BC called Lao Tan, elaborated and deepened in the writings of Chuang Chou (4th – 3rd centuries BC), had certain similarities with Buddhism. According to the Taoist Classic, the *Tao Te Ching* (translated by Arthur Waley under the title *The Way and its Power*), to find the Way means to understand 'the way the universe works', to fit into nature's pattern by rejecting civilisation, ambition and all striving. Evil could be overcome by passivity. Many Taoists, and Buddhists too, became recluses, and although wonderful works of art were part of the fruit, withdrawal from the human struggle and inertia in the face of human wrongs which these religions encouraged must be blamed in part for the Chinese people's apathy and their tolerance of bad conditions for too long. And if the government since 1949 has discouraged the practice of religion, it was as much for this reason as for the degenerate state in which Taoism and Buddhism had fallen by that time. Taoism, however, in its less abstract form, touched on science through the study of alchemy (the transmutation of baser metals into gold). Taoists also pursued the elixir of immortality by experimenting with herbs. Aspects such as these have played their part in the development of science and medicine in China.

More penetrating, pervasive and lasting than either of these lines of thought have been the ideas of Confucius (551 – 479BC). A teacher and moralist rather than a religious leader, he was concerned with proper human

behaviour – propriety – and the stabilization of society at a time of great instability, by a return to the ways of a past age. Every member of society was to 'know his place', through a comprehensive system of duties and unconditional obedience, from the Emperor downwards. Rites and etiquette were laid down for all occasions as a source of discipline for the individual and order in society. He categorized people according to the status which Heaven had ordained for them at their birth. Those born with knowledge belonged to the highest rank of individuals; those born stupid and lazy were incapable of improving themselves. Hence those who carried out his teaching have tended to polarize high and low born, intellectuals and manual workers, rich and poor, and this is one of the main reasons why Confucianism is under attack in present-day China.

Social structure

China's social structure, remarkably little changed through the greater part of her history until the Revolution of 1911 and even later, owes much to Confucianism.

The Emperor from earliest times up to the last Manchu ruler who abdicated in 1912, was known as the Son of Heaven. He was said to rule by divine authority and had absolute power; his virtue and high morality would spread blessings among his people, but an evil ruler would lose the mandate of heaven and bring disasters on the country. This theory traditionally accounted for the collapse of a dynasty or ruling house, which was said to spring from the depravity of its later members.

Under the Emperor came the hereditary nobility, who in Chou times, provided the counsellors, ministers, governors and generals, but in the Ch'in (221-206BC), power passed from them to non-hereditary officials and the Han saw the setting up of the characteristic Chinese administrative system. The first Westerners who came in contact with this were deeply impressed by it. When it was functioning well, it was remarkably effective in governing the huge area of China at all levels. Appointed to administer justice, collect taxes and raise troops from all corners of the Empire, its hierarchy of officials were selected by increasingly stiff examinations in the Confucian writings. Although in theory it was open to candidates from any part of society, in practice it had to be limited to the very small class of educated young men – the sons of the scholar-gentry, who had little concern for the ordinary people. Thus an elite class of bureaucrats, cultivated and privileged, became an outstanding feature of the Chinese social structure.

Beneath them came the unprivileged and uneducated: the peasants, artisans, merchants and soldiers, in that order. Merchants were despised because they were unlearned and their preoccupation with money-making was against the Confucian ethic. As for soldiers, there was a common saying that 'you don't take good iron to make nails or good men to make soldiers'. They were regarded as the dregs of society. The peasants, always the backbone of China, were also the most oppressed and miserable. Local officials were expected to collect taxes from them and support themselves and their retinue from the same source – a system that invited corruption. Unless the official was scrupulous, the burden on the peasant became crushing. No account

was taken of harvest failure or drought which would make it impossible for him to pay the taxes as well as feed his family. In times of hardship, peasants and small landowners were forced to sell their land and become tenants or even bandits. Year after year there were peasant uprisings in one part of the country or another.

Thus life for the mass of Chinese who struggled to live by agriculture was generally intolerable and on the national level, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a period of consistent exploitation and humiliation of China by Europeans, Americans, Russians and Japanese.

First clashes with the West

The first clash with Europe occurred over the export of opium to China by the British East India Company. By the 18th century, China was exporting not only silk fabrics and tea, but even cotton cloth and porcelain to Britain. Payment had to be made in silver for, in the famous phrase of the Manchu emperor, Chien Lung, in a message to George III: 'We possess all things . . . and have no use for your country's manufactures.' It was in order to stem this drain of silver that Britain began to pour opium into China — a trade which grew so fast that it soon outweighed all China's exports of tea and other goods, and silver began to flow the other way. The commissioner appointed to deal with the problem, Lin Tse-hsu, appealed to Queen Victoria to halt the trade: 'Though not making use of opium oneself, to venture nevertheless to manufacture and sell it, and with it to seduce the simple folk of this land is to seek one's livelihood by exposing others to death . . .'

This moral appeal fell on deaf ears and the attempts of the Chinese to confine British traders to Hong Kong island, cut off their supplies and seize their opium led to war. This first Anglo-Chinese armed conflict (1839-42), known as the Opium War, ended in the disastrous defeat of China; her people were forced into a subjection that endured for a century. Under the Treaty of Nanking Britain's seizure of Hong Kong was confirmed, five ports were opened to unrestricted foreign trade and residence, and the first of many indemnities was exacted from China. This was the beginning of the extra-territorial system under which foreigners obtained 'concessions' (areas in which they might live) in Chinese cities. They also set up their own administrative and legal systems, did not pay Chinese taxes and were not subject to the Chinese authorities, no matter what crimes were committed against Chinese people.

The rest of the 19th century saw a succession of wars started by foreign powers, causing great damage to Chinese property and life and accelerating the disintegration of the economy and the social order. The despatch of the British expedition which sacked and destroyed the Summer Palace outside Peking in 1860, arose from an incident in which Chinese police had lowered the Union Jack on a Chinese-owned vessel registered in Hong Kong. The Sino-French war of 1884-5 left 3,000 Chinese dead in the city of Foochow alone. The pretexts for these punitive expeditions were in many cases untenable but the aim was always the same: the expansion of trade. Such humiliations continued until the outbreak of the First World War.

The 1914-18 War was for the Chinese a European civil war, in which for

the first time the grip of their European exploiters was relaxed. But on the other hand, the Japanese grip tightened. In 1919 at Versailles, without any consultation with China (nominally their ally) the victorious powers agreed to confirm Japan's seizure of the former German concessions in China. It was this which sparked off the first broad-based revolutionary movement (the May 4th Movement) which 30 years later, under Communist leadership, achieved victory in establishing the People's Republic.

It would be wrong to assume that the Chinese had been taking insults and exploitation without a murmur. China has a long history of peasant rebellion. Revolts organised by secret societies often developed from self-help associations into anti-dynastic movements. The Ming dynasty, for example, was established in 1368 by a Buddhist monk from a poor peasant family who led a successful revolt against the Mongols, backed by secret societies. The Taiping rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century was an almost successful attempt to overthrow the Manchu Ching dynasty and replace it with an ideal society based on a mixture of traditionally Chinese and Christian ideas. And the Boxer uprising at the turn of the century was a secret society rebellion directed both against the dynasty and against foreigners. These later rebellions failed because they lacked disciplined political leadership.

Sun Yat-sen and the 1911 Revolution

One of the great founders of modern China, Sun Yat-sen, was educated partly in Honolulu and Hong Kong, became a Christian and was familiar with Western democratic ideas. He too made full use of the secret societies of South China in his revolutionary movement to overthrow the ineffectual Manchu rulers and revitalize and modernise China. He had, besides, the support of the overseas Chinese in Malaya, the Pacific Islands and Japan, and also of the intellectuals within China, but relatively little broad support.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary forces which had sprung up in different parts of China finally brought down the weak imperial house. On 10 October 1911 the revolution broke out at Wuhan in the central Yangtze valley, soon followed by uprisings in other provinces. In some confusion, the first Chinese Republic was declared and provision was made for elections to a parliament.

Sun Yat-sen had formed a political party, the Kuomintang (KMT) or National People's Party, from five different groups. Its basic ideology was contained in his 'Three Principles of the People': Nationalism (freedom from foreign domination), Democracy, and 'People's Livelihood' or Social Welfare. In the first parliamentary elections, the KMT had a clear majority, but power was seized by a general, Yuan Shih-kai, head of one of the regional armies. Yuan drove the KMT leaders south and made himself virtually dictator. Under his oppressive rule, with a government scarcely more effective than that of the effete Manchus, the provinces of China gradually fell under the control of rival generals supported by their own armies and by foreign powers. This was the era of the 'warlords'.

After Yuan's death in 1916, China found herself effectively divided: five or six warlords ruled in the North, vying with one another for power, while in the South Sun Yat-sen was trying to build up strength to resist them. Meanwhile in 1921, encouraged by the success of the 1917 Russian Revolution, a

group of Chinese founded the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). Another branch was formed simultaneously in Paris among the Chinese students there: Chou En-lai was one of these. With the support of the Russian example, in theory and practice, the Chinese Communists proceeded to organise militant workers' unions in the cities, especially in the South between Canton and Shanghai, to channel the frustrations and aspirations of the workers into the revolutionary struggle.

Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek: rival policies

Among the delegates attending the first secret meeting of the CPC in Shanghai was Mao Tse-tung, who had been born in 1893 in the village of Shao-shan, Hunan. He has described his peasant background and struggle to educate himself, his independent and rebellious nature as a young boy to Edgar Snow (*Red Star over China*, Part 4, Chap.1). He describes the lasting impression made on him by the Hunan insurrection of 1906, when he was a schoolboy of 12. Starving peasants and miners, rioting and demanding food in a severe famine, were cut down by the soldiery of the Governor of Changsha and the leaders were executed. Merchants fleeing from the city brought the news to the Mao family and this he never forgot.

In 1918 he went to Peking for the first time and worked as a library assistant under the University Librarian, Li Ta-chao, later to be a founder of the Chinese Communist Party. He began to read Li's translations of Lenin and his writings on Marxism — 'By the summer of 1920 I had become in theory and to some extent in action a Marxist', he told Snow.

Early in 1919 he was back in Hunan where in the following three years he began to organise the workers and peasants. He founded labour unions and led strikes, organised workers' schools and started a movement for mass education. The spur to his revolutionary work at this time was the May 4th Movement of 1919, the first 'cultural revolution'. This was basically a student movement of protest against Japanese imperialism and in particular against the unjust terms of the Versailles Treaty. It was also a literary revolution — of which the writer Lu Hsun was the leading protagonist — to provide writing, not for an elite but for the masses, in a language all could understand. It was to be a means of spreading the new political and social ideas, and for the young Chinese of the time, it was a kind of baptism into the revolution.

At the third Congress of the CPC in 1923, the historic decision was reached to join with the KMT in the fight against both northern warlords and foreign domination of China. Mao Tse-tung began to work in both the Central Committee of the CPC and the Central Executive Committee of the KMT. Advisers arrived from Soviet Russia and the revolutionary movement began to assume nation-wide proportions. But the alliance did not long survive the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925.

Sun's place at the head of the KMT was taken by Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang came from an East China landowning family; after a traditional education and military training in Japan, he had risen fast in the KMT hierarchy, strengthening his links with the banking and commercial classes and marrying the daughter of one of the wealthiest banking families in China, Soong Mei-ling, the sister of Sun Yat-sen's wife, Soong Ching-ling.

As commander of the revolutionary forces, he led the KMT's historic northern expedition against the warlords in 1927. But on entering Shanghai, which the workers themselves had liberated, he betrayed their trust by turning on the trade unions and slaughtering the workers in thousands. The CPC was decimated and driven underground; even Sun's widow had to flee to Moscow.

Chou En-lai was one of those who escaped. He fled to Nanchang where he helped to organise the August 1 Uprising. Although this was a failure, it marked the establishment of independent Communist forces in China — the Workers' and Peasants' Army. Other CPC survivors continued to work underground in the cities, strongholds of Chiang's rich supporters and the foreign powers, and some joined Mao Tse-tung in work with the peasants. Mao explained to André Malraux, 'After Chiang Kai-shek's coup in Shanghai, we scattered. As you know I decided to go back to my village. Long ago I had experienced the great famine in Changsha where the severed heads of the rebels were stuck on poles . . . Two miles outside my village there were trees stripped of their bark to a height of twelve feet: starving people had eaten it. We could make fighters of people who were forced to eat bark.'

Although Mao firmly believed in the revolutionary potential of the peasants as well as the workers, and further strengthened his conviction by working among the peasants, the Communist leadership at this time continued to stress the importance of taking and holding cities, a tactic which was impractical and wasteful in view of the limited forces at their disposal. Ignoring such directives, Mao proceeded to lead a band of about 1,000 into Chinggang mountain on the borders of Kiangsi and Hunan provinces where he set up a base. He enlisted local support by leading the peasants to seize landlords' land and redistributing it.

One of the first priorities was to overcome the peasants' traditional hostility to soldiers who were regarded as little better than bandits. The Red Army which was now a growing force was subject to strict regulations controlling behaviour, with an insistence upon honesty in all transactions and a helpful and respectful attitude to everyone, irrespective of sex. From the beginning they learnt self-reliance in housing, food and clothing instead of living as parasites on the villagers. A relationship of mutual help and trust was established, the peasants caring for the sick and wounded and acting as intelligence gatherers. And the soldiers gave political organisation and leadership to the masses, a totally new concept of the army's role which established a continuing tradition. By adhering to these rules and following the guerrilla tactics of constant surprise and mobility, the CPC and Red Army maintained and increased their influence in the base area (soon transferred to the Kiangsi-Fukien border) despite continual harassment from Chiang Kai-shek's troops.

While Mao and his followers were working in the Kiangsi 'Soviet', the Japanese had invaded Manchuria in 1931. Relying on Chiang's preoccupation with the Communists and the impotence of the League of Nations, they set up the deposed Emperor of the Ch'ing, Pu Yi, as a puppet ruler in the North-eastern provinces (Manchuria). Chiang's virtual acquiescence in the Japanese invasion was a major factor in his eventual defeat and exile. As a representative of the landlord class, he was bound to stand against the peasants and was incapable of solving their problems; his failure to resist the Japanese

gradually drove students, intellectuals and city-dwellers to support the Communists who opposed the invaders fiercely, systematically and effectively.

The Long March

In his determination to smash the Kiangsi Soviet, Chiang Kai-shek had employed nearly a million troops in five encirclement campaigns and finally made the position of the Red Army untenable. Leaving their central base in 1934, they began the famous Long March of 6,000 miles, over mountains, plains and rivers to join their comrades in Yen-an, capital of the 'Border Region' in the North-west. The Long March lasted a whole year. Many thousands of men, women and boys marched on foot through swamps and snow with little food, practically no medical care and harassed all the way by Chiang's troops and bombs. In her biography of Chu Teh, for long Commander in Chief of the Red Army (*The Great Road: the Life and Times of Chu Teh*, New York 1972), Agnes Smedley records interviews with veterans of the March:

'For weeks at a time we fought our way across the plains, capturing cities and supplying ourselves from the landlord warehouses and enemy ammunition dumps . . . The peasants always helped us and offered to take our sick, our wounded and exhausted. Each man left behind was given some money, ammunition and his rifle and told to organise and lead the peasants in partisan warfare as soon as he recovered. When hard pressed by superior enemy forces we marched in the daytime and at such times the bombers pounded us. We would scatter and lie down; get up and march, then scatter and lie down again, hour after hour . . .'

They travelled through mountains where the paths were only two feet wide so that if anyone tried to sleep he was in danger of rolling down the mountainside, they travelled through areas inhabited by tribal peoples, some of whom were hostile, and they fought all the way. The most famous battle was at Luting bridge. They had to cross the great Tatu river in Szechuan and Chiang's troops were ready at the only possible crossing points. They chose to tackle the ancient iron suspension bridge of Luting, most of whose planking had been removed, swinging themselves across on the bare iron chains over the fast-flowing current and full in the face of the enemy's fire. Even after this heroic victory their troubles were not over since they had still to cross the mountains and glaciers of Tibet.

The March was not only a test of heroism and endurance; it was also a revolutionary education. 'We held great mass meetings. Our dramatic corps played and sung for the people and our political workers wrote slogans and distributed copies of the Soviet Constitution and the Fundamental Laws of the Soviet Government . . .' The educational process was a two-way one. Chu Teh's diary describes the impression that the peasants' poverty made on him; 'Corn with bits of cabbage, the chief food of the people. Peasants too poor to eat rice; sell it to pay rent and interest . . . Peasants call landlords 'rent gentry' and themselves 'dry men' - men sucked dry of everything. Three kinds of salt: white for the rich, brown for the middle classes; black salt residue for the toiling masses. Even black salt, so expensive, peasants place small chunk in a bowl and rub cabbage on it when eating. Poor hovels with black rotten thatch roofs everywhere . . . Have seen no quilt except in landlord houses in cities. One family of ten persons here. Two board beds, one for

the husband, wife, baby; one a shelf for grandmother. Others sleep on earth floor around fire, without covering.'

Of the 90,000 who left Kiangsi, only about 7,000 reached the Shensi Soviet: some were unable to stay the course, others died on the way of wounds, hunger, cold or disease.

The Yen-an Way

From 1935 until 1947 the Communist leaders directed all their operations from Yen-an. Two vital tasks had to be tackled: the defeat of the Japanese who began a full-scale invasion of China in 1937, and the initiation of change in the areas controlled by the Communists - change which followed naturally the military mobilisation of the peasants. The organisation of the local population to fight the Japanese was complicated by the arrival of thousands of young people who trekked from the cities to join in the fighting. Since they knew little about the Communist programme and the need to mobilise the peasantry, their political education became a priority.

It is important to examine the ideas developed and carried out in Yen-an since they are still of the utmost significance today. Great emphasis was placed on study; certain texts by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao were recommended and the practical application of theory was stressed. Group criticism and discussion were encouraged as a means both of correcting mistaken ideas and of involving everyone in the process of decision-making. Involvement was a fundamental principle of Party work embodied in the 'mass line'; that is, the systematic cultivation of the closest possible interaction between Party and people.

Mao said:

'All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. In such cases we should wait patiently. We should not make changes until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out.'

The programmes carried out in Yen-an aimed to transfer as much power as possible to the local level. In the war situation decentralisation also helped to make the Communist bases less vulnerable. A campaign for intellectuals to work in the countryside was part of a continuing attempt to break down the differences between town and country, manual and mental work. While themselves learning to work with their hands, they also taught the peasants to read and write, helping them to absorb new ideas and increase their understanding of the theories underlying them.

Peasants were encouraged to establish agricultural cooperatives since more could be achieved by concerted effort. This was combined with a drive to develop small industrial enterprises in the countryside, drawing on the labour of women, children and old people, teaching the peasants alternative, supplementary skills and reducing problems of supply by dispersed production. The Army had its own food, cloth and shoe production units as well as transport cooperatives. The Industrial Cooperatives pioneered by the New Zealander



Mao Tse-tung in Yen-an during the Anti-Japanese War.

Rewi Alley established schools for technical training in various useful fields such as the making of ropes, pots and pans, soap and matches. The Border Region Government in Yen-an also issued its own money and there was a programme of rent and interest reduction which involved the peasants in fixing fair rents.

'The 'Sian Incident' and the war against Japan

In September 1931, Japan had invaded and seized China's north-eastern provinces (Manchuria), discontent with Chiang Kai-shek's unwillingness to confront Japan grew steadily and came to a head in the so-called 'Sian incident' of 1936, one of the turning points in modern Chinese history.

Troops from the North-east under Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang, who had no interest in civil war but were spurred on by the desire to recover their homeland from Japanese occupation, found themselves in growing sympathy with the Red Army. Their attitude acted as a catalyst for the outraged patriotism of many Chinese people. When Marshal Chang formally presented Chiang Kai-shek with a programme for a national front of resistance to Japan, Chiang replied,

'I will never talk about this until every Red soldier in China is exterminated, and every Communist is in prison.'

But he had to eat his words. On 11 December 1936, a division of the North-eastern army moved towards Sian where Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had summoned a General Staff meeting. In the night, his followers were disarmed and arrested, the city police force surrendered and the Generalissimo himself was caught as he tried to escape up a snow-covered hillside outside the city. He was released only after agreeing to form a united patriotic front together with the Red Army and to suspend attacks against the Communists. The agreement was the result of a Communist initiative carried through by Chou En-lai, which in effect saved Chiang's life. Chang Hsueh-liang formally asked for punishment and was taken at his word: he remained under house arrest in Taiwan until his death nearly forty years later.

Chiang's heart was never in the United Front. Nevertheless it is arguable that the Sian incident swung China away from the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis which it might otherwise have joined in the later world struggle, and ensured the ultimate defeat of Japan.

On 8 July 1937, Japanese soldiers in the Peking area provoked an incident at Lukouchiao, ('Marco Polo Bridge'), ten miles west of the city. This was the start of full-scale war between Japan and China which in 1939 merged with World War II and only ended with the general cessation of hostilities, in 1945. In this war the Japanese armies advanced along the main railways and great rivers, meeting little resistance from Chiang Kai-shek's troops and occupying the cities with acts of indescribable brutality. But in the hinterland the Red Armies (renamed the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army) had set up the largest guerrilla force in the world. Thousands of villages behind the Japanese lines were organised into a 'people's war'; almost two-thirds of the so-called conquered territory was in guerrilla hands most of the time. The more Japanese communications were extended, the less firm was their hold.

As the war went on, Chiang Kai-shek's government became increasingly apprehensive of the Communists' influence over the masses in the areas they had recovered from the Japanese, and an open struggle for leadership developed, Chiang's government taking a series of steps that effectively destroyed the United Front.

The end of the war with Japan found the KMT and CPC face to face. Stalin, who had signed a treaty of friendship with Chiang Kai-shek on the day of the Japanese surrender, was known to favour a coalition government with the CPC throwing its weight in with Chiang; he still believed that 'the development of the (Communist) uprising in China had no prospects' (Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*). Though with little expectation of a lasting settlement, Mao Tse-tung went to Chungking, the wartime capital, in an attempt to solve their differences peacefully. Agreements were signed providing for the democratisation of the government and the amalgamation of the two Chinese armies. However, the ink was hardly dry on these agreements before Chiang went into the attack. From 1946 till 1949, civil war again raged in China. Chiang's prestige declined further with the corruption of his regime and the inflation that raged in the cities. In Chungking, prices doubled 67 times between 1946 and 1948 and then rose 85,000 times in six months. Although the KMT forces had been four times the size of the Red Army in 1945, and had been equipped with vast quantities of US arms, defection depleted them rapidly. In a series of decisive campaigns the Red Army (now known as the People's Liberation Army) swept all before it and the government of the People's Republic was firmly established in Peking on 1 October 1949.

After Liberation

Rehabilitation: the first steps (1949-52)

For the Chinese people, winning the civil war in 1949 was only a beginning: ahead lay the massive task of rebuilding a country that had stagnated for centuries and had been devastated by a hundred years of colonial exploitation and fifty years of war. Added to this the currency was in total collapse after Chiang Kai-shek had fled to Taiwan with the remaining gold reserves and there was an inflation far greater even than that of Germany after the First World War. But for the first time in the modern era there was a strong central government which had both the will and the ability to take control of the nation's resources and policy. Essential commodities – grain, salt, cooking oil, fuel and cloth – were not only price-controlled but used as backing for the currency, with such effect that inflation was ended within 18 months. Control was established over private banking and business. Twenty-five years later the Chinese currency remains more stable than almost any in the world, while the prices of goods in Chinese shops tend, if anything, to go down.

Most railways and roads, canals and irrigation works had been cut or broken down. In these years of rehabilitation (1949-52) communications were restored and improved and industry, brought virtually to a standstill by lack of raw materials and inflation, started up again. But more important than all else for ensuring the livelihood of the people and changing their sorry conditions was the land reform.

Land to the tillers

Under the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, redistribution of land among the poor and middle peasants, begun during the civil war in the liberated areas, was extended to cover the whole country. Meetings were held in the villages and each household, including the landlord's, was classified into rich, middle or poor. Formerly the landlord had lived on rent and interest exacted from the peasants, the rich peasant owned his land and hired help, the middle peasant worked his own land and the poor peasant worked for others. Now the landlords' land, draft animals, implements and surplus grain were taken by the peasants for redistribution and 'accusation meetings' were held to judge their crimes. Those owing at least three 'blood debts' were executed, others given prison sentences together with re-education through labour on the farms. Those who had not committed serious crimes were left enough land for themselves and their families to cultivate but without hiring labour. The rest was distributed to landless and land-deficient men, women and children according to the work force within each family and the nature of the terrain.

Granting women an equal share was a revolutionary change. In old China

the only 'career' open to a woman was marriage – and marriage, always arranged by parents and through a go-between, was often little better than slavery. She became the property of her husband and the servant of her mother-in-law, without rights or status. In famine years she might be sold to buy food. Jack Belden writes of these unfortunates in the 1940's:

'In the women of China the communists possessed almost ready-made one of the greatest masses of disinherited human beings the world has ever seen. And because they found the key to the heart of these women, they also found one of the keys to victory over Chiang Kai-shek.'

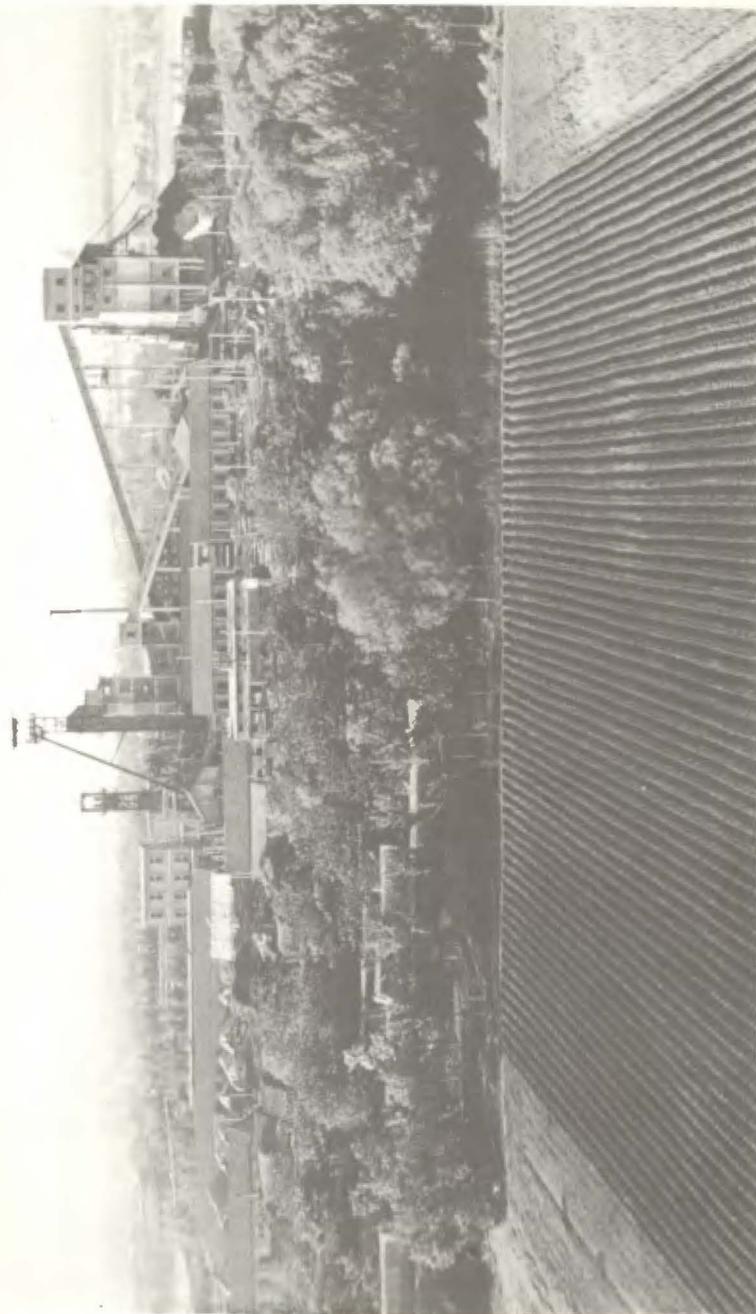
Mao was always their champion – 'As many women as men are capable and they have a tremendous influence on building up a society' he said, and it is significant that the Marriage Law of 1950 stipulating freedom of choice in marriage, no concubines or child-brides, and the right to divorce was the first law to be passed after Liberation. Even before this, all brothels had been closed and their inmates re-educated and given work; prostitution gradually ceased to exist. With equal rights to the land as well, the women of China were making progress towards an equal place in society.

The First Five-Year Plan (1953-57)

Five-sixths of China's population had now become small peasant proprietors, but their plots were indeed small, their tools and methods primitive; they lacked fertilisers and irrigation systems and were still at the mercy of drought and flood. It was clear that with land alone they could not make a living. The formation of 'Mutual-aid Teams' pioneered in Yenan days, was extended. Small groups of neighbours, while keeping their own land, came together to work each other's plots in turn, first at the busy seasons and later all the year round, loaning their implements and draught animals. In this way they were able to increase the crop yield and help one another through difficult times.

In 1953 the First Five-Year Plan was started. Its aim in agriculture was to raise production by 25 per cent and to broaden the whole concept of mutual aid. Under the old system of work teams, arguments would often arise over precedence – whose land was to be sown or harvested first: it seemed more reasonable to pool and cultivate a whole area together, the income of the harvest to be shared out on the basis of work done, and the amount of land, tools and draught animals contributed. This was how the elementary Agricultural Producers' Co-operatives were organised. At this stage they were already larger than the Mutual-aid Teams and were semi-socialist. Further development led to the Advanced Co-operatives, generally of around 200 households, where the land and other means of production were actually collectively owned. The State helped with loans for the purchase of tools and seeds; by combining together, the co-operatives were able to accumulate funds for productive investment and repay the State loans.

This was a movement towards collectivisation and socialism. Initiative and a new social consciousness developed among the peasants – traditionally conservative and individualist. They learnt new skills: to read, write and keep accounts, to plan and organise on a wider scale, to invent, to innovate. And the practical results were astonishing: harvests reached unprecedented heights.



New coal centre at Huapei, East China.

Foundations of industry

Simultaneously with collectivisation in the countryside, China began to build up a centralised modern industry, but the task was formidable. In pre-revolutionary China what industry there was was mainly light, such as textile and paper mills, much of it owned and managed by foreigners. In the initial stages of industrialisation these foreign-owned enterprises as well as those of some national capitalists, were brought under State control and ownership. The small sector of light industry remaining in private hands was gradually reduced; some were converted into joint State-private enterprises, the former owners receiving 5 per cent interest on their capital and a percentage of the old personnel being retained.

'Our socialist system has only just been set up; it is not yet fully established or fully consolidated,' said Mao Tse-tung in 1957, 'In joint state-private industrial and commercial enterprises, capitalists still receive a fixed rate of interest on their capital, that is to say, exploitation still exists. As far as ownership is concerned these enterprises are not yet completely socialist in character.' (*On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People.*)

It took the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to do away with the 5 per cent.

The technical difficulties were equally challenging. The Communist Party which had had good success with agriculture in the liberated areas during the civil war had little experience in organising industry, especially in the setting up of heavy plants. In 1949 the new government turned to the Soviet Union for practical help and advice. Under the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, signed in 1950, economic aid to China was promised in the form of loans, industrial materials and technical expertise. In the '50s, thousands of Soviet engineers, technicians and designers came to China.

A good deal of practical help and advice was forthcoming in the early years, particularly in the form of complete factories and collaboration in certain major engineering projects, such as the bridge over the Yangtze at Wuhan, where the river is a mile wide and runs very fast and deep. Some basic industrial installations – e.g. machine-tool and machine-building plants – were built and brought into production; steel output increased six-fold under the First Five-Year Plan after the mills at Anshan, Shanghai and Wuhan had got under way with Soviet help. A hundred and forty-five industrial projects were in hand or accomplished by 1958.

These were solid achievements but the Chinese paid for them with interest. Nothing was given; the Russian loans were repaid by the labour of the Chinese people and China had to pay, in exports of equal value, for all the machines and technical assistance. Moreover, Soviet aid represented only a small fraction of the input into industrial development, and the Russian development model and Russian equipment were not always suited to China's situation.

The Second Five-Year Plan (1958-62): The 'Great Leap Forward' in industry

In 1958 it was decided to harness the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses to 'go all out, aim high, achieve greater, faster, better and more



China-produced electronic computer.

economical results in building socialism' on both the agricultural and industrial fronts. As Han Suyin says:

'The leap in 1958 was an intellectual and psychological bounding into the twentieth century. Boldness and experimentation were to replace safe, traditional habits. "To dare" was the motto impressed upon youth when once it was "to obey". (*China in the Year 2001*).'

In industry enormous efforts were made and in many instances even excess of the five-year production targets were reached by 1960, two years ahead of schedule. Five hundred factories were commissioned in 1959. Of course there were mistakes as well, through lack of experience, even excess of zeal. The Great Leap Forward was criticised at the time by both Soviet and Western commentators and it had its critics within China itself who argued that it was far too ambitious and too early – an attempt at a short-cut to communism. But recent assessments are inclined to see it in another light. The many existing factories first established at that time are evidence of the long-term economic value as well as the political value of the 'Leap'. It is seen in China as another example of the 'struggle between two lines', between the bold innovators and the more cautious elements who believe in centralised, bureaucratic control – a long and continuing struggle which came to a head in the Cultural Revolution of the mid-sixties, but is still going on. The people will only become equipped to judge it correctly through experience and study.

Meanwhile relations between China and the Soviet Union were deteriorating and in July 1960 the Russian leaders abruptly withdrew their technicians and advisers (estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000) with many projects only half-completed and others at an early stage of development. Blueprints and specifications were carried off too; vital parts were withheld and shipments cancelled. This coincided with a series of natural calamities – the three bad years of 1959-61 which resulted in the worst harvests China had known this century.

In these disasters, however, China proved the great value of self-reliance, a lesson already learnt in 1933 in the guerrilla days. *Zi li geng sheng* – 'regeneration through our own efforts' – a phrase coined by Mao in 1945, was never truer than in the early sixties. In a relatively short time Chinese technicians and builders not only discovered how to do what their Soviet colleagues had been teaching them but often to do them in ways better suited to their own conditions. They managed to complete huge projects like the Yangtze river bridge at Nanking which had been abandoned half-way, and similarly to develop the Taching oil field in the North, relying almost entirely on their own ideas and resources. Indeed Taching became an industrial model for the whole country. Although it is a big modern industry using advanced techniques, the families of the workers there are largely engaged in cultivating the land. Most of the oil pipelines are laid underground and many thousands of families have organised themselves into agricultural production teams. The region is now self-sufficient in vegetables and has a growing output of grain. Small factories make use of waste products from the oil production and the various residential communities have their own educational, medical and other social services. The resource and inventiveness of the Chinese people have created a large-scale industrial-farming community of an entirely new type.

The Sino-Soviet split.

The question of the differences between China and the Soviet Union can only be touched on here. Their disagreement is a deep ideological one and though this was apparent at an early stage of the Chinese revolution, it did not affect State relations till after the death of Stalin. The Chinese now affirm that a new exploiting class has come to power in the Soviet Union; that over the last 20 years, the socialist Soviet economy has been transformed into a State-capitalist one, internally repressive and outwardly a source of aggression and war, so that only a mask of socialism remains. Their criticism of the USSR is also designed to prevent the same thing happening in China.

The Chinese Communist Party began criticising the abandonment of socialism under Khrushchev and now criticise the logical result of this – aggressive policy under Brezhnev. At present, the bulk of Soviet armament faces Europe and this, the Chinese believe, represents the main strategic thrust. A serious border dispute admittedly exists between the USSR and China, which developed into an open clash in 1969. Its history dates back to the 19th century when territory was conceded by a weak Imperial China to the Tsarist regime under 'unequal treaties'. But China's struggle to expose the 'social-imperialist' features of the Soviet leadership has nothing to do with these border questions.

During the period of industrial co-operation between the USSR and China, and especially in the Great Leap, China's internal policies became a particular bone of contention. The Russian leaders held that it would be impossible to collectivise agriculture until a heavy industrial base had been set up, capable of supporting a modern, mechanised agriculture. But Mao was convinced that China's road to socialism should be first through co-operation on the land 'before the use of big machinery'. China proceeded to collectivise her agriculture stage by stage; local control was established in every field: industry, agriculture, culture, trade, military affairs and social services – all before the consolidation of heavy industry.

Indeed a deliberate policy adopted during the Great Leap was the setting up of economically small factories in the rural areas, one aspect of the policy called by Chairman Mao 'Walking on Both Legs' which became very characteristic of Chinese organisation in general. It meant the simultaneous use of traditional and modern, western techniques (tractors besides hand-ploughs), simultaneous development of light as well as heavy industry (departing from the Russian emphasis on heavy industry and calling for less capital), the even spread of industry throughout the country (not merely in great cities), or the setting up of factories and small workshops in the countryside, building them round local resources and markets to save transport costs. Under this system, workers and peasants contributed many practical ideas to an economy half-way between manual labour and mechanisation.

The 'Great Leap' in agriculture – The People's Communes

The bold conception of the Great Leap expressed itself in the countryside in the burst of energy that produced the People's Communes – a new kind of social and economic organisation which has transformed Chinese rural society.

Although the advanced co-operatives had had a good measure of success, they had been organised chiefly for farming. The peasants found that the projects for land improvement which they now urgently wanted to undertake, such as large-scale irrigation and water-conservancy works, were beyond the scope of the unit; by the Spring of 1958, some co-operatives began to combine into larger ones. On the Tanshui river in Honan, for instance, eight co-operatives had each built small water-control projects but without much success. By combining they were able to co-ordinate control of the river which affected them all and plan their work together, producing 13 large reservoirs and preserving the whole area from the effects of drought and flood.

Again, in the small-scale local industries which were springing up in the countryside at the time, the larger unit was found to be much more effective than the smaller. For example, one co-operative had iron ore on its land but no coal while alongside it another had coal but no iron. By merging the two it became possible to produce farm tools by simple methods for the use of the whole community.

These mergers came about spontaneously through the initiative of the peasants who saw their practical advantages and had already experienced the benefits of increasing degrees of collectivisation. They were given shape and form and spread throughout the country after Party leaders – Mao Tse-tung himself among them – had spent the summer of 1958 visiting the farms and discussing problems with the local people. The publicity given to the formation of the first 'People's Commune' at Chilying, in Honan, started a trend towards similar movements throughout the summer and autumn of 1958. By the following year, China's 500,000,000 peasants had been organised into something like 26,000 communes; at the present time the number is about 53,000.

The movement, started with so much fervour and hope, ran into many difficulties in the early years. It coincided with three years of droughts in the northern regions and floods in the south which ruined the Spring sowings and put whole provinces under water, while the unexpected withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1960 hit the economy as a whole. Moreover, some of the organisation was too impetuous and these large collectives proved unwieldy in their original form. While they might be the right-sized unit for planning, building or taking in the harvest, they were much too large for handling the details of daily life. However, the Communes not only survived, they saw to it that nobody starved as countless millions had starved in the past. Emergency measures organised nationally, and also locally by the communes themselves, price control, rationing, the absence of hoarding and corruption – fair shares for all – so new to the Chinese experience, ensured that even in the bad years everybody had enough to eat. In 1962 and every year since, harvests have been good, thanks to the irrigation, flood-control and other work initiated in 1957 and since continued and expanded by the communes.

Commune organisation

Over those three years of hardship the communes were reorganised on a three-tier system which is still functioning. The *Production Team* is the small-



Lungchuan production brigade, North China, threshing wheat with self-made threshers.



Members of a South China commune delivering rice to the State.

lest unit: 15-30 families who live close to one another and are the real social unit, the working unit too, responsible for the day-to-day planning of farming. Within the plan for the whole Commune, the Production Team decides its own programme of work and obtains its income from the sale of its surplus produce to the State. Five to six per cent of the harvest is paid to the State as an agricultural tax and the rest is used by the team itself for its own needs and the requirements of next year's crops. Out of its receipts from State purchases of its produce, the team can buy such things as water pumps and farm implements. The Team chooses its own Committee to lead its work and during the year meetings of the whole Team are held to discuss policies and programmes. Every member is encouraged to take part in these meetings, except for former landlords and rich peasants hostile to the system who have been deprived of political rights.

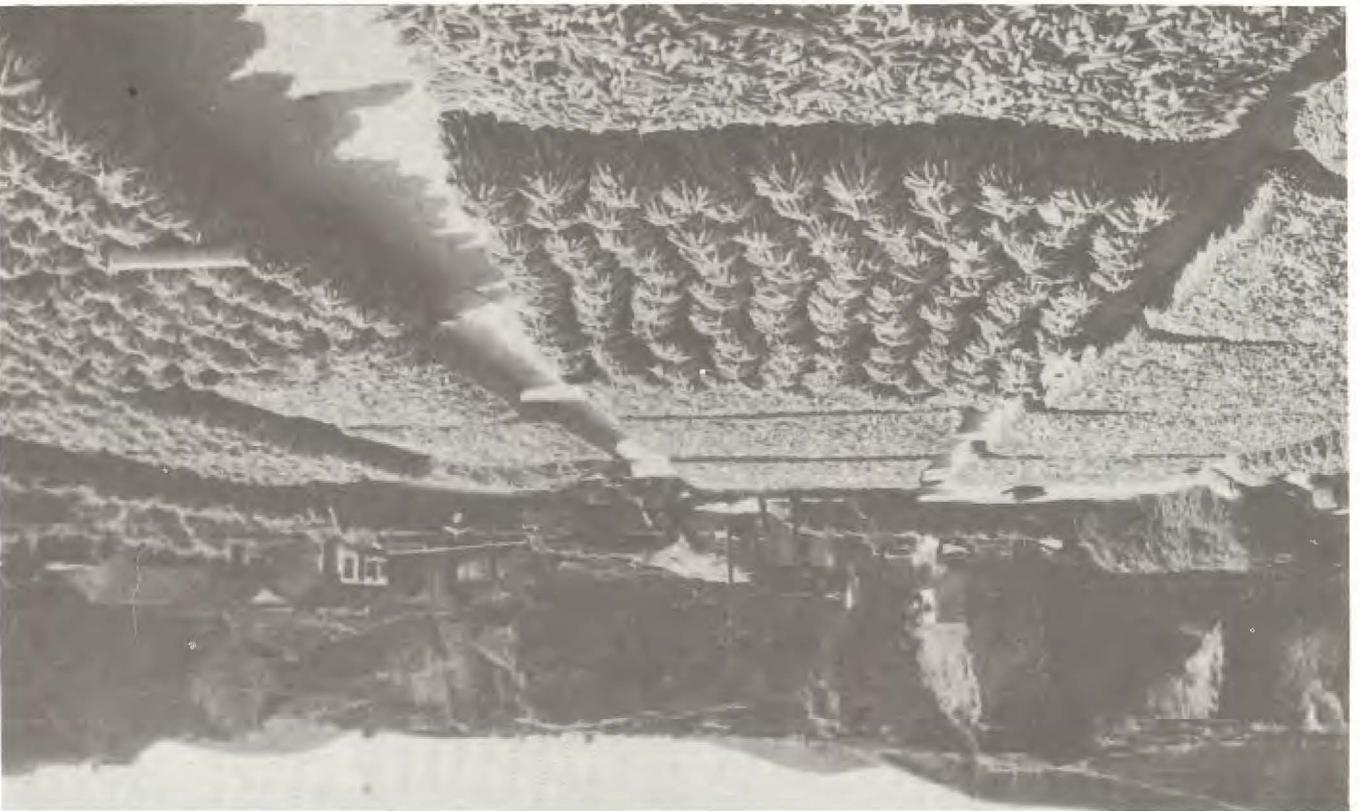
The *Production Brigade* is made up of several teams: something between 150 and 500 families living in one or more villages. Its field tasks are those which the Production Team cannot manage or which the Brigades can manage better, such as the planting of orchards and hill terracing. It runs the tractor stations and farm implement repair shops; it may also provide facilities for grinding and storing grain and for transport. The most famous Brigade, which has become a model for the whole rural population, comparable in agriculture with Taching in industry, is the Tachai Production Brigade. In a particularly poor and difficult terrain in Shansi province where flooding virtually destroyed the homes of the whole population as well as the hill-terracing of the fields, washing away plants, fertiliser and terrace walls, Tachai by its own efforts and refusing State help, rehoused its people and created a confident, thriving agricultural community.

At the apex of the organisation is the *Commune* which may include 10 to 30 Production Brigades, altogether between 10,000 and 50,000 people (2,000 - 12,000 families). It varies greatly in size and population from one part of China to another. It is concerned with overall planning, but not only of the agricultural programme: the Commune is the local government unit in its area, responsible for welfare services (health, care of the aged, creches etc.), primary and middle schools, small factories (particularly for the repair of farm implements and, where there are local resources, such industries as small iron and coal mines, cement and brick works), and the militia. It also serves as a link between its group of villages and the County administration above.

The Commune runs its own militia of able-bodied men and women and manages its own security; there are no police on Chinese Communes.

Many of the families own their houses, often built with the help of other Team members. A few of the more politically-advanced Brigades, such as Tachai, have put up community housing. Families also maintain small private plots to grow vegetables for their own use; some raise a few pigs, ducks and chickens as well.

The rest of their income comes in grain (in the more advanced production teams in China today, all members are guaranteed a basic and adequate allowance of grain) and a money payment calculated on a system of points on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'. Every season the production team evaluates the work of each member so that figures can be re-adjusted. The inexperienced naturally get fewer



Maize drying in the sun at Tachai.



Self-reliance is in the forefront at Tachai.

points and women usually less than men, (though this situation is changing). The aged do not usually get points; their needs are provided for by the welfare fund. But a member's attitude to work comes into the picture as well as the level of skill and degree of strength. And in learning to work wholeheartedly for the team's target, members find their own life improves also: 'When there's water in the big river, the small streams will be full too.'

Prelude to the Cultural Revolution

In 1959 Mao Tse-tung retired from the Chairmanship of the People's Republic but remained Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. Liu Shao-chi was appointed Head of State in Mao's place, but has since been removed from office and disgraced. Under his leadership, 'rightist' policies gained the upper hand. A new élite began to emerge in many sections of society. Instead of relying on the masses in the Yanan spirit, China's leaders turned to experts and planners removed in thought and experience from the people, whose lives they decided. The new elite obtained special privileges for their families and educational advantages for their children; it seemed as if China was in danger of repeating the Third World pattern of developed cities and an impoverished countryside as health, educational and cultural facilities began to be concentrated in the cities at the expense of the rural areas. In the countryside, material incentives and private plots were encouraged; free markets flourished in a move to the right that was subsequently called 'taking the capitalist road.'

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR)

The Cultural Revolution of 1966 was a visible manifestation of the continuing 'struggle between two lines', in this case, a socialist road and a 'capitalist' one. The Chinese believe that even with a socialist economic base, the superstructure of society can become tainted by capitalist ideas, or it may never have completely absorbed socialist aims. They criticize Stalin's contention that the abolition of private property automatically creates a classless society. The recent history of the Soviet Union shows that power with its accompanying privileges – more money, a better apartment, perhaps a private car – inevitably creates a new elite. And in addition to these privileges for administrators, the Soviet Union has tried to solve problems which excessively rigid central planning raises by resorting to economic incentives for the workers. Such policies the Chinese believe to be harmful to the socialism of the superstructure. Through the GPCR they have made heroic efforts to overcome the problem of elitist attitudes and the desire for personal gain and advancement rather than collective welfare. Two outstanding slogans of the Cultural Revolution: 'Serve the People' and 'Fight Self' encouraged the whole country to substitute moral incentives for monetary ones. This is the great strength of China's present revolutionary stand.

As its name suggests, the GPCR first manifested itself in the cultural field. Through a historical play *Hai Jui Dismissed from Office*, a thinly-veiled attack had been made on Mao Tse-tung and his policies. Supporters of Mao's line counter-attacked and the criticism of rightism rapidly extended to many



Struggle-criticism-transformation meeting, 1969.

fields of activity. Greater democracy was needed throughout China – in schools, factories, planning departments, hospitals, everywhere where experts were not putting the interests of the masses first.

The leadership of educational institutions in particular came in for attack, especially the high schools and universities, as they seemed to be training a generation of intellectuals and technicians quite out of touch with the common people. These institutions were actually closed down for several years. The young people took part in mass rallies and went on 'long marches' through the country to learn from the peasants and to organise the struggle for the correct line. For a time the whole country was in a ferment of revolutionary activity. Young men and women formed the 'Red Guards'. The 'Little Red Book' of quotations from Chairman Mao encouraged them to innovation, discussion, criticism. Discussion meetings were called in every institution, every village and street, at which constructive criticism was levelled at elitist officials or slothful managers with the aim of enforcing genuine democracy and involving everyone in the changes. People were encouraged to confess their former wrong ideas or actions and were given support in their desire to change. Han Suyin said of these 'struggle-criticism-transformation' meetings: 'It broke down so many inhibitions . . . put to flight so many bogeys, dispelled so many myths and avoided so many nervous breakdowns . . . At last people had to face themselves as they were, not as they pretended to themselves to be.'

Some lost their jobs; most administrators, and skilled technicians worked for several years on the factory floor or in some form of physical labour, continuing to study all the while so that their ideas were transformed. Now, when one visits a factory or a hospital, for instance, the manager or surgeon may very possibly say that he was severely criticised during the Cultural Revolution, but thanks to the encouragement and example of his fellow-workers he is back at his job with a new attitude; he is there to serve the people not himself.

On May 7th 1966, Mao issued a directive which resulted in the setting up of cadre schools (a cadre is anybody in a position of responsibility, whether in government office or school), for the re-education of cadres in two ways: through serious political study and self-supporting labour. Cadres build their own living quarters and grow their own food. Office workers go in for farming, teachers make bread, they are all learning, through work and study, what life is like for the ordinary worker or peasant. Every four or five years, all cadres spend six months or so in these courses of intensive work and study.

In the arts, where the Cultural Revolution started, there have been striking changes too. Art, like everything else in China now, must serve the people. In place of the old Peking operas, modern revolutionary Peking operas have been composed which preserve the form, the type of character, the fights, the music and dancing and acrobatics of their prototypes, but which tell a simple revolutionary story in a straightforward way that appeals to the workers and peasants. Painting too may still be done in the traditional style but the subjects are totally different: instead of a scholar meditating in the mountains you may see peasants harvesting rice or workers building bridges. The same is true of fiction and poetry which describe the life and struggles of working people in simple, forthright language. Moreover, the arts are not only for the people, but by the people: most creative work since the Cultural



Red Guards marching through the countryside.

Revolution is done by amateurs – workers in the factory and field or soldiers in the PLA – who create out of their own experience, sometimes under the guidance of professionals who in their turn take part in productive labour. These have come down from their ivory towers.

'Criticism Confucius – Criticise Lin Piao'

The Chinese see the Cultural Revolution as part of a continuing process of struggle. While it was still in progress, seven years ago, Mao Tse-tung wrote in a letter to his wife, 'We shall launch another movement for sweeping up the ghosts and monsters after seven or eight years, and will launch more of this movement later'. He knew that the revolutionary road needed to be constantly guarded and redefined. The nationwide campaign of 1974 against Lin Piao and the teachings of Confucius was clearly a part of this process.

'The superior man thinks about virtue, the inferior man thinks about the soil; the superior man is diligent in governing, the inferior man exerts his physical strength. Those who work with their minds govern; those who labour with their strength are governed.'

This was said by Mencius, a follower of Confucius. It is the same idea of an intellectual elite superior to the labouring people which the proponents of the Cultural Revolution were fighting against: the significance of the anti-Confucius campaign is that it aims at a deeper level. The Cultural Revolution brought about changes in political and mass organisation; the purpose of the anti-Confucius movement was to change the way of thinking of the Chinese people, moulded for so many centuries, consciously or unconsciously, by this reactionary teaching. The meetings, discussions and study groups that were held, the 'big character posters' that went up, all over the country, encouraged the people to study for themselves the dangerous elements in Confucian thought and see where these ideas threatened the true course of the revolution in their own lives.

That Lin Piao was linked with Confucius was at first puzzling. Lin had been very close to Mao and even named as his successor. It was he who had drawn up the 'Little Red Book' and had been responsible for the many statues and portraits of Chairman Mao in public places. It later appeared that Lin's aim in praising the Chairman to the skies and elevating him to super-human status had been to separate him from the people and facilitate his own eventual succession. There was evidence that he was a faithful follower of Confucius who believed in rule by an exclusive class and despised the rank-and-file; and finally that he planned to assassinate Mao and seize power. He died in a plane crash in 1974, while trying to escape to the Soviet Union. His name was associated with that of Confucius in the campaign of criticism so that people should learn to understand and distinguish the progressive elements from the reactionary ones in their leadership and not be misled by any future Lin Piaos.

Since February 1975, a new campaign has opened – in reality a continuation and deepening of the former ones: a widespread study of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A number of articles on the subject were published in leading newspapers and were studied all over China. The whole population is examining and analysing the political and theoretical

basis of their socialist system so as to safeguard and develop it more effectively. This movement is still in progress.

The Cultural Revolution in education

Although the Cultural Revolution finally permeated every aspect of society, it was the educational system in particular, and especially higher education, that was violently denounced at the outset. The centuries-old tradition of veneration for book-learning had not entirely vanished with the setting-up of the People's Republic. Liu Shao-chi and his followers in particular had favoured the training of an intellectual elite as a short-cut to China's industrial development. Although in 1958 – the year of the Great Leap – numbers of young people from worker and peasant families had been admitted to University, without entrance examinations, there was obvious prejudice against them by the educational authorities. With the difficulties of the 'three bad years' and the withdrawal of Soviet support, more emphasis was put on academic ability and less on political stand; most of these 'Leap Forward' students dropped out or failed their examinations (some say owing to tricky questions). The Cultural Revolution attacked the base of this academicism and aimed to bring the whole educational system into line with socialism and the needs of the people.

The educational inheritance

In Imperial China, education was only for the sons of the scholar-gentry (not for women, of course), was strictly academic (manual accomplishments were despised) and based on the Confucian Classics. Examination success in this narrow field was theoretically the only door to government appointments, though some slipped in through the favour of influential patrons.

From 1905, Confucian education with its three-tier examination system was abolished and replaced by Western-style schools and colleges to which girls were admitted and subjects more fitted to the 20th century were taught. But although China at that time urgently needed scientists, engineers and technicians for her industrialisation, up until the founding of the People's Republic, education was still geared towards the humanities and was given mainly to privileged children whose chief ambition was self-promotion – 'to become an official'. In 1949 about 80 per cent of the population was still illiterate.

The first task in this field was to provide schooling for the whole young generation and to launch literacy campaigns for the adults as well, for as Lenin said, 'a nation of illiterates cannot build Communism'. But after twelve years of war there were neither buildings nor teachers. In the early years of the People's Republic it was inevitable that China should turn for help to the USSR. Thousands of Chinese students were sent to Soviet universities, especially for scientific training, while enormous numbers of Russian text-books were translated into Chinese. Russians came to China to teach and many Chinese teachers received their training from the Russians. Education expanded but the teaching methods remained formal, relied on cramming and learning by rote and entirely failed to encourage critical thinking. The students

now dreamed of becoming cadres — the old 'becoming-an-official' mentality still remained.

In the year of the Great Leap, a statement from the Central Committee of the Communist Party said, 'We consider that the only method to train human beings in all-round development is . . . to combine education with productive labour'. If students and teachers worked regularly in the factory or the countryside they would lose their notions of superiority and learn how deeply their lives were linked to the processes of production. It was also at that time an economic necessity to involve as much of the population as possible in productive work. Schools began to set up their own factories and farms; factories and agricultural co-operatives (later Communes) to set up their own schools. This principle, which has become the basis of China's educational system today, came into conflict with the rightist idea of full-time schooling geared to children with special talent, on the Soviet model. From these divergent attitudes developed the 'struggle between two lines' in education which came to a head in the Cultural Revolution.

Education today

As a result of the Cultural Revolution, the educational system has been thoroughly reorganised. In March 1969, a nationwide debate on how schools and universities should be run laid down new guidelines. Planning and organisation were put into the hands of a three-in-one alliance of workers or peasants, PLA men and teachers and students. These became the basis of the revolutionary committees which are still in charge (though PLA men seldom form part of them now), to keep learning in line with socialist thought and economic needs.

More than 90 per cent of children between the ages of seven and 12 or 13 are now in primary school. Large numbers of city children — most of whose mothers are working — attend crèches or kindergartens in the pre-school years, but these are only just beginning in the countryside.

The majority of city children go on from primary school to junior middle school for two years and about half of them continue for another two years in senior middle. Although children in the countryside still have fewer educational facilities, probably 50 per cent of those finishing primary school now have their two years in junior middle, and every year this provision is increasing. After leaving middle school, students must work for at least two years in factories, communes or in the army before they may apply for entry to a university or technical college. Admission is not dependent on entrance examinations: among the criteria for acceptance, political maturity and social attitude come first, and here the opinion of their workmates is especially considered. Preference is given to the children of workers, soldiers and peasants.

University study is now for three years instead of five. Curricula have been changed and textbooks rewritten to bring book-learning closer to the practical needs of a developing socialist society. Examinations (many 'open-book') are no longer an 'ambush' for the students but a means for them to check their own progress and this holds good throughout the whole educational system. University education does not necessarily mean a change in





Middle school graduates doing political study.



Workers' College at Shanghai Machine Tools Plant.

job or a rise in status. Though some graduates may become teachers, interpreters or technicians, the majority will return to the ranks and use their training at their old place of work, to do better work and to train others.

The chief stress in all education is on the integration of theory with practice. City children now spend a month in the year doing farmwork in the rural areas and another month working in a local factory. In addition, almost all city middle schools have their own small factory or workshops where the young people and teachers learn the techniques of industry. Part of the teaching in city schools is given by local factory workers and on the communes by peasants. Even in the primary schools the youngest children are expected to undertake some physical work, such as tending the school garden. At universities, work and study are even more closely integrated: architecture or engineering students, for instance, will spend part of their time actually constructing or building.

Political study goes on all through school and university, starting from the kindergarten. Little children are introduced to Mao Tse-tung Thought in a simple form, such as from the text 'Serve the People' which commemorates a soldier-hero who gave his life for his comrades. From such examples, children learn not only to behave unselfishly towards their school-mates but to respect and emulate hard work, self-reliance and dedication to the revolution.

The Chinese of today view education as a life-long process. 'Man has constantly to sum up experience and go on discovering, inventing, creating and advancing' says Mao Tse-tung. Spare-time education in a vast range of possibilities touches the lives of almost the whole population, from city shop-assistants following foreign-language lessons on the radio in their spare time to peasants in the remotest districts learning about book-keeping or farm machinery at evening classes. Newspaper-reading groups, literacy classes for the older generation, and of course the regular political study groups have been formed up and down the country. Most factories arrange classes for their workers in technology and general subjects; hundreds of workers' colleges have been set up. Almost every factory and commune has its theatrical group giving lively performances of plays, dances and songs, often composed by its own members from material based on their life experiences. Printing houses cannot keep pace with the demand for new books and again, most of these are written by worker-peasant-soldier amateurs. Deprived of education through all the past centuries, the ordinary Chinese people are now acquiring pertinent knowledge with eagerness and imagination.

A health service for the people

Medicine and public health is another area where policies were radically re-thought during the Cultural Revolution. The great problem, common to other Third World countries as well, of using limited resources of every sort to serve a huge, predominantly rural population was tackled in ways unique in the history of medicine.

Mass health campaigns after Liberation

Before 1949, after decades of Western colonial exploitation and years of

war, China was literally 'the sick man of Asia'. In cities such as Shanghai and Tientsin, the services of Western-trained doctors could be obtained — at a price, and some missionary doctors offered free treatment, but the mass of peasantry and the city poor had mainly quacks and superstitions to rely on in sickness; at Liberation there was only one doctor to several tens of thousands in the countryside. In addition, poor sanitation and hygiene, and general ignorance, resulted in a heavy death-toll from disease. Malaria, small pox, cholera, typhus, schistosomiasis were prevalent and 50 per cent of all deaths resulted from infectious diseases.

The earliest health campaigns were mass movements involving the whole population, and this remained highly characteristic of China's attitude to health care since Liberation, as did the emphasis on preventive rather than curative medicine and the special attention paid to the social causes of disease. The first 'Patriotic Health Movements', as they were called, tackled sanitation and hygiene from the elimination of disease-carriers (flies, bedbugs, lice, mosquitoes, rats, snails) to ordinary cleaning and removal of garbage. It was said that in some parts of China, rubbish dumps had existed since the Ming dynasty! Visitors today can testify to the extreme cleanliness of the cities and that there are almost 'no flies in China'.

Mass vaccination and inoculation campaigns in the early 1950s virtually wiped out the most serious endemic diseases — plague, smallpox, cholera and typhus; areas where parasitic disease such as snail-fever, malaria and hook-worm are found have been greatly reduced. Venereal disease has disappeared thanks to the eradication of prostitution and to educational measures; opium addiction has ended as well through treatment, persuasion, and the punishment of drug-traffickers. Infant mortality has declined strikingly and a better diet combined with preventive injections has reduced the danger from children's illnesses.

Improvisation, traditional medicine and 'middle-grade' doctors (B)

Despite heroic efforts to build new hospitals, clinics and medical institutions and to increase the number of doctors trained in Western medical science during the early years of the PRC, there were never enough in proportion to the population. The problem was tackled from two sides — both characteristic of Mao's approach: the training of 'middle-grade' medical and public health workers and the revival of traditional Chinese medicine. Both these measures date from pre-Liberation days.

In the old Red Bases, the Communists had observed the work of traditional doctors with their herbal remedies and simple acupuncture kits, and had realised their value, especially in the countryside. Herbs can be grown, gathered and prepared easily and cheaply compared with, say, penicillin, and had proved empirically effective in many complaints. The country people had faith in them too. Acupuncture, a centuries-old technique of pain control by the insertion of fine needles into the body according to a system of 'points', had been curing sufferers from a wide range of diseases for many centuries. In 1956 and again in 1958, directives were issued by the Ministry of Public Health for the integration of the old Chinese and the new Western medicine and for the study of the traditional medicine at several levels. Purged of



Barefoot doctors prepare medicines from herbs.

superstition and made more scientific, traditional medicine became a required part of every doctor's training, a combination which produces increasingly good results. Fractures, to give one example, are found to heal better with joint traditional-Western treatment.

A particularly spectacular development in recent years has been in acupuncture analgesia. Patients undergo major operations while fully conscious and yet feel no pain. The cheapness and simplicity of the method and its lack of side-effects make it particularly useful in rural hospitals. Acupuncture has also proved effective in the treatment of deaf-mutes, the blind and polio victims; new applications are being constantly discovered. China's doctors also lead the world in such fields as the treatment of burns, and the rejoining of severed limbs, combining traditional Chinese methods with modern Western techniques.

The 'middle-grade' medical workers first appeared in the Communist areas during the anti-Japanese war as a sort of front-line guerrilla medical service for the 8th Route Army. (They had been organised by the Canadian heart specialist, Norman Bethune, who has become a legend in China for his selfless heroism in 'serving the people' and as a model of internationalism.) During the first ten years of the People's Republic, 153,000 of these medical auxiliaries received training in basic medicine; the number of fully qualified doctors graduating in the same period was only 40,000. The numbers speak for themselves: to reach the majority of China's huge population, some kind of short-cut in the training of medical personnel was absolutely essential. Later on, these 'middle-grade medics' became the 'barefoot doctors' so characteristic of China's medical service since the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution in the medical services

Conflict over the Health Service at the Cultural Revolution was, as in other fields, a struggle between two lines. Despite the fact that 80 per cent of the people lived in the countryside, the majority of doctors were not politically mature enough to leave the cities and devote themselves to the rural population. Mao dubbed the health organisation at this time the 'Ministry of Urban Gentlemen's Health'. Secondly, doctors were tending to lose interest in social medicine and to concentrate rather on research and medical techniques. This was the Liu Shao-chi line, favouring the development of specialists with academic qualifications but no particular enthusiasm for helping others.

During the early years of the Cultural Revolution, virtually no medical research or education was carried on. Doctors in their thousands, including professors and department heads, moved into the countryside to serve the peasants. They were also made partly responsible for training the 'barefoot doctors' (so-called after medical workers from rice-growing areas who worked part-time in the wet paddy-fields with bare feet). These are commune or brigade members chosen by their fellows to undergo a few months' medical training every year. The rest of the time they work in the fields but are always available to deal with accidents and minor ailments, to deliver a baby or give instruction in birth planning, to teach hygiene, to give inoculations. Though



Army medical team arrives in the Tianshan mountains of Sinkiang to treat peasants and train barefoot doctors.

they may not be the complete answer to the rural medical problem, they certainly go a long way to providing a solution.

And the fully-trained doctor has come down from his pedestal. In the country he shares the life of the peasants, learning what it is like to be miles away from a medical centre: in the city hospitals he works at times as nurse, technician or medical orderly so that he understands medical problems from all sides. As in other disciplines, would-be doctors are chosen by and from the workers, peasants and soldiers on the basis of their willingness to serve the people as well as their intellectual ability.

The cost of health

Medicine in general costs very little in the PRC. Many communes and factories have their own clinics; some have a hospital attached. Workers and their families get free treatment through their own welfare fund. Peasants pay about 1 yuan (20p) a year per head into a rural medical cooperative scheme and perhaps further small contributions towards the cost of drugs. Free medical care is also provided for those who work in government offices, in schools and colleges and in the various people's organisations. Those who have to pay for themselves, such as the dependents of workers in non-productive jobs, are let off lightly: about 2p for a visit, £1 for a birth delivery and £2 for a major operation – in a Peking hospital. Doctors' salaries are low too.

The structure of government

In September 1949 the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference met in Peking and adopted the Common Programme. This was both a provisional constitution and a programme for the first few years of the People's Republic. It was based on Mao's concept of the People's Democratic Dictatorship – this was the corner-stone. In September 1954 after the first national elections ever held in China the Constitution was adopted by the National People's Congress.

The political system chosen by China was one of congresses at all levels. Under the revised (1975) Constitution the rural people's communes and towns elect congresses (commune councils) to serve for two years; those of prefectures, cities and counties to serve for three years and of provinces and municipalities for five years. The National People's Congress, the highest organ of State power, is formed of deputies elected by provinces and municipalities together with the autonomous regions (national minority areas) and the People's Liberation Army.

Deputies to the whole hierarchy of people's congresses are chosen by consensus among the people. All citizens from the age of 18 have the right to vote and to stand for elections, apart from certain reactionary elements who have been deprived of these rights for a specified period but given the opportunity to reform. The majority of delegates are from the workers, peasants and soldiers (72 per cent in the 4th NPC of 1975); women, who enjoy equal political rights in the new China, form more than 22 per cent in the present Congress.

The first Constitution clearly stated that 'All power belongs to the people' and that all authority, legislative, judicial and administrative, derive from the National People's Congress, under the leadership of the Communist Party. The Congress elects its own Chairman (Mao Tse-tung until 1959, then Liu Shao-chi until his removal). He chooses the Premier, who nominates Ministers. These must first be approved by the NPC: together they form the State Council – the organ of government.

The Communist Party, of which Mao is Chairman, makes policy and gives political leadership. There are Party Committees at every level of society down to brigades in the countryside, neighbourhoods in the cities and workshop level in the factories, composed of Party members within each organisation. Under the 1975 Constitution the Communist Party Chairman is also Head of the armed forces; thus the overall authority of the Party is strengthened. As Chou En-lai said in addressing the 4th Congress, 'Of the seven sectors, industry, agriculture, commerce, culture and education, the Army, the government and the Party – it is the Party that exercises overall leadership. We must put all fields of work under the unified leadership of the Party committees at various levels.'

This is not to say that politics and policy are imposed from above in China today; the masses participate in a very real sense. Peasants and workers are deeply involved in the revolutionary tasks of building a socialist society. There is a two-way movement of ideas and plans between people and Party, people and government, from one level of authority to another. Mass involvement is an objective fact.

This is particularly true since the Cultural Revolution when a new form of administration emerged – the Revolutionary Committee. Formed from an elected membership of ordinary people, cadres and representatives of the respective organisations, these committees now administer every unit of society from communes and production brigades to factories, hospitals and schools. They ensure that the running of an organisation is supervised by members of its work-force, who understand the local problems. So that they shall be fully representative, care is also taken to include a 3-in-1 combination of ages: young, middle-aged and elderly.

Nowadays, Party and Revolutionary Committees work side by side; there is also some overlap of membership, but while the Party groups are concerned with policy, it is the Revolutionary Committees that implement the decisions. Party Committee members have been put on their mettle since the Cultural Revolution. At that time they had been criticised for bureaucratic style of work and failure to give correct leadership and were largely disbanded. Mao had called upon the young 'Red Guards' – the spearhead of the Cultural Revolution – to 'bombard the Headquarters'. There has been for many years an established way in China for an individual or group to express criticism publicly, that is, to put up a *Dazibao* or 'Big Character Poster'. Wall newspapers belong to an old tradition in China, but at the outset of the Cultural Revolution they were adapted – in the first instance by the students of Peking University – and widely used to express political protest. Hand-written posters in 'big' characters were pasted up in public places and proved a very effective method of both expressing and rallying criticism. *Dazibao* appeared all over the country during the campaign to criticise Confucius and Lin Biao,



Workers putting up Big Character Posters (1969).

substantially the same throughout the country. Even in remote mountain areas, where transportation and handling costs are heavy, prices are no higher than in the towns, the extra being paid by the State.

Essential items such as rice and some vegetable oils are sold below cost whereas others, less needed ones, like cigarettes, wine and bicycles, are sold at above cost price. In the early years after Liberation, a number of goods were rationed, but now only cotton cloth and cereals (in the towns) are subject to control, to ensure fair distribution and avoid waste. This does not apply to rice or wheat-flour in the factory canteens, where many workers take their meals.

A wide range of good quality, simple consumer goods at reasonable prices are to be found both in town and countryside; you can buy virtually the same articles in a Peking Department Store or in one of the well-stocked village shops of a production brigade. And there is a built-in system to obtain the consumer's views on the design, colour or durability of a product; changes are made in response to the customers' needs. Shop assistants feel that they are there to 'serve the people'; thus some shops remain open all night for the benefit of workers on night-shift.

China and the world: principles of foreign policy

China is a socialist country and her foreign policy is based on the principle that the common people throughout the world should unite and help one another. Her foreign policy statements stress that all countries, big and small, are equal; that strong nations should not bully weak ones and that the affairs of any country must be handled by its own people. China's spokesman at the United Nations declared:

'At no time, either today or ever in the future will China be a superpower, subjecting others to its aggression, subversion, control, interference or bullying.'

But China belongs to a world of states with many different social systems. Her relations with them are not based on her approval or disapproval of their politics or social set-up, which she believes the people of each country should decide for themselves, but on clear principles set out by Mao Tse-tung in May 1949 and consistently followed ever since:

'We are willing to discuss with any foreign government the establishment of diplomatic relations on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit and sovereignty, provided it is willing to sever relations with the Chinese reactionaries (the Nationalists), stops conspiring with them or helping them and adopts an attitude of genuine, and not hypocritical, friendship towards People's China. The Chinese people wish to have friendly co-operation with the people of all countries.'

Apart from diplomatic relations between states, the Chinese, as Mao Tse-tung says here, welcome relations between the peoples, and these they see as separate from state relations but interacting with them as well. Thus an active friendship between the Chinese and Japanese people had a strong influence upon bringing about full diplomatic relations between the two countries. The visit of the American table-tennis team to China was the precursor to the Nixon visit in 1972 which in turn opened up much wider possibilities for exchange between the people of the United States and China.

At the conference of Afro-Asian states at Bandung in 1955, China subscribed to the five principles of peaceful co-existence; mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in one another's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.

However, whilst China observes these principles of peaceful co-existence in her relations with other states, she differs radically from the Soviet Union in extending this policy into other spheres. Peaceful co-existence, say the Chinese, cannot replace the struggles of the people for freedom. It should never be applied to relations between the oppressed and oppressor nations. In fact, she sees the struggle of the countries and peoples of the Third World for independence and liberation as the central feature of the world situation today.

China and the Third World

Because her economy is still developing and because she has had her share of suffering from exploitation, China feels herself to be part of the Third World – the African, Asian and Latin-American nations that have been exploited by the western powers and are still in a state of backwardness. Her actions and influence in world affairs, especially since her seat at the United Nations was restored and her representatives have been able to express China's viewpoint on an international stage, are directed towards helping the developing countries to resist big-power domination and to find their own way to independence.

At every United Nations Conference on economic and political problems, such as the Santiago Conference on Trade and Development (1972), the Law of the Sea Conference and many others, China has thrown all her weight in support of Third World countries, usually in opposition to the United States and the Soviet Union.

As one of the most advanced nations in that Third World, China has been in a position to offer aid to others for some years, but has often stated that this aid is only on a very small scale. But what she gives and the conditions on which she gives it are quite different from the aid programmes of the superpowers. Chou Hua-min, Vice-minister for Trade, at the 1972 Conference condemned 'aid with strings attached' and high interest rates. China's financial assistance is given either as a gift or at very low interest, and with a long period for repayment. China's greatest contribution is her example, the transformation from poverty to self-sufficiency within 25 years. The example is borne out by the behaviour of Chinese experts abroad, such as the technicians who helped to build the Tanzam railway. They lived frugally and declined to accept any special benefits not shared by their African fellow-workers.

Supplies of military equipment, as in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, are always given free for, say the Chinese, 'We will never be merchants of death'. China has supplied arms, medicines, machines, food and technical training to nations in South-east Asia who were fighting for survival, but far more important here too has been the example of her own struggle – successful resistance to Japan and triumph in civil war without any outside help, either material or moral. Because she believes that a successful revolution must be self-reliant



Nepalese road-builders learn about China's Cultural Revolution.

she does not, unlike the United States – or Cuba – send troops to fight on foreign territory. She has no troops stationed on the territory of any other country in the world.

China has always tried to have good and friendly relations with her neighbours. Soon after the founding of the People's Republic, she started negotiations with neighbouring states to regulate the frontiers, which in many cases had been decided by foreign powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Border agreements satisfactory to both sides were reached with Burma (1960), Nepal (1961), Mongolia (1963), Afghanistan (1963), Pakistan (1963), and also with Korea and Vietnam. Only with India and the Soviet Union has China so far failed to reach a satisfactory solution of border questions.

China's thoughts on war

China's attitude to war is clear and uncomplicated. She believes that as long as superpower domination and rivalry exist, war is inevitable. However, she does not believe that military might is the key factor for the outcome, but the will of the people. In a statement soon after the United States' attack on Cambodia in May 1970 Mao Tse-tung said:

'Innumerable facts prove that a just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little. A weak nation can defeat a strong, a small nation can defeat a big. The people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country if they only dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country.'

The outcome of the Indo-China wars has amply justified this view.

China herself continues to feel threatened by the desire of the great powers for world domination. She is against war and will try to prevent it, but she is not afraid. By thoroughly preparing for any attack, she will suffer less should it eventually come. Alongside the People's Liberation Army is the people's militia, which comprises almost all China's able-bodied workers and peasants.

In Chinese eyes, nuclear weapons have been used by the big powers to terrify people and blackmail their governments. To call the bluff of these tactics and to defend herself and other Third World countries, China has developed and tested her own nuclear devices. Every time these have been tested (most recently in January 1976), China has reiterated that she will never be the first to use atomic weapons and has called on the nuclear powers to destroy their stockpiles and stop manufacturing these instruments of mass death.

The struggle for world domination is now concentrated on the opposing ambitions of the US and the Soviet Union. The Chinese point out that wherever tension, local wars or disturbances occur in the world today, underlying them is the conflict between these two powers, striving to outdo each other and obtain control and influence. Talks of agreement, 'detente', and arms limitation are just a smokescreen put up by these powers to delude their own people as well as the peoples of the world.

China opposes the policies of both these powers, but after analysing the situation since the US defeat in Indo-China, she draws the conclusion that the United States, though still powerful and dangerous, has been weakened, while

the Soviet Union, which has been building up its armaments on an enormous scale in recent years, is following an aggressive policy, all the more dangerous and deceptive for being carried out in the name of socialism.

The Chinese have been trying to alert the other nations and their leaders to this menace. Despite the dangerous situation, however, China remains confident and optimistic, trusting in the strength of the ordinary people everywhere. As Mao Tse-tung said, 'The people of the world are bound to win.'

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