

INTENSIVE LOOK AT CHINA

by Joan Robinson

A short visit (though an intensive one) to China to study the Cultural Revolution does not make it possible to give any general account of it, but I hope that the following notes may contribute to answering some of the questions which have been raised about it.

WHAT TOOK PLACE between June 1966 and October 1967 certainly was a revolution, in the sense of an abrupt reversal of political power, carried out by a popular movement, as opposed to a coup d'état, an inner Party purge, or a general election. But it was a popular rising instigated and guided by the leader of the very regime which was established before it, and which remains in being. What kind of revolution is this? For the Chinese, who think of politics in terms of moral content, not legal forms, it is sufficient to say that it is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, led by Chairman Mao. Since it is a unique event, there are no preconceived categories in which to place it.

The First Round

During the first six months of 1966 hints were being thrown out, in the guise of criticism of the political tendency of some literary works, that there were highly placed personages who were hostile to Mao's ideas. Some independent spirits, who had themselves come across difficulties in carrying out what they believed to be Mao's line, took the hint. The system of venting ideas by 'sticking up posters' was well established. The first shot in what came to be known as the Cultural Revolution was a big character poster, written on 1 June, 1966, by a philosophy teacher at Peking University criticising the Principal and the educational policy that he was carrying out. Once given a lead, posters sprouted everywhere; rebel groups were formed in other colleges and institutions, followed by a number of industrial enterprises. 'Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road', whom we may call rightists for short, reacted strongly to the criticism, scold-

ed the rebels as anti-Party counter-revolutionaries, and in some case took sanctions against them. At the same time, an inner-Party struggle broke surface; the Mayor of Peking was demoted and the city Party Committee reorganised. The dismissal of the Principal of Peking University was an important victory for his critics.

At this time, Mao was not in Peking. His comment on the 1 June initiative, that it was the first Marxist-Leninist big-character poster, (because it raised the question of taking power within an institution) became known later. His only public contribution to the controversy was to swim across the Yangtse, a wordless signal to his young supporters that his lease on life would see them through.

At the beginning of August Mao returned to Peking and wrote his own poster 'Bombard the Headquarters'. The Central Committee issued directives for the conduct of the Cultural Revolution—the Sixteen Points—which were evidently written by Mao himself. Meanwhile Red Guards had been formed by various student and school groups. Mao summoned a mass meeting and put their red band on his own arm.

Still the struggle between rebels and rightists was going on, flaring up in fresh places. Red Guards were allowed to criticise all and sundry, high and low, no holds barred. From Ministers to school teachers, they picked out all who could be accused of bourgeois thought or reactionary attitudes.

There are tales circulating about Chen Yi, the Foreign Minister, known for his dry humour. One is that he had been sitting on a platform for some time wearing a dunce's hat, being criticised, when presently he looked at his watch, and said: 'Please excuse me.

I have to go to the airport to welcome the President of Guinea.' Or that, opening the quotation book, he intoned in the usual form 'Chairman Mao teaches us that Chen Yi is a good comrade'. The Red Guards cried out: 'Take off the hat.' 'I won't,' says Chen Yi—'you put it on, you can take it off.'

There were some posters even against Chou En-lai, but these are believed to have been put up by a gang of young rightists who infiltrated the Red Guards, or else by a group infected with anarchism and 'down with everything-ism' for which Red Guards also had to accept criticism. (The view of some China watchers that Chou's position was seriously threatened seems to have no basis whatever. He was kept busy the whole time going round from one ministry to another seeing that serious business was not interfered with.) Violence was not in the rule book, but it broke out from time to time. When rightists succeeded in getting a group of workers on their side, in some places it even came to shooting. When army units were sent in to keep the peace, they went unarmed and had casualties. In some places serious damage was done to industrial installations.

Why did Mao leave things to boil over? He could easily have used his enormous prestige, any day, to crush opposition. Why did he not do so at the start? Here I am giving an answer based only on my own hunches, not on hard evidence or on any one else's opinions.

First, if Mao had cleared out the rightists and attached the Party more firmly than ever to himself, he would have created the very situation that he was most anxious to avoid—a personal struggle for the succession, such as followed the death of Lenin and the death of Stalin. He wanted the succession to go to the people, that is to a Party that had been broken in to serving, not ruling them, and to a

(continued overleaf)

(continued from page 1)

public that had learned to watch the Party, at every level, for signs of ambition, corruption and privilege sprouting again. The slogan **Rebellion is justified**, which sounds strange in the mouth of the leader of an established government, becomes the equivalent of: The price of freedom from Party bosses is eternal vigilance.

Second, it was impossible to know, looking down from the top, who all the rightists were and through what ramifications they were linked. They exposed themselves by their first reactions to attack, and by their demeanour under criticism or in confrontation with records of their past behaviour which the student rebels dug out, as well as by cruder indications, such as stocks of arms or the title deeds of their old landholdings found hidden in their houses. A decorous, legal procedure could never have done the job. Moreover the very rumbustiousness of the movement and the comical appearance of the solemn, devoted young people carrying out high politics, disguised the inner Party conflict and made it possible, by isolating a few top figures at each level, while rescuing and redeeming their followers, to disintegrate the opposition without splitting the Party. The rightists were used to patronising Mao, as a peasant leader, too simple-minded for the exigencies of politics in a modern State. Perhaps they are still wondering what hit them.

Thirdly, the very process of calling in the youth to carry out the Cultural Revolution was committing them to the movement and putting off for one more generation the danger that sloth and self-indulgence would set in before the economy was able to provide modest comfort for all.

After the youth came the industrial workers. A critical stage was passed in January 1967 when the rebels of Shanghai took over the municipality. Mao commented that their proclamation was the second Marxist-Leninist big-character poster, because it raised the question of seizing power at government level. Encouraged by Shanghai, other cities and provinces followed suit.

After power had been seized trouble broke out between rival groups thrown up in the course of the rebellion. Once more the question arises, why did Mao allow it? Once more offering a hunch — to let the rebels find out that they needed the Party to form a stable system.

With the first of October, 1967, the dramatic period of struggle came to an end. Posters were cleared from the hoardings, processions with drums and songs were heard no more. Reconcilia-

tion and reconstruction were the order of the day. This marked the victory of the Revolution in the revolutionary phase. Grand Alliances now had to be formed among the various rebel groups which had grown up spontaneously during the struggle. They must cease competing for the name of the only true followers of Chairman Mao and learn to work together. Dissipating the rightists was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the great task of developing the institutions and the human relations of a truly socialist society.

Already in the Sixteen Points it was made clear that the struggle was only a preliminary to a new long phase of socialist development. It was made clear also, from the start, that the struggle must be as little destructive as possible — success would be the greater the fewer the casualties on the other side. This was particularly emphasised in connection with the Communist Party. It is laid down that most cadres are excellent or fairly good. Some have made mistakes and must be helped to recognise and overcome them. Only a very small minority were consciously involved with the Chinese Khrushchev in 'taking the capitalist road', and even they must be given a chance to redeem themselves and remould their mentality by productive labour. (At the time of writing, the disgraced ministers seem to be living quietly under some kind of house arrest, but in factories the few incorrigible rightists are working on the very same shop floor where lately they strutted with offensive pride.) The whole point of carrying through the Cultural Revolution in such a peculiar way was that, although in essence it was a revolt of the workers against a certain tendency in the Party, it was not to be allowed to damage the Party as such.

The ruling directive in the last quarter of 1967 was 'To combat self-interest and root out revisionism in our minds' — a wholesome exercise after orgies of criticising other people.

Class Under Socialism

The Chinese conception of class is not quite easy to grasp. The whole movement has been phrased as a class war between proletarians and bourgeoisie, but the old bourgeoisie were only minor auxiliaries of the party persons in authority taking the capitalist road, who were the main object of attack. Bourgeois intellectuals, except for those 'scholar despots' who were carrying out reactionary educational policies, are treated tolerantly in the Sixteen Points, and special mention is made of the need to protect scientists and technicians who, though bourgeois, have contributed to national development.

Class is not defined by birth. When the record of a cadre is being examined, former status as a poor peasant will count in his favour, and a former bourgeois style of life is *prima facie* suspicious, but in neither case decisive. He must prove a proletarian attitude today, not proletarian origin in the past, to be liberated from mistakes and rejoined to the movement.

Still less is class hereditary. Some ex-landlords have been found to harbour dreams of restoration and to pass on to their sons records of the lands they once owned, but this is not allowed to tar all landlords' children. When I asked a young functionary for examples of the kind of mistakes the cadres made, he took his own case. 'As I am a poor peasant's son, I thought I had no need to make revolution. I thought I was a superior person, and I protested against landlords' children being allowed to join the Red Guards. Now I realise that that was wrong. We should draw a sharp line between family and the individual.' Some of the bad characters who infiltrated the Red Guards and made mischief turned out to come from highly placed families — a well-known phenomenon in the USSR.

It seems that being proletarian is really a state of mind, which reveals itself in behaviour. The onus of proof is on every one to show that he is a true proletarian, though, as usual, hard-headed with all their tolerance, the Chinese workers expect to have to examine the evidence more closely if the individual concerned was not a natural-born proletarian than if he was.

Is Mao's conception of a truly proletarian army a romantic day dream, inspired by a nostalgia for the caves of Yenan, that is holding China back from building the modern armed forces that she needs? The H-bomb seems to be a sufficient comment on that question, but certainly the People's Liberation Army is highly unconventional by normal military standards.

All ranks eat, sleep and study together and wear identical uniforms. There are no badges of rank, indeed there are no ranks in the conventional sense — any individual can be moved up or down without disgrace, according to the requirements of a particular situation. The army largely feeds itself and produces minor items of equipment. The pig keeper is taught to feel that he is serving the people no less gloriously than the tank driver.

No one has suggested that this peculiar way of doing things undermines discipline, for even the least sympathetic student of Chinese affairs has to admit that no army in the world has such perfect discipline as the PLA.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

Let us hope that no one is seriously thinking of testing them again as a fighting force.

Like many aspects of Mao's policy which seem extravagantly idealistic, there is a very practical side to the concept of a classless army. Consider recruitment. The communes offer complete economic security, at the level each has succeeded in reaching. Nobody now will turn to the army for the old reason, as a refugee from misery. Selective service, when the boys chosen bitterly envy those who remain at home, is not good for morale. For the officer class in any country, however, the army traditionally offers an honourable career, with social status and a tinge of glamour. This situation exists in China for ordinary recruits. Young men in the militia in every village are eagerly equipping themselves to qualify for the honour of being chosen to serve. Thus an apparently romantic idea is serving a very practical purpose.

The Economy

Was there a collapse of the economy and a danger of total disintegration during the turmoil that the Cultural Revolution produced? The rightists succeeded, for short periods at various places, in getting groups of workers on their side. Some clashes went from fists to guns, and there was loss of life. For a few days, Shanghai was paralysed; the railways stopped running and ships in the harbour were waiting to be unloaded. In most factories up and down the country, there was at least a day or two when output fell. After the first round of conflict with the rightist establishment, rival groups were often left bickering, each claiming to be the true revolutionaries. For the most part this was not allowed to interfere with production, but sometimes it did.

On the other hand, the great release of energy, the determination of the rebels to show that they were fulfilling Mao's demand to 'grasp revolution and stimulate production', and the possibilities of cutting out red-tape and reducing the ratio of administrative personnel to productive workers, led to such high rates of output that many enterprises overtook arrears and fulfilled their planned assignments for the year two or three months ahead of schedule. Our China experts, of course, will deny that this is possible, but let any British factory manager ask himself what would happen to output if his operatives actually wanted to increase productivity, without demarcation problems or fear of redundancy, and would freely exchange ideas with his engineers about how it could be done.

In Shanghai, recovery was held up

by damage to the coal mines on which her industry depends, and overall output for 1967 may fall short of 1966 or barely reach it. In 1968 a great leap is confidently predicted.

Agriculture, which matters far more, appears to be in excellent shape. The harvest for 1967 (the sixth good year in succession) is said to be the largest in recorded history. The Chinese population (now conveniently put at 700 million) is also the largest in recorded history, but the general impression seems to be that both consumption per head and the accumulation of stocks of grain are steadily rising. Imports of wheat (which save transport to feed the great coastal cities) are more than offset by exports of rice.

Agriculture

The old tale that the agricultural communes collapsed after the Great Leap dies hard. The communes were formed, by linking neighbouring co-operative farms, all over the country in 1958, in a rush of enthusiasm. They were invaluable during the three years of disaster which followed, for they formed an administrative network which could deal with rescue operations and control relief where harvests failed. But they had been formed very hastily; the necessary psychological preparation had not everywhere been made, and some extreme ideas, such as abolishing private plots, and distributing food according to needs rather than on work-points, proved to be far ahead of the times.

During the bad years, reorganisation took place. The extremist policies were abandoned. The team, a small group of twenty or thirty families, became the accounting unit for the distribution of income and the control of manpower; local fairs were organised to encourage private household trade. The direction of national investment was changed to favour agriculture, and supplies of consumer goods were made available so as to induce the peasants to want to earn money. This might be regarded as a kind of NEP; but Lenin intended the NEP as a temporary device in face of difficulties, which was to be reversed as soon as they were overcome. The rightists in China advocated these measures as permanent and wanted to push them further. Recovery, starting from 1962, and the fruits of the huge effort of investment made in 1958, began to show that the Great Leap was not a failure after all, but the rightists were reluctant to admit it.

In 1964 there was a campaign for Four Clean-ups, in respect to political, ideological, organisational and economic aspects of life and work in the communes. This was a kind of dress rehearsal for the Cultural Revolution;

it smoked out corruption among cadres and dangerous intrigues among ex-landlords, and it reversed some of the measures of the bad years—local fairs were given up, so that the sale of household products reverted to the Marketing Cooperatives and the regular State channels of trade.

There is a famous brigade at Dazhai, in Northern Shansi, which is held up to the nation as a model. Here, as often happens, a cooperative that had been successful carried on as a unit within its Commune, on its own lines. The terrain was the most hopeless imaginable—stony hills, eroded gullies of loess. The brigade set about creating cultivable land for themselves by the laborious process of building walled terraces on the hill side and filling them up with soil. In 1963 they were struck by a deluge which washed away most of their work and completely wrecked their village. Refusing State aid to which they were entitled, they rebuilt both fields and village and then extended the work, so that now they have ample land to support themselves and to contribute to feeding the nation.

The rightists in the province found all the song about these achievements gall and wormwood. They took advantage of the Four Clean-ups to challenge the figures of crop yields put out by Dazhai, saying that they had understated the area of their land and overstated their harvest. The villagers, saying: 'Is this four cleans or four dirties?' stuck to their statements. Chou En-lai heard of the affair, and declared that national honour was involved—the matter must be cleared up. A huge team was sent in to measure every plot and count every grain. The brigade was vindicated. They are now advancing towards some of the conceptions which were premature in 1958. They have simplified the work-point system and have one grand day of settlement every year, instead of nagging over the shares every evening (other communes, following the light of their example, have got down to once a month). Private plots were given up after the flood. This autumn, grain was distributed by asking everyone how much he would need for the following year; only money income went according to work-points. Needless to say, these achievements were due to personal leadership—the Party secretary was a local peasant of heroic mind. But the example can be reduced to a system once it has been pioneered.

There is another aspect of the Dazhai story. There are very great differences in the level of income per head that is obtainable in different communes for reasons of economic geography. This gives rise to 'socialist

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

rent'. Moreover it sets up a cumulative movement. Land tax is negligible for an area where output has been rising, as it was fixed on the basis of yields at the time of the land reform. A rich commune saves and invests in land improvements and in installing small-scale industry, while a poor one struggles to feed its members. It would be politically dangerous to penalise the prosperous commune, and economically extravagant to deflect investment to the poor one. The Dazhai example appeals to the poor commune to pull itself up by its own bootstraps and offers rewards in pride and honour that (once food and shelter are secure) may be preferred to anything that money could buy. Thus apparently starry-eyed idealism is found once more to be based on solid Chinese common sense.

The Arts

Devotees of Chinese history and art must hibernate for a while. Among the quotations in the little red book we find: 'Works of art which lack artistic quality have no force, however progressive they are politically. Therefore we oppose both works of art with a wrong political viewpoint and the tendency towards the "poster and slogan" style.' But for the time being the latter point is not observed.

In the West the greatest art lovers are generally unbelievers, yet they can enjoy a Madonna or a Crucifixion with not merely appreciation for its technical skill but also a sense of communication with the artist as an artist. This kind of detachment from content is not possible for the young enthusiasts of the Cultural Revolution. Political content is all; the only form to be seen derives from a debased socialist realism which was imported by the Russians before they were repudiated as revisionists. Appreciation of their Chinese heritage, no doubt will revive when the young generation have made the break with the feudal past so completely that they can look upon its work without revulsion. Meanwhile the museums are closed and the antique shops are out of business.

During the campaign against Four Olds—ideas, culture, customs and habits—some iconoclasm broke out, in the tradition of the English Puritans and of Aurangzeb; it seems to have been checked, but not before some harm was done. However, I can testify that the rumour that the Summer Palace has been wrecked is untrue—the only damage is that some of the little paintings in the long corridor, that were felt to be glorifying feudal life, were whitewashed over.

External Affairs

Why does China alienate her neighbours and isolate herself by stiff

diplomacy, sharply worded notes and fanatical, ignorant comments on the affairs of other countries in the official Press? It is hard to know how much is intentional and how much a question of mere manners. During the period that they were on good terms with Russians they took over the heavy, offensive style of controversy usual among Western Marxists. It is to be hoped that in the present campaign against revisionism it will be recognised and corrected.

We must keep a sense of proportion, however. The very newspaper readers who are most indignant about Chinese pronouncements, learn that the CIA is corrupting their students and arranging to murder their statesmen with amused detachment. 'Of course, Americans are funny that way.' If the Chinese record in deeds, not in words, is fairly assessed, it seems that they take a great deal of provocation very calmly.

As for the diplomatic gaffes of the Red Guards, it is easy to see that the enthusiasm of callow youth, fed on a strong diet of hatred for imperialism as the enemy without and for revisionism as treachery within, would inevitably overflow the bounds of correct behaviour between sovereign States. Episodes such as the burning of the British Chancellery in Peking were certainly not in the programme outlined in the Sixteen Points.

The authorities were evidently in a dilemma. Correct diplomatic etiquette demanded that the Red Guards should be checked even if it meant using armed police. The conduct of the Cultural Revolution demanded that they should be free to make mistakes and that they should not be confused by any contradiction of the simple doctrine that imperialists and revisionists are representatives of an evil thing. The solution was to let them shout in public and give them a dressing down in private for violating the strict injunctions against violence in the Sixteen Points.

The bad international manners of the Chinese are very helpful to their enemies. They are always proclaiming that imperialists and revisionists are terrified of the Cultural Revolution and, indeed, if the hungry and disillusioned peoples of the world learned that socialism can mean, not only bread and national might, but genuine democracy in daily life, it would not be easy to laugh it off. But the Chinese style in external propaganda is only serving to keep it from them.

Combating Self-Interest

One of the aspects of the Cultural Revolution that most mystifies outsiders is the magic claimed for the little red book of quotations. It must be

remembered that it was compiled in the first place for the PLA. Merely as a text on which to practise literacy, the quotations are a cut above the horror comics which GIs prefer.

But it is not meant just to be read. Dip in at random, and it appears to be composed of snippets deprived of meaning by lack of context, slogans of the Civil War all jumbled up with pronouncements on the problems of the new People's Republic and its evolution over fifteen years. The use of the book lies in first defining a particular problem, whether personal—how to combat a tendency to self-interest in one's own mind,—or public—how to allocate the cost of terracing a gully between the teams in a commune. Then find an appropriate quotation. The problem gives the quotation its context and it is seen to point to useful lines of attack. Discussion follows on how to apply it in concrete detail to the case in hand.

Examples of combating self-interest may be purely subjective—I have already mentioned the soldier who learned to overcome his chagrin at being detailed to the piggery instead of the tank corps; or they may be concerned with some issue that arises in an administrative or economic unit—for instance, the problem of private plots on a commune, or they may affect the assumption of responsibility. An army cadre was sent to help a middle school reorganising itself. The question came up whether the Triple Alliance should be on the basis of the school forms, or on the basis of the teaching departments. This was the first case of its kind, and the soldier was tempted to hedge, for fear of taking a line for which he might be criticised later. Then he realised that this was self-interest; he must give advice to the best of his judgment and stand responsible for it. As it turned out, the formula he found was endorsed as correct and is being applied elsewhere.

Of course it is not quite historically accurate to identify self-interest with capitalism. Other economic forms are not immune from it. Moreover a modicum of self-interest is indispensable in human life. Ambition and love of praise makes a baby learn to walk. All the same, it is true that in a commercial society, everyone, not only the great exploiters, is under a constant pressure of competition which sharpens egoism and blunts generosity. When this is combined with religion which preaches: Love thy neighbour, and: Take no thought for the morrow, public morality develops a horrible squint.

The Chinese were well prepared by their past traditions to find a morally

(continued on page 5)

Suggestions for a Programme

THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT has adopted a programme for the Society based on the Policy Statement published in **SACU NEWS** (December 1967). This will establish the basis for the work of the Central Office and is offered for the consideration of Branches according to the local circumstances.

The Council feels that the main focus of the Society's work in relation to the public should be based on the following subjects, which are of the greatest current interest:

- (a) the Cultural Revolution
- (b) The thought of Mao Tse-tung
- (c) US and UK policies towards China
- (d) China and the national liberation movements
- (e) Economic and social developments

(continued from page 4)

coherent way of life. Their religion was never theological, but based upon right conduct in this world.

A young Englishman who worked in China during the period of social disintegration under the Kuomintang, made these prescient comments on the generation he learned to know:

One thing is certain: the collectivisation of conscience which in the present anchorless state of society is China's greatest source of danger, will also prove to be her very precious heritage and a unique source of strength just as soon as new and more vigorous ways of thinking come up from the people to break the bonds of bureaucracy. . . .

The identification of literacy with privilege is still, after thirty years of the Republic and state education, the No. 1 enemy of Chinese democracy. For it utterly precludes that most essential condition of all democracy — not, surely, the existence of wise and privileged rulers, but the existence of a self-confident, opinion-forming, idea-generating people. . . .

Losing itself in its work for the people, Chinese youth, afraid no longer of wearing straw sandals and overalls, or of being seen reading too much in public, will find itself. Patriotism will be based on popular national achievement instead of on half-baked upper-crust Westernism. Modern ideals of democracy and productive efficiency can be brought safely down to Chinese earth, and linked with the peasants' amazing aptitude for democratic forms of action. . . . And who knows that a new form of collective face will not quickly emerge, under which everyone competes with his neighbour to get a reputation for unstinted social effort?*

It is precisely this that the Cultural Revolution aims to supply.

Chinese socialism is very Chinese. The thought of Mao Tse-tung may curdle into strange forms when it is injected into other civilisations. We must formulate our own questions with care before we can hope to get help from it in answering them.

*Fruitful. The story of George Alwin Hogg, by Rewi Alley, Caxton Press, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1967, pp. 107, 134 and 145.

- (f) China's Foreign Policy
- (g) Education in China
- (h) Hong Kong
- (i) Historical background of the Chinese revolution
- (j) British trade with China.

The Society's activities — public meetings, study courses, weekend schools, letters to the press, articles in **SACU NEWS**, notes for speakers and pamphlets — should be geared to these themes.

Branches are asked to consider their activities in the light of the Policy Statement. Besides holding public meetings they should consider methods of furthering **SACU** policy in their particular areas in other ways. These could include:

- (a) strengthening relations with other local organisations with a view to discussions on China, provision of **SACU** speakers, etc;
- (b) approaches to local MPs with a view to meeting them regularly to discuss China, and press for a less hostile official attitude;
- (c) initiating contacts with schools and local educational institutions, libraries, regional radio and television stations, urging them to give greater attention to China in their activities;
- (d) seeking the services of local people with specialist knowledge of China;
- (e) writing letters and articles in the local press;
- (f) promoting sales of literature in public places.

Speakers. In view of the greatly increased interest in China, the Society as a whole should take positive action to approach other organisations with offers of speakers, particularly on the main themes; the London Events Committee is already making approaches to a number of selected organisations. At the same time speakers for the Society should be helped with speakers' notes and other factual material to make easier their preparations for meetings. At present each **SACU** speaker does his own preparation of notes and in doing so must collect material, quotations and references which would be useful to other speakers. A start should be made on preparing notes for speakers on some of the more important subjects. By centering the work around selected topics, information material could be coordinated and time and effort reduced. For example information for speakers on the current phase in the Cultural Revolution, would be invaluable at the present time.

Press. There has been much discussion about Press work but insufficient action. Letters should be sent to the press continually: also the radio and

television programmes should receive our attention and comment.

Many press-cuttings reach the Central Office but insufficient use is made of them at present. It is proposed that a small team should be brought together to analyse them and prepare a mimeographed document selecting the more important items and giving factual information to counter press distortions. Frequently gross errors of fact are printed which could easily be dealt with in this way. A start could be made with a document issued periodically to be distributed to branches, speakers and other active members of the Society. A proposal is under consideration to prepare, even if only in mimeograph form, a compilation of distortions from the British press similar to Felix Greene's 'Curtain of Ignorance'.

Pamphlets. The Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute is planning to produce three pamphlets on the following subjects: China's Economic, Social and Foreign Policies; and when more information is available, a pamphlet on China's Educational Policy. Further pamphlets on such subjects as the Cultural Revolution and Tibet will be considered later.

Study Courses. A series of discussion sessions have been held at Warren Street during this winter. Attendance has been small but interest seems to be increasing. Branches wishing to arrange a similar series are invited to consult the Secretary who will be pleased to offer advice on the basis of London experience.

Members of Parliament. The Society has made only a limited attempt to establish relations with MPs interested in China. In the present situation it is important for the Society to consider whether there is a basis for bringing together for regular consultation a group, however small, of those MPs concerned at the present state of Sino-British relations and prepared to take appropriate action.

It might seem that the programme suggested is far too ambitious for a Society with such limited staff and finance. However, if interest in China is as great as has been suggested there should be no lack of willing helpers and in the Council's view there are many members who would like to be involved in the programme outlined above. Volunteers are needed if we are to progress with the work involved, and interested members should get in touch with Central Office or their Branch Secretary.

This is an outline programme and

(continued on page 6)

China Tour For Young People

IF THE NUMBERS justify it, SACU, in cooperation with the China International Travel Service (Luxingshe) will organise a tour for young people in the Summer vacation.

The tour of three full weeks in China will include visits to Peking, Sian, Yenan, Shanghai, Hangchow, Canton, Changsha and Shaoshan (Mao Tse-tung's birth-place).

Travel both ways by second-class rail via Moscow.

Leave London, Monday 29 July 1968

Arrive Peking, Tuesday 6 August

Leave Peking, Thursday 29 August

Arrive London, Thursday 5 September

Approximate cost £250 (this will be reduced if numbers allow for Group Travel reductions).

Will all interested members please write to the Secretary as soon as possible.

Letter from a Devon member

I READ THE MONTHLY letters with great interest—and especially the December edition which dealt with policy.

I should have thought the policy simple enough to be put in three words 'Understanding with China'. Does it matter what one's politics are?

We all have a motivation I suppose. In my case it is my distrust of Americans. I see the emergence of China as a colossal power in head-on collision course with America.

I have a tremendous admiration for the way the Chinese have solved their own massive problems in simple, splendid fashion.

How futile to have it destroyed by possession-hungry, frightened Americans.

All we can do—I think—is to seek understanding with China and so be prepared and have some influence in guiding future decisions.

Or is that too simple?

Sincerely,

John Evans.

(continued from page 5)

the Secretary will be pleased to hear from any member of the Society who has suggestions for the more effective promotion of friendship and understanding with China.

SACU DIARY

February

- 6 Study course. Sino-Indian Relations. Introduced by Preman Addy. 24 Warren Street, London. 7 30 pm.
- 7 Bristol branch. 'The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung: their Development and Achievement.' Speaker: Jim Little. 4 Portland Street, Clifton, Bristol. 7 30 pm.
- 9 Barnet branch. Films of 'Life in China' by Bill Brugger (lived in China 1964-66). The Town Hall, Hendon, NW4. 7 45 pm.
- 16 Manchester branch. Dinner to celebrate Chinese New Year. Joy King Restaurant, Portland Street, Manchester. 7 30 pm.
- 20 Oxford branch. Reg Hunt—who taught in China for two years, talking about his experiences. Friends Meeting House, Oxford. 8 pm.
- 20 Study course. 'Mao Tse-tung's Theory of People's Warfare.' Introduced by Sam Mauger. 24 Warren Street, London, W1. 7 30 pm.
- 22 Camden branch. 'China-USSR Relations.' Speaker: Denys Noel. Chairman: Tom Hill. Holborn Central Library. 7 30 pm.
- 25 Social evening. Myra Roper's film of China in 1967. We hope Miss Roper will be here to speak about her new film. 24 Warren Street, London, W1. 7 30 pm.
- 27 Camden branch. Slide Show. Introduced by Irene Spink who has spent two years in China. Kentish Town Library, Kentish Town Road, NW5. 7 30 pm.
- 28 'The Thought of Mao Tse-tung.' Three speakers discuss and invite audience participation. Kensington Central Library, Campden Hill Rd (Children's Library entrance), Nr Kensington High Street Underground. 7 30 pm.

March

- 5 Study course. Subject to be announced.
- 6 Oxford branch. 'China's Bomb.' Speaker: Nicholas Bateson. Friends Meeting House, Oxford. Joint Meeting with Oxford University. CND. 8 pm.

March and April Dates for your Diary

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS Cantor Lectures. Three lectures on Modern China are arranged for March 18, March 25 and April 22. Full details in March SACU NEWS. Tickets from: Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, Adelphi, London, WC2.

ABOUT SACU

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

Office: 24 Warren Street, London W.1
Telephone 01-387 0074-5

Telegrams ANGCHIN London W.1

Chairman: Dr Joseph Needham

Deputy-Chairman:
Professor Joan Robinson

Vice-Chairman: Mrs Mary Adams

Secretary: Mrs Betty Paterson

* * *

Council of Management: Mrs Mary Adams, Mrs Kate Allan, Mr Roland Berger, Mr Frederick Brunson, Mr Derek Bryan, Mrs Hung-Ying Bryan, Mr Andrew Faulds MP, Miss Margaret Garvie, Mr Douglas Greene, Lady Haworth, Dr Joseph Needham, Rev Paul Oestreicher, Mrs Betty Paterson, Mr Colin Penn, Mr Ernest Roberts, Professor Joan Robinson, Dame Joan Vickers MP, Mr Ronald Whiteley.

* * *

Believing that friendship must be based on understanding, SACU aims to foster friendly relations between Britain and China by making information about China and Chinese views available as widely as possible in Britain.

* * *

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

* * *

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

SACU NEWS is published by the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding Ltd, 24 Warren Street, London, W1, and printed by Goodwin Press Ltd, (TU), 135 Fonthill Road, London, N4.

An American Farmer Looks at China

THE BOTANY THEATRE at University College, London, was well filled on Thursday, 11 January, when William Hinton, author of 'Fanshen', spoke of his experiences in China and the current situation. He began by recalling how, on his way back from China in 1953, he was questioned all night at Heathrow Airport.

On return to America his passport was impounded, as well as the notes for his book; only after a long legal battle were these finally released and the book written. Mr Hinton remarked that Americans were still prohibited, on pain of severe penalties, from visiting China.

The Cultural Revolution, said Mr Hinton, represented a major transition in China's history—from one stage of the Revolution to another. The New Democratic Revolution, against imperialism and feudalism, could be said to include such early manifestations as the Opium War, the Taiping Rebellion, Sun Yat Sen's revolution, and the Communist movement in the 1920s; its goals were achieved in 1949. The next stage—Land Reform—was completed in 1953-4. After this, the Chinese people were faced with a choice between two roads—revolutionary and capitalist. In the middle and late '50s a struggle took place between supporters of the two roads. Then came the bad weather and food shortages of 1960-1, and the break with the Soviet Union. During this period, Socialism could not be consolidated.

Mr Hinton's book 'Fanshen' deals with the early period of Land Reform. In the village where he lived they began

to divide the land within a few days of the Japanese surrender. Some Party members from a 'gentry' background were not ready for this; they wanted to confiscate land only from collaborators. Reluctance to challenge the gentry was reinforced by a reluctance to challenge Chiang Kai-shek and the US which stood behind him. Liu Shao-chi was clearly leading a group which was opposed to Land Reform, and did not wish to challenge Chiang Kai-shek or the US.

There was also left-wing utopianism on the part of those peasants who wanted an egalitarian society based on the division of existing wealth. Having dispossessed the gentry, they attacked the middle peasants. A few years later it was the turn of others, who had grown prosperous meanwhile, to be attacked. Work-teams, sent out to the villages in the belief that Land Reform was incomplete, consequently found that it had been carried too far, and were faced with the problem of how to give back to the middle peasants the land they had lost. This egalitarian policy, known as the 'Poor Peasant Line' and condemned as 'left in form, right in content', also had support from some leading Party members.

After Land Reform, the question of which road to take—mutual aid or laissez-faire—came to the fore in the villages. The decision in favour of mutual aid was arrived at voluntarily by the majority of the peasants, who were not the rugged individualists many people supposed them to be. They saw no future in their small holdings, some only one or one-and-a-half acres in

area, and split up into numerous tiny, scattered plots. Such peasants could not afford a mule or an ox, because their holdings would not have provided them with enough work to balance the cost of their keep. Moreover, in a peasant economy such as this, the tendency was for the wealthy to get wealthier and the poor poorer. For millions, taking the capitalist road would have meant descending into even worse poverty than they already knew. Hence the demand for cooperation came mainly from the poorer peasants, and was opposed mainly by the richer ones.

After describing the development through co-operatives to communes, Mr Hinton said Liu and others had advocated the adoption of material incentives as in Russia. Mao Tse-tung had opposed this, saying that it appealed to people's selfish motives, and could not lead to Socialism. On the Sino-Soviet dispute, Mr Hinton said he thought the main differences lay in the attitudes of the two countries towards American imperialism. The Chinese believed that only the mobilisation of people throughout the world could tie down US imperialism and prevent a world takeover. The Soviet Union thought that the power of the Socialist countries would in time so outweigh that of the United States that no struggle would be necessary.

Mr Hinton said that the American 'establishment' had never fully recovered from the shock of the Chinese revolution, which had dealt a powerful blow to their plans to control China. They were now trying to build up sufficient strength to crush the Chinese revolution, by establishing bases in countries like Vietnam.

Mr Hinton said he had witnessed the brutality with which troops attacked girls and disabled people in Washington when anti-Vietnam war demonstrators raided the Pentagon. But despite this brutality, the demonstrators were not cowed. He said opposition to the war was growing, mainly because the mounting casualties were beginning to hit the middle classes—most of the earlier casualties were from the inarticulate poorer classes. But opposition would have to become much stronger to beat the American war-machine. In reply to a question about the Declaration of Independence, Mr Hinton said that in Wisconsin someone recently tried to get people on the street to sign it, but they thought it was a Communist document.

The Chairman, Professor William Sewell, thanked Mr Hinton, who was given a great ovation by the audience.

BOOK NOW FOR WHITSUN WEEKEND SCHOOL

(31 May to 3 June)

Phillips House,

Dinton, Nr Salisbury, Wilts.

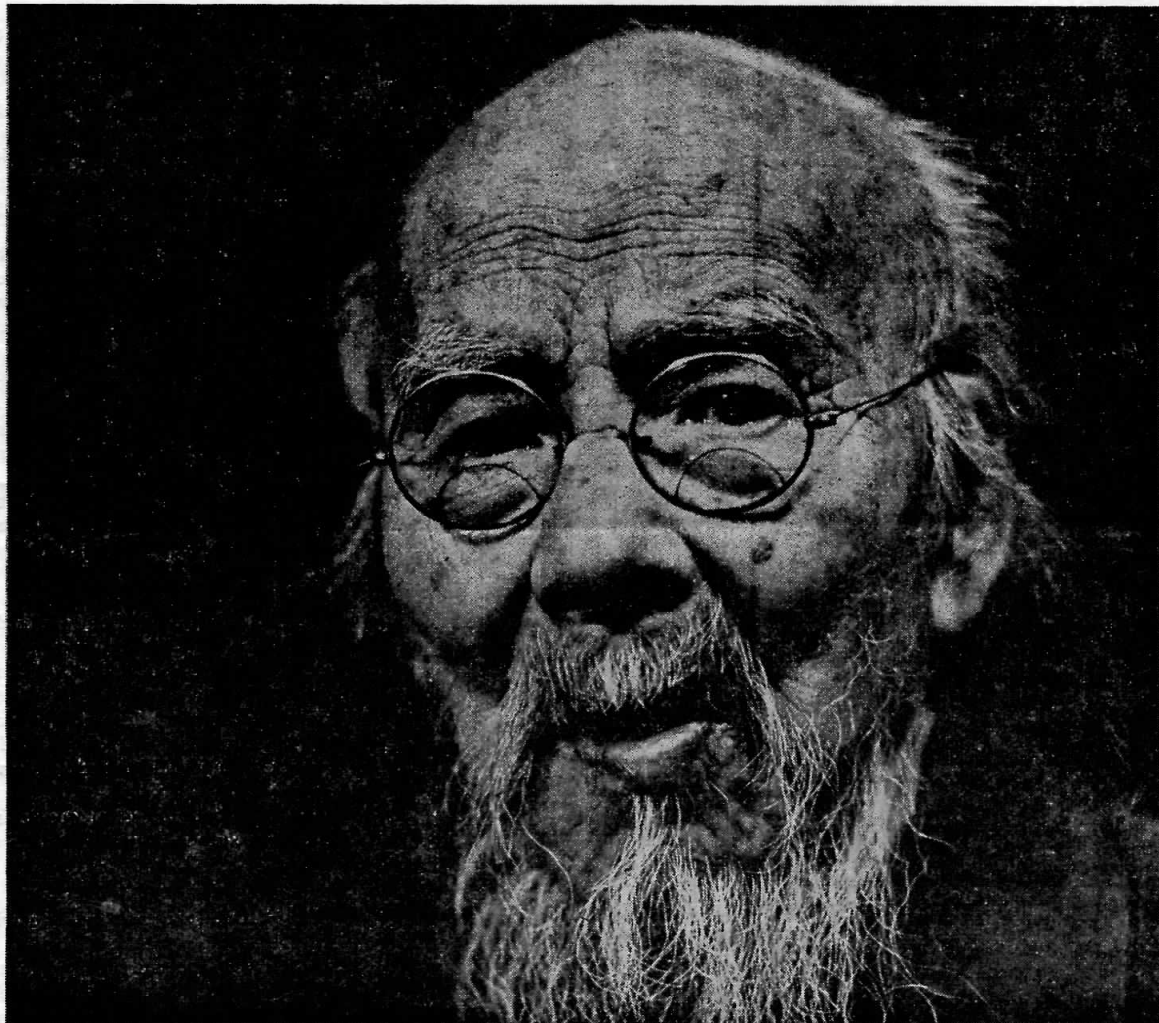
Nine lectures including China before 1949; Social and Economic Developments since 1949; the Cultural Revolution; Mao Tse-tung—his contribution to philosophy, social and political science; China's foreign policy; Hong Kong.

Fees: SACU members £7 0s 0d; Student members £5 15s 0d; non-members £7 15s 0d.

A deposit of £1 (non-returnable) paid now will assure you of an interesting and worthwhile weekend.

'The invaluable lessons at the Phillips House School . . . put my ideas and knowledge about China on quite a new level. Not only the very lucid and comprehensive series of lectures, but also the wide-ranging discussions introduced me to new facets of the Chinese scene, her problems, her aspiration and the determination of the Chinese people and leadership to make life and conditions as ideal as possible.'

— A comment on the last Dinton School.



Chi Pai-Shih, most celebrated national painter of this century

Shanghai - a new route on the Air France world network

The new Air France weekly service to Shanghai, flown by Boeing Jet Intercontinental, gives businessmen, exporters, diplomats and official travellers fast, direct access to the heart of industrial areas. The flight leaves Orly, Paris at 11 a.m. on Mondays and the Boeing reaches Shanghai on Tuesdays at 3.20 p.m. The return flight departs Shanghai on Tuesdays at 6.20 p.m. and arrives at Orly at 9.30 a.m. Wednesday. London-Shanghai jet economy return fare is £395.4.0. (1st class return £676.8.0.).

Air France is the first West European airline to be granted a route to Shanghai, and the new service brings to six the total number of flights a week by the company to the Far East. Countries served by Air France include Iran, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, the Phillipines,

Japan - and now the People's Republic of China. Destination in many of these countries may be used as stop-over points on your journey to Shanghai. Full details can be obtained from your Travel Agent or nearest Air France office,

à votre service

**AIR
FRANCE**

THE WORLD'S LARGEST AIR NETWORK

AIR FRANCE, 158 NEW BOND STREET, W.1. GRO 9030
Birmingham CEN 9251/4 - Bristol Lutsgate A'p'l. 444 - Manchester DEA 7831/5 - Glasgow CEN 8054/5/6 - Dublin 778073

