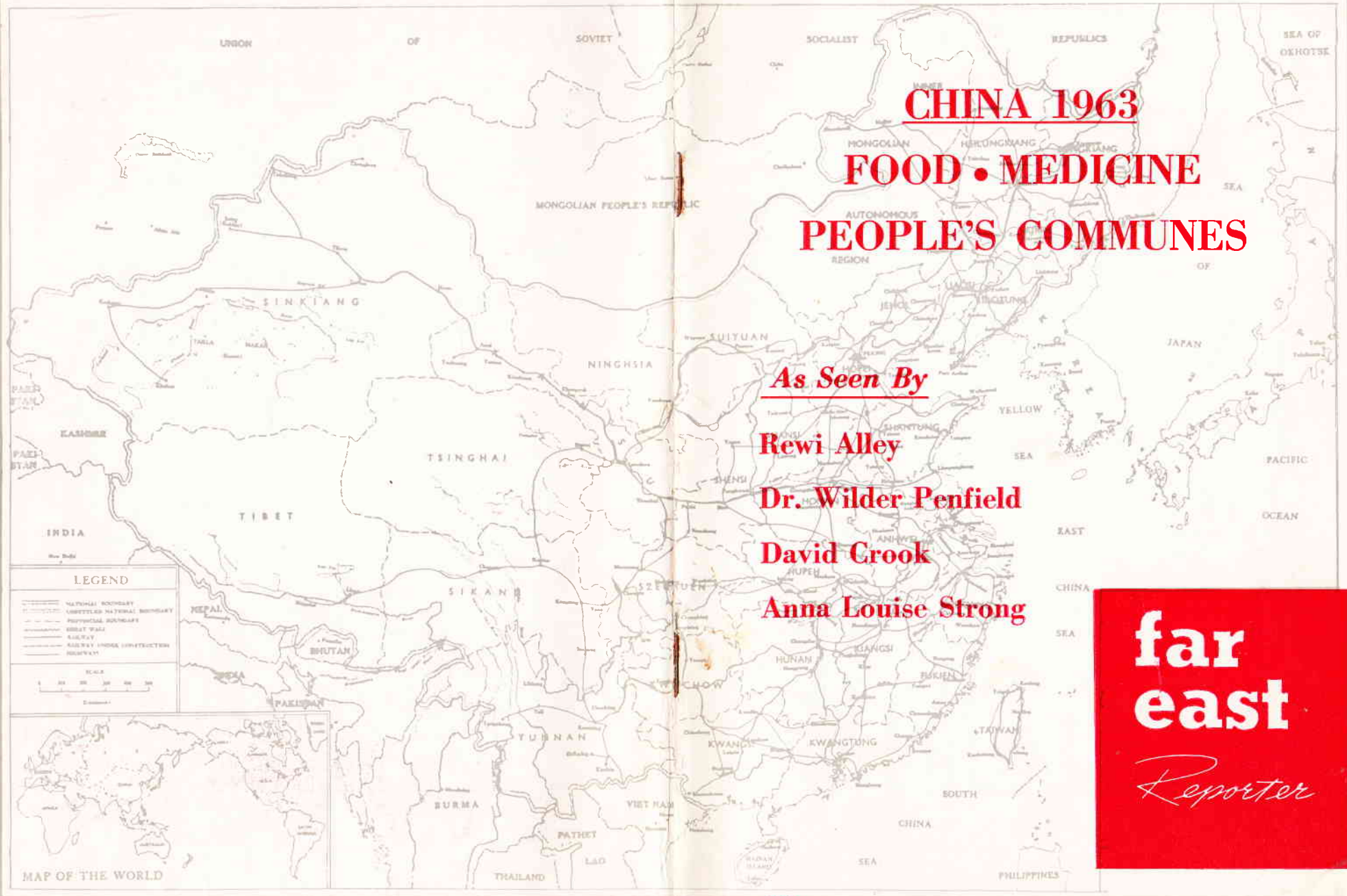


MAP OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



CHINA 1963

**FOOD • MEDICINE
PEOPLE'S COMMUNES**

As Seen By
Rewi Alley
Dr. Wilder Penfield
David Crook
Anna Louise Strong

**far
east**
Reporter

INTRODUCTION

China has been through three difficult years of economic strain. Beginning in 1959 natural calamities, the worst in a hundred years, affected half the cultivated land. The economy was strained in three areas—food shortages, lessened foreign trade, and a slow-down in the industrial program. The food shortage was successfully met mainly by rationing, by the strengthening of the people's communes, and by the purchase of cereals on the world market. Foreign trade, with exports largely consisting of agricultural products, was curtailed. Readjustment of the national economy gave prior emphasis to the agricultural front; light industry to meet daily consumer needs took precedence, for the time being, over heavy industry.

The general picture presented to the American people by our news media during these three years of economic difficulty was a China lacking food to the point of starvation and of a Chinese government so mismanaged that China has been unable to proceed toward her goal of a modern industrial society. The purveyors of such a picture are in for rude awakenings. The magazine *Atlas* of October 1962, reprinting an article from the Dusseldorf *VDI-Nachrichten*, reported:

“Any prophecy that the economic collapse of China is imminent must be taken with more than a grain of salt. To be sure, large purchases of wheat and flour from Canada and West Germany might lead to the erroneous conclusion that China faces famine. Certainly a portion of these imports is intended to soften the effects of a crop failure. But at the same time it must not be overlooked that China has

valuable food stuffs such as soya beans and rice for export and is importing cheaper food stuffs in order to increase her import of capital goods." (A. E. Friis)

And the *New York Times* last summer reported:

"The belief in the West is that China will revert to programs of rapid industrialization . . . as soon as farm production reaches tolerable levels. The outlook in the opinion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Service is 'fairly good.'" (5-26-62)

And five months later the *New York Times* editorially observed:

"The new industrial giant that almost every one envisaged as just around the corner does not yet exist" but "a quiet extensive basic structure exists which if built upon could grow into a big industrial system." (10-1-62)

And in the spring of 1963 the *New York Times* reported:

"Observers here (Hongkong) believe that Peking has now called a halt to retrenchment in the fields of heavy industry and capital construction. The movement of manpower to the countryside has slowed to a trickle and the closing of factories which had been going on over the last two years seems to have stopped." (4-5-63)

FOUR FIRST-HAND REPORTS OF CONDITIONS IN CHINA: FOOD AND MEDICAL ADVANCES

FAR EAST REPORTER is happy to share with its readers reports from four experts who have knowledge and first-hand experience in China. *Rewi Alley*, who reports on the food and agricultural situation, has lived in China for thirty-five years.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, Director Emeritus of the Montreal Neurological Institute, is one of the world's leading neurosurgeons, and reports on medical education and impressions during his recent visit in China.

David Crook, a Britisher, has taught Chinese university students for seventeen years, including three years in mission universities

in old China. He writes to the *Manchester Guardian* to react to and correct impressions and accounts of China today that have appeared in the western press by visitors who spent short periods of time in the new China without the experience of the old China as background for their reporting. Mr. Crook is at present teaching in the Foreign Language University in Peking.

Anna Louise Strong, veteran American reporter, needs no introduction to any American or world audience. Living in China today, where she has just celebrated her seventy-eighth birthday, she continues her amazing ability to be at places where significant events and developments are occurring.

REWI ALLEY REPORTS

The New Zealand China Society late in 1962 published *Rewi Alley's China's Food Problem*, a fifteen-page pamphlet. In a section "About the Author," the Society states:

"*Rewi Alley* was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, 64 years ago. Has lived in China continuously for 35 years (except for occasional visits back home—his latest was in 1960—and to England, the United States, India, and other countries). Reads, writes and translates Chinese and speaks it fluently (it is said, with a New Zealand accent!) in more than one dialect. Went to Shanghai in 1927, served a period with the Fire Department, was thereafter for 10 years Inspector of Factories under the Shanghai Municipal Council. In the early thirties, became known overseas in connection with his work for famine and flood relief. Helped to found and was Technical Advisor for the world-renowned 'Chinese Industrial Cooperatives,' in Chinese 'Gung Ho' (working together). Begun in 1938, in the teeth of Japanese invasion, 'Gung Ho' became a legend, and a battle cry; and *Rewi Alley*, traveling from end to end of China, had so many hairsbreadth escapes that he became known as 'The Man With Nine Lives.' A founder of the famous 'Bailie Schools' (technical training schools for Gung Ho), he became headmaster of the Sandan (Kansu) Bailie School . . . this school survived many perils and came under the wing

of the new Government after 1949. It now flourishes in Lanchow and is often visited by Rewi Alley. Some of the books and translations by Rewi Alley: *Sandan, An Experiment in Creative Education* (1959); *Yo Ban Fa* and *The People Have Strength*—diaries of life in China before and after 1949; *Man Against the Flood*; *Stories Out of China*; *Children of the Dawn*; *Fragments of Living* (poems); *The People Sing*; *Peace Through the Ages*; *The People Speak Out*—(and, FAR EAST REPORTER may add, some dozen or so more books!).

The text of the New Zealand China Society pamphlet follows:

Foreword by

W. T. G. Airey, MA, BA (OXON)

Formerly Professor of History,

University of Auckland

It is good and necessary to have an account of current conditions in China from one who knows that country and the life of its people over some thirty-five years of strivings and change.

Rewi Alley does not pretend that a high standard of living has been reached, that mistakes have not been made, or that natural disasters have not caused difficulties. But he has been among the peoples of China almost from end to end of that vast country, more perhaps than all but a few Chinese. He knows what old conditions were like; he has seen the changes—the enthusiasms, the set-backs, the new efforts, the general trend. He hates bureaucracy and pompous fronts. He is not the feted guest who allegedly is shown only the good things and can be hoodwinked into seeing nothing that he is not told to see. Rewi Alley's great characteristic is a living, warm humanity—a love of actual people in their daily life, not of abstract "humanity." He mixes with them, talks with them, sees.

Here is his report. Read it and compare it with the stories we get of starvation, enslavement, and breakdown of communes. We can be grateful for having someone so able and well placed as Rewi Alley to keep us up-to-date on the facts about a country of such great importance to human destiny as China.

CHINA'S FOOD PROBLEMS

By REWI ALLEY

China, with its continental climate, has throughout its long history been subject to cycles of flood and drought. In the years 1926-30, when I first came to Shanghai, there was one that ravaged the whole of the north-west, so that some eight million people died during it. I worked in what is now called Inner Mongolia on one relief project where 200,000 famine refugees were buried in an old city moat. It was a heart-searing experience to see peasants stumbling over the dry roads and, at last, sitting down in the dust to die there; to watch children fading away to skeletons until they started to swell — and then die. Good, hard-working common folk, with no way out.

The less one thinks about these times, the happier one is. Then in the years of the great flood in 1931-32, death from hunger was widespread down the whole Yangtse valley. In Honan, in 1939-42 over three million people died of famine. The older people would stay in their houses and swell up and die. The young ones would join in bands to beg or try to get on railway trains to escape. When the cutting winds of winter came, the sun, which had kept them alive, no longer even kept them warm, and they wilted and died everywhere.

Starvation Under Kuo-Min-Tang

Around the great cities, in Kuo-min-tang times, there was perpetual famine, with an immensely high mortality rate. When anything like the Japanese attacks on Shanghai in 1932 and 1937 happened, hundreds of thousands died of the hunger which affected millions. In the little town of Sandan in West Kansu, where I lived for a decade, there was always spring famine in the countryside in the pre-Liberation period, with children eating kaolin porcelain clay to assuage hunger. "Kwan Yin Earth" they used to call it, "Kwan Yin" being the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy. Sometimes the kaolin would lodge so stiffly in the lower intestine, the child would die. Young conscripts torn from the villages would die of starvation on the road they marched.

The upper classes, of course, had everything. The gay life went

on as usual. The poorest took the whole burden, and it was they who died. Racketeers hoarded grain and sold it at terrific prices. One mission in Inner Mongolia bought up the best land and later rented it to approved tenants. Keepers of prostitute houses in the cities bought up small girls for a song in the interior. The average span of life, after they were in the profession, was two years. I verified this on seeing a survey amongst them in the Foochow Road area of Shanghai in the thirties.

The life of a common human being had become a thing of small account. In these times of degeneration, the main thing for the wealthy class was to have a nice home in a coastal city, a good car, children on scholarships in the U.S.A., a deferential attitude toward all Americans and a hearty contempt for the ordinary Chinese people.

Such a thing as a relief committee was one which set many minds working to see how much and how quickly "squeeze" could be made from it. When I was in charge of the reconstruction of the dykes after the great Yangtse flood of 1931, I estimated that we did not get more than 40 per cent of the relief loan. The rest was stolen by the gentry and soldiers of Wuhan and Changsha. Such things were the rule and not the exception. Dead babies swirling around in the flood waters were one of the most common things to see in flood-hit Hankow. The world did not hear of such things, for to the foreign press famines were not news. Communiques inside China were so bad that it was difficult to move food from one part to another, even if there was a surplus.

Fourth Year of Drought

In the Liberation period since 1949 there have been many natural calamities—floods on the Hwai and Yellow Rivers, and in 1954 there was the greatest flood of all time on the Yangtse. Now, in 1962, we face the fourth dry year in North and North-West China. The way in which each of these difficulties has been met has been epic. No one has made money out of the troubles of the people. China has 100 million more people than she had in 1949, but she has also brought into cultivation vast acreages of once waste ground. Deserts have been made into green fields, marshes have been drained, hill valleys once deserted have been brought

into production. People have been channelled out of urban areas back to rural ones to help in the fight for better production. Innumerable irrigation schemes, too, have been built by the people, using underground or glacial waters. Apparent disasters caused by typhoons and late frosts have been met by the organized strength of the people.

Without the new commune organization losses in people would have been high, probably running into millions. As it was, people went a bit shorter than usual, but children got their full rations. Of course, in the dry north-west loess hill areas in which irrigation is not possible, conditions have been tough enough. In these times the life of any one individual is considered a valuable thing. Whenever a problem affects life, it must be grappled with and solved. No responsible rural leader could retain the confidence of the people amongst whom he worked unless this was so. If he loses their confidence, he loses his job.

The way China has dealt with its grain problem is the epic of our age, a triumph of organization, of self-sacrifice, the whole country coming out of the ordeal immeasurably stronger than it entered it. China had raised grain production to around 180 million tons by the early fifties, gaining around 250 million tons in the good year of 1958. India, with 450 million people, got only around 80 million tons of grain last year.

An Expanding Farm Economy

China has an expanding farm economy—new methods are being applied all the time, new lands reclaimed. In Peking and other centres, I have never seen such a plentiful supply of vegetables, nor so many varieties as this year. First crops in the provinces are reported to be considerably better than those last year, and, of course, there have been provinces that have had surpluses all through the last four years.

If there is the organized determination to improve, natural calamities can be turned to good account. Mistakes show up better when hard times come. Not a few bureaucrats have found themselves uncomfortably jolted after a careful analysis of mistakes has been made. The old Red Army learnt to fight by fighting. China in the early sixties is learning better how to base an advancing economy on the people in a socialist way. There is intense heart-

searching at all levels, and creative ideas that have to do with better agricultural production get immediate support. For instance, meteorological stations in Kansu, using modern equipment and local experience, are able to give valuable weather forecasts, both medium and long-range, to the local farmers.

In North China, which has been the area affected by the drought, the main crops rotated are winter wheat, harvested in May and June, and then the maize gets the rainy season of July and August and is harvested in September-October. Between the rows of maize, beans are usually grown as a subsidiary crop. In Honan, the Vice-President of an agricultural college has evolved a hybrid drought-resisting maize that last season was grown on some 300,000 acres of land, giving a 10 to 30 per cent increase over other seed used. Further new strains are being tried out this year on many state farms. The daily papers, radio and television in the cities tell always of such successes and give impetus to the movement to make more of them.

Without looking over the land, especially in the drier parts, it is difficult to realize the shocking state long centuries of official neglect and landlord greed have left in the erosion of crop lands. The New China has inherited this condition, and has to deal with it as swiftly and as best she can.

Taming The Rivers

In some places rivers have been dammed and hundreds of miles of aqueducts led over loess ridge tops to irrigate the terraced fields below. Many rivers have been dammed, as the Yellow River is being dammed now. Silt has been halted from coming down the hillsides by better terracing, in which the whole countryside, including town officials and children, have taken part. Gullies can be filled with tree growth and check-dams built.

Afforestation in big belts gives shelter for better crops and stops the drift of Gobi sands. A friend was telling me about the old town of Kulun in Inner Mongolia, which was once a trading centre set among trees. The local princes felled the trees to build temples or to sell the timbers. Erosion ripped a stony river-bed over forty yards wide through the heart of the town, which was soon almost deserted. Today the tree-bordered stream runs in a concrete channel about 20 feet wide and six feet deep into a reservoir which regu-

lates the river's flow. Astride the channel is a small power plant that lights the town.

When last up in that area, I asked a local farmer how much grain he allowed himself to eat a month. "Sixty-two pounds," he said. "Is it enough?" I enquired. "No. I could eat more. But we get meat here, so it is not so bad." He was a tall rangy man without any surplus fat. Cadres in Peking doing office work would be setting their ration at 32 to 35 pounds and feeling that it was plenty. It is true that at times oils and fats have been absent, and protein has to come in the form of beans or fish. But everyone takes part of the burden and what there is goes round.

Adverse weather conditions have stimulated the production of mechanical pumping stations for the paddy fields, whose capacity has increased tenfold in the last four years. A man-made river, over ten miles long, that drains excess water from four lakes into the Yangtse, the Youth Irrigation Canal in Kwantung and the vast irrigation complex in Anhwei have been built. In Chinese Central Asia waste lands have been reclaimed in a big way, and tens of thousands of wells have been sunk, especially in the North China Plain.

In every primary school in the country children have lessons based on the grain problem. They learn why we have to be economical not only in the use of grain but also with cotton and tobacco, to make more land available for food.

The first crop in the south this 1962 has been good. Reasonable first harvests have come in, too, from places even in the north, where the drought has been bad. Good rains in Heilungkiang have made for especially fine crops in the north-east.

It is recognized that only when the grain problem has been properly mastered can there be a realization of the full potential of the people in rapid industrial expansion.

"Famine" Refugees

There has been a great deal said in foreign papers about "famine" refugees from China to Hong Kong. The Kowloon leased-territories of Hong Kong are part of the Kwangtung Province, and pretty well all of the three to four million people of Hong Kong, which includes Kowloon, have close relatives in or around Canton. So do most of the 14 million overseas Chinese, numbers of whom

come through Hong Kong to see their families in the old country. Cantonese people have always been accustomed to coming and going, and there are young folk who want the excitement of trying their luck abroad as their forefathers did.

Many other people cross the border or come by sea each day, since much of Hong Kong's food supply comes from Kwangtung (as, incidentally, does a good deal of its water). The Colonial authorities have the power to turn back whomever they like. Various U.S. interests have publicized some incidents of such turning back in the spring of 1962, and it has reverberated throughout the world. The same U.S.A. that is busy bombing—with napalm and poisons that kill people, crops and trees—the peasant population of South Vietnam just across the South China Sea, suddenly becomes humanitarian! Continental boundaries are somewhat artificial things, and people have a way of drifting across them. But the pressing problem of Hong Kong is how to market its industrial production that the Chinese people who live there produce with such skill. The U.S.A. keeps it out. There is nothing much to fear from a few more wealth makers who walk over the hills.

Dissatisfied? Of course, among the 700 million folk of China there will always be some such, especially among the old privileged classes that once could ride easily on the people's backs, so that naturally there will be those who go out with a suitably lurid story to sell to the highest bidder. And it seems that Hong Kong is full of foreign experts and press men who have to depend on these for their "news."

Meeting Local Needs

Actually the struggle on the agricultural front in China is one to integrate successfully the forces and needs of production. Light and felicitous extemporization will not do. For sure, wheat is nicer to eat than the tall kaoliang, but kaoliang will stand high above flooded fields and still give a good crop, while wheat would be submerged. For sure, tractors are essential in places with short springs and autumns where there are wide stretches of flat land, but they are not yet the answer in paddy fields. On the other hand conservatism in the use of better seeds and fertilizers has to be struggled against.

It is not always easy to change traditionally hallowed thought processes in rural areas. While in Cuba last spring I saw many pieces of ground that would have made wonderful terraces for paddy fields, but which the local farmer thought of simply as waste ground. The Italian or Spanish farmer might look at many a hilly ravine in South China and think how many olive trees he could grow there and how much oil he could get from them.

Most South China farmers have been used to getting their oil seeds from the rape which is grown as a rotation crop on heavy land. But, in Yunnan in 1959, I saw how the Yi people were planting literally millions of walnut trees in the hill valleys and were pressing wild walnuts they had gathered for their oil. Room for experimentation and adaptation remains. I like the way simple farmers who have been successful with local crop experiments are brought into the universities to lecture to the specialists.

When a great number of people, a rising third of the whole population of the world, go putting their hearts and minds into finding a solution, even the weather gods begin to sit up and take notice. It is safe to say that the new China will completely master her food problems in the same powerful, sane way as she has mastered the many other difficulties of first years of liberation.

Cultivating Private Allotments

Sustained community effort to improve agricultural production in China is one thing. Another is the individual one in which the family works together on its own private allotment growing what it likes for home use or for household sale. Country people are all better off than city ones in this respect, for so much can be grown not only on allotments but also on corners of waste land, beside river banks and so on; grandfather his few tobacco plants; grandmother a few cotton bushes. Beehives, chickens, pigs, rabbits, goats, sheep and fish-pond can all in a measure help commune folk. Villagers, too, can plant sunflowers on headlands, run pumpkin and melon vines over their cottages; but city organizations usually have a hill farm outside the city where they grow a good deal, and others have fish-ponds or orchards. Even in my Peking compound, the children go out to get leaves for the family rabbits, which are kept in hutches, but their plots of vegetables are not so

extensive as a village family would have. When city people go to the country these days they carefully take string bags and come home well stocked with good things.

In round figures, the cultivated area of China comes to about 270 million acres, set mostly among the hills and streams of its hinterland. As many hills, valleys and unused lands can be used to produce fruit, the growing of walnuts, peaches, apricots, apples and the local dates has received a great boost. China is the original home of the peach, which has been cultivated for the past three thousand years. Recently a peachgrowers' conference has been held in Shanghai as part of the drive forward in fruit production. A winter peach has been found in Shensi which ripens best in snowy December. Research has found that in various local areas fruit trees exist that bear the whole year round, including lichees, loquats, pears and pumelos. These strains are being spread over the growing areas.

There are around 170 million acres of forest land in China that is being added to all the time, and food bearing trees are being included among extensions of it. I was interested in a report on the growing of apples up in Heilungkiang, 52 degrees north and adjoining Siberia. They were planted horizontally, with earth piled on the tree trunks in the winter months to protect them from cold, and the branches covered with straw. Then, up in Sinkiang, a virgin apple forest has been found that yields thousands of tons of apples a year. The new oil fields at Karamai below it, the oil produced there and the new highways make this food supply of immediate use.

The central areas of China have a great deal of land liable to flooding. A certain species of wild water rice that is harvested by boats is helping to make many of these areas more productive.

Food From Lakes And Sea

In all there are about 50 million acres that can be used as fish-ponds. Now, throughout the north and west as well as in the south, hydro-electric or irrigation schemes provide fishing ponds. Away up in Yulin by the Ordos Desert, I ate good fish from the local fish-ponds.

Along her coastline China has fine fishing grounds which bring

in a rich supply of sea foods, and recently it has been found possible to grow edible seaweed in places once thought too warm for this highly regarded food. By planting the spores in suitable coastal waters rich crops have been won in southern waters.

There is no limit to the potential of the land. Deep ploughing and fertilizer have produced crops of fantastic proportions. Experiments have been carried out in all provinces and the results are being analysed. It is possible to double food production in one generation by the use of seeds alone. Five tons of grain an acre is not by any means an impossible score to aim at.

During my first two decades in China, the situation in the rural areas was rendered chaotic by the greed of landlords and grain merchants and officials. There was no incentive to the people to produce more. In many of the great rice producing areas the population was rotten with the liver fluke, and potbellied children with big lustreless eyes moved apathetically over the land already weary of their brief spell of life. Now the curse of the liver fluke and debilitating malaria has been basically overcome, the health and therefore the energy of the rural population improves.

The poor of China, who are the great majority of the Chinese people, are eating at least twice as much as they did in the bad old days, to which the United States and their henchmen on Taiwan want to force them to return now. In my first twenty years in China, a high percentage of the rural population died yearly because of malnutrition.

In those days, too, whoever heard of there being any kind of officially backed movement for young people to go back and work in famine or undeveloped areas? Did the farmers in places where there was a surplus go on short rations themselves to send food to places where it was really needed? Yet these things are part and parcel of today's China, really basic training in the task of building a better society.

One of the first movements started throughout China after liberation, was that against waste, bureaucracy and corruption. The problems that arose after droughts started to create shortages brought added emphasis to the movement to eradicate waste and bureaucracy, the third weakness being no longer a major one. Bureaucracy brings waste, because the bureaucrat, brought up in the old society, has been steered away from simple practical things.

"A Pair of Hands to Each Mouth"

Chairman Mao said that though there were at the time he spoke 650 million mouths, yet there were a pair of hands to each mouth. The hands and the creative brain behind them can solve any problem. In many parts of the undeveloped hinterland the cry is for more people. "Not enough people to do all there is to do." How often I have heard those words!

In Chinese cities during hot weather popsicles on sticks are sold on all the streets. They contain Cuban sugar, and grain has been exported to Cuba to buy it. Grain has also gone to Albania. Rice goes to Hong Kong all the time to fill commitments there. Grain has been imported from Canada and Australia, doing much to ease the grain surplus in those countries, and something to assist the coastal cities in China.

The knowledge that the U.S. Seventh Fleet is based on Taiwan, which is occupied by the U.S.A., does not make normal trade relations with other countries easy. It is in the interests of Australia and New Zealand to see that the Chinese market be kept wide open. The fact that rockets and all kinds of filth are trained on China from over 220 U.S. bases in Japan, as well as those on Okinawa and the Philippines, and on her southern borders, forces China to maintain sufficient force to repel such an assault, if necessary. Armies take a great deal of food to support, and one cannot discuss the food situation without recognizing that.

China's Liberation army, however, is not like the looting, beating Kuomintang, but it turns to and assists with production wherever it can. When a typhoon rips in from the Pacific, the army stands with the farmers, saving whatever is possible. Down in South Yunnan, where the Tai people live, there was a big rain while I was last there. The army came out in force the next day, helping the people to pick the freshly sprouted leaves from tea bushes on the hillsides, so that none would be lost because there were not enough hands.

The first great boost to food production in China was the land reform that came in the early fifties. In Sandan, where I was living, the change was dramatic as grain production doubled, then trebled. In the old days peasants could eat wheat for two months of the year, barley, oats, potatoes and millet for the rest; the poorest were always half or wholly starving in the two lean months before

the harvest. Then in the 1958-59 period too much attention was put to growing just wheat and smelting iron, and not enough on the cultivation of quick growing and more reliable crops of oats and barley that would stand the dry weather better. Then followed a cycle of dry weather. I have not been back to Sandan since 1959, but I am sure now that there will be a great deal of oats, barley and millet harvested, and that in the future the drought resisting crops and the 60-odd day ones will predominate on unirrigated lands, leaving the 92-day wheat growing to those whose fields have an assured water supply. More notice, too, will be taken of local farmer advice.

Feudalism to Socialism

The heart searchings of the four drought years have strengthened the determination of the people that the commune can be made the basis for a successful rural economy in China on which industrialization can be built. From a semi-feudalist to a socialist form of economy over so great a portion of the world's population, in just over twelve years, has meant that whole lot of things have had to be done very fast. Not everything that the more conservative class as mistakes, however, were actually so. More often they were things that suffered because of some kind of bureaucratic, unpractical execution.

The communes are good; there is no doubt of that. There will undoubtedly be more natural calamities, but facing them will be a steeled people.

Long years of neglect through the centuries can still make for flood problems in China. Slowly, however, the mountains and ravines are being covered with trees again; re-afforestation more than matches timber fellings; dams rise; stop-banks are being more scientifically built and better guarded. When the Yangtse is harnessed, the Yellow River projects are completed, and all the myriad "little waters" are controlled, there will be basic changes.

The United States hungers to come again in its old guise of professional famine reliever, with a whole train of propaganda and demands in its wake. Those who have seen the shocking cynicism of professional famine relief, that by and large gives comfort to the relievers themselves, would not like to see China smart again under such insults.

China can look after her own house, pay for what she needs in ordinary foreign trade, and go on developing her own vast resources. In this way she will maintain her true independence, and be able to play her part as one great self-respecting nation in a world of nations.

In the old days it gave an unctuous self-satisfaction to dispensers of relief who would come and play Lord Bountiful, to give out grain to congregations of successful Christian missions and select official organizations. They would be invited to tea by Madame Chiang Kai-shek. But the poor of China would still be dying in ditches. China has had more than enough political relief of that kind. It is better to use her own strength to help herself.

Progress in a Commune

To come from the general scene to that of one particular commune, let us discuss one in Hunan in Central China. Situated in a poor valley, wedged in between some steep hills, the Tungpung Commune had only 2200 acres of arable land. The stream that ran through it flooded frequently, as erosion, following the felling of timber, was washing down the paddy fields into the valley. The swift floods also took away the soil from the valley bottom. In 1958 the Commune was formed, and collective strength made a transformation. The river was contained, 170 ponds made, dams were built, silt dredged, 13,000 laterals dug for water so that 70 per cent of the hillside paddy fields were irrigated. Vegetation was restored in the upper catchment areas, and more composting of suitable manures done. In 1957 the area was declared to be one in need, and 250 tons of grain were brought in. In 1958 it had a surplus of nearly 800 tons to sell. Since then the output has registered a steady rise. This is just one instance of what can be done in a very poor area, when people join together to tackle the problem on a relatively large scale.

An example of how industrialization has helped in this drive for better crops comes from around the city of Wuhan. After the commune was formed in 1958, they were able to buy 200 electrically operated pumping stations which irrigate over 100,000 acres of rich rice land, where previously smaller units had used treadmills.

Recently in Shanghai, boats have been built of concrete, reinforced with steel netting, for the farmers of canal-intersected

Kiangsu. Although 10 per cent dearer than wooden junks, they require little maintenance, and have been found ideal for canals. They help the farmer to get fertilizer to his fields.

The problem of getting fertilizer to the fields has been solved in Sian in the North-West where nine communes are now growing wheat on land irrigated with treated city sewage.

In Chungking small machine shops merged to form a factory to make water pumps which are estimated to have saved 30,000 acres of paddy fields from drought or waterlogging. The factory trains operators as well. Large-scale chemical combines are making better fertilizers.

Problems Will Be Solved

The problem of how to get more food, and how to obtain it quicker, is being attacked and will be solved. With a proper use of the mobilized strength of the people, no difficulty can long stand in the way. Even such problems as the soil alkalinity of dry areas are yielding, as a scientific conference on this subject held in Urumchi, capital of Sinkiang, shows. Shelter belts have proved useful in halting rapid evaporation; crop rotations and leaving the land fallow help. Many times I have been told by the old-time officials, "Plenty of land, but none of it any use!" Now, its usefulness is being demonstrated.

Among the many things learnt in the drive for better agricultural production, however, are not a few concerned with the building of dams, and simply flooding arid and semi-dry land with water. The control of the innumerable small waters must go along with the putting in of any large-scale projects—the check dams in valley streams, and all the many measures aimed at preventing the precious loess land being carried down the rivers with every rain. The village soil conservation technician is as important as a big works engineer, for each depends on the understanding of the other and on his cooperation in fighting the war against hunger. Only by successful mass work can the problems of soil conservation be mastered.

In Northern Sinkiang an additional 20,000 acres of grain-producing land has been reclaimed by carrying on further irrigation canals from the two large rivers which drain the Altai mountains, whereas before the water flowed uselessly away. After liberation

the local people, with government aid, built small and medium canals which gave them 25,000 acres of irrigated land. After the commune was set up in 1958, about a hundred new canals were built, and 50,000 tons of grain came from the area last year. In the first days of the settlement, grain had been brought from outside. Pastoral work has also developed, because of the new water supply.

As I finish these many words about a simple yet important subject, I look out on the compound and see that rain is steadily falling. We have had many good rains like this already this summer, so that reservoirs are full and canals run well. There is no doubt about the second crop of this season; the beans, maize and all the rest are green and smiling.

Postscript

I have recently been down in Hunan province, travelling over a good many miles of the countryside. There had been a high-water period around the vast Tongting Lake, with water levels higher than those of the Great Flood of 1954, but organization was so good, and the new pumping system for disposing of the backwater so efficient, that comparatively small damage was done. The same thing was reported to me of the delta in Kwangtung when I visited there in August (1962).

This link between industry and agriculture is tremendously important. Forty thousand tractors, for instance, have come on to the land since 1960. Agricultural implement factories are now in every middle and large sized rural center all over the country. While hill climbing on Hengshan in Hunan last week, I stopped some youngsters cutting brushwood for fuel and examined their slashers. They were made of good steel that took an edge, so unlike the poor, blunt ones of the past that often would beat down rather than cut cleanly. Tools everywhere in rural areas are better.

New fertilizer factories are coming into production all the time, and I see in a daily paper today that a one-hundred-thousand-ton-per-year unit is being built in Shanghai now. The first eight months of 1962 saw as much chemical fertilizer out into the fields as was produced in the whole of 1961.

Autumn crops over the whole country have been fair this year, even quite good in some places. But drought years in China do not

as a rule suddenly change to ones with perfect farm weather—rather must one look for a period of tapering off. Where crops are good this autumn, this has usually been the result of perfecting organization with a new stress on the importance of agriculture. The weather has still been freak weather in many parts—typhoons, floods and droughts still giving some trouble. Yet, with the solving of the grain problem being given first priority, much has been done in that direction.

Now the autumn ploughing has started and the winter wheat is shortly to be sown. Two-fifths of the rice of China comes from the Yangtze River region where there is usually one crop of rice alternated with other crops. It is being harvested now. Cotton-picking in Central and North-west China is going on—generally speaking, the crop in this as well as in food grains being better than last year, though late spring losses through unseasonal frosts and early summer droughts were considerable.

More electricity, more farm machinery, better insecticides, better fertilizers—all these are coming into the rural communes all the time, so that gradually the losses sustained in the bad seasons will be recouped. The struggle that goes on is truly an epic one, deserving the sympathy and support of all who would see this people take their rightful place in the scheme of things. What I have seen myself this late autumn makes me feel optimistic. Given a couple of reasonable seasons the losses will have been made up, and the people of China enabled to do a great deal more in the realm of industry.

Peking, November, 1962

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In February 1963 Rewi Alley sent FAR EAST REPORTER an additional and later picture of the agricultural situation in China.

FACING 1963 SPRING IN CHINA

Peking winter has been mild and dry, with just one small snow fall. Not the kind of winter that local farmers like. Most other parts of China, however, report good weather with the prospects for the early harvest of the year excellent. I myself spent the first

part of the winter down in Hunan province south of the Yangtze, finding there a province pretty well recovered from the drought set-back of 1960-61.

The period of food shortages brought one idea well to the fore, namely, that unless there was sufficient grain in hand, industrialization would have to take it more slowly. So there has come an increased stress on farm production all over the country. Anything that has to do with gaining better crops gets first preference these days. Sometimes places which have suffered most make so big an effort that they do better than the once more prosperous places around. Such, for instance, is Huaian County in North Kiangsu, which suffered great flood damage so often that the people were becoming desperate. Then after the early fifties, when the Huai River Conservancy scheme was put into operation, and additions like a ten-mile protective dam made later around 1957-58, the problems of inadequate irrigation and drainage remained. A start at solving these was made when the 860 producer cooperatives in which the local farmers were organized switched over to form 28 communes at the end of 1958. The commune leaders soon got together and mapped out a plan to build 17 irrigation and drainage systems. At that time the rice paddy fields depended for their water on irrigation canals fed from 13 conduits coming through the dykes of the Grand Canal. The flow from these conduits was but one to three cubic meters per second, so that peasants had to work on treadmills day and night in the busy season, raising water to their fields. Now, taking advantage of the topography, 20,000 new irrigation canals and 7,000 drainage ditches have been completed, covering the land like fishing nets; now in practically the whole county treadmills hang up inside barn walls unused while the water slips easily into the paddy when so directed.

Another place I think of is the coast of Fokien in the South-East, where there are over 100,000 acres of sand dunes from which typhoons lift the sand and blow it inland amongst the standing crops. Now belts of trees, 60 deep, totaling 300 miles in length, have been planted, and already stand between 20 and 30 feet high. It has been found that the bigger of these belts can reduce wind force from 48 to 68 per cent, while evaporation on the leeward side has dropped by 10 to 26 per cent. Last autumn, when a 60-mile an hour typhoon passed over Tungshan county there, crops behind

the trees stood intact. In the past, even 40-mile an hour winds would cause sandstorms and crop damage.

Quite naturally, the fertilizer industry is coming to the fore: small-scale fertilizer plants, which were started in the leap-forward beginnings, are today growing into larger, mechanized plants. In Yunnan province alone, eight modernized factories are doubling their production of phosphate fertilizer this year. Each makes its own sulphuric acid, and the main product of each plant is calcium superphosphate which is very much preferred all over rural Yunnan. A good deal of the new factory equipment is made in Yunnan, the rest coming from the industrial centers of China. None needs to be imported.

Agricultural colleges are helping also. For instance, there has been a good deal of investigation around the adaptation of better vegetable strains for different climates. It's easy enough to say, "Tomatoes will not grow here" and leave it at that. A professor in Harbin way up in the cold North-East has gone into the matter of growing tomatoes there in a scientific way. He has brought in over 400 strains from various parts of China and abroad, selecting from them those he needs for further experiments. He has been able to produce seed that grows a fruit maturing earlier than ordinary strains. The result of his work has been that the tomato, once a costly fruit in Harbin, is now sold on every vegetable stall in summer and autumn, at a price well within the reach of all housewives.

Another scientist whose fame has spread is one in Szechuan in West China. People call him the "Earth Doctor." He has not sat long in any laboratory, but has gone out into innumerable villages, calling on peasants in their homes, talking to them in the fields, doing experiments on the spot. Using sulphuric fertilizers to fix nitrogen in the soil through the roots of certain green manures, he has found it to be successful in many places. He has had many other notable victories—especially in such practical things as washing lands clear of saltpeter where it was causing root decay among crops. His advice is now eagerly sought by commune technicians all over Szechuan, for he has the knack of bringing to light the best ideas of local experienced farmers and of coordinating them with modern scientific know-how.

In these early days of February, one thinks of what is going on

all over the Chinese countryside—how down in Hainan Island in the furthest south, rice plants for the first crop are being set out, while a little further north the red earth of provinces is being worked. In Yangtze valley the winter crops of rape seed and beans are coming along, with farmers storing rain water in reservoirs for flooding the first paddy fields. In North-West China, compost is being hauled out to the still frozen fields, while in the North-East sledges take it out over the snow. In the South, green manure shows up its purple flowers, ready for being plowed in, while the piles of animal and vegetable compost mixture around villages in the North shows up all the effort of autumn and early winter. Tractor drivers, technicians and bookkeepers are being trained in many parts of China, and the new tractor factories in industrial cities are trying to keep pace with demand. Seven hundred million people are struggling to make an old land produce more abundantly, going about their tasks in an organized methodical and thoughtful way that now begins to bring in better results.

Peking, February 1963

DR WILDER PENFIELD REPORTS

Some Americans have had the privilege of hearing over the radio or in public addresses during March 1963 the first-hand report of observations on medicine and so-called "famine" conditions in China by Dr. Wilder Penfield. Dr. Penfield has given FAR EAST REPORTER permission to reproduce his interview of March 10, 1963 on *Yale Reports* (a weekly Yale University Office of Information radio program over station WTIC in Hartford, Connecticut). Yale University Office of Information has kindly furnished the text for this interview. FAR EAST REPORTER omits from this text paragraphs dealing with Dr. Penfield's training as a neurosurgeon and his observations on medicine in the Soviet Union* and presents his observations on China. This portion on China follows:

Sunday, March 10, 1963

* Full text No. 280 can be secured free from WTIC Broadcast House, Hartford 15, Connecticut.

YALE REPORTS NUMBER TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY INTERVIEW WITH DR. WILDER PENFIELD

Mullins: To extend knowledge far and wide is one of the purposes of a university. To educate and inform as well as to entertain is the task of enlightened broadcasting. To achieve these goals WTIC in cooperation with Yale University brings you each week Yale Reports.

Good evening, everyone, this is Bernard Mullins welcoming you to the 280th edition of Yale Reports. This evening our special guest is Dr. Wilder Penfield, scientist, surgeon, and novelist. Dr. Penfield, Director Emeritus of the Montreal Neurological Institute, recently delivered a Sigma Xi lecture on the Yale campus. His career has been wide and varied—as one of the world's leading neurosurgeons, he has traveled extensively, most recently to Russia and Red China. He holds 26 honorary degrees, including a Doctor of Science degree awarded by Yale; he has written numerous books dealing with the brain and brain mechanisms, and is also the author of two novels. This evening, with Professor D. Allan Bromley of Yale's Physics Department, Dr. Penfield will talk informally about his work and his recent experiences behind the Iron Curtain.

And here now is Professor Bromley to begin the discussion.

Bromley: We know that you and Mrs. Penfield have just recently returned from extensive traveling in the Chinese mainland. Since you are one of the very few scientists from the West who have been privileged to make such a visit in recent years, I am sure many people would be very much interested in your impressions and comments. First of all, I think people would be interested in knowing how you and Mrs. Penfield came to make this trip in the first place.

Penfield: That was sort of an accident. When we went to India five years ago to visit some of the universities under the Columbo Plan, we received an invitation from the President of the Chinese Medical Association to come on to China as their guest. I had some feeling at that time that the visit might not prove to be a straightforward medical professional one. I also had a good deal to do in Montreal, so I regretted that I could not go on to China. I told them, however, that I would like to some some time later. This

summer when we attended the centenary celebration of the University of Melbourne in Australia, we were going to be so close to China that I wrote to the doctor who is President of the Chinese Medical Association, and said that I would accept his invitation if it was still good. He wrote a very brief letter saying that he would be glad to have us come and that we would be guests of the Chinese Medical Association inside of China. But he didn't tell us anything more about what could be expected.

Bromley: Was communication a problem? Did you have difficulty in any way in China itself?

Penfield: No. Once we were inside it was all handled very well. We entered at Canton from Hong Kong. They had arranged for us to fly, but I resolutely insisted that we go by train. So we took the two-day journey from Canton to Peking and we saw all the towns and the people on the way. We travelled at least 4,000 miles by train and car through China and went to all the major cities and saw a good many hospitals.

Bromley: Perhaps we could begin then by asking you what you thought of the Red Chinese work in your own specialty. For example, is there actual research going on in neurosurgery?

Penfield: The development in neurosurgery is rather remarkable, and it is due to a Chinese neurosurgeon who spent a couple of years in Montreal. The Chinese government is developing a hospital in Peking and is planning to build a neurological institute. In a hospital in Peking they have a staff of sixty or seventy, with a hundred and twenty beds devoted to neurosurgery. I made rounds there twice and was very much impressed by the level of the work. Certainly there is no clinic in Europe which excels it, and they have already done some original work. But the important thing for China is that during the past fifteen years this neurosurgeon has trained quite a large number of specialists for different cities of China. He considers about thirty to be well trained, with perhaps an equal number of men who are trained to handle an emergency involving brain surgery procedures or neurological procedures. I saw some of these pupils and the work is good.

Bromley: Were you in a position to form an impression of the

general problem of medical education in China? I, for example, was surprised to learn that there exists the Peking Union Medical College, which was supported initially by the Rockefeller Foundation. What was your impression of training in general?

Penfield: I was most interested in the evolution of education in general and in medicine in particular. I think they had to fit the whole problem of education into the economic problem of China, which they have had only thirteen years to solve. In the first place, they had to lay a plan for education for the whole of China, and this is the first time it had ever been done by the Chinese. At the same time all foreigners were swept out and this left only a small group of educated men to carry out the work. Up to that time in medicine they had trained only 18,000 doctors in the whole history of China, and I doubt whether more than a few thousand were left after all the foreigners were gone. They shortened the curriculum, increased the number of medical colleges, and turned out a number of partially trained men. All of the medical schools were turning out doctors too fast and with too little training. Yet they considered this as necessary to meet the emergency. The result is that in thirteen years they have trained one hundred and four thousand Western physicians, if you want to call them that. In the last three years they have rapidly been changing their medical schools by lengthening the curriculum and decreasing the number in each class. At the Chinese Medical College, which is housed in the old Peking Union Medical School, they have increased the schooling to eight years, which was the length of the original curriculum, that is, three years of special pre-medical, four years in medical school, and one year in internship. The other big major medical colleges have all been increased to six years; two years of pre-medical, and four of medical. You mentioned the Peking Union Medical School; many people ask me about the situation there. In terms of money, it was one of the greatest philanthropic gestures ever made, East or West, at the time the P.U.M.C. was built, equipped and endowed. The school had a very small group in each class, but they were highly trained. The man I mentioned earlier is one of them. The people trained in that college have had a very profound effect on medical education throughout China. I am perfectly sure that John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who often said he expected no gratitude for any money he gave

and avoided any opportunity for anyone to thank him, would be quite satisfied with the result of his action in China.

Bromley: You mentioned, Dr. Penfield, that there had been a tendency to sweep foreigners from China. I am particularly interested in knowing whether in your travels in the country you saw any significant number of foreigners?

Penfield: I am glad you asked that question because it is most astonishing to be in that country and to see foreigners, although they were not quite the kind of foreigners one expects to see in China. We met no American during the month that we remained in China, and we met no Russian except in the Russian Embassy and the plane crew of our flight from Peking to Moscow. It so happened on that plane, which only goes twice a week between the cities, there were no Russian or Chinese passengers, but only queer people like ourselves. There were a good many foreigners—if you want to call them that—from Southeast Asia, Tibet and Mongolia. And there were a few Canadians and an occasional Englishman.

Bromley: We have heard much about conditions of famine which according to reports have existed in various areas of China. I wonder if you saw any evidence of this during your travels?

Penfield: Of course I was prepared to find evidence of malnutrition and innutrition. I have been in a famine in Calcutta and I saw the effect of deficient diet in England toward the close of the war. I know what it looks like and there is none of that in China. I was not in every corner of China, of course, but you can't hide these things. If you travel on public conveyances you see the country as it is. We saw no beggars all the time we were in China, and I saw no evidence of food lack. The people are energetic as they would not be if they had not enough food, Chinese or any other nationality. And they are working with a will and with great enthusiasm.

Bromley: We have also heard quite a lot recently about rapidly increasing technological sophistication and technical education throughout the Chinese mainland. Do you have any comment on either of those points?

Penfield: I am afraid I have no real information on that point. However, I saw a good deal of the performance in the best hospitals. The college hospitals in the big cities, for example, are absolutely first-class. They are doing heart surgery with equipment for extra-corporeal circulation, which they made themselves since they were unable to get it from the United States. In the university hospital in Shanghai I saw a large ward filled with patients who had had open heart surgery and who were being handled by a man who had never studied outside the country. He had been trained by a P.U.M.C. chest surgeon who had received his training at Ann Arbor. They have done the same thing in other departments in neurosurgery. They have a great capacity for work and a degree of intelligence which certainly is not inferior to that of other people.

Bromley: I wonder if you would comment on how you and Mrs. Penfield were received during this visit. You traveled widely and you were in many areas and many environments. What was the reaction of the Chinese people to your visit?

Penfield: They were very friendly and very interested. I remember on the train going from Canton to Peking at the end of the first twenty-four hours the car boy came in. He had been in occasionally to swat a fly or to do something useful like that. He came in at the end, and said a girl would take over the car. He had never worked for a Canadian before, so he asked us if he had done anything wrong and what he should do to help Canadians in the future. It was a very friendly point of view, and I may say the train ride was perfectly smooth.

Bromley: If you were asked to single out one impression of the Chinese people to bring back with you, what would that be?

Penfield: I think I was most impressed by the attitude of those that I met. It was a feeling of enthusiasm, exhilaration and pleasure that at last they were doing something on their own. They are working, especially the younger people, and they are working with a will. The people in the communes are working hard, but that is the way of the Chinese anyway. I would say in general that there is a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm among the people.

DAVID CROOK REPORTS

In A Letter to the Manchester Guardian

David Crook writes that he does not agree with correspondents who report China as "in a state of economic chaos," and the communes as "a failure"; or that "the intellectual climate of the country is one of stagnation" with "the people cowed, furtive and underfed," "their leaders doctrinaire place-seekers divorced from reality," as a recent Manchester Guardian writer reported. This correspondent, by the way, said that while in China he "had never experienced a more total loneliness." Reporters who spend a great part of their time in China within the confines of an elegant embassy are indeed cut off from the Chinese people and are thus excluded from feeling with the Chinese people their strong sense of release from the gruesome past.

Extracts from David Crook's Letter

The Gruesome Background

In the first half of the 20th century millions of Chinese died of hunger, as a result of floods, drought, and famine epidemics. For many millions more it was normal to eat chaff and wild herbs "between the yellow and the green"—that is, when the autumn crop was eaten and the spring crop not yet reaped. In hard times they ate leaves and grass and bark of trees. Tenants and laborers—that is about two thirds of the people—had no hope of redress against a greedy landlord or corrupt official. Over 80% of the people were illiterate. Many women lived in degrading subjection. Disease was rampant. Continuous foreign intervention brought war, economic dislocation and national humiliation. Now this has all been swept away.

The Peoples Communes

I dined with a former beggar in his home in a commune during the recent lunar year's holiday, in Hunan, a thousand miles south of Peking. There was meat, fish, vegetables and grain galore on the table. My host was forty. His two older brothers were both hired laborers for landlords in the older days. Both died in their

twenties from hunger and overwork. His mother lived all her life in a mud-walled, thatched-roof hovel. On her death bed in 1961 she said to her one surviving son, "I've never lived in a house with a roof that didn't leak; you must build a new home so that my grandchildren will live better." It was that new house we dined in—water-proof, spacious, solid. The former beggar, his wife, and three children had received a ton and a quarter of grain in 1962, raised their own pigs and poultry. They ate two chickens over the holiday. The four hundred families in their commune brigade killed a hundred and twenty pigs for the occasion.

I visited eight communes in five provinces during the last three years, staying from a day or two to several weeks. Each one had its ex-beggars whose lives had been similarly transformed, as have the lives of hundreds of millions of commune members.

That the communes "have failed," "are on the way out," "no longer exist," "have emerged back into cooperatives" or even "to private ownership" (as some foreign reporters tell)—none of this bears the remotest relation to reality. Nor does the notion that they have caused rather than cured ills. In every commune that I have visited since 1960 the idea has been repeatedly and emphatically expressed—"without the communes we would have been done for." This was said in dry Hopei Province in the north after two hundred days of drought, and in Kiangsi Province in the southeast after the worst floods in a century. The commune has the manpower, the organization, the capital resources, the scope and the staying power to fight natural calamities in a way unparalleled in China's history. To imply that it causes disasters is to turn things upside down.

Of course consolidating the communes has not been smooth going. The change to a brand new social and economic basic unit for close on to six hundred million rural people could not be effected without some errors and miscalculations. But the errors do not condemn the institution.

There was some over-emphasis at first on moral incentive in working out the system of pay and distribution; there was some diversion of too much labor from agriculture in the first enthusiasm for building local industry; there was an over-estimate of the urgency and practicability of setting up canteens in the desire to free women from primitive housework.

It took time, too, to work out methods of management and ad-

ministration suited to the new social unit and to the educational and technical standards of a people emerging from illiteracy.

On top of this was the imperative need to allocate labor to dam, dyke and reservoir building, without which the alternating droughts and down-pours of three successive years would have been tragic. The Min Yun reservoir, the biggest in North China, has put an end to the floods of the Bai and Zhao rivers, which sometimes caused water-logging as far away as Tientsin near the coast. Over the years to come it will provide increasing quantities of electricity as well as water for irrigation. It was built in the main in 1960 with the labor of 190,000 peasants from 180 communes, paid by the commune while they were on the job.

Today miscalculations have been set right. Experience that was lacking has been gained. The ground is now clear for full exploitation of the communes' unprecedented potentialities. There is already clear evidence of a rapid advance.

Improved Conditions

The winter of 1960-1961 was hard. But as Ed Show writes in his latest book, "At no time has the country been in danger of mass starvation." Conditions have improved ever since that hard winter, and are now doing so rapidly. Despite three years of drought, Peking has so greatly increased its supply of vegetables—mainly from near-by communes—that last year the government was urging all the people to buy all they could in order to assist with storage. Fruit is equally abundant. Cooked and tinned meat are available off ration. Unrationed fish is plentiful and cheap. More cooking fat and oil is available and in greater variety. Sweets and traditional delicacies which have been scarce for a couple of years are obtainable freely. No coupons are needed to buy a radio, a suitcase, or furniture.

It is perhaps hard in Britain to realize the size of China's domestic market and the difficulty in supplying it. Here the demand for consumer goods is measured, not in tens of thousands, but in tens or even hundreds of millions. With the fast rising purchasing power and the heritage of a backward economy no country in the world could satisfy this demand all at once without some form of rationing.

Today illiteracy is coming to an end. Since 1949 hundreds of

millions of people between fifteen and forty have learned to read and write. Bookshops and libraries are crowded; everywhere in the streets one sees children reading. A new generation of intellectuals is being trained, drawn in increasing numbers from peasant and worker families.

There is no problem of juvenile delinquency in China, no problem of rising crime. Any one, man or woman, can walk through any street in Peking at any time of the day or night, not only in perfect safety but without annoyance of any kind. The fact that a large proportion of the city's taxi-drivers are women in their twenties is an index of public morality.

The Social Climate and Human Relations

In Academic Circles

I have witnessed and to some degree been involved in the ideological struggles that go to the making of a revolution in education. For two or three thousand years intellectuals formed a privileged stratum in Chinese society. The supplanting of their traditional superiority by a spirit of service to the people has not been a painless process. But the vast majority, even of old intellectuals and young folk from formerly privileged strata, now identify themselves with the new society.

Most outstanding intellectuals, in the course of the civil war in China after World War Two, opposed Kuomintang brutality and misrule and welcomed the establishment of the People's Republic. They have continued to support it and today hold leading positions in the academic field. Many who were indifferent to politics under the old regime have gained public respect under the new—along with better working conditions and a renewal of creative ability. Many former supporters of the Kuomintang now hold positions of responsibility under the People's Government, which has given them and their country a sense of self-respect and of purpose in life, as well as a material security which they never had before.

There is still much headway to be made, but the atmosphere as a whole is permeated with optimism, vigor, purpose and dedication.

To present picture of decline and despair, suspicion and corruption, as some reporters in the West do, is to disregard the positive nature of Chinese life. Edgar Snow in his recent book refers to those who overlook "... the simple fact that behind all the propa-

ganda stand millions of unknown and unsung men and women who have successfully and devotedly carried out the real work of releasing half a billion people from the heritage of dense ignorance and superstition, widespread disease, illiteracy and universal poverty."

The rapid and fundamental changes now taking place in China "affect not only the Chinese but the destiny of every other nation," as the Manchester Guardian says. It is in our interest, therefore, to look at China with unprejudiced eyes, to see her in perspective as she is.

ANNA LOUISE STRONG REPORTS

The Peoples Communes

The Great Leap Forward has not been abandoned; and the People's Communes remain the basic unit of their new society.

Anna Louise Strong "asked a friend why the 'big leap' is still listed as one of the 'three red banners.' Is it in memory of that historic 'leap of 1958-1960, or in prophecy of the 'big leap' yet to come? He looked at me in some surprise. 'Neither,' he said, 'and yet both.' The 'big leap' is a process and we are still in it. It is a way of advancing by great drives of the people. After each drive there may be pauses for adjustment and filling in, but we think that, taken over ten, twenty or thirty years, China's progress will be in the nature of a 'big leap,' perhaps the biggest leap the world has known."

And about the People's Communes she writes: "The three years' struggle tightened the commune organization by eliminating waste, correcting mistakes, and increasing local initiative and collective strength. . . . The most important change in the communes is that which makes the 'production team' rather than the (larger-Ed.) 'brigade,' the 'accounting unit'; this accounting unit makes the farm plan, manages the labor and divides the harvest, and is practically the owner of the land and the draught animals. What has happened is the transfer to the small unit—a team of some score or two of families—of the responsibilities of ownership and control. In practice I find the stronger communes still stick to the brigades. The manager of the Evergreen Commune in Peking told me, 'We prefer the larger unit because we have tractors, electric pumping

systems and many hot-houses. Our ownership and operation are best handled by the larger unit. But nine-tenths of China's farming is still by manual labor and draught animals; such peasants want to decide their plans and divide their crop right in their villages. As mechanization advances they will also think in terms of the larger 'brigade.'

"These changes are in practice, not in substance. They are part of the constant adjustment of local initiative to wider organized strength. When I asked the Evergreen manager which unit—the team, the brigade or the commune—had the right to give orders for an irrigation canal, he looked at me quizzically, as if suspecting some provocation. Then he laughed: 'Give orders? To a Chinese peasant? That's something you don't do if you hope to succeed. Whichever unit needs irrigation makes the plan and explains it to the peasants; if you don't get volunteers you know the plan isn't reasonable. Peasants are shrewd in matters of livelihood.' If the 'communes saved the country' through these years of disaster it was because they first organized the peasants for irrigation and flood control, because in the hardest trials the better communes were a light to their neighbors, and even the poor communes, as distributing centers for state relief, prevented the pulverizing of communities which is always the worst aspect of a real famine. So communes survived, learned from mistakes, and came from the years of scarcity stronger, more confident than ever.

"If the greatest thing they learned from the 'big leap' of 1958 was 'the power that lies in the Chinese people,' then the greatest thing they took from the scarcity years was the technique for using this power, through local initiative connected through mutual aid and state aid in a network that reaches the ends of the land."^{*}

CONCLUSION

The Chinese people, free of rapacious rulers and Lady Bountiful "benefactors," now mobilizing their own strength, their own skills, and their own resources, have proven their ability to handle

^{*} From *China's Fight For Grain*, 44 pages, obtainable from FAR EAST REPORTER, P. O. Box 1536, N. Y. C. 17. 50c postpaid.

^{**} *Christian Science Monitor*, April 19, 1963.

their internal problems and difficulties. Without begging for or receiving a single cent from the outside they have proceeded to adjust their economy, to meet their consumer needs and to strengthen the basic structure of their new society.

China emerges from these three years of economic stresses and trials stronger than ever. As Rewi Alley observed:

“Disasters have met by the organized strength of the people. . . . The way China has dealt with its grain problem is an epic of our age, a triumph of organization, of self-sacrifice, the whole country coming out of the ordeal immeasurably stronger than it entered it.

“When a great number of people, a rising third of the whole population of the world, go putting their hearts and minds into finding a solution, even the weather gods begin to sit up and take notice.

“China can look after her own house, pay for what she needs in ordinary foreign trade, and go on developing her own vast resources. In this way she will maintain her true independence and be able to play her part as one great self-respecting nation in a world of nations.”

A recent issue of the *Far East Economic Review* gives details of hundreds of hot-houses that have been constructed around the major cities, so that in the future, whatever the climatic conditions, every one will be assured of at least one pound of fresh vegetables a day any time of the year. Yes, “even the weather gods begin to sit up and take notice”!

A Swedish visitor to China observed:

“I believe that the critical years have created a situation which in spite of everything is more hopeful than the successful years. The earlier victories led toward defeat. These defeats, however, can form the basis for lasting progress.”
(Sven Lindquist.)**

The *Manchester Guardian*, introducing the series of articles by the Swedish writer, Sven Lindquist, said:

“China, the most populous nation in the world, with the

world's oldest civilization, is undergoing changes as rapid and fundamental as any society has ever undergone, changes moreover that affect not only the Chinese themselves, but the destiny of every other nation. We are in the presence of one of the most momentous episodes of history.”

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