



THE WORLD
BELONGS TO ALL

天下為公

By Liao Hung-Ying
and Derek Bryan

The title is an ancient Confucian saying:
Tiān xià wèi gōng
The World Belongs To All

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About The Pamphlet

These letters were written by Liao Hung-Ying (pronounced Leeow Hoong-Ying) and her English husband, Derek Bryan, after they had revisited China in 1959.

Liao Hung-Ying taught chemistry in West China Union University in Chengtu where our family lived for many years. We became close friends in 1958 when I visited London where the Bryans now live, since his retirement from the British Foreign Service in China. They made tape recordings for me after their trip and a clamor from my friends for more of their stories brought this pamphlet into being.

Its unique feature is that Liao Hung-Ying deals exclusively with her conversations with relatives and travelling acquaintances in China in 1959. She has given us an opportunity to come close to the average citizen in her native country and especially to see life through the eyes of the new woman. For contrast, at the end, we have Derek Bryan's reflections on the attitudes of people in England to China and the Chinese attitude to 'politics'.

To keep the price of the pamphlet down to bare costs, it has been privately published in Toronto by friends of the Bryans and it is a pleasure for me to handle the orders on this continent. The best advertising is to see the pamphlet itself and I hope that many who have lived in China, as well as the many more who have not, will send it out by the score to those who may return payment or may only read it with interest. Its wide circulation can be a small but useful factor in furthering that friendship among all peoples which must be the firm basis for enduring peace.

Muriel J. Brown

MURIEL J. BROWN

ST. MARYS, ONTARIO, CANADA

CHINESE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN RELATIONS

Background to the Letters

In the eighteen months since we revisited China tremendous advances have been made in technical innovation and in education. Much of the back-breaking work of rice-transplanting has been taken over now by simple machines, designed and made by the peasants or with the help of university teachers and students who have been working for part of the year on the farms. Many villages which in 1959 were still burning vegetable oil in primitive wick burners now have electric lights and are milling their grain by electric, water or wind power, instead of by the toil of their own muscles. These are only two examples from a long list.

Housewives in cities and towns have organised community service centres, nursery schools and public dining-halls. Having freed themselves from dawn to dusk domestic drudgery, they have started workshops and even small factories. And they are now attending regular adult education classes as well as technical classes in connection with their work. Thus they are making an important contribution to the total national construction effort.

In many places these service centres, nursery schools, dining-halls and workshops have already been integrated into the large, organic unit of an urban People's Commune, whose members run their own administration and provide themselves with a noteworthy variety of social services and amenities. The differences between rich streets and poor streets, and between different social strata have disappeared. 'We', 'You' and 'They' are one and the same.

These letters show the attitudes and thinking of ordinary men and women. The quality of any society depends, ultimately, on the subjective and conscientious efforts of its individual members, and on the creative processes of their life and work as a community. Of course, not everywhere in China is as

advanced as just described above. Many pockets of backwardness still exist. But it is not these that are significant, nor are they static.

It is now a commonplace that China is, or soon will be, one of the great powers in the world. My own observation of ordinary people in China certainly gives me the conviction that she will be, and perhaps is already, one of the greatest nations, in a cultural and spiritual sense (yes, I mean spiritual, though not religious).

A Universe in Harmony

In every field of national life the Chinese, who have a very strong sense of their long and continuous history, are conscious of the greatness of the past and determined to revive and further develop their heritage. Many people in the West are familiar with some of China's contributions to the world, such as paper-making, printing, silk, porcelain, landscape gardening, and poetry. Less well-known, except to sinologists, but of supreme importance in shaping the people's fundamental outlook, albeit unspoken and even sub-conscious, is the ancient idea of a Universe in Harmony. Now, the Chinese people are not only conscious of this noble historical aspiration, they have been striving for its realisation—harmony in the family, in the community and between different peoples and nations.

Harmony demands cooperation instead of competition. The present-day Chinese leaders have consistently kept in close touch with the people. For thousands of years the Chinese have held the idea that the Emperor ruled with the mandate of Heaven for the well-being of the world under heaven. If and when the ruling Emperor failed in his mission, the people had the right to rebel and overthrow his dynasty. Marx-Leninism has not only fitted in well with this ancient Chinese ideology, but has also resurrected it from the neglect of a cen-

tury and more. It has done this through its ever-vigilant "mass line". that is, the leaders work with the ordinary people and learn from their goodness and wisdom, and in turn guide their onward movement towards a fuller life, the life of cooperation for the creation of a universe of harmony.

Human Relationships

About eight years ago I asked William Sewell, formerly Professor of Chemistry at the West China Union University in Chengtu, what he thought would be China's special contribution to the world. His reply, which expresses the deepest insight both into Chinese history and into the real nature of China under the People's Government, was that it would be in human relationships. We hope these letters will help our friends to share this insight and perhaps stimulate them to find out more for themselves about China and the Chinese people.

I ought to explain why I've written only about my own relatives or people whom I met while travelling to and from my home in Fukien. The reasons are simple: (a) being from the same province, I could hardly misunderstand

or misinterpret their words, meaning or even unspoken intentions; and (b) because of its geographical position, my part of Fukien is one of the most backward areas in China. It is far from any city or route visited by people from other provinces, let alone foreigners. The people I met, travelled with and talked to are completely ordinary common people, whose lives and outlooks have not been touched by modern industry and urban sophistication.

Changes in thinking and beliefs can move mountains, but they do not take place in a vacuum; they have their historical basis. Those people who claim to assess the results of a revolution without setting it against its historical background only deceive themselves, and for a time others. My relatives, and the people I talked to on my journeys are still very backward compared with people in other parts of China, but, even so, any of them can argue, and demonstrate, and convince you that the People's Government is **their** government, that its mistakes are their own mistakes and that they themselves can change them. Their support of their government is complete. L.H-Y.



A modern paper-cut, folk art handed down for centuries, using ancient Buddhist symbols.

MY CHENGTU RELATIVES

Letter to English College Friends I.

Dear Innes and Joyce,

It is good of you to have remembered and asked about the nephew I was responsible for bringing up and for whose education I had such long years of real hardship and worries. We saw him and his family and spent two evenings with them in Chengtu. He is a lecturer in anatomy in the Szechwan Medical College which has grown to four thousand students from the few hundred in 1952. He is enthusiastic about his work, but I am not going to write about that. What is exciting to us is his family, all the more exciting because they are not in any way unique but one of the millions whose lives have been radically changed.

Second Elder Sister-in-Law

There are five living in the home now: my nephew and his wife and two small children and his mother, the widow of my second elder brother, and so she is my Second Elder Sister-in-Law. I must tell you about her first. And I must remind you that in China we have precise terminology for family relations. Whenever I hear English people talking about 'my cousin' my mind feels at a loss!

Second Elder Sister-in-law was brought as a baby to our home and grew up there as my brother's future bride. She spent those years in untold misery because my brother did not like her, regarding her as stupid. When they were grown up, he had to go through the wedding ceremony in obedience to our parents. They had one boy who died and this anatomy lecturer is their second son. My brother then thought he had accomplished his filial duties. But divorce in a highly respected Confucian family was out of the question, so my brother took the only course open to him — he left home. He went to Malaya to teach and he asked me to be responsible for his son's upbringing. This brother had been largely responsible for my education, not in the sense of paying school fees but in actual teaching at home. He taught me algebra, simple astronomy and classical Chinese

very early, but I enjoyed them. In the mission school which I attended there was a Bible lesson every day and this brother, being an atheist, confiscated copy after copy of the Bible given to me by the School, until I gave up taking it home. I would do the necessary Bible homework after school before one of my brothers fetched me home.

Second Elder Sister-in-Law was illiterate, of course, and did house-work all day long and all her life. In her younger days she never travelled anywhere except from sheer necessity and with someone to look after her. At that time it was too dangerous for a woman to travel alone. However, in 1954, when her daughter-in-law was expecting her first baby, Second Elder Sister-in-Law travelled from Changting, our old home town in Fukien Province, southeast China, a thousand miles by bus, train and steamer. This would not have been believed possible in her youth. Indeed, this single event is so full of significance that it makes me want to write a book about her past and present life; it would be a miniature Chinese social history before and after *Liberation* in 1949. (I underline that word because the revolution which culminated in the establishment of the People's Government precisely means liberation for us, the Chinese people, and in the fullest sense of the word.)

Today Second Elder Sister-in-Law is obviously as happy as she is busy. She is really the head of the family, as both her son and his wife are absorbed in their jobs and let Granny run the house as she likes, with the help of a family friend, an 'aunt' from our home town who had gone to Chengtu to visit them and had decided to stay longer.

Wen Li-yang

My niece-in-law, Wen Li-yang, is an elected deputy head of one of the three District Governments in Chengtu, a city with a population of over a million. She is a salaried full-time worker. When we visited there Wen Li-yang was actually

working for a couple of months in a small factory, making brushes for calligraphy and painting. The reason, as she put it, is: "By doing manual work side by side with other workers, we learn from their good qualities and understand their needs and views. They have such a lot to teach us government workers. This is the best way to keep us from getting into bureaucratic habits and to help us always to improve our democratic government." Every year Wen Li-yang spends at least one-tenth of her time on some kind of manual work, industrial or farming, or in some public service establishment.

Wen Li-yang got leave of absence for a whole day to take me about the city and call on some of our old friends. There were so many changes in the city that I could hardly get my bearings. Wide boulevards and modern public buildings had altered the scene from former days.

I asked my niece-in-law whether there were any government workers who would go to the farms or factories but not really work as expected. Her answer was: "I won't say absolutely none, but the workers and peasants have their eyes open and can see through us. If we are not honest in our intention or effort, sooner or later they will criticise us publicly. We shall be corrected and if we don't reform we shall not be re-elected at the next election. It is all very simple really, that is, if you trust the ordinary people. This is the only way to rally the whole people of our country to build socialism. There is no other way; no government ever succeeds without trusting the people and enjoying their trust in turn."

What Is Democracy?

I gave my niece instance after instance to show that in England, and in other Western countries to different degrees, people believed they had the best democratic system of government in the world. For instance, they say that they can write to the press and criticise their government and hold public demonstrations against government policies but

that people in China have no freedom to do these things. Her comment was, "O yes, we know about that. It is the only way the people in those countries can express their views, because they, the ordinary people, do not take part in government affairs beyond casting their vote at elections. And those elected do not always have a large majority. After being elected the Members of Parliament do not have to vote according to the wish of the people. Moreover, the government can carry out policies and measures with a tiny majority of the members present and sometimes even without their knowledge. You cannot tell us that this is real democracy, can you? Do the ordinary people hold meetings and discuss about government affairs as we do?"

Wen Li-yang agreed that public demonstrations had their value, but not enough, and she was not convinced that the British people had as much freedom of the press as claimed. I admitted that our own experience in the last eight years justified her doubts.

This niece-in-law is from a rich, land-owning and merchant family in Szechwan Province. While she was studying philosophy and social science in the university before the Liberation, her trunk was full of silk and satin dresses and if she had wanted to play about with her money instead of studying, the examiners, or some of them, would still have given her good marks, because of her father's economic and social position. She and my nephew became friends and he helped her to open her eyes and see the social injustices, the sufferings of the majority of the students from poverty and utter rottenness of the government. When we first knew her in 1948 she had already discarded her fineries and had become a serious student, conscious of the part she could play in helping to bring about the revolutionary changes which the country needed.

Chiu Hua

When we visited Chengtu, Chiu Hua, their five-year-old son, a big child for his age, was in a boarding kindergarten in another part of the city. We were there

during the middle of the week, so we insisted that they should not upset his routine by fetching him out to see us.

However, one afternoon as our car passed the gate of the school, Derek saw the name. We walked in and asked, with apology and explanation, if we could see our great-nephew. The young head teacher, a most warm and attractive woman, said they had no rigid rules and the children were used to receiving unexpected relatives. She called Chiu Hua and showed us round. We were much impressed by the teachers and the whole atmosphere. The children were lively and healthy. When we told the head teacher that we were already late for our next engagement, the traditional mid-autumn festival dinner at our nephew's, she instantly suggested that we could take the boy with us. We said no, we would not like to upset his routine, though I was overjoyed at her observation and quick decision.

His own teacher said if we could wait for a few minutes she would get a change of clothes for us to take for the night and next morning. I said we couldn't wait and we got into the car, putting Chiu Hua between us. He was a bit shy at first, to be between a great aunt and a foreign great uncle, both of whom he had never seen before, but soon he responded and we talked the whole way to his home. Actually, we were not complete strangers to him. Our photographs hung in their living-room and for weeks they had talked about our visit, though we had been too busy travelling to be able to tell them the exact date of arrival.

Nursery School or Clan Family?

During the evening we talked a lot about Chiu Hua, who had been playing with the red London bus which we had just given him, until it was time to go to bed. I must mention that during dinner a messenger from the Kindergarten came with a change of clothes for him. His mother said it was unnecessary, as there were plenty of clothes at home. Grandmother said the Kindergarten was always very thoughtful. Later, the story

of the family attitudes to the school was discussed.

The parents had always wanted to put him into a nursery school, for the good of the whole family, they thought. Grandmother was absolutely against this, because she could not part with her only grandchild, and a boy at that, and she could not believe that other people could be so kind to him as herself. The parents gave in. However, the doctor-father and the old-fashioned, illiterate grandmother sometimes had diametrically opposed ideas about child-care. For instance, the father said the child should have plenty of protein food but Grandmother, having lived in semi-starvation and being ignorant of any scientific knowledge, still regarded it as a virtue for children to eat rice mainly, with some vegetables only to help it down.

The deciding issue was that the boy was not eating proper meals, not gaining weight as he should and was becoming more and more unruly. In short, he was absolutely spoilt by Granny. So, in spite of her unwillingness, they sent Chiu Hua to a nursery school, at first as a day boy and then as a weekly boarder. Soon he made rapid all-round improvement which convinced even Grandmother that the teachers were not only as kind to the children as their own families but that they were trained for the job, and, most important of all, the children would grow up together with the consciousness of mutual needs and co-operation and thus develop the sense of social responsibility.

Joyce, I can almost see you bursting to ask what his mother was doing for him, and saying that surely it was her instinct, interest and duty to look after her own child. As a Chinese I can only answer yes, and no. To explain this well one would have to go into China's social history—the centuries-old clan-family system and the Confucian concept of filial piety. One would also have to go into the political, social, economic and psychological aspects of the Liberated women since 1949. I can only mention them briefly.

In the first place, please remember our traditional clan-family system. A household might contain as many as fifty individuals under one head (the grandfather or the eldest uncle, the grandmother or the eldest aunt being the head on the domestic side) and all eating from one huge kitchen. All the members of the family belonged to the oldest, in the sense that they were *their* sons, daughters-in-law, grandsons and granddaughters-in-law. All the daughters and granddaughters had been married off young, as a rule. And in well-to-do families, you could be sure, there would be many concubines and their children. In such a household, babies and children were the proud possession, primarily of the grandparents, and secondly of the whole clan family. Traditional virtue demanded that uncles and aunts should treat all the children alike and should not show any more attention or favour to their own children than to others of the clan. The mothers were, of course, far too busy to cuddle their own babies and children, even if they had the courage to defy social conventions. They had to take turns in doing all the housework, waiting upon the old, sewing, mending and seeing to all the social obligations, for example, the presents to be given on the occasion of a wedding, the birth of a boy or a funeral. In the case of demoralized rich families, the mothers spent most of their time on mahjong, quarrelling or opium smoking and left their children to the care of the servants, with grandparents as the most authoritative supervisors.

At the death of the grandparents the eldest member of the next generation automatically assumed the headship; and this couple, the eldest uncle and aunt, had more claim to demonstrate affection to the children than their own parents. This same relationship still holds even now in my own clan family, although my nephews do not live under the same roof as their elders.

In the second place—coming back to the situation in my own family in Chengtu—Wen Li-yang, my niece-in-law, is one of the new type of daughter-in-

law-wife-and-mother, and since 1949 the number of women like her is increasing to millions. Since Liberation they have been given equal status with men in political, social and economic fields. For thousands of years they had been the inferior sex and nobody of any importance until they became grandmothers. Now they are exerting themselves to enjoy their new status and they are proving fully their wisdom, ability and worth as public servants at all levels, from the village to the Central Government, in industry, agriculture, commerce, education, medicine, nursing, engineering and every other profession and public service. They are blossoming out and it is utterly unthinkable for them to go back to the life of former days. To them the phrase 'women's place is in the home' is not different from Hitler's slogan: 'Kinder, Kirche und Kuche'—that is, part of Nazism. All these women of the new type want to go out and share the exciting work being done by men. They want to see the domestic chores socialized and eventually mechanized.

What Is Best For The Children?

In the third place, Chinese parents today are convinced that it is better for the children themselves to be brought up in community with other children and under the trained 'aunties'. The Western idea and practice of almost exclusive parents-children and mother-baby relationships, the ideas of insecurity, jealousy or emotional instability are totally foreign to us Chinese. I hope that some of the Western social psychologists will try to study this Chinese system; and it would be interesting to see what they would find out.

For my part, as a layman, I can only judge from my own experience, which is this: the way children are brought up in China is one of the aspects of Chinese national life which have no tendency to cause the development of social misfits and delinquents. This method of education is rapidly spreading and the result is already obvious everywhere and at every level.

—Hung-Ying

MY FUKIEN RELATIVES

Letter to English College Friends II.

Dear Innes and Joyce,

In my former letter I wrote of my Chengtu relatives. Now I want to take you to my old home in the Southeast. I will not attempt to describe the breath-taking beauty of the landscape. Nor will I go into the backwardness in application of science to daily life, nor elaborate on the political and social changes of the last ten years. I cannot even give you a rounded picture of my Fukien family, as there are over forty members. I will only attempt to tell you about two nieces, one married and one not yet.

They are both daughters of my Third Elder Brother and Sister-in-law, now a widow. Ming-Chen, the older niece, had only a few years' schooling before her parents married her off in her early teens and from that time she had to perform all the duties of a daughter-in-law in a household of twenty-one people. In 1953 social pressure from friends and neighbors who had already stepped out into the new life that came with the Liberation led her to join one of the many evening classes started since 1949, and she went four evenings a week. She was good, and year after year won the title of Model Student and prizes.

In 1958 their neighbourhood committee established ten public dining-halls and she was elected a member of the management committee for her dining-hall. Not everyone was satisfied with the dining-hall and after a general meeting they decided to close it. I was curious to know why it had failed and whether it would be started again. Ming-Chen and some other young people who were listening to our conversation replied in chorus that the dining-hall failed because they had not had enough experience to run it well, and also because there was not enough demand. When more and more women had outside jobs they would demand the convenience of public dining-halls, nursery schools and kindergartens.

Social institutions never grow out of a vacuum, they explained to me, but would flourish when the need for them was felt and expressed by the people themselves and through their own efforts. I then asked why this dining-hall got started in the first place. They replied that it was due to the enthusiasm of a few only. In this matter the neighbourhood committee had not acted according to the wish of all the people. They had learned a lesson and would never make the same mistake again.

I asked how they would be sure of finding out the demand and the needs. "People will talk, talk and talk," they said and laughed at my ignorance and backwardness. "You forget, Seventh Aunt," my niece gently chided, "we have been liberated for ten years and in these years the thinking of people in China has advanced more than in a hundred or even a thousand years in the past."

This niece, Ming-Chen, had three sons and longed to put her youngest into a kindergarten so she could go out and get a part-time job. "The more goods we can produce," she said "the more we'll have to enjoy. The more our daily chores are socialised the more time we'll have for education and culture. And I miss the social life we had in the public dining-hall."

This conversation took place over a year ago; their letters now tell how these things are happening. Ming-Chen's husband works in the agricultural department of the local People's Bank. He is hardly ever home but travels from village to village working in the communes and studying their needs for government assistance in capital investment or relief in case of some natural calamity. When I was in Fukien in 1959 he was far away attending a special training course. I was sorry to miss him but he writes to us now and then.

Ming-Li

My younger niece, Ming-Li, aged about twenty-one, was engaged to be married in childhood but was luckily too young

to be married before the time of Liberation. Under the Marriage Law of 1950 no one can be forced to marry against her own choice. Under the new Constitution passed by the People's Congress in 1954 my niece also gained the right to have education and so, after primary school, she went on to a teachers' training college in a big city down river. The education was free, so her parents could not keep her at home in the name of poverty as they had done in the case of the older daughter.

Ming-Li is working in a rural People's Commune, training peasant women and girls to be teachers in nursery school, kindergarten and primary school. She got leave for a few days to be with me. I found her full of enthusiasm about her work. Though we are a generation apart, she and I found deep friendship with each other. We talked and talked whenever I was free from conversations with the other people who were in the house or dropped in for a chat.

This young niece is a symbol of the new generation which, having tasted the life before Liberation, understands the old but, being educated in the new system, is clear-headed, incorruptibly honest, fearlessly courageous and full of optimism and confidence. Above all, nothing is ever too much for this new generation if it is for serving the people, building socialism and establishing a new world order of peace.

All my life I have seldom enjoyed talking to anyone as much as to this niece. With her there were no inhibitions, and no ideological barriers. We spoke the same language. (How often even parents and children do not speak the same language!)

Problems of Former Days

As Ming-Li talked with me about the life of her Commune my mind wandered back to my own past experiences in pre-Liberation days.

The vast interior of China, containing about eighty-five percent of the whole population, year after year lost almost

all the young men and women who had the opportunity of obtaining education in the cities, including the tens of thousands who had studied in the West and Japan. With few exceptions they never went home again to work in the backward hinterland which had no modern conveniences, entertainment or cultural stimulus. They could not go back to the smell of farm manure and the revolting sight of the peasants, emaciated, diseased and ignorant.

This situation was one of the biggest headaches of the missionaries working in the interior. They would send the brightest ones among the children in their schools for further education in the cities, hoping that they would come back after graduation to help run the mission schools, hospitals and churches. Some did go back but many stayed away, for higher pay, better social amenities or from a sincere belief that with their better training they could serve their country better by working in the cities.

These factors led to many unpleasant relationships between the benefactor-missionaries and their home boards on the one hand and the Chinese who had received the help and who now appeared ungrateful on the other. One former colleague of mine, a Ph.D. from an American university and an earnest church member, said that he would not mind going back to teach in his own province, which had one university and two colleges of university standing, if he could see an American film once a week, or even once a fortnight, and if he could buy coffee and butter (imported in those days) more cheaply for his family.

Not all the sons and daughters from the interior forgot about the importance and the urgency of improving the lot of the peasants as one of the many ways of changing "the sick man of Asia" into a modern nation. Many felt a guilty conscience. A few did try to go back and work but they asked "What can we do in the face of overwhelming and insurmountable difficulties?" They saw numerous wrongs and had as many theories of their own for righting them. None of

these worked, and so, after a few years, the disheartened 'returned students' threw in their hands, convinced that it was utterly hopeless, and they went away again, to the coastal cities or abroad, this time for good.

Mao Tse-tung and the Peasants

There are a number of books on Chinese peasants, written by well-known scholars, such as Professor R. H. Tawney and Fei Hsiao-tung, which have already become classics and are found in public libraries in the West. Most important of all the books dealing with problems of the peasants of China are those by Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of our People's Government till 1959 and still Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. He was the first Chinese who, from a peasant family upbringing, after receiving a city education and studying Marx-Leninism, went back to live and work among the peasants in the countryside. He studied their problems, their needs, their ways and their thoughts systematically and whole-heartedly, and completely identified his interests and aspirations with those of the peasants.

Mao Tse-tung began to do this in the middle twenties and from that time onward the Chinese peasants, under his guidance, have made history which has periodically shaken the world. To us Chinese this is a history of uninterrupted revolution, a history of countless miracles. What thousands and tens of thousands of highly educated Chinese, and many Western scholars including League of Nations Commissions, failed to achieve, the Chinese peasants have accomplished. The scholars failed even to touch the fringe of the problems they set out to solve but the peasants have solved them in a series of movements: Land Reform, followed by the formation of Mutual Aid Groups which organized themselves into Co-operatives, reorganized into a higher type with common ownership of the means of production and finally merged large areas into the still more productive stage of People's Communes, with all-round industrial,

educational and cultural development, and self-government.

In this process the peasants have not only transformed their rural society; they are also transforming nature and their own human nature. This is why I have used the word miracle. There is no other word in the dictionary adequate to convey the magnitude, the depth and the quality of the transformations which have taken place, are still going on, and will continue, in the new Chinese society. This is why we regard Mao Tse-tung as one of the greatest geniuses in the whole history of man and why we love him deeply and follow his guidance.

A Modern Young Woman

To come back to my unmarried niece in Fukien. I asked her whether she would not like to get a job in the city. "Why should I?" she asked, with a look of surprise. "My work is extremely interesting and inspiring and I would not want to change it for anything." I then said that perhaps she might want to do so after a few years. She looked thoughtful and said, "As the work grows, my job will be more and more interesting. Of course, I won't say that I shall never want to go anywhere else or get further training. This sort of question cannot be thought out in a vacuum. If the situation changes and the people discuss and say that I ought to have a change and that it would be good all round, then I will go gladly."

My mind once again wandered away, and this time into the future. It was not a picture totally strange to me. Indeed, I could almost see the future unfolding in two years or five, ten, fifteen years' time. I did not succeed in suppressing the mixture of feelings inside me,—the joy for them and sadness for myself that I was not able to participate in their creative work. My niece said, "Seventh Aunt, don't feel so. I'm sure you and Uncle are doing valuable work for world peace. No matter in which country we are, we can work for international friendship and peace. Your work is as important for peace as ours is for building socialism, which also is for peace."

These words, so familiar as to sound hollow at times during my last eight years of living in England, now suddenly sounded solid and powerfully compelling.

Finally, I asked Ming-Li about her own affairs, that is, her engagement which was arranged before the new status of women was established. She replied that she had not really thought about it. They could not get married; after all, they did not know each other. If she had someone else she wanted to marry she would bring up the matter in her organization, or he could bring up the matter in his working group. In reality, they both were free because they had been engaged by their parents.

I thought how lucky they were, so easy in organizing their own lives and so full of common sense. And then my mind quickly ran through various cases that I had known,—those who had left home to escape from arranged marriages, concubines, suicides and life-long suffering, among others.

At parting my niece said to me, "Don't worry about my affairs; it is such a small matter. There is nothing that we Chinese cannot solve together. I know this kind of thing used to mean terrible suffering for the young people in the past, because they had no one to help them. Now we share our problems in our groups and discuss and solve them together. Even two brains are better than one, but we have all the brains in our group working together and we have learned to trust our collective wisdom." Her words brought to mind what my niece-in-law in Chengtu had said: "It is all very simple really, if you trust the ordinary people."

Third Elder Sister-in-Law

My Third Sister-in-law, that is, the mother of these two nieces I've been writing about, lived with her older son, his wife and baby. This niece-in-law of mine was one of the very few women of her age among those I had come across who were still illiterate. She carried her baby in her arms nearly all the time. I

was really shocked and told them so and I said that they had not been liberated yet in this matter.

I asked my nephew why he had not made his wife go to one of the classes to learn to read and write and acquire some general knowledge. He said she was stubborn and would not go. I said I was surprised that he could not make his own wife study. He replied, "No, under the Peoples' Government we cannot force even our own wives to do things against their own wishes." However, he assured me that I must not worry and that she would go later; when more and more women had joined classes, social pressure would make her go. As I write this I am wondering what this niece-in-law will be like in two or three years' time.

Wage and Free Supply

My sister-in-law wanted to make some local delicacies for me for supper. I told her that I was not feeling too well and could not possibly eat anything extra rich, but this did not stop her. The niece-in-law picked up a basket and started to go out. I thought she was going to buy something and almost instinctively asked, "How about money?"

The background of my reaction in this incident is that as soon as I had started earning I had shared my salary with my family. Their poverty and the problem of schooling for the nephews and nieces had been a heavy burden on my mind, right up till Liberation. A few months after Liberation my nephew, then a student in the former Central University in Nanking, wrote to us acknowledging receipt of some money and said, "Do not send any more. The new Government provides everything, including pocket money. Use your money for some other more urgent needs."

And so now, Third Sister-in-law replied to my query by explaining that they did not need money; my niece was only going to get things from the Commune store and one only had to leave one's name and the name and quantity of the goods to be put down in the book. I

suddenly got very excited as if something most extraordinary had happened. Of course, Derek and I knew all about the free supply plus wage system in the communes, but learning from reading is only theoretical. Seeing it happen, especially unprepared, provided the emotional impact. So we spent the next hour or so talking about the payment system in the Communes.

I was overjoyed to be with people actually enjoying this life. But my niece said, "Oh, this is only the beginning of 'to each according to his work'. You must come back later and see us enjoying 'to each according to his need'. It won't be long."

I corrected her by pointing out that what they were receiving free already belonged to the second stage. She agreed and said that entering the first stage or the transition to the second stage was not something to be done by one act or brought about at any one time. The condition at any stage would depend on the *amount of goods produced*. Basic food was sufficient already and so it could be distributed free, but clothes were not yet in abundant supply and so people had to buy them.

But this was not the whole story, she said. Abundant supply was only the first condition. The second condition was the raising of the people's educational, moral and spiritual level. I told them that, in the various cities we had visited and in the journeys I had taken, I had seen a high moral standard and outlook among ordinary people. She said, "Still it is not high enough," and gave an illustration from the question of feeding animals.

Their own family of three adults and one baby had two small pigs, three angora rabbits and several hens. The Government encouraged every family to keep some animals, as well as to engage in large-scale animal husbandry and poultry farming, in order to improve the diet and health of the nation. But there were a few people in the commune who would feed the animals with rice instead of trying to find other foodstuffs and this

was both a moral and an educational question. "That is why we are all working hard in our production, which includes educational work," my niece explained. "The speedier and more economically we are able to raise the quantity and quality of production, the sooner shall we enjoy fully socialist life and sooner transform it into communist life." Again they all pressed me to come back and see them again before too many years; otherwise I would not recognize anything in these villages or any of the peasants.

When I was leaving this branch of my clan-family to take the five day journey back to Peking, they all came to the bus station. It was early in the morning and the sun was not too warm yet. The hills on one side of the valley were in sunshine and the young trees on the formerly barren red earth seemed to have a peculiar power to draw me close to them. There were few people about the village streets but more people walking about the fields with various farm implements on their shoulders or under their arms. I tried hard to take in the picture, hoping to keep a few landmarks in my mind's eye, as something extremely precious, memories of this place which I had known so well in my youth.

New Personal Relationships

During the seven hours' ride in the bus, new impressions from talks with fellow travellers crowded into my mind, almost pushing out the vivid impressions garnered in my Fukien home setting. One big surprise I had had on this trip was the happy relationship between the three generations: my eldest brother and his wife with their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren; my second sister-in-law with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren; and my third sister-in-law with her son, daughter-in-law and baby.

Under the traditional patriarchal family the mother's feelings were mixed. "When my son gets married," they used to say, "I gain a pair of hands to help in the house and the happiness of my grandchildren, especially grandsons, but

I lose my son's affection." In the unending quarrels and conflicts between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the son usually pretended to scold his wife in public but at the same time, filial

piety notwithstanding, inevitably felt alienated from his mother. The new relationship is one of harmony, mutual dependence and mutual care.

—Hung-Ying



A city nursery school.

LONG TERM PLANS AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Letter to an English Scientist and His Wife

Dear Edna and John:

I am not going to write to you about scientists, their work, and the general technological advances, as I had planned, because I am not sufficiently qualified and I did not see enough of them. My chief interest was to talk to the ordinary people in the street and to try and find out about their ideas and attitudes towards some of the things I happened to see in my travels.

As I try to begin, I suddenly recall a letter about 1954 from a medical friend in Glasgow who also had an Oxford classics degree. She had been closely associated with the organization which supported a missionary medical school in Shenyang (Mukden) in north-east China. I had written to her about the increase in medical students since Liberation. In her reply she said how glad she was, but also sorry because the standard must have been lowered. This is typical of many people's view in Britain and America.

Training for Service

On a very warm evening in late October I was strolling along the new wide dusty roads, lined with new buildings on both sides, in a mountainous valley near the border between two provinces. I got into conversation with a girl of eighteen who was training for hotel service. There were two new hotels; one could take one hundred guests and the other several hundred. A group of fifty boys and girls with books and notebooks under their arms and fountain-pens in their breast-pockets came out of a building and walked away in different directions towards their homes or hostels. I asked the hotel service trainee who they were, and she told me they were from shops, co-ops, and service establishments, and were doing a course of training in accountancy and elementary statistics. I asked more questions, and she explained

in her very simple, semi-peasant language. Unfortunately, I cannot reproduce its flavour in this rendering.

"The need for modern accounting is very urgent, because we have more and more organizations all the time; and to serve the people we must keep accurate and honest records and also make plans. In the past, when a man owned a shop, he did as he liked with his bookkeeping. The tax official did not care provided he was offered a bribe. If the shop belonged to a clan-family, the question would be which member was the better calculator and schemer. Now, shops and service establishments are mostly the property of the people; therefore their organization and management have to be scientific. Squeezing and falsehood are not permitted by the people. Planning is not based simply on profits but must be balanced between the amount of goods we can produce and the amount we need, and between our long-term needs and immediate needs."

Shoes or Water Conservancy?

I asked if she could give me an example. This was rather too much for her, and she said, "I don't know. My cultural level is very low. I started going to evening class to learn reading and writing only in 1954. During the day I had to help Mother in the house. From 1956 onwards I was in primary school, and this summer I graduated from lower primary. Now I am still going to classes, and will go on with them from year to year, when I am working. But I think I can answer your question in this way:

"Supposing in our street 200 more pairs of cotton shoes are needed this year than last, because more people have the money to buy them than ever before. Actually, we need many more, but we buy those rubber-soled ones made by factories in the cities. If one woman could spare the time to make three pairs it would take 60-70 women to make the lot, and shoes are only one item. We have money to buy many other things

as well, and some people have to make them, either in our local co-ops or in the cities. *But the most urgent need of all is water conservancy, irrigation and electricity.* Look at the hills and mountains around; we suffered either from torrential rain and floods or from drought almost every year in the past. If we can't solve this problem we won't be able to solve any other problem. We need all the men and women to help in this urgent task of water conservancy. So the shoemaking co-ops cannot just grab as many people as possible to make shoes. Some of us will have to go barefoot for another summer and nobody will complain; we had to go barefoot even in icy winter, in the past. We have to strike the best balance between two kinds of needs, irrigation and shoes, the long-term and the immediate."

I suddenly remembered that some of the children playing about in the garden in front of the railway station had no shoes. My thoughts now shuttled between the modern English mothers who let their children run about barefoot in the summer and the question of water conservancy which had tormented China for thousands of years, and whose importance compared with shoes was now being balanced up by a peasant-girl turned hotel-trainee. How inexpressibly exciting this world was, I thought, and felt I had learned my first lesson in the fundamental yet common-sense principles of economic planning.

The girl continued: "When a woman made shoes for her family there was no question of bookkeeping. Now the co-ops get material from Communes in the country or from stores in the town, and pay the women to make the different parts of the shoes and sell them to the public. The Commune has to save money to buy sewing-machines and expand the business. Therefore we need the more complicated and scientific accountability."

Meeting with a Soldier

You will hardly believe it, but since 1958 there is a labour shortage in China, very noticeable at all the stations. It was

extremely difficult to get a porter, and, in the interior, to get pedicabs. At one place I was in a queue waiting for a pedicab to get to the railway station. In front of me was a soldier; behind me a young woman with a lot of luggage, including a large bed-roll. I pushed her in front of me, as I thought, if necessary I could walk slowly to the station. When it was the soldier's turn he followed my example and swung the woman's luggage into the pedicab; she stepped on and sat down, greatly pleased. When the next pedicab came he took my arm to get me on board. The cabman—Comrade Cabman as we all call him—said, as neither of us had much luggage, he could take both of us. The soldier asked if I would mind; I was delighted. As he sat down, I saw the title of a thick book sticking out of his side pocket. It was a novel of which I vaguely remembered reading a review some months earlier, but I had completely forgotten what it was about.

On reaching the station I rushed to buy a ticket and find out the time of the next train, but the booking office was not yet open for it. The soldier had found two seats on one of the long benches in the large waiting-room. A girl in ordinary dress, but with an armband, "Station Service Staff", brought me a cup of hot water to drink. I looked round and saw that many passengers were helping themselves to the hot drinking water from a huge urn. The staff members obviously could tell which were strangers, and so brought the water to them.

The soldier probably would have talked to me, but seeing the big crowd waiting to get tickets I was a bit keyed up and anxious in case I could not get a sleeper, and he may have noticed my mood. Anyway, he began to read his novel. I felt ashamed of myself, and asked what it was. He told me the story as far as he had got, with comments, and added, "Do you know, the author is an industrial worker, who had hardly any education before Liberation. It is about his life in the past, and the life

of the workers in his factory now." He told me more about the book and how good it was, but I was rather tired and did not take it all in. I asked him whether he was a literary worker in one of the forces. He told me that they in the forces had many groups for creative activities, such as painting, music and drama, as well as writing.

When the booking-office opened, he wanted to give me his book as a memento. I said I should have too much to carry, and produced my own books, including a new reprint of the *Historical Record*, written about 100 B.C. He looked at this and said he had heard about it at lectures but never read it, and added that he hadn't much education, as he began to learn only after joining the armed forces. I pointed to my grey hairs and told him that long before he reached my age he would be a writer, a scientist, and an engineer, as well as a defender of socialism and peace. I said exactly what I meant, expressing the plain and simple fact that millions and millions of ordinary people like this soldier who began to read and write only after 1949 are now doing creative literary, scientific and artistic work all over China.

Travelling Companions

The train had passed the mountains and was entering the plain. My eyes had been straining to catch and, if possible, to retain all the fleeting images, but after turning for a moment to the lights inside the train I was suddenly night-blind. There was nothing on the mountains except darkness. I was now completely physically shut out of my own province, one of the most beautiful places in the world. I felt as if I had come to the end of my own life, but, aware of the wonders and greatness of the life being born continuously there and then, I turned inside to sit down before deciding whether to go to bed or to talk to fellow-passengers.

Then I noticed that in the immediately adjoining rows of bunks there were People's Liberation Army men, without any division or rank marks. My instinc-

tive reaction was the memory of our frightful fear of, and pity for, the soldiers before Liberation, but then I pitied myself because there had been such a gap in my experience, and I was partly alienated. It was not that I lacked rational understanding, but I had unexpected emotional reactions towards everyday scenes. People in China mingled with members of the armed forces as with any other groups, with no division of we, you, and they.

Four were playing cards; a group of four or five were discussing something, with many jokes and outbursts of laughter; one was making notes in a notebook; the rest were reading various weeklies: *Film*, *People's Literature*, *Science Newsletter*. I attached myself to the group discussing, but balancing on the narrow window-seat was too much of an effort, so I climbed up and listened to their conversation as I lay on my bunk. They were talking about anti-aircraft work, and how the peasants and fishermen and their families helped them to catch the men trained by American organisations, and smuggled in or parachute-dropped, to collect intelligence or engage in sabotage. The biggest outburst of laughter came when one of them asked what sort of thinking lay behind such deeds? I wanted to sit up and say that it was the thinking of the Dulleses, but I did not. They knew more than I. They were already engaged in socialist construction, which was for life, and therefore they would defeat those who were preparing for mass destruction. It is a struggle between the creative life and co-operative society, irrespective of colour and religion, on one side, and a competitive, commercial society on the other. The result is a foregone conclusion, and it is only a question of time.

In another train, when we were passing a place where there was fire and smoke, I asked a soldier whether it was a blast furnace. He replied yes, and gave me a fairly full description of such furnaces, including the raw material, chemical process, capacity of the one we had just passed, local uses of the pig-iron

produced, and its by-products, and the important role played by such village industries, owned and run by the People's Communes, in the overall economic development of the nation. He also told me about the village power stations now being built by the Communes all over the country. The contrast between the scientific knowledge of this peasant-turned-soldier and my own ignorance was such that I hadn't the courage to mention my twenty-five-year-old degree in chemistry.

I asked him where he went to school before Liberation. "School?" He looked astonished, as if I had mis-identified him as a thief or something! No, his father had died of T.B. when he was five. He used to follow his mother when she went to the hills to cut brushwood for sale in the town, so as to be able to bring up her three small children. As soon as he was strong enough to carry the bundles, he took over this job from his mother, whose health was failing. In 1949 Chiang Kai-shek's retreating troops caught him, along with many other men and boys, and made them carry the rice they had looted. He managed to escape while his captors were de-lousing themselves. (There was a roar of laughter from us all). For fear of being caught again, he had found his way to the People's Liberation Army, and had been attending classes ever since. He was going to study some branch of marine engineering.

Two Village Women

I got talking to two village women sitting opposite me in the same carriage. They were probably in their mid-forties, an age that, for people who had lived the hard life they had, was regarded as old. We passed a neglected-looking village shrine. I asked them if they knew of anyone still worshipping the images in these shrines and temples. They did not think there were any. "We had to worship them in the past, because we had so many illnesses, deaths, floods and droughts, and we were always hungry. Now we have enough to eat; we have

clinics and hospitals in the towns; we learn about hygiene, and with our own hands we are building irrigation works to prevent flood and drought and increase our crops. We don't waste any more money or time on burning candles and incense, or offering food and wine to the images—they were made by our village craftsmen any way, but somehow we never thought about this in those days!"

Then they gave me a lengthy talk on the question of soil erosion, afforestation, irrigation and so on. I do not think they could read much; they were probably still classified as illiterates. Obviously they had learned about this whole subject from their own participation in the work. Their talk was not at all fluent, rather disjointed and repetitive. But it was one of the best pieces of education I had ever had.

The Landlord's Wife

A distant relative of ours whom I call Biao-Sao (meaning Cousin-Elder-Sister-in-law), now in her forties, used to be a woman of leisure. Her husband was a landlord, and took an active part in banditry. After Liberation he was caught and imprisoned for three years, during which period he learned to use his hands and do useful things for society. He became a reformed character and was accepted as a member by the Commune where he lived. Biao-Sao is a member of the iron-smelting group and looked healthy, sturdy, and agile, not at all like the typical leisured woman in the past, sallow, frail, and slow-moving. I asked her how she liked doing physical work in a team outside her home, instead of being waited upon by a bought servant-girl (virtually a slave). Of course she found it hard at first, and it took her two years to get thoroughly used to it. "But I wouldn't go back to that life for anything now. Look at my arms!" She rolled up her sleeves to show me her muscles. I asked her whether she would like to be rich again and do exactly as she liked, and accumulate more and more wealth for their sons.

"Why, what for?" She emphatically and a little indignantly threw the question at me, as if I had insulted her intelligence. "Our sons don't need our property; what they need is education and training to build up the country. They get this in our Commune schools. When they are older (I hope they will be scientists) they will go to colleges. We don't have to worry about their education. After their training there will be many more jobs than there are people to fill them. I don't see what use private wealth can be to anyone when our country is still poor and backward. You can't really enjoy being rich unless everyone is rich; that is, we must make our country rich first. Only when the village water resources are found, and kept, can we irrigate our farms. When the country is developed and prosperous we shall be rich and enjoy comfort. Now we want to grow more and better crops and lighten our physical labour, so we need farm tools and machines, and more iron and steel. That is why I am taking part in iron production. We want to build our country into a rich, strong and socialist country; how can we do this except with our own labour? We want tractors to do the heavy work; we want electricity. Will these come from heaven? We have to work and learn to make them ourselves. That is why I hope that our sons will be scientists; we ourselves are too old to learn science now."

How many hours did she work every day? Eight, nine, or ten, with several breaks, depending on the season. Did she find it long? "Long? Nothing like the days when I used to sit at home with nothing to do and lie awake at night worrying about the children's father who was so often out at night. I didn't know what he was doing, whether he was in danger, or living with a concubine outside, or gambling away our money. The day was long and the night was even longer. Now time flies. Do you think the landlord's life was a comfortable and easy one? Not at all. We robbed and were robbed. We were afraid of so many dangers."

I asked if she would prefer some job which she could do at home. "Then I should miss the company of others; no, I couldn't sit alone in this place all day long any more. I often wonder how I got through those years!" She went on to tell me more about the hard life she had led in the past, despite their wealth. I told her, of course I knew all about it, and I only wanted to know how she was really feeling now. I echoed her wish that their sons would be scientists, adding that she and her husband could also begin to learn about science and technology. No, it was too late, she assured me, but "never mind, we can have the scientific spirit about things."

Theory and Practice

In 1958 my nephew at the Medical College in Chengtu, together with some other members of the staff and many students, went to the villages to live and work among the peasants. Their programme varied, but the general pattern was the same. In the morning they held their own classes, and during the day they worked with the peasants on the farms. In the middle of hot summer days they all had a rest and sleep, unless there was some emergency, such as torrential rain and flood. In the evenings they held classes for the peasants in general education, hygiene, and public health, simple science, singing, dancing, acting, and discussions on political questions. At any one time they always had a central task, to which their concentrated and concerted efforts were devoted. This time it was the fight to eliminate the scourge of schistosomiasis (a liver fluke disease). A certain number of the Commune members were allocated to work under the supervision of the college people. At times almost the whole population of the area took part. They learned about how the disease was transmitted, and the life cycle of the snails and how to exterminate them. It was a typical *mass movement*, organised in the same way as every other task in hand, at any given season of the year, and in any part of the country, was organised.

During these months the peasants

acquired a lot of general education and for the first time learned something of science and medicine. My nephew was in the village for over eight months (there are no fixed periods for this). When these teachers and students went back to their college, they found themselves much stronger and more versatile, and had acquired a much deeper understanding of the predominant importance of the peasants who make up eighty-five per cent of the whole population. Most important of all, they felt the experience of living and working among the peasants had made their studies come alive; the whole countryside had become their laboratory, clinic, and textbook; and to their own surprise their mental alertness had been sharpened.

This was contrary to what many of the older intellectuals had said: that it would be a waste to send learned people and students to work in the factories and on the farms. The educational policy of combining theory with practice, book-work with manual labour, was bearing fruit. It was all so easy too, except for the initial period of stiff back and blistered skins! And they were proud to have taken part in lifting the peasants out of their abysmal ignorance, as the first step in transforming them into new intellectuals. Since then, these teachers and students keep on going out to the country or factories year after year, for longer or shorter periods.

Pay and Livelihood

My nephew (my sister's son) in Changchun, north-east China, has hoped, year after year, to go down to the villages for a good stretch of several months. However, there were more urgent things for him to do. His university, founded in 1952 on a merger of two small institutions, has been growing rapidly. His department (history) like most of the others, is starting new courses for its students, and also training teachers and preparing textbooks for a new university to be opened in another city

in the north-east. Some of the teaching staff have to be kept back to undertake these urgent tasks; they can only go to the countryside for short periods during vacations. Last winter for instance, my nephew and many of his colleagues and students went to their university farm to dig a big pond for fish-breeding, so that they would gradually become self-sufficient in fish. (No doubt they now have a very big piggery and poultry farm as well). He is a brilliant historian and has been teaching for several years.

I asked about his salary, and was surprised to find that it had not increased regularly. He explained that normally the question would have been reviewed two years ago, "but we have been too busy to bother about it." I asked for a further explanation. This was that democracy implied that members of the staff should discuss questions of promotion, salaries, and so forth. The Ministry of Education only lays down broad principles. He added that they all had more than enough to live on and support their families; most of them had savings in the bank, and "we don't know what to spend them on". This last sentence may sound like an exaggeration, but it is true, in the sense that the interest of my nephew and millions like him is *not* in the amount of their pay. They are fully satisfied with the economic improvement and absolute security of their own livelihood; and beyond this they feel rewarded by their personal participation in the continued leap forward in almost every aspect of national life. My niece-in-law is a teacher in one of the numerous schools and classes for workers. They have one girl, aged three when we were there. She danced, sang, and talked to us without any shyness. I had never before come across a child like her. She completely captivated both of us. I said it was time they had another baby as irresistible as this one, but they were not sure if they wanted another.

—Hung-Ying

CHINA OF THE FUTURE IN EMBRYO

Letter to a Retired Missionary

Dear Muriel Brown:

I want to tell you something about my homecoming in 1959. As you know, I was born in Changting, a small town in the interior of Fukien Province, where my ancestors had lived and been buried for many generations. When I finished secondary school in 1927 the universities in Peking were closed because of the revolution, so the head of my (London Missionary Society) primary school sent me to England to study. When I went back to China I taught in Universities, first at Wuhan and later at Chengtu. Afterwards the Japanese invasion of 1937 cut me off from home until after I was married in 1944. Then we were in England for two years, and in 1946 we went back to China—to the British Embassy in Nanking. I wanted to go home, but banditry was still rife, and travelling very difficult, especially for women — Chinese people of my generation had never tasted peace and security, always war and bandits everywhere — so I had to keep my longing for home.

Before I go on, I want to give you some background about my family. My father was a Confucian scholar, of the most Puritan kind. He earned a living by teaching, and by his calligraphy. Although the Manchu dynasty had abolished the classical examination system, and was supposed to have established a system of modern schools on the western pattern, there were only two primary schools and one middle school (all for boys only, of course) in the whole town, and the county of which it was the capital. These catered for the few, either the rich, or boys who were exceptionally bright. So some fathers still sent their sons to be taught classical Chinese (and nothing else) by private teachers. My father taught older boys; other teachers, such as his brother, whose scholastic attainments were less, taught younger ones.

Confucian Puritanism

My father had very high moral ideas. He brought us up very strictly, and was proud of his children, whom he considered (rightly on the whole!) as exceptionally intelligent and good. Ours was the only family in the town — and beyond — which enjoyed such a high social position and yet was entirely free from what he regarded as the worst evils: taking concubines, smoking tobacco (let alone opium), gambling, and drinking. Last year on my journey a young woman, a complete stranger, was introduced to me and said immediately 'Oh, then you're Liao Hsiu-yen's younger daughter.'

My parents died when I was in my teens. We never knew what they died of, because we could not afford to have one of the two local doctors trained in the London Missionary Society's hospital until it was too late, in each case. My eldest brother became head of the clan-family. He followed in our father's footsteps, both in his Confucian moral outlook and conduct and in his strict non-participation in political affairs (politics were dirty, and politicians dishonest and shameless). He too enjoyed high public esteem.

Goodness — and Poverty

I grew up in an atmosphere of tremendous public respect for my father and brothers, but also with the idea that strict moral conduct and semi-starvation were two sides of the same coin, in a social system characterised by man's inhumanity to man. One of my deepest memories of my mother is of her worried look and sometimes tears because there was no rice to make even a thin gruel for breakfast next day, before we went to school. Later, when I was earning, every letter from home brought me news of illness, of a child dying, another whom there wasn't money enough to send to school, a very young niece being married off, and so on, all of which were the result of poverty. During all these

years letters meant bad news, sad news, and fresh sources of anxiety. Now and then I sent money for this or that purpose, such as the education of children, or for medical expenses for some member of the family. Of course, as I feared, my intentions were never carried out, as the money was swallowed up in the basic expenses necessary to keep the family going.

Our condition was in some ways worse than stark poverty would have been. Our family was not directly exploited and driven to destitution as were peasants in the countryside; we always had a home to live in and were never reduced to wearing rags. Thus, paradoxically, our problems were among the most hopeless in China. People of our status would never have thought of joining one of the peasant uprisings which recurred throughout Chinese history, nor could they join any strike or other demonstrations against the authorities, as did factory workers in the big cities. We had no way of doing anything to improve our lot. In that political and social set-up we were too 'good'. Our consequent poverty was a constant worry, ever present in my life.

In the first few years after Liberation, conditions naturally remained hard for my people, but gradually their letters showed an increasing freedom from worry. Younger nephews and nieces began to write to me, thus demonstrating beyond doubt that they were in school. Letters from the older members of the family hardly ever mentioned any need for money. Still I did not feel completely reassured, thinking they were probably keeping things from me.

After my October 1959 visit, all my worries completely disappeared. I do not believe that any of our friends in Britain or Canada has any notion of what 'freedom from want' really means. It may sound paradoxical, but you can't really appreciate it unless you have experienced poverty. What I saw in my home was a 'miracle', complete lack of any sense of worry, and complete confidence that 'we shall live better year after year.'

And now to tell you about my journey. By the time the train entered Fukien Province it was midnight, and I could see nothing out of the compartment window. At seven in the morning there was a mist, and when this lifted the scene was very beautiful. Fukien produces a lot of timber, paper, tea, peas and beans, but is relatively poor in grain. I saw timber and bamboo floating down the rivers in great quantities; construction sites were everywhere, as indeed wherever we went in China.

At last I arrived at Changting, in the south-western corner of Fukien, near the Kiangsi border. There I saw over forty close relatives and some distant ones, and many friends. Some of these people would be called 'officials' in England, and would have been in the past in China, but now they are simply 'working personnel'. Some friends are members of the Christian (Protestant) church, but none of my relatives has any connection with it.

My Family in 1959

All the forty-odd close relatives live in five or six houses in the small town of Changting, and all of them regularly visit our old home, and regard my brother and his wife as heads of the family. She is a retired primary school teacher, who now enjoys looking after the grandchildren, and he is a retired middle school teacher, with a pension of seventy per cent of his salary. He is a deputy in the Provincial People's Congress, and attends its sessions regularly in Foochow. He is also Vice-Chairman of the county People's Political Consultative Conference for which he is paid a salary. (By the way, there is no income tax in China).

There are numerous nephews and nieces-in-law, and others of the younger generation in our family. Some would be called cousins in the West, but in China we call them all nephews and nieces. One was a member of the bricklayers' cooperative, another of the umbrella-making cooperative, another a primary schoolmaster, another working

in afforestation, and another in a rural People's Commune. One worked in the People's Bank, another in the Post Office, and a niece in a Commune was training thirty peasant women to be kindergarten and primary school teachers. All the nieces-in-law were bringing up small children, except for one who was working in a market gardening cooperative. You see, they are just ordinary people in a small town in the interior of China.

Because of its geographical situation, that part of China is one of the most backward, from the scientific and technical point of view. But in ideas about political and social matters they are far from backward; indeed I must say they are more advanced than ordinary people in Britain.

My strongest impressions of my home town and its people are as follows:

1. The standards of health, hygiene, and education have gone up so much they are really beyond recognition. In former days, endless diseases all year round in every family, due largely to semi-starvation and complete lack of public hygiene. This time I did not see any illness or sign of poor health in the whole town or in the villages I visited. The children looked especially healthy, and, what is more, every child was in school. The standard of living is still very low, but compared with the past the improvement is obvious everywhere.

2. Lack of Sense of Class Distinction, or Inequalities of any kind, such as between men and women, or between scholars and the illiterate (or those who have only recently learned to read and write). The Confucian school of philosophy and ethics divided people into two classes, scholars being the rulers and the rest the ruled. Now, one can hardly distinguish between a high woman government worker and a peasant who brings her Commune's farm produce to sell in the market town. Their attitude to each other is even more remarkable, for its quality, openness, and comradeship, and it is a far cry from the days when the two met only as superior and inferior.

In a country bus I was travelling in, the conductor allowed more passengers to board at one stop than there was room for. The bus was already under way, when a young peasant woman stood up, full of dignity, and in a clear voice delivered a criticism ending: 'Is this how you serve the people?' The conductor humbly explained that he had miscounted the number of passengers getting down, and apologised. Among the passengers was a county government worker of high rank sitting two rows in front of me. I asked the woman next to me, a distant relative of mine, whether the majority of the passengers knew who this man was. She replied: 'Yes, of course, we all know him.' Such a scene would have been impossible before Liberation, and unthinkable in the presence of an 'official'. This is what I mean when I say there is no class distinction and no inequality of any kind.

3. No Insecurity, Fear, Suspicion or Hatred. The most remarkable thing of all I saw, not only in my own home town and province but in all the other cities we visited in China, Peking included, was the complete absence of any feeling of insecurity, worry, fear, suspicion or hatred. The ordinary people seemed to have complete ease and poise in their life. My relatives and I talked night after night till midnight, and they had their children and babies, too, with them. They still have the bad old habit of keeping babies up and not putting them to bed early. When they began to cry about 11 o'clock, I urged their young mothers to take them home. They went, but the husbands and older children of four to six stayed behind. 'How about the older children?' I asked. 'They'll come by themselves when they want to'. 'At midnight?' I asked incredulously. 'Don't you realise we were liberated ten years ago?' came the conclusive reply.

I knew, of course, from personal letters and wide reading, that society was now peaceful, and people enjoyed security for the first time, but to come up against the actual conditions was an extraordinary experience, for which I

was not emotionally prepared. Society is so peaceful, life so secure, and the spirit of the people so free and easy, that I felt as if I had come to a paradise. In Peking and other big cities there are plenty of men and women traffic police, especially at busy centres, for people in China, particularly the old, are not yet traffic conscious. In Changting there was no motor traffic, and, believe it or not, I didn't see a single policeman or police-woman, either in the busy centres, or at the gates of government buildings.

My overriding impression from my visit home is that I have seen the embryo of the future China, a society in which 'Law and Order' — that cover for so many abuses and cruelties — will become altogether a thing of the past. Dynamic social power will spring — indeed it is already springing — from cooperation and coordination between the People's Communes, and from the feelings of need and care for one another between individuals. China will be a nation in which army and police will be superfluous, — provided that there is no longer any military occupation of her territory by a foreign power, or foreign naval and air bases equipped with nuclear weapons threatening her from the east and south, as there are now.

China's greatest strength lies in her ordinary people, the people I met and talked to, because they have the feeling that they are making history, as they create a better life for everyone here and now, and help towards the eventual creation of a Universe in Harmony. This is a moral and spiritual aspiration, as well as a material aim, and they know they will achieve it.

Note On The Church

My information came from friends who are church members. My own observation was superficial because, of my seven Sundays in China, most were spent on trains. We did go to an Anglican Church in Peking but the service was not familiar to me. The sermon was very long and so poor that several people

fell asleep and I had great difficulty keeping awake. The church was one-third full and I counted about 85, with very few young people. Because it was Communion Sunday there was no time to talk to members afterwards as I had intended.

In Chengtu I talked with seven or eight Quakers whom I had known very well. Two years ago the Three-Self Movement in the churches had arranged that various churches would combine services according to locality rather than denomination. As I listened I thought what a wonderful idea it was, but my friend told me that after sitting together for several months the Quakers said they didn't feel at home with that kind of service and decided to go back to their own meeting for worship. Other denominations were talking of following suit when we were there. The Quakers, like the others, have the same problem as many years ago—that the young people do not go to Sunday meetings except at Christmas.

I also had good talks with old friends in other churches, Anglican, Congregational, and Baptist. Their churches were all carrying on as before, and the Baptists were flourishing. I raised one question with each of them regarding my own belief. I said that as I lived in 'Christian' Britain longer and longer I found it more and more difficult to believe in the Christian religion. I asked them how they had been able to maintain their faith, in this society which is agnostic.

They reminded me of our past experiences, how we had told people about the love of God and the brotherhood of man—inside the churches, in Sunday Schools, in study groups, in the YMCA and YWCA. But in those days it all sounded hollow and full of hypocrisy and we ourselves had felt we were cheating the uninitiated, because in actual life everything was exactly the opposite to what we tried to tell people about the Gospel of Jesus. I could not agree more. They further said that it was only since the Liberation that what they tried

to tell people about the teaching of Jesus had relevance to the actual life of the people, and now they could practise their beliefs.

I can't help feeling, Muriel Brown, that the Chinese people are really becoming the children of God because I think they are doing His will. Who has the right to determine how God could and would work out His own will? History may show that the Kingdom of God on earth may not be brought about by those who call "Lord, Lord" but by those

who, though not knowing the first New Testament Commandment, nevertheless go all out in carrying out the second one.

—Hung-Ying

(Ed.: The first New Testament Commandment is: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength." The Second Commandment as quoted by Jesus is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.")



Chengtū: a commune manager of small fertilizer plant (in background) and visiting English agriculturist.

REFLECTIONS ON CHINA'S TRANSFORMATION

Letter to a Former Colleague

Dear Jack,

You may well be surprised to hear from me after so many years: our paths have not often crossed since I left the Foreign Service in 1952. But I felt that I should like to share with you, and other friends and colleagues from the old days, some of my feelings and reflections after a recent visit to China, in a very different capacity.

Hung-Ying has written to some of her friends about her own impressions, and particularly about the experience of going back to her old home. Because her roots are completely Chinese, and because she has always kept in the closest touch with the ordinary people, she has a much deeper understanding of what the changes mean than most Chinese living abroad (and most foreigners) can possibly have. Such knowledge of, and insight into, things Chinese as I myself possess are based on my own 28 years work in, or directly in connection with, China, but they owe far more to her, and what little I want to add is mainly by way of comment on the sort of attitudes to China which prevail here.

No Basic Change Before 1949

People who wish to minimise or discredit China's achievements since 1949 sometimes say that changes were coming anyway: "Chiang Kai-shek's government was doing well in Nanking until it was frustrated by the Japanese invasion." This may sound plausible, provided you have a sufficiently rosy and unrealistic view of just what was being done by the Kuomintang government in the mid-thirties. The suggestion that it could ever have begun to do what has been done by People's China (and I use the term deliberately) is ludicrously absurd for anyone who has either been there or seriously studied developments.

For the big majority of the Chinese (i.e. all except those in the Old Liberated Areas) there was no fundamental

change before 1949, merely a gradual deterioration in conditions, as war, inflation, and oppressive misrule continued. The Liberation, which for most of the country came in 1949, was quite literally epoch-making: everyone old enough to remember it will always date any other event, whether earlier or later, by it. The changes that have taken place are fundamental and irrevocable; they add up to the final ending of an outdated, corrupt, and inhuman system of society, and the conscious building of a better system to replace it.

It may seem unnecessary to repeat all this, which is certainly nothing new. I do so because many in the West, including some who knew the old China, while reluctantly conceding the achievement, brush it aside, on the grounds, they say, that 'there's no freedom'. This attitude is so deeply ingrained in us, in our so-called liberal democracy, that the question whether a single Chinese peasant farmer is an unwilling member of a Commune, a single Chinese Christian the victim of 'religious persecution', or a single intellectual criticised for his 'liberal' views, becomes of paramount importance, without any reference to the degree and nature of such freedoms as they, and the other 650 million Chinese, may have enjoyed under the old regime, still less any consideration of how much value attached to individual freedom in the Chinese tradition.

Achievements of Liberated People

Why is this so? Are we so concerned for freedom in the abstract? Or are we really lamenting the end of the privileged position formerly enjoyed by some westernised intellectuals in China as compared with ordinary people? You will remember how it was explained to the students in 1949 that every one of them was being supported by the labour of 100 (or was it 200?) peasants. Now, the students fully appreciate the importance of manual work, which they do as a matter of course in factories and on

farms. Since an increasing proportion of them are from worker and peasant families any way, this point no longer needs to be emphasised. Indeed, it no longer holds good, because the productivity of the peasant has approximately doubled, and the students have become more and more self-supporting.

In the West we are ready to concede those things that cannot be denied—the strength of the administration, the rise in production, the buildings and dams that all can see; the public health, the end of starvation, and the beginning of improved living standards. Yet we are reluctant in the extreme to admit that these achievements are inseparable from the moral and spiritual advances: the development of education, the new public and private honesty, and the sense of selfless devotion to the good of the community as a whole, which are all-pervading in China today. In other words, the achievements of the last eleven years would have been quite impossible without the active and conscious participation of a liberated people. It is the refusal to recognise this which leads the blind anti-communists into such absurdities as the *News-Chronicle's* 'Mao's 500 million slaves'.

Uniformity Versus Diversity

Two things struck me more than anything else in China in 1959. One was the *absence* of uniformity. True, there is an overall pattern, but within that pattern there is the greatest diversity. One aspect of this diversity is the fact that some areas, and some individuals, lag behind the country and the people as a whole. By concentrating on these it is possible to build up a distorted and grossly misleading picture, of the sort brilliantly satirised by an English Quaker editor, in an article 'Volcanic Disclosures' (*The Friend*, 17 February 1961).

The fact that this picture, of inefficiency, disorganisation, and discontent, is hardly compatible with the image of a menacing China, also constantly presented to us, does not worry the propagandists, though the ordinary reader,

listener and viewer finds it confusing. In the last three years, in Britain at least, China has replaced Russia as principal bogey, to such effect that many otherwise intelligent people have allowed themselves to become indoctrinated with fear of China. A person in such a state of mind does not consider whether it is reasonable to suppose that a nation which has dragged itself out of the slough of despond, and looks to the establishment of a world order (the Confucian 'world in harmony'), is really likely to want to expand and plunge the world into war. Incidentally, in this country it is the 'liberal' papers, such as the *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and *Observer*, which have most consistently tried to 'brainwash' their readers on the subject of China.

To turn to our visit in 1959, my other overriding impression was of the young people who dominate the scene everywhere. I think for instance of the 35-year-old commune chairman in Chungking and his deputy (one of five—all women), both formerly poor peasants, of great warmth and obvious competence, who are typical of the best of the leadership which the people themselves have thrown up. And of the 18-year-old youth on a Chengtu commune who had taught himself to make chemical fertiliser. And of the railwayman we met on our way to Changchun, a veteran of the Korean war, who pointed out his home village as we passed it in the train: he had not asked for leave on his transfer because he felt he was needed on the job. And finally of the railway-girl at Manchuli, with long plaits and a wonderful smile, whose appearance was sufficient to soothe an agitated Australian tourist, afraid he would be unable to change his Chinese money before the train crossed the border into the Soviet Union. Cheerful, confident, friendly, and modest, these and countless millions like them are consciously engaged in creating a socialist society.

Perhaps you will say: 'You may be right, but what has all this got to do

with me, in this affluent society, where we've never had it so good?' That is a question you must answer for yourself (in China your colleagues would help you find the answer, but we are in England!). Believing profoundly in Sun Yat-sen's dictum that 'politics is everybody's business', I am sure that, however full our lives, there is something missing

when we deliberately refrain from some action (whether it is support for nuclear disarmament or spreading truth about China) because it can be construed as 'political'. When we in this country have as broad a conception of politics as the Chinese have, then I think we shall be getting somewhere.

—Derek



Calligraphy is a highly prized art in China and here, written in running style by Charles Curwen, are the same four characters which appear on the cover, meaning: "The World Belongs To All".

About The Authors



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Liao Hung-Ying, M.A. B.Sc. (Mrs. Derek Bryan) was born into a strict Confucian family in the interior of Fukien Province, southeast China; educated at English and American mission schools and at Oxford University, Somerville College.

She taught for many years in schools and universities in China and was closely associated with the Chinese Student Christian Movement, with Quakers in West China and with missionary work.

DEREK BRYAN

Derek Bryan, O.B.E., M.A. (Cantab.) was born in Norwich, England; educated at Cambridge University. He joined the British Consular Service in 1932, served at many Consular posts and travelled or lived in twenty provinces of China. He ended his period in the British Foreign Service as First Secretary (Chinese Affairs) at the Embassy from 1946 to 1951, first in Nanking and later in Peking after the People's Government was established there. He reads and speaks Chinese fluently.

Since 1951 the Bryans have been living in England (Cambridge and London). He is Assistant Editor of a journal for trade with Asia, and writes on Chinese affairs. Both of them also do translation work and speak on China to a variety of audiences. They recently took part in the BBC series of talks 'Thinking About China'. They re-visited China in 1959.



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