

JANUARY 1966

Trade Unions in China

Following previous reports from SACU's delegation to China, Ernie Roberts (AEU) here speaks of the impressions he received during his four-week visit as guest of the Chinese Foreign Cultural Association. (Interview by Kate Allt.)

NATURALLY enough, Ernie Roberts was keenly interested in the functions of trade unionism in present-day China. He visited many factories in various parts of the country, and was especially pleased to find that he was free to examine and question as he wished. Everywhere he found a friendly and co-operative atmosphere. 'There are approximately 22,000,000 trade unionists in China (i.e. most of the non-agricultural working population),' he said, 'and these are organised into 16 industrial unions. In the engineering union, for instance, there were some 2,070,000 members. On the national level the unions are headed by the All China Federation of Trade Unions; under this comes the provincial level, the county committee, and the branch level. Only some of the unions have provincial levels, but all have got branches. The union officials are elected by the members. Management, on the other hand, is not elected, it is a state institution; directors are appointed by the ministries, state by state.'

Mr Roberts found that trade unions and management work hand-in-hand on a great variety of social as well as production problems. Education, for example, is one of the primary responsibilities of the trade unions. 'In some factories the schools are directly attached, so the unions and the management have some say in the running of them. In their opinion, the trade union is the school for communism. Technical training is emphasised; however, political and cultural education are given considerable attention. Furthermore, social intercourse is promoted between factories. Concerts, plays and sports events are arranged in order that the workers from factories having a predominance of one or the other sexes may meet and mix. Unions and management are also sometimes responsible for housing, nurseries, and hospitals. The director of one factory spoke of the principle of the Three Togethers. This was the rule that workers and management ate together, lived together, and worked together. Thus, they ate in the canteens and had the same food, the same sort of diets; they lived in the same block of flats or small houses (one could see very little difference at all between the director's home and all the others); they worked on the same shop floor, the managers amongst the

workers, and once per year they had to do a month's manual work in the factory somewhere. This made for a strong feeling of unity. There was no touching of the cap, no 'please sir, may I speak?'—the directors were treated in a quite off-hand manner.'

Regarding actual working conditions in factories, Ernie Roberts said he was very impressed on the whole, though there were many instances where equipment was clearly antiquated and even unsafe. These were cases where workers were having to make do as best they could with limited facilities. 'The point is, they do the job with the equipment they have, and if they must rebuild an existing machine for a special purpose, they do so with a great deal of invention. I visited a factory in Shanghai which, prior to the liberation, simply repaired lorries. Afterwards they began designing and manufacturing 4 and 8 ton lorries and hydraulic tippers. The machinery was quite old, some of it rebuilt and looking odd, even clumsy, for the adaptations they'd had to make. But they were producing good lorries.

'Safety regulations were not good, indeed there were some quite dangerous practices, I thought. But this was due to the shortage of the right

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TOURS CONCESSION

BY arrangement with the Chinese Cultural Association and Luxingshe (China International Travel Service) tours to China visiting major cities and places of historic interest and national beauty will be available to SACU members in 1966 at considerably reduced rates.

1. **General SACU tours:** Travel by air to and from Peking; hotel accommodation and meals in China; travel by rail in China. All-in cost £395.

A **Tour No. 1.** Will leave London Saturday, April 23, 1966 and arrive back in London Monday, May 9, giving 14 days in China.

B **Tour No. 2.** Will leave London Saturday, September 3, 1966 and is also planned to allow 14 days in China, arriving back in London Monday, September 19.

C. A third tour starting on or about October 7 will be arranged if there is sufficient demand.

2. **Special tour for Teachers.** 24 days. London to Peking and return by air. Costs within China will be borne by the Chinese Cultural Association. All-in cost to SACU members £295. Teachers in primary, secondary and technical schools and educationists are eligible. The party must be limited to 20. This tour will leave London Saturday, August 13, 1966 and arrive back in London Monday, September 5.

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CONGRATULATIONS

SACU NEWS offers its warm congratulations to our Chairman, Dr Joseph Needham, on his pre-election as Master of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge.

Dear Editor....

We would like to correct the statement in the Church House meeting report (December issue) that Prof Trevor-Roper was — quote — 'not taken to task for making his criticisms of China. . . .'

The question was put to the SACU Deputy Chairman: 'Would Prof Robinson say whether SACU wishes to be associated with the article by Prof Trevor-Roper, and does she consider it to be conducive to understanding and therefore compatible with the aims of SACU?'

The answer was a definite NO to both points. We submit that this was 'taking him to task.'

We were equally surprised that in your report, no mention was made of the announcement from Dr Needham — read in his absence — that he regretted the article and the manner in which it was written.

Barnet Branch Committee,
London, N.W.7

Space limitations allow us to print only essential points from a selection of letters received from individual members.

CHURCH HOUSE MEETING

I found myself resenting the seeming inability of two of the speakers to see anything other than through very Western eyes. Although they knew of the pre-1949 morass of injustice and misery and corruption, it doesn't seem to have touched their understanding. It was left to a student in the audience to marvel at the standards of honesty

Tours Concession

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3. **Special tour for Students.** Eight weeks including five weeks in China. All-in cost £275. Travel second class rail with couchettes London-Moscow — Ulan Bator — Peking and return. This tour will leave London Tuesday, August 2, 1966 and arrive back in London September 27.

All the above arrangements for departure from and arrival back in London are based upon current schedules. Some minor modifications may be necessary.

Members wishing to apply for any of the above tours should inform SACU office without delay, enclosing a deposit of ten pounds (£10), when further details will be sent.

and moral uprightness which prevail in China as nowhere else in the world.

Mrs A Gates,
London, S.W.20

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I found most surprising the assertion at the Church House meeting of November 16 that the Chinese had no interest in Britain. While the delegates may have felt this to be the attitude of the individuals with whom they had contact, it is surely unwarranted to generalise so widely from a limited experience. I have been making business visits to China annually for the last twelve years. I have found considerable interest in a wide range of British activities and have met numbers of Chinese who are pretty well informed about British life.

A N Silver,
London, N.W.3

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I was sorry to see the oft-repeated criticism of Hugh-Trevor-Roper, for his 'rudeness' and 'sensationalism' in a newspaper article on China, being yet again reiterated in SACU NEWS. It seems to me that the flamboyance of the Professor's style should be well-known to most people by now, and was surely appreciated by those responsible for the delegation to China. Far too much offence seems to have been taken about this already, particularly if the title of the article was not Trevor-Roper's own.

D C Jagers,
London, N.21

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CONFUCIANISM — COMMUNISM

The Chinese people will not forget that Confucianism was — if not the pacemaker of, and concurring with, oppression — anything but instrumental in alleviating the suffering, and nowhere aroused the people's resistance and enthusiasm to fight and save the land from calamities: this was left for the Communists to achieve. As the Chairman of SACU, Dr Needham surely would have ample opportunity to acquaint the members with that historic perspective. Yet to ignore this and to pretend that it was all the achievement of Confucianism in the disguise of communist modernity is to miss the significance of the revolution in China.

Fredy Brandler,
London, N.2

CHINA NEWS

Construction of a huge drainage project is under way in Hopei Province, North China. It is expected to protect 1,300,000 hectares of farmland from water-logging, and benefit some 6,500,000 people.

The drainage project is part of an overall scheme to control the Haiho River, which drains an area twice the size of Portugal. Records show that the Haiho has burst its banks no less than 383 times since the year 1360, and in 1949 its floodwaters inundated part of the city of Tientsin.

Other water-conservancy projects are also being started in a part of the Northwestern province of Sinkiang inhabited by Kazakhs. There water is a precious commodity, and the Kashgar River is to be controlled for irrigation purposes and to generate electricity.

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Lhasa's first-ever bus service went into operation in November. Until a few years ago the city had only one all-weather cobbled street. Now it has eight asphalt roads.

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A Nanchang, Kiangsi Province, newspaper recently commented on the success of a four-year medical course, first introduced in 1960, to train medical personnel for work in the mountainous areas of the province. The course is 'half-work-half-study.' Students spend one year studying elementary medicine and at the same time work in hospitals as assistant nurses. The next 18 months are spent on more advanced studies, with emphasis on those diseases that are endemic locally. During this period students also work as members of medical teams touring the countryside, and as assistants to doctors. The last 18 months of the course are spent as hospital interns.

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A Shanghai shipyard has built a Chinese-designed 8,820 h.p. low-speed marine diesel engine, the largest diesel yet manufactured in China. It is reported to have performed well after being fitted in a 10,000-ton vessel.

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China now has two publishing houses specialising in publications in Chinese Braille. The one in Peking, which publishes textbooks for schools and books on philosophy and political science, issues a monthly journal in Braille, and recently published a biography of Louis Braille. The Shanghai house is now publishing a monthly journal of popular songs in Braille and a series of books on popular science, as well as dictionaries, novels, plays and poems.

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kind of machinery. In another factory they showed me a 600 ton press, used for bending $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch steel — a real Heath Robinson affair — but it worked. The operators were skilful, using it in spite of the danger, with their eyes wide-open, and using it well. Furthermore, they were not being pushed on a piece-work basis. Piece bonus rates are occasionally used, but not to a great extent. For example, in one factory individual piece-work represented only 10% of the wages bill, which isn't much compared with this country where the greater proportion of a worker's wage is piece work. The difference is that the Chinese try to give the highest possible rate for full effort, while here the basic rates are low and the worker only puts his full effort into piece-work.'

Mr Roberts then pointed out that the factories operate on a basis of eight grades of pay, which are laid down nationally following an agreement between the Ministry of Labour and the trade unions. There is an approximate difference of 18% between each grade. In British industry, though there are far more than eight specific wage levels, still there would be about eight main divisions, one of which would be women. In China, women are not placed in a separate category, as here, but get equal pay for equal work and receive apprentice training the same as the men. 'The group of workers on a particular job,' he said, 'determine the wages on which a new worker will go. They examine his capabilities and performance, then recommend to the management just which grade the newcomer should receive. A worker who feels he deserves more than he is receiving can take it up with the management, and from there, to higher levels of the Ministry of Labour officials. I did not find out how long it would take for a complaint to reach the top level from the shop floor, but I was told there were very few cases of disputes going that far, since it is a man's fellow-workers who make the first decision.'

Low Rent

'An average wage among engineering factory workers was about 55 yuan per month, while the highest was about 95 (6.7 yuan = £1). I learned that the rent charged for houses belonging to a factory was about one yuan per month, while, for the same period, electricity cost about 25 cents and water about 2 cents (there are 100 cents to 1 yuan).'

As an example of the enormous progress in the effort to raise the standard of living of the Chinese people, Mr Roberts cited the Melon

SACU ACTIVITIES

A STIMULATING and entertaining evening was enjoyed by members recently when Sir Richard Acland gave an illustrated talk on his visit to South China at SACU Meeting Room. Although his visit was a short one, he gave a vivid picture of life in a particular commune which he visited near Canton. By concentrating on this single theme he was able to describe the lives and some of the problems of members of the commune in depth. His beautiful and delightful slides were an integral part of his lecture and at the end one felt one had real contact with the people whom Acland himself had met.

BRANCHES

THE SECRETARY will shortly be visiting Birmingham, Manchester, Merseyside, Leeds and Oxford in connection with the proposed setting up of branches in these areas.

SACU LIBRARY

A LIBRARY and Bookstall Committee is now actively at work. Its work covers many aspects. Further volunteers are needed to help man the bookstall, cut and classify newspaper items on China and to help in setting up a reference and lending library, in particular, cataloguing. Volunteers are still needed to cover the Daily Express, Daily Mail and Evening Standard.

If any members have books on China

that they would like to donate to the library, would they please let us have particulars.

SACU has back numbers of illustrated Chinese magazines suitable for distribution to schools and hospitals. We should be grateful of those members who can help in this way would let us know.

LECTURES

SACU is much indebted to Professor de Haas of Leyden University and his wife Dr de Haas for coming to England last month to deliver illustrated lectures on China in Oxford, Cambridge and London. Members and others who heard them appreciated the authoritative information they were able to give on medical conditions in China, as well as their excellent slides.

OFFICE INTERIOR

WE ARE still looking for one or more people who have time to undertake the job of making our library and meeting room attractive and liveable.

CHINESE CONVERSATION CLASSES

CHINESE Conversation Classes are now being held at 24 Warren Street every other Friday evening. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact Head Office.

K.A.

Housing Estate in Shanghai. Speaking to representatives of the Tenant's Association, he was told that the area had been a shanty town of mud and wooden shacks where relatives and neighbours of these very tenants froze or starved to death in the winter, and in the summertime died of diseases produced by the filth, flies and mosquitoes. After the liberation the Communist government cleaned up the area, built blocks of flats, put in sewers, electricity, schools, and provided work nearby. 'One woman told us that her first child was born on the ground in one of the shacks, and that this same child was now studying in one of the universities. It was something, she said, for which she would never cease to give credit to Chairman Mao and his government. She said too, that there was a high level of honesty among the people living in the Melon Estate, where previously many were

thieves in order to survive.

'I was also invited to see and to photograph the people who were still living in caves and mud huts. There was no attempt to hide the cruder living conditions, rather the Chinese were eager for us to see the inheritance they had got from the past. One saw this contrast in many places. I saw, in adjacent fields, a tractor, a bullock pulling a plough, and finally, six people pulling a plough. In some places they must use tools which are, in design, about a thousand years old. Likewise, though they are producing lorries, they must still lift heavy loads and carry them on their backs. Everywhere I was impressed with the fact that the Chinese people are exerting every ounce of their strength to produce from the land, from their industries, and from every possible source of wealth.'

SACU FIXTURES

January

- 7-9—The Weekend School held at White House, Sussex (already fully booked).
- 10—All trade unionists are welcome at the Trade Union Committee Meeting to be held at 24 Warren Street, W1, at 6 pm.
- 10—The Library Committee will meet at 24 Warren Street, at 6.30 pm.
- 10—Meeting of SACU members of the Oxford branch, in Oxford.
- 20—Informal discussion led by Mrs Pauline Silver, 'A Month in Peking,' held at 24 Warren Street, at 7.30 pm.
- 27—Isaac Deutscher and others will discuss The Role of China in International Affairs at a public meeting at Caxton Hall, Westminster, 7.30 pm.

Future Programme

- In early February a Social Evening will be held at 24 Warren Street.
- Feb. 24—The Barnet Branch Inaugural Meeting will be held at Hendon Town Hall, chaired by the Mayor.

Mar. 15—K S Karol and others will discuss The Internal Developments in China at Caxton Hall, Westminster, 7.30 pm.

Mar. 19—In Edinburgh, the Inaugural Conference of Scotland-China Association will be led by Dr Joseph Needham and other speakers.

The First General Meeting of SACU members will be held in London. The date will be announced.

During April School Holiday, it is hoped there will be a film show for children. The details will be announced.

May 7 to June 4—China Month in the Borough of Camden, including an exhibition of paintings from China in the Civic Centre at Swiss Cottage. Full details of a large and varied programme will be published later.

In late May, Han Suyin will speak at a Public Meeting in London, following a prolonged visit to China.

ABOUT SACU

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

Office: 24 Warren Street, London W.1
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Chairman: Dr Joseph Needham

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Professor Joan Robinson

Vice-Chairman: Mrs Mary Adams

Chairman of General Purposes Committee: Mr Ernest Roberts

Secretary: Mr Derek Bryan

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

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

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

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WEEK-END SCHOOLS

THE week-end school at White House, Sussex was over-subscribed and some bookings had to be refused even to SACU members. **IT IS, THEREFORE, ADVISABLE TO BOOK EARLY FOR FUTURE SCHOOLS.**

Of special interest to members in the Birmingham, Oxford, Bath and Bristol areas:

HARRINGTON HOUSE, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire
29th April - 1st May.

'CHINA IN THE WORLD'

Lectures on 'China as a World Power,' China's Foreign Policy Before Liberation,' 'China in South-East Asia,' 'China's Relations with the Western Powers.'

Cost: £3 2s. 6d. (£3 7s. 6d. for non-members)

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Of special interest to Yorkshire and the North:

GROSVENOR HOUSE, Scarborough
29th April - 1st May, 1966

Lectures on 'China Before Liberation,' 'China's Foreign Policy,' 'Democracy in China,' 'Developments in China since 1949.'

Cost: Members £3 17s. 6d. Special rate for student members £3 7s. 6d. Non-members £4 5s. 0d.

You can book for these schools now by sending a deposit of ten shillings (10/-) to SACU. The full fee must be paid by April 8, 1966. Please send in names of friends likely to be interested.

Watch SACU NEWS for announcements of other week-end schools in 1966 at Manchester, Glynllifon (Caernavon) and in East Anglia, Wiltshire and Devonshire.

Please send your ideas of suitable subjects to be covered in future schools to:

The Secretary,
Week-end Schools Committee,
SACU, 24 Warren Street, London, W.1.