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'ENORMOUSLY TO LEARN'

IN THE BROCHURE distributed at the time of SACU's inauguration eighteen months ago, plans for the future included 'the distribution of Chinese books, magazines, statements, pamphlets, etc.' and 'providing an information service for schools, researchers, and others interested in specific aspects of Chinese development.' At that time Professor Joan Robinson gave as the most important reason for the founding of SACU the fact that 'we all have enormously to learn.' With some of these ideas as a stimulus, a committee at headquarters has gradually built up the nucleus of a special library of books, pamphlets, periodicals, and press cuttings about China.

Subject matter, style of writing, political stance, and nationality of authors cover a wide range, and should provide something for almost any reader in search of understanding. There is, for example, a biography of 'Two-Gun Cohen' (former bodyguard of Sun Yat-sen) and one of 'The Last Great Empress of China,' as well as those of Sun Yat-sen himself, Mao Tse-tung, the former emperor Pu Yi, a guerrilla hero, and a 'son of the working-class.'

Foreign visitors

Books by foreign visitors to China outnumber all the rest of the non-fiction at present. These volumes have been put on the shelves in chronological order since it was felt that the year (or years) of the visits was of especial importance. At one end are books by two Americans, Edgar Snow (1936) and Agnes Smedley (1938) and at the other, at the moment, is Myra Roper, Australian (1966). In between are the views of various Swedes and Swiss, French, Indian, New Zealand, Canadian, and, of course, British writers. Han Suyin's 'The Crippled Tree' is in a class by itself as an outstanding contribution to the West's understanding of China.

There is a handful of good solid books on the Chinese economy, and

a varied group dealing with China's foreign relations: C. P. Remer's **Foreign Investments in China**, which was published in 1933 in New York, and Sir John T. Pratt's **China and Britain** (1944) rub shoulders with the Chatham House Information Paper, **China and Japan**, published in 1941, and Ballantine's **Formosa. A Problem for US Foreign Policy**, published by the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC in 1952. Felix Greene's **A Curtain of Ignorance**, books on the Sino-Soviet dispute, and I. F. Stone's **Hidden History of the Korean War** round out this collection of contrasting points of view.

History

The history books include an eighteenth century diary of 'a journey from St Petersburg to Peking, 1719-1722'; Panikkar's **Asia and Western Dominance**; A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama **Epoch of Asian History (1498-1945)**, as well as several books on the Opium Wars and **A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution (1919 to 1956)** by Ho Kan-chi, published in Peking in 1959. This last is used as a basic general reference work for teachers in training at Shanpei College in Yenan, according to Edgar Snow (**The Other Side of the River**, 1963).

Some books are devoted to agrarian policy, and some to art and literature, as for example an anthology of prose and poetry about China through the ages, compiled by Hsiao Ch'ien in 1945, bearing the vivid title **A Harp with a Thousand Strings**. (Another book by the same author in 1951, **How the Tillers Win Back Their Land**, seems to indicate that he made the transition from old to new China with ease.) It has been said that understanding springs from well-informed humility. Though knowledge of one's own limitations and failings must come from within, it may be that the library will be able to contribute to the knowledge that books can provide.

MARY Z. BRITAIN

Inaugural meeting

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH of SACU was inaugurated at a meeting held on October 27 in the Friends' Meeting House, Bull Street, Birmingham. Mr Derek Bryan and Mr Roland Berger were present to formally inaugurate the branch and the meeting was attended by about 30 people, most of whom were already enrolled members of SACU. However, several new members were made.

Mr Berger spoke about the aims of SACU and the reasons for starting a branch in Birmingham. The presence of 30 people at this meeting surely indicated a need for a branch in a place the size of Birmingham. There was no formal speaker, so Mr Berger then asked those present for their questions and comments, both about SACU and about China.

Mr Bryan and Mr Berger offered advice on how best to start the branch activities and how to finance them, and offered the services of SACU sponsored speakers, and films. Eight people indicated that they were willing to serve on the committee to arrange the branch affairs. The meeting then adjourned to allow time to look at the literature.

The first meeting of the standing committee was held on November 3 at 37, George Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. The committee decided to go ahead with arrangements for a first meeting which would be a public one. The committee decided to invite Mrs Knight as speaker at the first meeting, which was fixed for December 8 in the Friends' Meeting House, Bull Street.

The committee also decided to ask Mr Colin Penn to address a public meeting of the branch in January when he will be in Birmingham to address the Students' Union at the University. No definite date was fixed for this second meeting. The committee meets again late in November. The officers elected by the committee were Mr A. Sohn-Rethel, Chairman; Mrs S. Leach, Secretary; Mr T. D. Smith, Treasurer.

LETTER BOX

SIR,

Mrs Frida Knight's view of the Red Guards in your October issue differs from the views of most other observers.

Jostling her way through 'milling crowds of excited young people . . . the marching youngsters and older workers alike immensely cheerful and friendly', Mrs Knight found the 'Cultural Revolution' in Shanghai 'more like a carnival'; and 'the Red Guards, who have been built up by press and radio as some sinister police force, more like school prefects or scout leaders'. (One cannot but recall the ecstatic reports of events in Germany with which we were regaled by Hitler's British fans in the Thirties.)

To four correspondents of the *Sunday Times*, on the other hand, it appears that 'the excesses of the Red Guards have produced a very bad impression everywhere in the Communist world'; and, according to the *Times of Zambia*, in the non-Communist world too. Referring to 'the mad Red Guards in China', that paper publishes reports telling of 'the nightmare saga of these ideological fanatics rampaging the length and breadth of the old Cathay smashing everything in sight and hammering everyone in their path . . . leaving in their wake a swathe of wrecked factories, sacked Party offices and battered and bewildered Chinamen'.

Even through Mrs Knight's rose-tinted spectacles, the current Chinese scene is hardly endearing. 'Individuals who have been accused of shortcomings' (presumably by a Red Guard or anyone else who doesn't like them) 'will be able to defend themselves and will either be re-instated or sent for a course of manual labour'. The Socialists' object is to stop 'the development of a bourgeois attitude in education and culture . . . and to avoid the emergence of an education class divorced from the masses' (and therefore less easy to control?). In the bad old days, 'a scholar was a highly privileged person with undue influence and position. . . . Many 'revisionists' have been suspended from responsible posts and discussions on their future are going on among their fellow-teachers and students before being referred to higher authorities'. Can one really blame 'press and radio' for their 'build-up'? Some of SACU's sponsors must be glad not to pursue their calling in China.

Mrs Knight further reports that only 'ideologically sound' films are being shown . . . musicals and films alike are packed with propaganda . . . books have been thoroughly censored and the editorial boards of periodicals purged

. . . and big stores (investigated) to make sure that bourgeois tendencies do not creep in by way of goods for sale on (sic) the counters'. I wonder if Mrs Knight shared the recent experience of a French journalist who went to a Chinese cinema to witness the nuclear test and found that 'each atomic explosion is greeted with a standing ovation'.

Finally, Mrs Knight tells us that she found 'a solid determination to carry the social revolution right through to its cultural conclusion'. I defy anybody — including Mrs Knight herself — to tell me what that means.

Yours, etc.

Gilbert Longden, MBE, MP

FRIDA KNIGHT COMMENTS AS FOLLOWS:

I realise that my view of China differs from the views of the journalists quoted by Mr Longden — the main reason for my reporting things I saw in China was that they were so different from the rumours, fictions and speculations printed in the Western press. (The *Times of Zambia* certainly excels in fantasy — please, where is this 'swathe of wrecked factories', and sacked offices?)

I didn't wear rose-tinted spectacles, but relied on my own eyes and the information given by responsible friends, European and Chinese, who naturally pointed out the positive aspects of the Cultural Revolution, which I tried to pass on.

Whether or not one likes the objects of the exercise it is surely wise to try to understand them; and unwise to compare the movement with Nazism, whose aims were diametrically opposed to communism.

It seems terrible to Mr Longden that teachers and other qualified persons should be criticised by their underlings — but to the Chinese it seems the very essence of democracy that everyone directly affected by education and culture should have a say in their organisation and administration. The system of long meetings, discussions, criticism and counter-criticism, is a very Chinese way of carrying out reforms and changes (cf William Sewell's book, 'I Stayed in China').

Present-day films and plays, whatever their artistic merit, are popular and often reflect ordinary people's lives and problems. The message conveyed usually impresses the need to 'Serve the People', make sacrifices for the Cause, and so on. Would Mr Longden prefer to offer the Chinese the sex and violence of Western screen and stage?

I was not in China when their nuclear test was shown in cinemas, but can understand their pride in the scientific achievement; I personally

can't forget that it would probably not have happened, if the West had not excluded China from the United Nations, and refused nuclear disarmament.

The 'cultural conclusion' of China's revolution will, (as I think they see it) be reached when socialist ideas predominate, when the profit motive is abolished, and when men and women live their lives on a basis of equality, plenty, security, with leisure to cultivate the arts, crafts, sciences, sport. At present a minority of the population have leisure, or higher education; the cultural revolution aims at ensuring that the majority have the same rights.

Starry-eyed? The Chinese will remind you of Mao's words (1963): 'Once the correct ideas characteristic of the advanced class are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into a material force which changes society and changes the world.'

SACU DIARY

December

- 5 **Manchester Branch.** Social and Discussion at Friends' Meeting, Mount Street, Manchester 2. 7 pm. Discussion to be opened by Dr Philip Leeson, Lecturer in Economics, Manchester University.
- 8 **Barnet Branch.** Film Show 'The East is Red'. East Finchley Library. 7.45 pm.
- 9 **Branch Co-Ordination Committee.** 5.30 p.m. SACU Central Office.
- 12 **Public Meeting.** Forum on the Cultural Revolution. Kurt Mendelsohn, Colin Penn, Frida Knight, Liao Hung-Ying. Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1.
- 13 **Camden Branch.** Meeting in Kentish Town Library, Kentish Town Road, NW5. 'Life in China', 8 pm. Speaker, J. Allan Cash.
- 16 **Central Office Social.** 24 Warren Street, London, W1, 8 pm. Members and friends all welcome.

January

- 6-8 **Weekend School.** White House, Hayward's Heath (see page 4).
- 24 **Manchester Branch.** Illustrated lecture on Chinese Art by Mary Tregear, assistant keeper of the Far Eastern Arts Department, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. At City Art Gallery, Manchester, 7.30 pm.
- 31 **Camden Branch.** Meeting on China and Vietnam. Speaker, Denys Nowell.

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Meeting Problems Head-On

We believe our readers will be interested in this article by Felix Greene, reprinted from the **National Guardian**, (NYC). Producer of the film 'China!', and author of several books on China, Mr Greene here gives his views on the current ideological revolution in China.

IT IS ALWAYS unwise to comment definitively on a revolution that is going on, especially a Chinese revolution, for events there move fast and the unexpected lies behind every corner. Who, for example, could have foretold during those hectic 'Great Leap Forward' days of 1958 that from out of all that vast excitement and apparently hopeless confusion, and after many experiments and errors (all, of course, derided by the West), there would eventually develop an entirely new social-agricultural system of unquestionable success?

The rural revolution in 1958 simply could not have been brought about merely by issuing edicts from above. It fulfilled its purpose precisely because the peasants themselves were directly involved as initiators. When the 500 million peasants of China tried their hand at developing a new kind of rural economy it led to muddle, excitement, errors and eventual success. Success, because the end could only come when a new rural economy had been devised that met the real needs of those immediately participating—the peasants themselves.

It is worth reminding ourselves of this as we watch the unfolding of the new Chinese revolution. Perhaps this time we can avoid arriving at premature conclusions. Just as the rural revolution in 1958 was precipitated by the need to meet a number of specific social and agricultural problems, so the proletarian cultural revolution today sprang from the urgent necessity to resolve issues that were creating damaging tensions within the Chinese society.

First, and above all, the Chinese clearly felt that the time had come to meet head-on the problem of revisionism in their own country. As we all know, the Chinese have been watching with increasing dismay what they term the revisionism, the 'creeping capitalism' that in their eyes has subverted the revolution in the Soviet Union. They have devoted an enormous amount of careful study to determine the causes of this phenomenon. They accept the thesis of Marx and Lenin and Mao that until the classless society is finally established, 'the spontaneous influence of the petty-bourgeoisie will always be directed to the re-establishment of the old order.' The Chinese do not consider that they are an exception to this law; and—so it now appears—there are still many Chinese who,

because of upbringing and past influence, have never been able to shed their old ideas. To make totally certain that no individuals and groups representing a drift towards capitalism are left in positions of influence is apparently the cardinal objective of the present revolution.

But behind this overriding objective there are, it seems, other imperatives at work.

The Chinese have concluded, and in my view rightly, that the United States is likely to expand the war in Vietnam to the point where China will have no alternative but to intervene—either because her own territory is attacked or because the Vietnamese call for her aid. I have no doubt whatever that under either of these circumstances China's response will be immediate and full-hearted.

How does an industrially backward country prepare itself for a possible confrontation with the richest and militarily the most powerful nation in the world? It would act, I suggest, exactly as China is acting now. The Chinese are not in the least daunted by the overwhelming superiority of the US in destructive weaponry, for they have long believed (and the Vietnam war is a vivid contemporary validation of this theory) that it is not the amount of weaponry that will determine the outcome of a struggle but the spirit of the people involved. Thus one of the first things that a country in China's position would do is to streamline the governmental apparatus to make certain that if the struggle should come only the totally determined and wholly dedicated are found in positions of influence. To ensure the closest possible harmony between the military and civilian administrations, the military would be given a position of enhanced authority. The industrial priorities would be altered to eliminate the expenditure of material and human energy on non-essential consumer goods. All this is now taking place in China.

And finally, of course, the people—especially those who are not old enough to remember the revolutionary struggles prior to 1949—must be given their head so that they can capture the zest, the readiness for self-sacrifice, the austere conditions and the sense of common achievement that alone can bring victory.

Today the revolution is confronting every Chinese with a question only he

can answer; Which side are you on? Are you on the side of those who want to build a new society or among those who want to cling to the old? Are you really out for yourself or out for the good of the community? Are you ready to take the road toward socialism or would you choose the road toward capitalism? Strangely remote as these questions may appear to us, this is the tenor of the intense self-questioning that is going on today from one end of China to the other.

It is by no means a mild affair, this latest Chinese revolution, and given its objectives it couldn't be. As in earlier upheavals, mistakes will be made; some people will be hurt. To me, however, there is something extraordinarily exhilarating and humanly encouraging in the spectacle of a whole country re-examining the quality of its life and the direction in which it is going. Nothing like this has ever before been attempted anywhere. And who are we, with the evidence of increasing violence and corruption all around us, to scoff at a whole people attempting to re-order their society?

VISUAL AIDS

AMBITIOUS PLANS to provide SACU branches with a wide variety of visual aids were made at the first meeting of the Working Group on Visual Aids held Tuesday, 8 November, at Central Office.

The meeting—attended by eight, members, all experts in various fields of communications—initially concentrated its attention to three aspects of visual aids: maps, charts and posters.

The group were agreed that material should be prepared for a variety of charts. These would include: rural organisation from mutual aid teams to communes; Chinese electoral system; progress of education; Chinese inventions in chronological order; development of health services. The help of experts in these fields is to be enlisted by the group during the preparation of the charts.

Maps to be prepared are to show: rivers, railways, towns and administrative regions; main mineral resources, agricultural production, density of population, centres of industry; treaty ports and concession areas, taken at the time of maximum occupation; the Japanese occupation and 'red' areas; the Long March; American and other foreign bases surrounding China; frontier settlements with Burma, Afghanistan, Nepal and Mongolia showing frontiers before and after the agreements.

REVIEW

'Imperial China,' by Michael Loewe. Allen and Unwin, 42s.

MORE than ever it is essential today that people in the West should study and try to understand China. Not necessarily only the China which has come into being since the People's Revolution of 1949, but the ancient civilisation that has shaped the destiny of the Chinese people.

For this latter purpose Michael Loewe provides a useful and informative book. There have been many studies of events, tragic and otherwise, in China since the first impact of modern foreign invasions, but few of these seriously considered the system of government and way of life which this impact so blindly and recklessly destroyed. Chinese civilisation, with its delicate arts and calligraphy, meant a great deal to scholars and connoisseurs, but nothing at all to the Westerners who came to trade and make profits. To these latter, Chinese customs, if they thought of them at all, seemed merely quaint and certainly inferior to their own.

Yet Chinese civilisation was a phenomenon almost, if not quite, unique in human history. It had a static quality that survived even violent upheavals, and absorbed former conquerors. To a Westerner of our time, now somewhat dubious as to where his own dynamic 'progress' is leading him, there is something refreshing about a system that had sufficient pride in itself to build political and social institutions that were expected to endure without change for generations; which was self-contained and accepted little from the

outside world; and which, like the Greeks, classed outsiders as barbarians.

It is important that we should understand this traditional Chinese self-reliance and pride, for a similar—and equally justified—pride in achievement is to be observed in the revolutionary China of today.

As Mr Loewe shows, gradual evolution did take place in China, as customs crystallized into imperial government, but radical change was extremely rare. One impressive characteristic prevails throughout, the system was all woven in one piece. Confucian teaching, dating from 25 centuries ago, underlay morality and manners, and continued to do so, right up to modern times. Unlike most religions, Confucianism was not other-worldly or mystical, and thus it could pervade government and daily life. It must have very deeply conditioned the character of the Chinese, showing them how to live and behave in this world. It has always seemed to me that the Chinese, of all people, were not escapist, or tormented with a sense of sin, as we are in the West. Buddhism came later to China, and attracted some of the sensitive who wished to withdraw from the world, but Confucianism was basic.

Like their past, the future of the Chinese people will be unique. They know how to be at home on this planet, as anyone who reads this book will learn. If there is one criticism I would make it is that a more chronological exposition might have been a little clearer. By devoting chapters to topics, the author is unable to avoid repetitions and retraces the centuries as each topic is examined.

DORA RUSSELL.

INTRODUCTORY WEEKEND SCHOOL

The White House (University of Sussex), Isle of Thorns, Hayward's Heath, Sussex

Friday evening, January 6, to Sunday evening, January 8

Programme:

Saturday, am 'China in the Nineteenth Century.' Lecturer: Mr Bernard Martin.
Saturday, pm 'The Land and People of China.' Lecturer: Mr Michael Freeberne.
Sunday, am 'China since 1949.' Lecturer: Professor Joan Robinson.
Sunday, pm 'Democracy in China.' Lecturer: Mr Colin Penn.

To SACU, 24 Warren Street, London, W1

Please reserve a place for me at the White House Weekend School on January 6 to 8. I enclose deposit of 10s.

Fee: £5 15 0 (full member)*
£5 0 0 (student member)*
£6 5 0 (non-member)*

*delete as necessary

Name

Address

GREETINGS

THE following letter has been received from Peking:

Dear Dr Needham and all members of Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding,

Your cable of September 30 has been received. On behalf of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations and Friendship with Foreign Countries, I extend to you and all members of SACU our sincere thanks. We are grateful for your warm and friendly greetings for the 17th anniversary of our National Day.

May the friendship and mutual understanding between the Chinese and British peoples constantly be developed.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
(signed) Chu Tu-nan
President

ABOUT SACU

Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding Ltd (Founded 15 May 1965)

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Dr Nicholas Kurti

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

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

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