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Ideas from China Spreading says SACU Chairman

OPENING the third **SACU** Annual General Meeting, Dr Joseph Needham reminded members that **SACU** was the only national organisation in Britain concerned with disseminating hard facts about China. 'We have done this consistently since the formation of the Society and have been particularly concerned to let the public know about the Cultural Revolution,' he said.

'We may be very small, but our influence is growing and we should be proud of the job we're doing. There are many other groups and organisations who do not see eye to eye with us on all our policy but we should strive to co-operate wherever possible providing the aims of the Society—as set out in the policy statement—are being furthered.'

Referring to the Cultural Revolution, Dr Needham told the meeting—held in the Holborn Assembly Rooms on Saturday, 25 May—that one thing was clear: the Chinese were determined upon a truly classless society. 'And they know that this will take a revolution of hearts and minds, not easily to be won, and needing perhaps perpetual renovation. **Hsin min**—"renewing the people"—was an ancient Confucian watchword, and now it is being practised as never before.'

'Whenever one of the leaders like Chou En-Lai makes a speech he invariably says that the position of the Cultural Revolution and that of the progressive forces throughout the world is "excellent". I must confess that this phrase has jarred on me, for the Vietnamese war has been a heart-rending thing, and the condition of Sino-British cultural relations has never been so bad as it is today, in spite of all our efforts. Yet now, in the light of the events of the past few weeks, I am inclined to think that Chou

En-Lai may have been right after all. I should like to explain what leads me to say this.'

What had depressed Dr Needham most was the Sino-Soviet rift and the determined attack of the Chinese on the bourgeois values of Soviet society and of those of the other Eastern European cultures, except Albania. 'We could all see their point, but what was so alarming for the prospects of world peace was the seeming weakening of the cohesive strength of the heartland of nations committed to socialism. For most people this was the main thing, but my nightmare was rather different. As long as the Soviet Union and China were united it seemed that a progressive force had come into the world which transcended racial and cultural boundaries, and that this could carry all before it as long as it remained united. Now however it seemed that the Russians, a white people of essentially European culture, were being thrown back into the arms of the white capitalist nations of the West, and the prospect of world division based on racial lines arose in all its ugliness.

'But then within the last few months and weeks what has happened? The students of the world, wherever we look, from **New York to Madrid**, from **Kyoto to Colchester**, have been taking aggressive action, partly arising no doubt from particular and local grievances, but keyed very largely to the big issues of their societies—the Afro-American liberation in America, fascism in Spain, US imperialism in Japan, and indignation at obscene methods of warfare in England. And in the last ten days what have we seen in France? A vast and powerful movement of the Paris students has sparked

continued overleaf

REVOLUTIONARY OPERA IN CANTON

by Myra Roper

ELEVEN YEARS AGO I saw my first traditional Chinese theatre when a Peking opera company came to Australia. I became an enthusiast and on my several visits to China since 1958 I have seen as many classical performances as I could. While it was disappointing on my 1967 visit not to be able to see any traditional opera, it was fascinating to see how classical techniques are being adapted to modern themes and audiences. We saw **Red Signal Lantern**, **Shachiapang** and, on our last night in China, **Taking the Bandits' Stronghold**, which was presented during the Canton International Trade Fair by the Peking Opera Theatre of Shanghai.

Canton has a fine, new theatre; in a garden with ancient tall trees and newly planted flowering shrubs, a fountain and a rock garden. It was a sticky, airless May evening; the theatre was full, but the air-conditioning kept the auditorium cool and fresh.

Red Signal Lantern and **Shachiapang** did not have, for me, that special quality which turns an interesting performance into an exciting one. **Taking The Bandits' Stronghold** had. For sheer theatricality the production is world-standard and it is wholly and peculiarly Chinese. There are all the traditional elements—the stage strut, the wide, stylised gestures, the—to us—falsetto voices; the modal form of music, the string and percussion band just visible in the wings, the type casting (goodies, baddies, funnies, old lady, old man, courageous young heroine), the acrobatics, the tumbling and the elaborately patterned confusion of mass stage-fights; but all these have been toned down, cut down, or speeded up to match the immediacy and pace of a contemporary 'action-packed' story.

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AGM report continued

off a nation-wide general strike, after the settlement of which France can never be the same again. Though it is too early to be able to say exactly what will emerge, some things are already clear, and one of these is, I believe, that student actions have been inspired by the ideas of Chairman Mao. The example of the Red Guards in China has proved infectious and the students have come to feel that something can really be done to express their utter dissatisfaction with the capitalist Establishments,' he said.

REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

'And not only are the students coming well out of it, but also the working class,' he added. 'We may sometimes have despaired of the working class and the Labour Party, fearing that the Welfare State and the Affluent Society had debauched the whole population into a sole concern for television sets, washing machines, cars and bingo; but perhaps the workers in France are showing that they care once again for the things that

matter, for human dignity, participation of the workers in management, equality and fraternity. If so, France is finding again her revolutionary spirit, and caring for exactly the sort of things that the Chinese Cultural Revolution is all about. Perhaps, after all, we are not spiritually dead.

'If this can happen in France, surely it can happen in any other European country, even our own, to say nothing of those in Latin America,' Dr Needham suggested. 'A Chinese influence seems everywhere to be at work, exerted not by "agents", not by money, but by the invincible and irresistible spread of ideas.

'The guiding ideas seem to me essentially simple: that youth need put up no longer with the "received ideas" of the past but can and should rebel against them, and that the "love of one's neighbour" must be actively and violently taken out of the pages of the book, and incarnated in social forms more equal and friendly than any the world has yet known, rejecting all racial distinctions and seeing only the world co-operative commonwealth of justice and comradeship,' he concluded.

COUNCIL REPORT

The Council of Management's report for the past year (circulated with the May **SACU NEWS**) was presented by the Vice-Chairman, Mrs Mary Adams.

As only 13 nominations had been received for the 14 vacancies on the Council of Management (half of the elected members of the Council retire each year), no ballot was needed.

'HEALTHY' FINANCES

The Treasurer's Report—given by Ernest Roberts—showed a surplus of £95 for the past year compared with a £1,411 deficit for 1966/7. But this apparently healthy situation resulted from major cuts in expenditure rather than increased income which in fact was down to £2,519 compared with the £3,930 received in the previous year.

In introducing his report, Mr Roberts pointed out that the grants from the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute were likely to remain around the £50 a month mark for the coming year. The great advantage to the Society in members paying their subscription through covenants was again stressed.

'There has also been quite a drop in donations,' he added. 'But we should be able to keep the accounts in balance.'

However, there was a need to increase activities and membership, he said. This required money. How was it best to be raised? Did members think that there was a case for raising membership fees? In particular, should the subscription for students (7/6d

compared to the 10s. paid by non-members who simply subscribe to **SACU NEWS**) be increased by an extra half-crown? On this last point, the meeting felt strongly that students rates should be maintained, despite the actual monetary loss sustained by the Society for each student member.

Only one resolution appeared on the agenda. Proposed on behalf of the Management Council by Derek Bryan, it read: 'This Annual General Meeting calls on every member and on every branch to study the Policy Statement and take steps to implement it.'

Moving the resolution, Mr Bryan said that members would agree that the new statement was a great advance on **SACU's** previous policy statement. No policy could satisfy everyone. A friendly attitude was a touchstone for understanding. He suggested that the best way we could express our friendship for China at present was to study the background to China today, to try to understand what was happening in the Cultural Revolution, and to try and find means of passing on our knowledge and understanding to others.

Bill Habets

BOOKS RECEIVED

An Historical Atlas of China by Albert Herrman, edited by Norton Ginsburg. Edinburgh University Press. £4 4s 0d.

Nagel's Encyclopedia Guide to China. Frederick Muller Ltd. London. 14s shillings.

The Grand Canal of China by Lyn Harrington. Rand McNally. \$3.95.

Chinese Communism in Crisis by Jack Gray and Patrick Cavendish. The Pall Mall Press Ltd. 40 shillings.

Strange Vigour: A Biography of Sun Yat-sen by Bernard Martin (Re-issue for Libraries.) 27 shillings and 6 pence from **SACU**.

Every Day Life in Imperial China by Michael Loewe. B T Batsford 25 shillings.

America's Failure in China by Tang Tsou. University of Chicago Press. Vol I 26 shillings. Vol II 22 shillings.

Intermediate Chinese Reader Vol II by John de Francis. Yale University Press. 35 shillings.

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ABOUT SACU

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

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Chairman: Dr Joseph Needham

Deputy-Chairman:
Professor Joan Robinson

Vice-Chairman: Mrs Mary Adams

Secretary: Mrs Betty Paterson

NEW MEMBERS OF COUNCIL *

Premen Addy: Researcher in South and Central Asian Studies.

Isaac Ascher: Senior Lecturer in Government and Political Thought.

Douglas Greene: Chairman of the London Events Committee.

Frida Knight: Writer and Teacher.

Jim Little: Secretary, Bristol Branch of the Society.

Sam Mauger: Lecturer in Education.

* * *

* A full list of Council members will be given in the next issue.

MAYOR HOPES IT WILL INSPIRE INTELLIGENT DEBATE

ATTEMPTS TO DEPICT China as a 'monster' or 'yellow peril' were criticised by the Deputy Mayor of Camden, Councillor J C Richardson, when he opened Camden China Week at Holborn Central Library on Friday, 17 May. The week was organised by the Camden branch of SACU.

Councillor Richardson said it was impossible to understand China without understanding her political motives and aspirations. He hoped the China Week would inspire a series of intelligent political debates, and create a better understanding of China's position in the world.

A showing of Edgar Snow's film *One Fourth of Humanity* followed. A review of the film appears on this page.

Two other films were shown as part of China Week — *The East Is Red*, a dance-drama film of scenes from Chinese revolutionary history; and *Tibet Today*, which contrasts the poverty, disease and illiteracy in Tibet before its liberation with the comparative freedom and prosperity enjoyed today by its former serfs. We see pre-1950 footage of ragged peasants, blinded or mutilated by their employers for trivial offences, begging amid the garbage of Lhasa's backstreets. Then come shots of modern schools, hospitals, factories, and hydro-electric stations — used in the massive irrigation schemes which are transforming the Tibetan plateau from an arid wasteland into fertile fields and pastures.

New crops grown in Tibet since its liberation include tea, barley and several varieties of Chinese vegetables. The peasants now own their farm implements and breed their own livestock. Mechanised lumbering has been introduced, and its mineral wealth is also being tapped.

Education is growing fast. Sixteen hundred primary schools have been built to provide education for the children of peasants, who themselves had none. Centres of higher education have also been set up.

The number of doctors and nurses is also increasing rapidly. Over 160 hospitals and clinics give free medical treatment, and mobile teams tour the country, treating workers in remote areas.

A discussion on the film was introduced by A T D'Eye. It had to be

shown twice, because of the unexpectedly large number of people who came to see it — and was one of the most popular events organised by the China Week committee.

Another item — which drew a smaller, though no less enthusiastic, audience — was an *Any Questions* programme. The subjects discussed ranged from Chinese teaching methods to the failure of the British national press to give a truthful picture of events in China. Several members of the panel who were in China at the time, gave examples of 'events' which had in fact never happened. A Fleet Street journalist in the audience

confirmed that foreign correspondents of Western papers had to send their papers the kind of news demanded of them.

Chinese music, and a humorous sketch — *The China-Watchers* — were among the entertainment at a social held at Holborn Assembly Rooms after the SACU Annual General Meeting, which also formed part of the China Week programme. A group of young folk-singers, *The Critics*, were the high-spot of the evening, performing songs of social protest with great natural exuberance.

A slide-show given by Colin Penn in the library in Kentish Town, and a talk on Mao Tse-tung's thought, by Roland Berger, at Conway Hall, were two other enjoyable items in a week which culminated in a Teach-In at Hampstead Town Hall, where the speakers included Dr Malcolm Caldwell, Richard Hensman, Professor William Sewell.

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New Edgar Snow film tells the China story

FOLLOWING THE HIGHLY successful premiere of Edgar Snow's *One Fourth of Humanity*, shown by central office of the Society on 26 April, the Camden Branch used the film to open its 1968 China Week. It is no small testimony to the film that the first showing attracted more than 200 people and the second, less than a month later, drew an audience of nearly 150. And quite a few of these were seeing it for the second time.

Edgar Snow, the author of the classic *Red Star over China* needs no introduction, and the film has rightly been called a documentary film version of this book and his later *The Other Side of the River*. The film consists of material shot in two vastly different periods both contemporaneous with the books.

The first period was Snow's pioneering visit to the Red base area of Yen-an in 1936; the second was one of his return journeys to China in 1965.

In the film, as in his books, Snow's treatment of latter-day China falls somewhat flat after his description of the Yen-an days. Snow the journalist shows the depth of his appreciation by his references and emotive reactions to the élan, esprit and ideological purposefulness of the Communist areas of China in the late thirties. He effectively contrasts this with the situation in the Kuomintang areas. Nor does he fail to bring home the startling comparison between the old China and the new; between the abject and hopeless quasi-existence of the sampan dwellers he saw in Shanghai before the war and

their children whom he shows today,

Questions such as the role of Liu Shao-chi and the 'cult of Mao' can no more be dealt with adequately in a film than can the Cultural Revolution as a whole. Mr Snow's interpretation is highly personal and controversial but somewhat confused.

Despite its technical shortcomings, *One Fourth of Humanity* is required viewing for anyone interested in China. It deserves a far wider audience than it is likely to get and it is to be hoped that all SACU branches will make the most strenuous efforts to show it and bring it to the attention of as many people as possible.

IN COURT

WHEN ERIC LEVY was charged with obstructing the police and using insulting behaviour and brought before the magistrate at Great Marlborough Police Court he pleaded not guilty. He said he did not obstruct the police and the only words he used to them were 'You guys are behaving like paper tigers'.

When the magistrate expressed some concern about the insulting connotations of the term 'paper tigers' Eric Levy whipped out his copy of *Mao's Thoughts*, opened it at page 72 and handed it to the magistrate, explaining that the expression had been popularised by Mao Tse-tung.

The magistrate had to admit that according to that definition 'paper tiger' was not insulting. Eric Levy was found not guilty on both counts.

Sussex 'internationalists' attack SACU'S 'friendship lobby'...

The following statement was sent to the Society by a group of students calling themselves the 'Sussex Internationalists'.

While their attack on SACU is of limited importance, the decision to give space in the Society's journal to their views was taken because their criticisms are not entirely unrepresentative. Their statement is followed by comments on it from Joan Robinson and Joseph Needham.

WE HAVE DECIDED not to join SACU. Instead we are going to attack it sharply.

We do not see how any organisation which has placed itself under the sponsorship of reactionary bourgeois professors, doctors of philosophy, Fellows of the Royal Society, distinguished members of the Order of the British Empire and 'leading figures in many fields of public life' can do anything but harm to China and the British people. How can there be 'Anglo-Chinese Understanding' between imperialists and anti-imperialists?

Instead of tackling the task of how to bring the shining example of People's China to the British working class, SACU is running after the imperialists trying to persuade them to adopt 'a less hostile official attitude'. SACU is simply trying to build up a 'peace and friendship' lobby of liberal imperialists.

Why else is SACU's Council of Management so full of MPs, Dames, Ladies, and reactionary bourgeois academics and businessmen? Why else is Dame Joan Vickers MP on the Council of Management? Why else is the avowed anti-Marxist, Dr Joseph Needham, SACU's chairman? Did not this enemy of the working class state publicly at SACU's inaugural meeting on May 15, 1965 that 'the age-long traditions of Confucianism and Taoism were still, and always would remain the background of Chinese mentality — just as Christianity does of the mentality of the West. The idea that China has taken the philosophy of Marxism as her chief inspiration from the West is a mistaken concept.' Are these not the words of an open counter-revolutionary? The Rev Paul Oestreicher is another member of the Council of Management: this reactionary is one

of the leading figures in the recent 'dialogue' between Christians and revisionists and on April 12, stated over the BBC that 'Communists have a terrible past to live down'. Is this not a naked slander of the heroic achievements of the Soviet people under the leadership of that mighty Marxist-Leninist, Joseph Stalin?

How can we support an organisation which publishes articles saying: 'The thought of Mao Tse-tung may curdle into strange forms when it is injected into other civilisations'? (SACU NEWS, February 1968). This statement is official: it was made by none other than SACU's deputy-chairman, the liberal bourgeois 'professor' Joan Robinson. How can we have anything to do with this ideologist for state monopoly capitalism, a follower of J M Keynes, himself a deadly enemy of the working class, an 'inveterate bourgeois', as the immortal Lenin called him, 'a merciless opponent of Bolshevism'? Are we to speak differently of those who follow him? Are they not also merciless opponents of the working class?

What an insult

Joan Robinson talks about the 'bad international manners of the Chinese'. What an insult! Not only to the heroic Chinese people but to all people struggling against imperialism! She slanders the heroic Red Guards as 'callow youth' and accuses them of 'diplomatic gaffes' which 'overflow the bounds of correct behaviour between Sovereign states'. No doubt she would have felt much happier if British imperialism had not been punished for its fascist atrocities against the people of Hong Kong! No

wonder she attacks the culture that is at present being consolidated to serve the working masses instead of their former oppressors as 'debased socialist realism' for is it not a dire threat to the class for whom she speaks? This woman Robinson is poison, all the more dangerous because she poses as one of China's friends. She wants China to end its 'isolation' — isolation from imperialism. We must thoroughly expose this spokesman for British imperialism, who does not shrink even from directly attacking the greatest Marxist Leninist of our era, the Lenin of our times, Comrade Mao Tse-tung. His mighty red book is shamelessly referred to as 'a text on which to practise literacy', a 'cut above the horror comics which GI's prefer'. Where is the Marxist Leninist whose heart does not burn with fierce class anger at the monstrous impudence of this counter revolutionary? — Who, does not clench his fists out of hatred for the class enemy when he hears that the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat is but 'a cut above' the most corrupt and brutalised propaganda put out by US imperialism!

As Professor of Economics at Cambridge University, Joan Robinson is a hireling of the capitalist class. The day she ceases to serve their interests she will be out of a job. She is an enemy of Marxism, of Mao Tse-tung, and of working peoples the world over.

So is SACU. It is an opportunist organisation under the domination of the bourgeoisie paving the way for the growth of revisionism in the ranks of British Marxist Leninists. It is the duty of every Marxist Leninist who wishes to promote real understanding between the peoples of Britain and China to ceaselessly attack and expose it.

SUN YAT-SEN: man of genius

François Geoffroy-Dechaume, writing in 1967, counts Sun Yat-sen amongst China's men of genius, naming him with Confucius, Mencius, Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu and Mo-Tzu.

Strange Vigour: A Biography of Sun Yat-sen by Bernard Martin has been re-issued at the request of the Library Association, with a new preface by the author and an additional chapter bringing the book up to date. Now available through any library. Ask for the new edition.

... and two leading members reply

From Joseph Needham

THE 'Internationalists of Sussex University' probably have their hearts in the right place, but they do not use their heads to do the reading and study that students ought to do. Perhaps this is why they are so un-Marxist as to agree with that great capitalist Henry Ford that 'history is bunk'. For if they knew any history they would know that the Royal Society, the premier scientific academy of the world, a body with which the Soviet Academy of Sciences and Academia Sinica have permanent agreements, is so called only because of its enlightened founder, Charles II in the 17th century. What he did was part of the bourgeois revolution, considered by all Marxists as highly progressive in its time.

Anyone with the slightest historical perspective would also know that Chinese history did not begin with the Communist Revolution, nor with the Kuomintang either. One would study what bureaucratism, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have in fact meant to the Chinese, instead of talking nonsense about 'enemies of the working-class'. If the 'students' looked into any modern history, incidentally, they might have informed themselves about the political records of those whom they are now attacking in so unfriendly a way. Having been written off as a Marxist in academic circles for forty years I am not unduly concerned at being called anti-Marxist by the Sussex 'students'.

A little philosophy might also not be out of place. If they had had a more careful look at that, they would not have made so ludicrous a misunderstanding of what I have said about China and Marxism. In 'Science and Civilisation in China', and in other publications, much evidence has been brought forward to show that the philosophical roots of dialectical materialism in Europe were in part Chinese, transmitted Westward in the 18th century. Hence there was indeed a natural affinity between Marxism and China's main philosophical traditions, and Marxism going eastwards was in a way going home. This is why China did not exactly have to borrow it from the West. Or could it be that the 'students' are following the example of old-style theological polemics, and quoting out of context to suit their purpose?

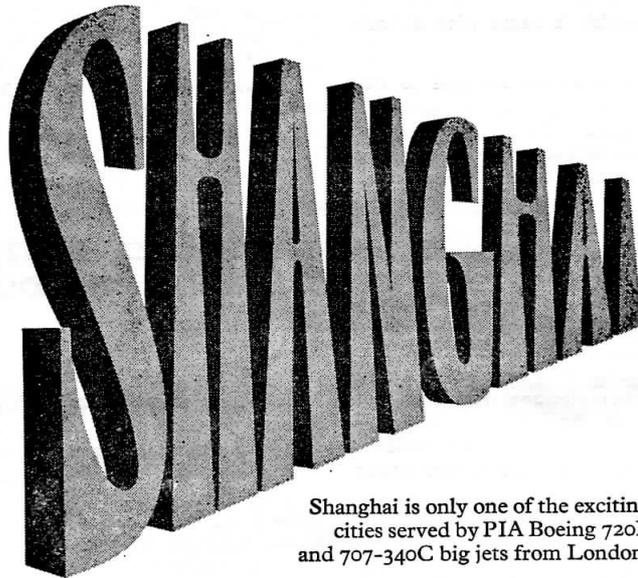
What their words really express is a general venom against the 'Establishment'. This is no bad thing in itself, yet if indulged in this way must make the 'Sussex Internationalists' a tiny sectarian group. But SACU was founded to mobilise friendship and support for China, for People's China, among the great broad masses of the British people, the vast majority of whom are far indeed from sharing their ideas, and would repudiate their intemperate and rhetorical language. This task will be faithfully continued.

From Joan Robinson

THAT A GROUP of radical students is resolved to promote friendship with the Chinese people in the British labour movement is much to be

welcomed, though I doubt if the ultra-left line will prove to be very effective at this stage. The immediate and urgent task is to build up a public opinion that will oppose our Government's policy of supporting the USA in hostility to China, and this can by no means be confined to the 'ranks of British Marxist Leninists'. SACU tries to follow the injunction to unite with all who can be united with. Let us look for the major contradiction, which is certainly not between me and the students, but between both of us and the apathy which permits decent British people to be unwitting supporters of aggression and imperialism.

It is natural that my article should rouse controversy. There seem to be some misunderstandings in these criticisms of it which can be dealt with later. Meanwhile I must point out that nothing in my article is 'official'. Apart from statements issued by the Council of Management of SACU, each of us takes individual responsibility for our own efforts to carry out the general aim of promoting understanding and combating misrepresentations about China.



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MAO ON AFRO-AMERICAN STRUGGLE

STATEMENT BY COMRADE MAO TSE-TUNG, CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA, IN SUPPORT OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN STRUGGLE AGAINST VIOLENT REPRESSION (APRIL 16, 1968)

SOME DAYS AGO,* Martin Luther King, the Afro-American clergyman, was suddenly assassinated by the US imperialists. Martin Luther King was an exponent of non-violence. Nevertheless, the US imperialists did not on that account show any tolerance towards him, but used counter-revolutionary violence and killed him in cold blood. This has taught the broad masses of the Black people in the United States a profound lesson. It has touched off a new storm in their struggle against violent repression sweeping well over a hundred cities in the United States, a storm such as has never taken place in the history of that country. It shows that an extremely powerful revolutionary force is latent in the more than twenty million Black Americans.

The storm of Afro-American struggle taking place within the United States is a striking manifestation of the comprehensive political and economic crisis now gripping US imperialism. It is dealing a telling blow to US imperialism, which is beset with difficulties at home and abroad.

The Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed Black people for freedom and emancipation, it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited

and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class. It is a tremendous aid and inspiration to the struggle of the people throughout the world against US imperialism and to the struggle of the Vietnamese people against US imperialism. On behalf of the Chinese people, I hereby express resolute support for the just struggle of the Black people in the United States.

Racial discrimination in the United States is a product of the colonialist and imperialist system. The contradiction between the Black masses in the United States and the US ruling circles is a class contradiction. Only by overthrowing the reactionary rule of the US monopoly capitalist class and destroying the colonialist and imperialist system can the Black people in the United States win complete emancipation. The Black masses and the masses of white working people in the United States have common interests and common objectives to struggle for. Therefore, the Afro-American struggle is winning sympathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the United States. The struggle of the Black people in the United States is bound to merge with the American workers' movement, and this

will eventually end the criminal rule of the US monopoly capitalist class.

In 1963, in the 'Statement Supporting the Afro-Americans in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by US Imperialism' I said that 'the evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and threw with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the Black people'. I still maintain this view.

At present, the world revolution has entered a great new era. The struggle of the Black people in the United States for emancipation is a component part of the general struggle of all the people of the world against US imperialism, a component part of the contemporary world revolution. I call on the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals of all countries and all who are willing to fight against US imperialism to take action and extend strong support to the struggle of the Black people in the United States. People of the whole world, unite still more closely and launch a sustained and vigorous offensive against our common enemy, US imperialism and its accomplices. It can be said with certainty that the complete collapse of colonialism, imperialism and all systems of exploitation, and the complete emancipation of all the oppressed peoples and nations of the world are not far off.

*This statement was issued on April 16, 1968.

China study 'one of the best things we've done' writes SACU member from Yorkshire

A SACU MEMBER in Yorkshire, Mrs Jean Thomas, is a member of the local branch of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which has a small international study group. Below she writes about its activities.

'Some four years ago we decided to try and find out what we could about China and we think it is one of the best things we have done. We have read a number of books on your list* and have just finished a good discussion on Fanshen by William Hinton. We went to Leeds University a couple of years ago for lectures in the evening and met Mrs Van der Sprenkel. Later she came to talk to the whole club as did Delia Jenner as well. Some of us managed to get to the SACU

*This refers to the Book list prepared by SACU which can be purchased from central office, price 9d including postage.

weekend at Scarborough, it must be two years ago, and met Mr Berger and listened to Professor Lattimore, among others. We also went to Han Suyin's talk when she was in Leeds (and of course we have read her books, including "China in 2001"). We have not done more than create, among ourselves and I think our families, an interest in China which is sympathetic and which tries to find out what is true, so that we can reject a lot of propaganda which continues to be unsympathetic. I think it is likely that next winter the group will move on to study something else, but we shall not forget China.'

HOLIDAY CLOSE-DOWN

August 2 to September 3

SACU Central Office closed for annual holiday. The next copy of SACU NEWS will be posted to all members at the end of July.

SACU DIARY

June

- 20 **Sussex Branch.** 'Mao Tse-tung and World Hunger.' Speaker: Dr Malcolm Caldwell, lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton. 7.30 pm.
- 20 **Camden Branch.** 'The Contemporary World Through China's Eyes.' Speaker: C R Hensman. Chairman: Prof A Carey Taylor. Holborn Central Library, Theobalds Road, WC1. 7.30 pm.

July

- 2 **Discussion Meeting.** 'Contradictions Among the People of China and Eastern Europe.' Introduced by Roland Berger. 24 Warren Street, W1. 7.30 pm.
- 9 **Discussion Meeting.** Adolph Silver will report on his May 1968 visit to China. 24 Warren Street, W1. 7.30 pm.
- 12 **Barnet Branch.** China-Vietnam Forum—Victory of People's War over Imperialism. Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, NW4 (nearest underground Hendon Central) 7.45 pm.

Revolutionary Opera

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In addition, *Taking the Bandits' Stronghold* has technical devices undreamed of by earlier producers; the blending of all these elements is admirable. The opera is set in the high mountains of North-east China and the use of back-projection provides a series of cloud-capped peaks, snowy valleys, fierce blizzards and tranquil mountain moonlight which are not only exquisite in themselves but which, more important, create a mood, imbuing the whole performance with a feeling of height and cold which markedly enhances the dramatic effect. In retrospect I realise that, like Chinese landscape painting, they also create a sense of the vastness and permanence of Nature in contrast with tiny ephemeral man; just as the struggle of the peasants and the People's Liberation Army against the enemy represents, for the audience, the continuing struggle of good against evil. Particularly imaginative was the lighting in the bandits' stronghold scene where the chief, Mountain Hawk, and his henchmen — Flatnose and Big Pock-mark! — are holding, in high fettle, their Feast of a Hundred Chickens. Mountain Hawk is picked out in a series of fearsome green and multi-coloured spotlights against the sinister, subaqueous-coloured flood-lighting of the cave.

When the fighting begins, a complex pattern of lighting follows it around the stage, heightening the excitement of the fracas and blending with cos-

tumes, music and movement into a brilliant theatrical spectacle. This scene represents the epitome of the old and new Chinese opera. The acrobatic dancing, the larger-than-life, formalised gestures, the swinging and swishing of cloaks and weapons, the orchestra, the style of the singing are pure 'trad', but the treatment, the whole effect, the speed, the cinematographic movement around the stage, the cutting of lights and action from group to group are unmistakably modern — like the theme.

Since, at present, all Chinese drama must have a theme of interest and instruction for the people, the producer is denied the use of the bizarre costumes of the 'White Snake' or 'Monkey'. The producer of *Stronghold* compensates the eye of the beholder by his skilful use of the correct modern costumes. The swinging, white snow-cloaks of the People's Liberation Army, their scarlet badges and banners, the great fur-lined coats and capes, the hussar-like hats and outlandish gear of the bandits are exaggerated just enough to make a stage spectacle without departing too far from verisimilitude.

For the theme the authors have found a true local story with everything it takes — peasants hounded by a wicked bandit gang in league with the Japanese and the KMT; a peasant girl disguised, for safety, as a boy living with her hunter-father who alone knows the secret path to the bandits' lair; the People's Liberation Army arriving amongst a fearful, hostile peasantry, winning their confidence by their honesty and their determination to prepare to fight and defeat the bandits (and, en passant, slay the local tiger). All these feats the People's

Liberation Army achieve, thanks mostly to the support of the peasantry and the courage and cunning of the hero, who worms his way into the confidence of Mountain Hawk to become his chief aide (he kills the tiger en route to the cave). Incidents from the life stories of the villagers are interwoven with the main tale which is a rattling good adventure story with no more pretensions to sophistication or the niceties of socio-pathological studies than our 'Westerns'; there is the same inevitable, heart-warming triumph of the good over the bad. But there are two major differences. First, in the *Stronghold* we have a story of the country's immediate past, of people and events in all their tragedy, triumph and agony, and one only too well remembered by most of the audience (Canton suffered greatly from Japanese and KMT atrocities). So there is a close rapport between stage and auditorium. Second, there is no love-interest; sex never raises its head for a moment!

The acting, down to the merest bit part, was admirable. The hero, Yang Tzu-jung, leader of a reconnaissance platoon of the PLA, gave a virtuoso performance as singer, dancer, actor and acrobat alike; his villainous counterpart would have stolen the show from any less gifted performer, for he had a magnetic stage presence — and that slightly comic sinisterness that all the best villains possess.

Both actors had star quality in plenty, but the phrase is, I am sure, suspect in a China where stars' airs and graces are specifically deplored and team-work stressed.

Indeed a performance to be remembered and one which would enthral an audience anywhere in the world.

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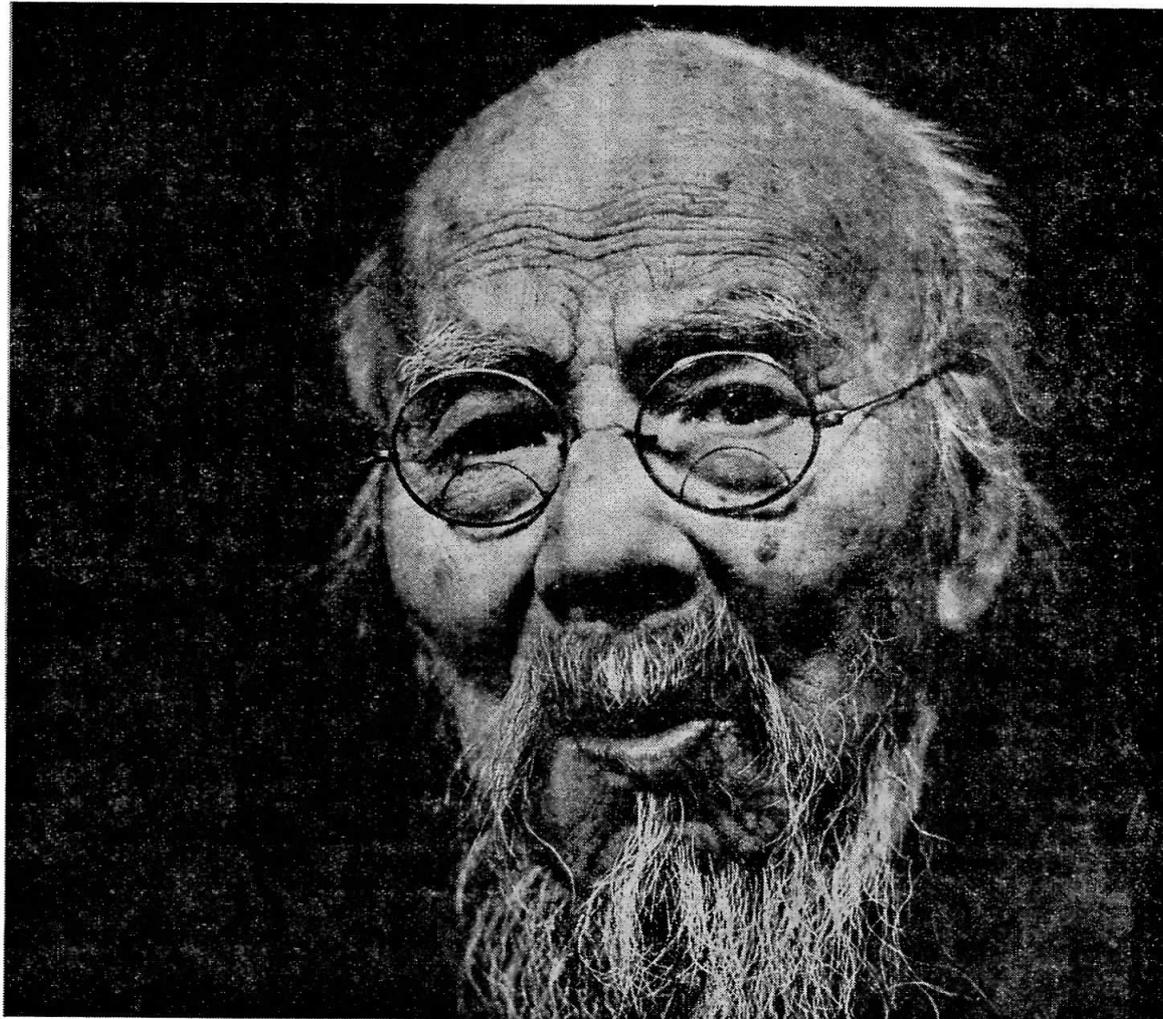
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