

A STATEMENT OF POLICY

IN RECENT MONTHS relations between Britain and China have deteriorated sharply. The events in Hongkong, Peking and London (see SACU NEWS, November 1967) have brought Sino-British relations to their lowest point since 1949. In this situation it is necessary for the Society to re-appraise its policy. If this is to be realistic we need to look at the recent history of Sino-British relations in a world context.

IN THE SPRING OF 1949 when the People's Liberation Army was on the point of completely defeating Chiang Kai-shek, Churchill stated that the victory of Communism in China was 'the worst disaster suffered by the West since the war'. (Speech at Boston, The Times, 4 January 1949.) Within a few weeks of Churchill's speech, the British government sent the frigate 'Amethyst' up the Yangtze from Shanghai to Nanking, ignoring the clearly announced and imminent PLA offensive from the north bank.*

In September 1949 the British and American governments imposed economic sanctions against China, banning the export of many items including machine tools, lorries, telephone equipment. (The People's Republic was established on 1 October 1949. British recognition came on 6 January 1950.) After the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 the British government voted in favour of the US-sponsored resolution passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 1 February 1951, branding China as an aggressor (for having sent volunteers to Korea when General MacArthur's forces crossed the 38th Parallel and advanced to the Yalu River).

The British government fully applied the 'strategic' embargo on exports to China adopted by the United Nations in May 1951. Indeed, they applied the restrictions more vigorously than other governments, and in their zeal refused to allow the export to China of such

* It is difficult to regard the affair as a very glorious episode in British naval history . . . it no doubt served to convince many, not only in China but throughout Asia, that the gunboat mentality was not dead.
(Evan Luard — Britain and China)

'strategic' materials as penicillin, sulph drugs and agricultural tractors.

Despite the British 'recognition' in January 1950, successive Labour and Conservative governments have equivocated on the question of China's representation in the United Nations. In 1961 when for the first time it seemed that acceptance of the Chinese People's Republic delegation's credentials would receive the required simple majority†, the United States adopted new tactics, contending that the China issue (previously accepted as procedural) was an 'important' question requiring a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly; Britain has faithfully supported this stand. Furthermore, British governments have for many years implicitly approved the notion of 'two Chinas' and have maintained official (consular) representation in Taiwan (Formosa).

US and British Policy

For the American Administration which had backed the Kuomintang so heavily, the liberation of China was a major setback. Aid to Chiang in Taiwan was continued and in June 1950 when the Korean war began, Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to 'protect' Taiwan, an assignment which (along with many new ones) it is still carrying out. Since the middle forties, the China lobby has been actively at work in the United States. War on China has been a consistently recurrent theme. Although fears of the consequence of General MacArthur's policies led to his dismissal by President Truman in May 1951, by 1954 official Washington had discarded such inhibitions. On 26 Jan-

†In 1962, 48 members voted to support China and 37 opposed.

uary 1954 Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Dulles, was questioned by Representative H. Coudert before the House Committee on Appropriations:

Question: Did I correctly understand you to say that the heart of the present policy toward China is that there is to be kept alive a constant threat of military action vis-a-vis Red China in the hope that at some point there will be an internal breakdown?

Robertson: Yes, sir, that is my conception.

Question: In other words, a cold war waged under the leadership of the United States, with constant threat of attack against Red China, led by Formosa and other Far Eastern groups and militarily backed by the United States.

Robertson: Yes. . . .

Question: Fundamentally, does that not mean that the United States is undertaking to maintain for an indefinite period of years American dominance in the Far East?

Robertson: Yes. Exactly.

It is ironic today to recall that this exchange was subsequently quoted disapprovingly in the House of Commons by Mr Harold Wilson.

In February 1955 Robertson further stated, 'Our hope of solving the problem of China is . . . through action which will promote disintegration from within.' Since the beginning of the United States war in Vietnam it has become steadily clearer that, in the last analysis, that war is directed against China. The recent decision to develop an anti-ballistic missile system is predicated on a war with China. No unbiased person would maintain that there is any likelihood that China will attack the United States. The implications are therefore obvious.

(continued on page 2)

ABOUT SACU

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

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* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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A STATEMENT OF POLICY

(continued from page 1)

Thus, in both Britain and America, policy-makers ever since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, have seen China as an enemy and have never discarded the notion of a war against her. Despite some divergencies in the past, the British government is today identifying itself with, and supporting, all major US policies in the Far East.

Propaganda and the Facts

No assertions are too wild, no rumour too flimsy, no extravagant imaginings too nonsensical to be put out, officially or unofficially, in the endeavour to create a public opinion that will acquiesce in, if not actively support, an anti-China policy. The build-up of anti-China propaganda in both Britain and the US covers almost every aspect of the country's life and policies. At the cruder end of the scale is the 'yellow peril' material now being revived. In foreign policy, China is presented as adventurous and belligerent, a menace to the peace of the world, a country which must encroach on the territory of her neighbours to solve her population problem.*

The facts are:

1. China has not a single soldier on the territory of any other country.
2. She removed all her troops from Korea in 1958. US troops are there still.
3. China has peacefully negotiated settlements of border questions with Afghanistan, Burma, the Mongolian People's Republic, Nepal and Pakistan.
4. She carried out a unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal on the Indian border and returned all captured Indian soldiers and equipment in 1962.
5. China is the only nuclear power which has repeatedly (most recently on 17 June 1967) declared unequivocally that she 'will never at any time and under any circumstances be the first to use nuclear weapons'.
6. She has repeatedly called for an international conference of all countries to ban nuclear weapons completely.

Like the United States Secretary of State, the British Prime Minister has gone so far as to imply that China is responsible for the war in Vietnam. He has twice (8 February 1966 in the House of Commons, and 13 July 1967

* The only choice open to China is to make a grab for the rice fields of Southeast Asia.' (Chester Bowles, later US Ambassador to India, 20 May 1963.)

at the University of Sussex) called on those who protest against that war to demonstrate outside the Chinese Embassy. This is surely an unprecedented action by a British Prime Minister of modern times.

On the economic front, anti-China propaganda has concentrated monotonously on the theme that China is on the verge of economic collapse, with mass starvation imminent. The communes, so it is said, proved such a failure that they were broken up and the whole organisation disbanded.

The facts are:

1. In the years 1959-1961 China went through a period of scarcity without inflation. 'The first effective organisation for the distribution of food in China's history had prevented starvation in the last three years.' (Malcolm MacDonald, 4 November 1962.)
2. Not only do the communes still exist, but since 1962 each successive harvest has shown an improvement over the one before. Rationing is being phased out; there is an abundance of fruit and vegetables. Meat is in good supply; fish, formerly scarce, is now a common food. China is able to export rice and many foodstuffs, groundnuts and other agricultural products.
3. China's trade with Britain in the first eight months of 1967 reached its highest point since 1949.
4. China's industry has made extraordinary progress in quality, quantity and range. 'In 17 years China has made a truly miraculous advance . . . there is practically nothing which the West can produce and China cannot. . . .' (Dr Kurt Mendelssohn, FRS, in a BBC talk.)

With the cultural revolution, anti-China propaganda has reached a new intensity and new peaks of distortion. The cultural revolution has been explained by 'Pekinologists' as a mere quarrel for the succession. At other times it has been suggested that the cultural revolution amounted to nothing more than millions of teenagers on the rampage. The distortions have not been confined to the mass media; serious economic and financial journals, many of the so-called China experts, and leading politicians, have also accepted and retailed these unsubstantiated statements.

What is Anti-Chinese Propaganda Aimed at?

Organised propaganda against China does not spring from a vague general antipathy to another country with a

different social political order, but from a deliberate intention to neutralise opposition to policies leading to a military attack. With American planes on the Chinese border, and with the present attitude of the British government toward China, the danger of an attack is no academic question. It is of vital importance that the British people should resist all measures of whatever kind, leading towards war with China.

The China We Seek to Understand

The Chinese people constitute at least one-fifth of humanity and as a nation have had the longest continuous history and civilisation of any. In this generation they have thrown off the foreign domination of over a century and emerged into full nationhood. It is vital for us all that they should make their full contribution to the world.

As a Society devoted to friendship and understanding, SACU can be concerned only with China as she actually is, not as people of different shades of opinion would wish her to be. Within SACU all shades of opinion are represented. Although SACU is not a party political organisation, it is bound to recognise the fact that China is a socialist country in which the leading force is the Communist Party, and the ideology Marxism-Leninism; a China which is determined to carry on revolution continuously until the creation of a Communist society. Opposition to imperialism and support for national liberation movements are cardinal features of Chinese policy. China is opposed to the international as well as the domestic aspects of the 'revisionism' which, she maintains, is manifesting itself in the Soviet Union, and which implies the domination of international politics by two major powers, the US and the USSR, and the suppression of national independence movements.

In seeking to create better understanding and greater friendship with this China, SACU is serving the interests of the British people, who are entitled to know the truth and not to be misled into hostility by distortion of the facts. In undertaking this task it is pitted against a formidable propaganda apparatus, constantly putting forth distortions and misrepresentations in order to condition people's minds to an image of China as Enemy Number One, the bogeyman of this period. One of the Society's main tasks is to frustrate these attempts by showing China as she really is. Its other major function must be to find ways and means of opposing the underlying policy which such propaganda is intended to serve. This necessitates a vigorous programme to present to the British people the essential facts and to explain the main

issues concerning China and Sino-British relations.

Powerful as the anti-China forces may be, events of the past two years have enormously increased public interest in China, and the desire to know more about her policies and the principles which guide them. It can be argued that political developments since the Society was founded have made its work increasingly difficult. While it is true that the anti-Chinese propaganda treatment of these developments has succeeded in confusing and misleading many, by the same token SACU's potential audience is greater today than in 1965 when the organisation began. The outstanding examples are of course the widespread demand, particularly among young people, for the facts about the cultural revolution, and the phenomenal interest in the writings of Mao Tse-tung.

Who is the Society for?

The Society should embrace all those who are interested in Chinese civilisation and its achievements, who genuinely seek to promote peace and friendship between the Chinese and British people, and who are prepared both to oppose the policies which treat China as an enemy and to expose the propaganda which serves such policies.

Not all SACU members will endorse everything China says or does. There should be a place within the Society both for those who find themselves in sympathy with Chinese policy and world outlook, and for those who may from time to time be critical of some aspects, but are nevertheless truly seeking friendship with China. This calls for some forbearance on the part of the committed and the uncommitted in the interest of a common objective — to fight the policy of hostility to China. Within the Society, issues should be frankly discussed and differences elucidated, using the methods of reasoned argument and persuasion which are practised by the Chinese themselves.

China is in the midst of a revolution of a new kind which is breaking fresh ground in constructive social change. In such a dynamic situation there is always the possibility of genuine misunderstanding and misinterpretation of events even by friends of China. Time will be needed to study what is happening, and a real effort of comprehension to take in new ideas about the nature of human society. Difficulty in understanding is not the same thing as hostility.

Conclusions

The opportunities for SACU to widen the circle of friends of China in Britain may well be greater, not less, than when we began our work. Such friendship will be stable and with-

stand the buffeting of political events — which are not likely to become more propitious in the near future — only if it is based on a knowledge of the facts and understanding of the objectives which the Chinese people are setting themselves. SACU speakers will know that the most effective method of combating the misrepresentation is not to make general assertions but to present the facts of the situation in China today.

In the period ahead, SACU should have the following closely related aims:

- (a) Opposition to our government's policy of hostility to China which has brought Sino-British relations to their present deplorable state.
- (b) A vigorous programme of spreading knowledge, dispelling misconceptions and countering misrepresentations — focussed on issues that are of key importance to the British people in the present situation.
- (c) A determined effort to make known the phenomenal progress of the Chinese people since 1949.

The above Statement of Policy was adopted by the Council of Management at its meeting on 11 November, 1967.

SACU DIARY

December

- 1 **Film Show.** Felix Greene's 'CHINA!' and 'The New China' from Myra Roper. Kensington Central Library, Campden Hill Road (Children's Library Entrance), Nr Kensington High Street Underground. 7.30 pm.
- 6 **Bristol branch.** Mass Line Discussion: 'Contradictions', 'Moving Mountains'. 4 Portland Street, Clifton, Bristol. 7.30 pm.
- 8 **Barnet branch.** 'China as Neighbour'. Speaker: Professor William Sewell. The Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon NW4. 7.45 pm.
- 11 **Manchester branch.** 'The China Scene in December 1967'. Speaker: Roland Berger. Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. 7.30 pm.
- 12 **Study Course.** 'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and its Development in the Cultural Revolution'. 24 Warren Street, London W1. 7.30 pm.
- 13 **Merseyside branch.** Film Show: 'Red Detachment of Women'. Time and place to be announced.
- 17 **Social Evening.** Members' Night — Bring your friends. Refreshments. 24 Warren Street, London W1. (Entrance Richardson Mews) 7.30 pm.

'MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL CHOICE'

Isaac Ascher, senior lecturer in Government and Political Thought at the City of London College, and London University lecturer in Sociology, was a member of the party of eight SACU visitors to China who returned to London at the end of August. Their tour ranged from Shanghai and Hangchow as far as Tsinan, Peking, and Harbin.

CHINA'S Cultural Revolution is the first major expression, for a long time, of powerful indigenous forces at work on the fabric of Chinese life, and is by far the most important development in China since the Liberation of 1949. It involves a major ideological choice in internal and external affairs, and the mobilisation of the entire population in that choice; the reconstitution of the People's Liberation Army; a re-assessment of the meaning of socialism, and of the Soviet contribution to socialism (and notably, a re-assessment of Stalin's work); the reorganisation of industry, and the application of democratic, egalitarian ideas in the reward of work; and the transformation of literature, the arts, and education into genuine instruments for the establishment and consolidation of a socialist society.

In ideology, the cultural revolution encourages an independent, critical view of world affairs, and a repudiation of Soviet policies as harmful in their effect on progressive forces and on the attitudes of individuals in relation to the interests of society. In particular,

an appeal is made to young people to learn from the history of China, and by personal involvement in political work to oppose 'book worship' and prepare for revolutionary leadership.

Cultural Mobilisation

The current claim in China is that, while Marx contributed to socialist theory and Lenin founded the first socialist state, Chairman Mao's contribution lies in the cultural consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship. This was foreshadowed at least ten years ago. In a speech on propaganda work in 1957, there is a significant passage, reproduced in the little red book of Chairman Mao's 'Quotations', which merits careful examination: (page 19):

'In our country, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, anti-Marxist ideology, will continue to exist for a very long time. Basically, the socialist system has been established in our country. We have won the basic victory in transforming the ownership of the means of production, but we have not yet won complete victory on the political and ideological fronts. In the ideological field, the question of who will win in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has not been really settled yet. We still have to wage a protracted struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. It is wrong not to understand this and to give up ideological struggle. All erroneous ideas, all poisonous weeds,

all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism: in no circumstance should they be allowed to spread unchecked. However, the criticism should be fully reasoned, analytical and convincing, and not rough, bureaucratic, metaphysical or dogmatic.'

And further, 'A dangerous tendency has shown itself of late among many of our personnel—an unwillingness to share the joys and hardships of the masses, a concern for personal fame and gain. This is very bad. One way of overcoming it is to simplify our organisations in the course of our campaign to increase production and practice economy, and to transfer cadres to lower levels so that a considerable number will return to productive work.' (Page 190.)

The little red book was difficult to obtain until 1965. It was particularly popular with the PLA and the with increasing demand it spread among all sections of the population and came into daily use, entering into a second edition with a foreword by Vice-Chairman Lin Piao (16 December 1966).

The other daily element in the cultural revolution is provided by the dazibao (big-character posters), designed as revolutionary criticism and repudiation of 'top Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road', detailed criticism of local bureaucrats, and as daily newspapers reporting the progress of local power-struggles.

The PLA

The PLA is important not only as the source of the little red book: it was in the PLA that the first discussions took place leading to criticism of the Soviet armed forces, culminating in the dismissal of the then Defence Minister, Marshal Peng Te-huai, in September 1959—he was replaced by Marshal Lin Piao. The army was decisively transformed on 1 June 1965, when badges of rank were abolished 'in response to popular pressure, and to discourage self-interest and false pride' as one army officer put it to us in Hangchow in August. Finally, the PLA is vital to the Cultural Revolution in industry, where its local units point in a 'Three Way Combination' of Communist Party and Red Guard cadres or rebels to replace the former Party organisation or state bureaucracy which functioned as a closed unit.

It needs to be stressed that the army in China has played a far more important role in the entire history of the revolution than in the Soviet case. Thus, the Bolshevik revolution began with urban uprisings followed by a relatively short civil war (1918-21), whereas in China the long civil war (1927-49) is still not at an end, so long

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as the Kuomintang remain in Taiwan.

Stalin Re-assessed

Chinese assessments of Stalin's positive and negative aspects are particularly instructive for appreciating the cultural revolution in the field of ideology. It was put to me that whilst Stalin was in many ways a worthy successor to Lenin in the history of the international communist movement, he did commit serious errors: thus, he was mistaken in regarding the USSR as a fully-fledged socialist state by 1936 (when he introduced the Constitution), since class-struggle against bourgeois ideas had by no means been won — the USSR was socialist only in a formal, not in a wholly cultural sense. Notably, Stalin failed to mobilise the masses in cultural work; and he waged political struggle against his opponents too often by merely removing them, and sometimes by removing innocent people too, whereas the real problem is to arouse all men to serve the people in a socialist spirit. A cultural and ideological problem is not necessarily (and probably not at all) solved by purely administrative changes.

Literature, Education and Politics

On 10 November 1965, a critical review in the Shanghai 'Wen Hui Daily' entitled, 'Comment on the new historical drama "The dismissal of Hai Jui"' was published. This literary event is regarded by many as the start of the cultural revolution. Written by Yao Wen-yuan under the direction of Chiang Ching (wife of Chairman Mao), this critical review was an attack on Wu Han — author of the play on 'Hai Jui' and then Deputy Mayor of Peking. His play, ostensibly concerned with the unjust dismissal of a Ming Dynasty official by the Emperor, was actually intended as a defence in dramatic form of Marshal Peng Te-huai. There now followed demands for more proletarian plays and operas, and finally the first dazibao attack by seven Peking students on the 'top people' at Peking University (1 June 1966). This was supported by Chairman Mao with a dazibao of his own ('Bombard the Headquarters', 5 August 1966).

It was these events that encouraged not only intense discussion of literary and cultural problems, but further: the formation of Red Guard movements in schools and universities, and dazibao movements in local government and industry, giving rise to political struggles and administrative changes everywhere in China.

Industrial Re-organisation

Criticism and repudiation of bureaucratic conceit and 'economism' (the doctrine of material incentives and ad-

ministrative rewards, promoting social inequality) took practical form in the factories we visited: first in inducing workers to return extra wages they had received, and then in organising Revolutionary Committees to seize power in the factories themselves. Thus, in a tractor-components factory employing 1,140 workers that we visited in Harbin, the first Peking dazibao of 1 June 1966 was publicised and discussed, and twenty Red Guard organisations with a total membership of three hundred were organised. After a wave of persecution by the local 'top people', the rebels seized the First Secretary of the factory Party Committee on 5 December 1966, subjected him to public criticism, increased their membership to over five hundred and took over the factory on 17 January 1967. Since then, the factory administration has been simplified, office workers released for the production lines, and a 'Three-Way Combination' established in April.

The Red Guards

On 18 August 1966 Chairman Mao received the first of eight massive Red Guard processions in Peking, demonstrating their determination to preserve China's political colour and repudiate Soviet revisionism in economic life, administration, and international affairs. It is noteworthy that the first anni-

versary of this first reception by Chairman Mao was an occasion for national celebrations: we ourselves witnessed a mass procession marking the event, at mid-day in Harbin (18 August 1967). In Peking itself, the Red Guards organised house-searches among the bourgeois for old Kuomintang insignia, Buddhist relics, property title-deeds and weapons, and within one year had re-named over 2,000 streets in revolutionary style.

A daily criticism and repudiation by young rebels, using the little red book, of the 'old culture, ideas, customs and habits', has had the effect of alerting all China to her tasks: it is as if time has been speeded up, and a new consciousness aroused. In the words of one of Chairman Mao's poems:

The world rolls on,
Time presses,
Ten thousand years are too long,
Seize the day, seize the hour!

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS, who publish **Peking Review**, and other English-language periodicals in China, welcome constructive comment and criticism from readers. SACU will be glad to forward to China any such comments which members care to send in.

Window on Shanghai

Sophia Knight

With a Foreword by
Dr Joseph Needham FRS

A fresh and revealing account of life in Shanghai today. The author has been teaching in China for two years, and her letters home describe with sympathy and charm the impressions made upon her by her school, her colleagues and pupils, and the progress of China's Cultural Revolution.
Frontispiece 35s

André Deutsch

105 Great Russell Street London WC1



Serving the People

Paul Marett Doody, Warden of Rutherford Lodge, Loughborough University, visited China in August with seven other SACU members.

THE FLIGHT FROM PARIS to Shanghai takes under twenty-four hours, a short time to adjust oneself to the transition between two civilisations. During our stay in China we were looked after by two charming young women guides of the China Travel Service (who spoke excellent English) reinforced in each town by local members of the Travel Service. The itinerary we had been given before we left England was considerably changed, in particular we did not go to the great industrial city of Wuhan. However we spent a few days in each of Hangchow, Shanghai, Tsinan (capital of Shantung province), Peking and Harbin, an interesting cross-section of the cities of eastern China. The programme of visits arranged for us was most comprehensive, taking in a wide range of factories, several communes, four higher educational institutions, as well as some of the regular tourist attractions such as the Great Wall and the West Lake at Hangchow. Generally speaking we were free to wander around on our own (except in the great confusing city of Shanghai where we were advised not to go out without a guide). Photography was unrestricted (subject to normal courtesy) except that the big character posters and, of course, anything of military importance, were forbidden.

After three weeks in China, you bring back a jumble of impressions. The first is the ubiquity of the Cultural Revolution. Expecting something like an exuberant general election I was quite unprepared for the sheer quantity of posters and slogans. They cover every wall in the streets as high as the hand can reach. Shop windows are completely pasted over with them. Upper storeys of buildings bear great red boards with professionally painted slogans. They are written on the pavements and roads. All distracting writing has been removed. Shop signs are almost extinct, public buildings are not signposted, there are almost no administrative notices inside factories. The eye is very conscious of the cultural revolution and so is the ear. On the public wireless loudspeakers there are constant readings from Chairman Mao and the catchy revolutionary songs. 'The East is Red' is something between a national anthem and top-of-the-pops. It is closely rivalled by 'Rely on the Helmsman'.

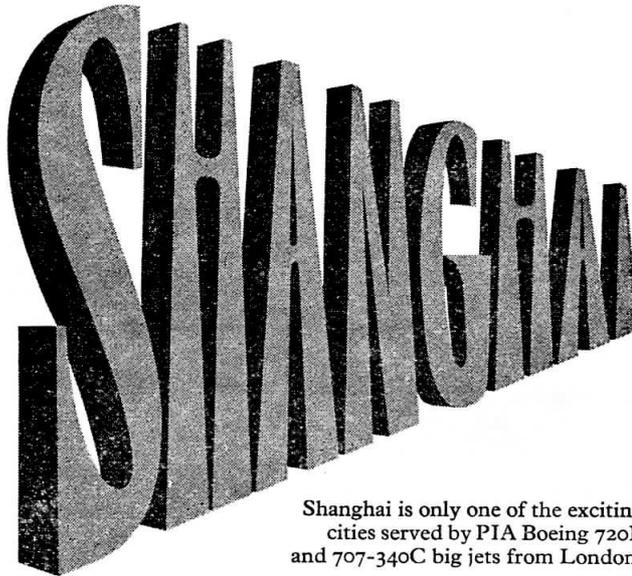
If you want a slogan for the cultural revolution it is 'Serve the people', a phrase which is constantly repeated. What is described as 'the capitalist road' in the factories is reflected in monetary incentives for harder work and profit as the indicator of efficiency. Instead the workers' aim should be, they say now, to serve the people. 'Grasp revolution and spur production' is heard constantly. And in one factory after another they tell you that production has increased with the cultural revolution. I was impressed with the factories we saw. They appeared well-organised and up-to-date. In some cases, for example the precision instruments factory in Harbin or the Chinese-made 12,000 ton hydraulic press near Shanghai, the achievements were most impressive.

Schools and universities are only just reopening after a year's closure. We visited a medical college, an institute of politics and law and two higher engineering institutions, and had long

discussions with students and some staff. They are positive that they have not wasted their time in the past twelve months: they have studied Chairman Mao's thought and how to serve the people and have taken the spirit of revolution to the countryside bringing back experience of the people's needs. A radical reorganisation of curricula and methods of study is now in hand to enable education to serve the people better. This will mean shortening the university course (hitherto 5 or 6 years) and emphasising practical studies with the aim of producing not officers but revolutionary workers. Methods of teaching will be changed to eliminate cramming of facts and to introduce more discussion and mutual help instead of formal lectures.

On the purely material side there is an air of modest prosperity. Bicycles, vacuum flasks, wireless sets, ball-point pens, wrist watches and sewing machines are all common. The children seem sturdy and well-fed. Women appear oblivious of fashion. They use no make-up and wear no jewellery but their clothes and hair are neat.

(continued on page 7)



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BOOK REVIEW

Window on Shanghai. Letters from China Today, by Sophia Knight. Published by Andre Deutsch. Price 35s.

THIS IS NOT ONLY a fascinating record of two years teaching in China — it is also the development of a twenty-one-year-old English girl from onlooking interest to understanding involvement. As Dr Joseph Needham quotes in his Foreword from the 'Kuan Tzu' of the 4th century BC: 'He who comes with the fragrance of friendship will be loved like a brother,' and Sophia Knight certainly found that warmth and goodwill and friendliness were reciprocated a hundredfold. She knew how eager her mother was to hear about everything, Sophia wanted her to share the experience of China and the people and their daily lives, and this is what makes these letters so alive and so full of interesting detail.

There is the matter of part-work part-study for everyone, so derided in the west; Sophia worked for two weeks on a commune with the schoolchildren in November, and wrote: 'It's hard work and I'm aching all over, but it's well worth it, if only for the added contact with the children. And I feel I'm pampered, somehow, and physically weak, so this'll tone me up. Besides which it's wonderful to be out in the fresh air all day. The peasants are so kind and friendly and hard-working and unsophisticated — it's a revelation to be with them.'

Sophia went to China in August 1965, and the reader, with benefit of hindsight, will find it interesting to trace the stirrings of the cultural revolution. In October she was won-

dering how a changed society could stay that way, how the leaders 'would educate the younger generation politically, as the standard of living rises and temptations of all kinds are open to them. I notice already that some of the children in my "slower" class have "ideological problems", which means they are open to the wrong kind of influence.' In November: 'How long is this kind of "socialist education" going to be effective? . . . When the next generation begins to grow up, how are the leaders of the government going to adapt their methods of political instruction? . . . The struggle and sufferings endured during the revolution are still fresh in the minds of a large section of the population at the moment, but the basis of Marxist thought, the analysis of production methods and their economic application seems to be relatively unknown, apart from party members and political secretaries. . . . I feel that revolutionary thoughts and ideas will have to be taught in a different way, but of course I don't know . . . sentences and words which crop up many times daily will begin to lose much of their meaning with a generation which hasn't been involved.'

In January 1966, in answer to her mother's question on the older generation of Chinese society: 'Many retain their old ideas. . . . The Chinese realise that there are strong anti-socialist elements in New China, and constantly tell people to be on the alert. . . . A lot of them refuse to change, and even try to cause trouble (often encouraged by the anti-Chinese foreigners who visit the country) and you can see it

in the way they treat their fellow-workers.'

In April 1966: 'The Chinese had plenty of individualists, as you can see clearly even now, after sixteen years of socialist education. . . . I see it every day, even among my own pupils, born and brought up in Socialist society.' Then on 21 May, she first mentions the cultural revolution, in connection with the 'revisionist' Teng To who had hinted in one of his 'Peking Daily' articles that the Great Leap Forward of 1958 was one utter failure. Sophia asked her pupils and fellow-teachers what they remembered of it, and was amazed at what they had to tell, and of all the projects in which they had taken part and from which they had learned so much. This again is personalised information which one rarely gets from the average book on China.

The letter dealing most fully with the cultural revolution is dated June 1966, a clear exposition of what it meant to the Chinese, perhaps so well understood because this English girl had seen the necessity for something like it almost a year before.

There are good descriptions of National Day in Peking, holidays in Hangchow, Wuhan, Shaoshan, and Ching Kangshan the first revolutionary base in China, the 'single spark' which set China on fire.

There is a saying, not always true, that if you can write a good letter you can write a good book. Sophia Knight has done both, and I recommend this book as the best window on China for a very long time. J G

Serving the People

(continued from page 6)

Foreigners are regarded everywhere with friendly curiosity. But it is very friendly. Everywhere we felt this spontaneous warmth towards us (even though feeling against the British government was obviously strong on the Hongkong question). This unflinching friendliness and the spirit of dedicated service remain my strongest impressions of China. We were astounded to see the alarming headlines in the Western press when we returned. China is a dynamic and exciting country at present, well on the way, one cannot help feeling, to become the greatest nation in the world within the next few decades.

China and the West

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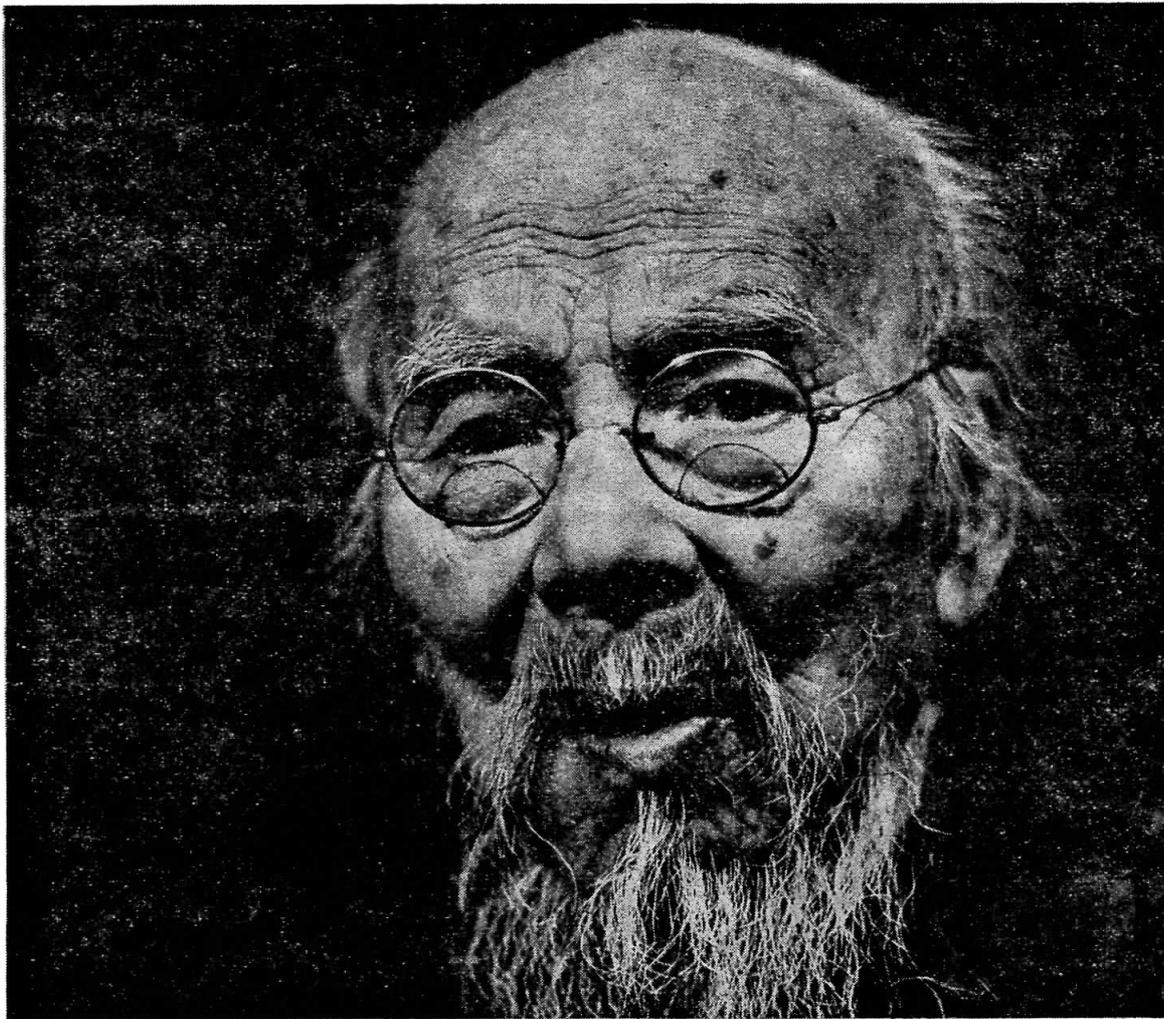
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