

BEHIND THE DAZIBAO

This report has been sent to us by a journalist working in Peking. He describes it as 'impressionistic' rather than 'analytical'.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION is obsessive. It reaches out into every sphere of life here leaving nothing untouched. It is tangible everywhere in the endless dazibao (big character posters) plastered on walls, shop windows, lamp-posts and even police boxes, the great slogans painted in dramatic black characters on the roads, the loudspeakers that blare out into the early hours of the morning. . . . Even the theatres, cinemas and TV screens have had to close down to make way for the much more real drama that is being played out in the factories, offices, communes and colleges. This is the drama of 'making revolution'.

What does it mean? Bloody clashes? Rowdy demonstrations? Civil war? That is the impression given by some foreign correspondents who judiciously pick out from the many thousands of dazibao the most scaring ones reporting—with the usual Chinese flair for exaggeration and colour—the odd clash that occurs here and there in the vast stretch of China. I have long since learnt that some dazibao should be taken with a big pinch of salt, for different groups reporting and commenting on the same event will often give their version of the story in sharply partisan terms. And so often the dazibao authors reach for the most highly charged turn of phrase. The other day, for instance, I read a dazibao at the office claiming that the newly-formed leadership had been practising 'white terror'. I gulped. The phrase conjured up visions of fights, beatings and blood on the desks. What was the 'white terror?' Simply that the new leaders had told several cadres to leave their desks and do a spell of manual work around the building. Or take the current expression much in vogue—'shao hung' I first

heard this when a colleague told me he was going to be 'burnt red'. I was horrified until he explained that 'shao hung' merely meant being tempered in the movement through criticism.

So much for the thick layers of exaggerated language used in the tingling mood of the movement.

Apart from this, however, there has, in fact, been some violence. There was a bit last summer during the peak of the Red Guard movement, and a few outbreaks of violence at the turn of the year when the revolution seemed to reach some sort of a crescendo in the criticism of such top leaders as Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping. The point to remember is that China is going through a revolution—anyone who reads Chinese publications cannot possibly escape the word!—and a revolution embracing so many hundreds of millions is bound to involve some violence and excesses. One of Mao's most popular quotations—the poster is stuck up all over the place—reads: 'A revolution is not a dinner party . . . a revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another'. Having said that, what has amazed me is the fact that there has been so little violence considering the millions of teenagers who have been allowed to do more or less what they pleased. This speaks volumes for the discipline of Chinese youth.

One may wonder why the Party made no attempt during the very early stages to curb the youngsters, why it allowed them to take actions which were quite contrary to the constitution, for instance. I think the answer lies largely in the Party concept of the mass line. The Party

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

AT A PUBLIC MEETING on 27 January in Birmingham, Colin Penn showed his excellent slides to an audience of some 40 people, and a lively discussion ensued from his impressive account of his experience in China. On 23 February bad weather rather reduced the number of people who came to hear Mr A E Farmer from Wolverhampton. He had visited China two years ago as a visiting tourist and had made a remarkably artistic and instructive film—colour and sound film—worthy of showing to a much larger audience. Monthly meetings are planned for the immediate future.

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ABOUT SEVENTY people listened to Denys Noel on 31 January when he spoke on 'China and Vietnam'. The meeting was organised by the Camden branch and chaired by Professor Carey Taylor.

Another meeting on 'China Now' took place on 2 February at Moreland Hall. It was attended by 80 members and friends and proved one of the most lively and interesting ever organised by the Camden branch. It was chaired by Roland Berger, and the other two speakers, Colin Penn and Bill Brugger, dealt in depth with the many questions posed by a very attentive audience. It was particularly illuminating to hear the eye-witness account of events in China from Bill Brugger; an account which differed in some material respects from the average newspaper reports.

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SIXTY PEOPLE attended a Seminar on China Today at Chester College, Parkgate Road, Chester, on 18 February. Arranged jointly by the Chester branch of the Workers' Educational Association and the Merseyside and North

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CHINESE PAINTING

IT IS CURIOUSLY invigorating to look at, instead of eternally read about, the Chinese world, mind, product, or what will you. Presently there are three important, and quite different visual experiences available as alternative diet in our quest for information about the East.

The first will have ended by the time this issue has reached you: however, it should be noted. Between 24 February and 25 March the Arts Council has featured **A Chinese Painter's Choice**. This collection, belonging to Madame Ling Su-hua, 'herself a distinguished painter and calligrapher', offered a selection of works from the Wen-jen-hua school of painting (artists of this school lived in the Ch'ing period—1644-1912). The specific effort of the Wen-jen-hua painter was to express himself rather than to simply depict nature. This was frequently achieved by a union of poetry and painting, even to the extent of including the written word into the composition of the

picture. Obviously, without a precise understanding of the language and the thought expressed, the western viewer is seriously hampered in any attempt to judge the success of this merger. Yet we in England have to hand a remarkable quantity of the cream of Eastern art, and have learned something of its objects. Therefore we can see that in this exhibition there is much that is less than great, and this is unexpectedly instructive. The incredible technical ease of the supreme masters belies their achievements, and here was a rare chance to undress the aesthetic problems faced by those not quite at the top.

A very impressive exhibition: **Chinese painting over the past 300 years**, opened on 16 March in the Print and Drawing room of the British Museum. Here is a rich selection from the museum's bountiful back rooms. The standard of these paintings is awesomely high, and one's only regret is that there are no examples done since

the Liberation. Nonetheless, several date from the 30's and 40's—one as recent as 'the seventh month of 1949'. Outstanding among these contemporaries is Fu Pao-shih, whose evocative landscapes are rendered with as bold and apparently careless brushwork as any we are accustomed to seeing in the west today. This exhibition represents the first of two showings of oriental paintings mounted annually by the British Museum.

Finally, readers should make every effort to see the just-published, vast (in scope and size) **Chronicle** by Feliks Topolski. Entitled **Asia: the Arena**, this lithographed scrutiny of our times comprises 35 issues of the artist's broadsheet, and records his journeys through China, Siberia, Mongolia, Vietnam and India over the past two years. It is a massive collection of on-the-spot drawings, together with a large colour reproduction of a recent canvas, all deserving a careful 'reading'. They may be seen in the Library at 24 Warren Street.

K.V.

Behind the Dazibao

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leadership, I suggest, reasoned that once it tried to control the youngsters it would dampen their enthusiasm and thus block the whole flow of the movement which is aimed at giving the masses the fullest possible freedom of action.

In a movement of this character and scale, of course, it is inevitable that it will sometimes go off the rails, or even get out of hand in some places. It is clear, in fact, that this happened. That is why, presumably, the Central Committee stepped in and issued a directive in January telling people not to force others to wear tall paper hats, carry self-denunciatory placards, or be made to kneel. A recent speech by Chou En-lai underlined this injunction by pointing out that Mao has never believed in any form of 'ruthless struggle and merciless blows' against cadres.

But the violence that comes out of the heat of the moment should not be confused with the acts of hooliganism inspired by several organisations now banned as being counter-revolutionary. What these bodies were it is hard to define, but it is said—and there is a great deal of evidence to support this point—that they were led, in the main, by disgruntled officials under fire and by the sons and daughters of leaders attempting to protect them.

But the flashpoints of violence that have occurred in some parts have little to do with the real business of 'making revolution'. This may be too pro-

saic an exercise to merit headlines in the west, but it is the very essence of the movement. What it boils down to is hard graft—the hard graft of interminable meetings and discussions and, of course, the writing of more and more **dazibao**. I say hard graft because I have now attended enough meetings in recent months to feel bone-tired after them. The meetings go on and on—and sometimes round and round—because the Chinese prefer to reach unanimity through discussion than just vote in order to speed things up.

Up to the last couple of months the meetings and **dazibao** principally had one aim—to criticise the men who gave the orders, the directors of factories and office, the heads of Party committees. All power lay with the people. Through their elected representatives on cultural revolutionary councils, the meetings were convened and the leaders were criticised.

Everyone could have his say at the office where I work—the cooks, the cleaners, the typists and the clerks, the lot. It was their revolution, and the leaders, mainly Party members, were made very much aware of it. They had to explain their political mistakes, their bureaucratic bungling, their reason for bossing people around and firing workers at will.

And as the criticism mounted and more incriminating evidence was built up—a process that took more than months—the staff began to realise that what lay behind the directors' actions and attitudes was a whole

system of ideas that was quite alien to one of Mao's basic tenets that the Party should serve the people and follow a mass line.

Invariably, the leaders would justify their mistakes with the ageless excuse: 'I was only carrying out orders'. And back would come the slogan from their critics—**da dao nulizhuyi**: 'down with slavishness'. Just to drive the point home, there would always be someone who would stand up and read an apt quotation from Mao like: 'Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of anything. . .'

And this, above all, is perhaps the fundamental lesson now riveted in the minds of so many ordinary people, that in future one must never blindly carry out orders—whoever gives them—for it is felt that such obedience will inevitably lead China into the wilderness of revisionism.

In the last few weeks the meetings have centred around a new problem: the seizure of power from those no longer trusted to do the job. And at each meeting the thorny questions are hammered out. Should all the leaders in organisations be dismissed? Or should some be kept? Can a leader be really judged by mistakes made over a few months? And all the time the big debate goes on with an intense passion. There is no question of the issue being decided by a few people at the top. It is being worked out at the bottom by millions of people through a grass-roots democracy the like of which China has never experienced before.

EG

The Press Reviewed

THE WORLD PRESS has expended much ink and many columns on 'analysis' of the cultural revolution in China, on generalities about 'power struggles' and 'leadership purges', and on reporting as gospel everything the Japanese correspondents could translate of the big-character posters. It's a pity no one told the editors that the posters have always been a medium for mass free expression and not for policy directives from above. As Dennis Bloodworth admitted in the **Observer** of 15 January 1967: 'The poster problem is complicated because it now seems evident that some have as much political meaning as 'Bill loves Mary' scribbled on a British wall'. Almost any member of **SACU** could have told him that six months before.

What the world press has not done is to present the manifesto on which the cultural revolution is based — the Sixteen-Point Statement put out on 8 August 1966 by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Here, plainly set down, are the reasons for the cultural revolution and its objectives, its possible setbacks, and the way to achieve success. It is a humane and reasonable document which has been ignored by western press and radio apart from seizing phrases out of context, and dwelling on 'riots', 'bloodshed' and 'beatings' (mainly apocryphal). The press has chosen to be concerned with a 'struggle for succession' when the Chinese themselves were concerned with the quality of education, the integrity of the teachers, and the importance of all media of mass communication and instruction.

The quality of western reporting is evident in a **Sun** report of 11 January 1967, with headlines: 'Mao Uses "Fighting" as Screen for Purge'. After paragraphs on Mao trying to 'justify his ruthless purge of all those who question his mastery over the country's 700 million people', and the loyalty of workers being 'in doubt', and the loyalty of the Army being 'in doubt', and the possibility of 'a clash between Army and workers sparking off a civil war', the diplomatic correspondent concludes his exercise in futility by writing: 'One big question remains: Where is Mao? Some China experts believe he is ill or senile and that a small group, led by his wife Chiang Ching, are using his name to seize power'. One quarter of the human race is examining the quality of its life and the future it is choosing, yet this **Sun** report is typical of the 'comment' given to British readers.

The **Scotsman** has relied almost entirely on Japanese translations of wall posters via the Japanese press, radio, news agency, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and on 'reports reaching Tokyo'. We hope **Scotsman** readers are experienced enough to know how much credence to give to those. Editorial comment is on the same level, as evidenced by the one of 13 February 1967. 'Russia is giving positive help to Hanoi; China is not; instead she is impeding Soviet aid'. This is an outrageous lie, and the slander has been denied again and again by Hanoi and by China. To no effect evidently, as western editors prefer to accept a lie from the respectable and newly-beloved Russia, rather than the truth from anywhere else.

As for the truth of many reports in the past months, the 'Nanking incident' is a good example. The **Observer** of 8 January 1967 had banner headlines: '50 Die as Red Guards clash with Workers'. The story went on: 'Street fighting between Red Guards and workers in Nanking has resulted in about 50 deaths, 900 wounded, and 6,000 arrests, according to scattered reports from China yesterday. . . . News Agency reports via Tokyo, Prague, and Belgrade said Nanking was in 'the grip of terror', that transport was paralysed, and telephone connections with the rest of China cut off. The clashes involved 100,000 Nanking workers opposed to Mao Tse-tung's "Great Cultural Revolution", the reports said'.

The **Sun** of 9 January 1967: 'Strong-arm tactics by the Red Guards movement, culminating in the mass rioting and bloodshed in Nanking are causing unease and even criticism among the hitherto obedient supporters of Mao and Lin Piao.' Same paper, same date: 'In attacking Tao (Tao Chu) the men

behind Mao may have gone too far. He seems to be a man of great resources. Nanking is now reported to be in the hands of his supporters.' Tao is also 'credited today with having organised the bloody week-end rising in Nanking.'

The **Guardian** of 9 January 1967. Victor Zorza writes: "Some 500,000 people, according to the Czechoslovak news agency, were marching to Nanking'. This agency has also reported that the 600 allegedly killed in Nanking may be a hundred times as many!

The **Guardian** of 10 January 1967: 'A foreign expert in Nanking . . . told correspondents in Peking by telephone that he had heard of no battles there. Nanking, he added, was quieter than the capital'.

The **Scotsman** of 11 January 1967: 'Close study of reports from Peking about large-scale violence in major Chinese cities suggests that they may have been considerably exaggerated.'

The **Observer** of 22 January 1967: 'Most observers believe reports of bloody clashes in some cities this month have been exaggerated.'

The **Observer** of 22 January 1967 from Hong Kong: 'Foreign visitors coming out of China in recent days report conditions calm. They say that Red Guards seem to be well disciplined and their demonstrations are conducted in a festival rather than a violent atmosphere.'

So much for the banner headlines about the dead and the dying and the thousands of arrests.

The **Sunday Mail** of 15 January 1967: Question and Answer by an 'observer just back from China'. Q: 'How honest are the ordinary Chinese?' A: 'Very honest. . . . There is no such thing as robbery. For, after all, there is almost nothing to steal in China. Money? Nobody has any'. A dishonest answer on the subject of a moral integrity the west cannot bear to contemplate.

Jane Gates

SACU ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AS ANNOUNCED in the March issue of **SACU NEWS**, the Society's 1967 Annual General Meeting will be held on 20 May.

Details of the time-table for the meeting, to be held in the Holborn Assembly Hall, will be circulated to members not later than 28 April, together with details of resolutions of which notice has been received. Such resolutions, signed by not less than 20 members, must be sent to reach central office not later than 14 April.

Ten members (i.e. one half) of the Council of Management will be retiring. A list of their names is being circulated. There will therefore be ten vacancies to be filled. Any member of the Society (including retiring members of Council) can be nominated by any two other members for election. Nominations must be received by the Secretary not later than 21 April, or, if accompanied by the written consent of the candidate, by 5 May, on which day the list of nominations will be closed.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

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Wales branch of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, it was the first event of its kind in the area.

Mr W J F Jenner, MA, of the Department of Chinese, University of Leeds, presented a detailed analysis of the events now taking place in China, the historical background and the significance of the cultural revolution. The cultural revolution is not a struggle for personal power by Mao Tse-tung or his supporters, said Mr Jenner, but is a vast and complicated political mass movement involving millions of people. The targets for criticism or exposure were, in the main, those people in positions of leadership, at all levels, who had become complacent or who pursued policies harmful to the revolution.

The cultural revolution was something new and was without precedent in Communist countries. Although some of its own members had been criticised or denounced, the Communist Party Central Committee was responsible for and supported the mass revolutionary movement. This was a new stage, a turning point and a consolidation of China's revolution. The revolution had not ended with the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's armies in 1949, it was a continuous process. Mao had said that it might go on for one hundred, or even three hundred years.

Referring to China's foreign policy, Mr Jenner said that although she adopted a tough policy towards her external enemies and supported the oppressed peoples in other countries who were struggling against foreign domination or unpopular regimes, China did not want to conquer other nations and was not a threat to world peace. While still a poor country, China had made remarkable progress and a nuclear war could destroy all that had been achieved.

After a break for tea, the colour film *China!* was shown and received warm, spontaneous applause. Mr Jenner then replied to questions, which lasted for more than an hour. The questions were searching and covered a wide range. They indicated a serious interest in China and a desire for information.

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SACU DIARY

April

- 5 **Film show.** 'Norman Bethune' (Canadian film), and 'In Praise of Revolution' (Chinese colour film), University College, Biological Sciences Dept, Gower Street, WC1, 7.30 pm.
- 16 **Bristol & District Branch.** Inaugural Meeting, Folk House, Bristol.
- 18 **Manchester Branch:** Annual General Meeting.
- 19 **Barnet Branch.** 'The Cultural Revolution in China'. Speaker Bill Brugger. North Finchley Library, 7.45 pm.
- 20 **Cambridge Branch:** Film Show, 'The East is Red'.
- 21 **Camden Branch:** Public Meeting, Holborn Central Library, 7.30 pm. Speaker: Roland Berger, just back from China.
- 22 **Merseyside and North Wales Branch:** Film Show, 'The East is Red', Royal Institution, Liverpool, 2.30 pm.
- 24 **Cambridge Branch:** Social and Discussion on film 'The East is Red'.
- 26 **Cambridge Branch:** Malcolm Caldwell on China and South-East Asia, 8.30 pm.

ABOUT SACU

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A Letter from the Secretary

DEAR MEMBER,

Even if you have not been able to get to any of the meetings held by SACU in different parts of the country during the last six months, you will know from SACU NEWS that we have been making information about China available in many different ways. This has been, and will continue to be, done in the firm conviction that friendship grows out of true understanding. At a time when interest in China has never been greater, SACU should be doing much more, both to satisfy the demand for information and to counter misinformation, but our resources, both human and material, are limited. As always, we rely on our members, without whose participation in all its activities the Society could do little. We hope that as many as possible of you will come to the Annual Meeting on 20 May (see page 3).

If the Society is to continue, and expand its work, it is essential that its financial resources should be broadened and strengthened. Annual subscriptions of members (at present about 1,300, many of whom are stu-

dents and pensioners paying 7s 6d and 5s a year respectively), are not enough to meet outgoings on our present basis. Every effort, including substantial salary cuts taken by the small regular staff, is being made to economise, but the real solution is for a much greater number of members to give more to the society.

I therefore appeal to you to contribute NOW as generously as you can afford. If you are able to pay your annual subscription by covenant (minimum £2, covering husband and wife) to the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, this will be very helpful. Immediate cash donations, large or small, are urgently needed by SACU, which receives no funds from any organisation except the ACEI, and is otherwise entirely dependent on subscriptions and donations from members and well-wishers. If such donations can be made annually under covenant to the ACEI, their value will be increased by two-thirds.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Bryan