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far
east

Reporter

“Why Do Chinese ‘Refugees’ ‘Escape’ To Hongkong?”

IS THIS A VALID QUESTION?

Maud Russell

THE LETTER “LIFE” WOULD NOT PRINT

Anna Louise Strong

15 c



“Why Do Chinese ‘Refugees’ ‘Escape’ to Hongkong?”

Is this a valid question? What are the facts behind the question? What are the implications of the question? First we must understand 1) What is Hongkong geographically? 2) What is Hongkong politically? 3) What is Hongkong population-wise? 4) What is Hongkong economically?

What Is Hongkong Geographically?

Hongkong is a collection of rocky islands and a strip of mainland China, adjacent to the Province of Kwangtung, situated ninety miles from the provincial capital, Canton. The total area is about 390 square miles (the Island of Hongkong, 35½ square miles, Kowloon Peninsula, 3 square miles, Stonecutter's Island, ¼ square mile, and New Territories, 355 square miles). The area now available for residential and commercial building is 12 square miles; 2½ square miles of the building area is land reclaimed from the sea; by 1965 the area of reclaimed land under development will be about 4 square miles. Development plans envisage extensions to existing urban areas and the establishment of satellite towns complete with their own industrial centers and residential areas. All these major developments are on the mainland section.

What Is Hongkong Politically?

Hongkong is a British Crown Colony. The capital of this colony is Victoria, situated on the Island of Hongkong which was ceded by China to Great Britain in 1841. Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutter's Island were added to the colony by the Convention of Peking in 1860. The New Territories was leased from China in 1898 for 99 years.

What Is Hongkong Population-wise?

The population of Hongkong is at least 3,000,000 of which more than 99% are Chinese and about 20,000 are Westerners, mainly British. There has always been Chinese migration to Hongkong—it has long been a refuge for fleeing politicians and gangsters, but the great bulk of the migrants have been peasants and workers. Access to Hongkong from the mainland is easy; not only is there regular steamer and train

service up the Pearl River to Canton, but multitudes of water-ways exist, and Chinese fishermen and transport-men are familiar with the routes that lead to Hongkong.

What Is Hongkong Economically?

Hongkong, with one of the finest harbors in the East, is a free port, one of the world's greatest trans-shipment ports. Today it is on the route of the major airlines such as Pan American, Canadian Pacific, British Overseas, Air France, Swissair and all the major Asian lines. Before World War II its economic life was sustained by its function as a free port; by 1959 this function had taken second place—local manufacture of exports now being the major economic activity. It has no resources except manpower, manpower from China proper. 100,000 Chinese are employed in the manufacture of textiles, fabrics and garments, the principal manufactured exports.

Hongkong Is a Chinese City

Sociologically Hongkong is a Chinese city. Chinese who move from their provincial town or village or from Canton go to no strange society—no more strange than an American country boy going up to the big city in the United States, or an American worker moving from say Philadelphia to New York. In most cases the Chinese go to fellow townsmen or to relatives; they are not "refugees" in the sense that Europeans are who pull up stakes and come to the United States to make a new life. In addition, return to his native place is easy, a few dozen miles or so from Hongkong. A Chinese in Hongkong is not an "alien." Nor does he sever his ties with his native place. The *New York Times* (1/26/60) reported that for the new year (lunar) festival food flowed back and forth between relatives in Hongkong and relatives in China proper; and thousands returned to celebrate the festival at home. Chinese whose permanent homes are in Hongkong visit China as tourists, and find an "Overseas China Hotel" in Canton, with every possible facility, from jute boxes to a Hongkong visa office, ready to serve them; and all over China they find modern hotels, the equal of any in Hongkong.

The population of Hongkong in 1949 was about 1,700,000. Today it is estimated as at least 3,000,000. The annual population increase in Hongkong is about 200,000, one half of which is due to the natural increase of births over deaths. Assuming that the other half come from the mainland (some come from Malay and some from Taiwan and some from other overseas Chinese communities) this is one 1/65 of one

per cent of the population of mainland China—an insignificant migration, even if they were "escapees."

Why Have Chinese Migrated to Hongkong?

Why have about 100,000 Chinese annually gone from their villages and towns in Kwangtung Province to Hongkong? *The major cause has been the change in the nature of the economic life of Hongkong.* Hongkong gets its manpower from mainland China. The increasing place that manufacturing now holds in Hongkong calls for more workers. The extension of the area of Hongkong, reclaiming land from the sea, and the developing of new towns for business and for residence, demand more workers. The post-war increase in communications, such as air transport with its ports and port facilities, and the increased tourist trade call for more workers. All these workers, builders, technicians and their families create demand for more service, such a food and clothing, etc. "Hongkong's booming industry is suffering from a shortage of skilled labor. The shortage may be no more than a temporary inconvenience for Hongkong had untapped sources of refugee manpower . . . The shortage is caused by the rapid rate of industrial expansion here . . . Hongkong's economic structure has greatly changed in the last ten years . . . Re-exports—that is, goods shipped through Hongkong—have declined from more than 100% of the colony's export trade before World War II to 30% today. Locally manufactured goods valued at \$400,000,000 annually now constitute the rest of the export trade." (*N. Y. Times*, 3/27/60) In other words, the volume of local exports as against the former re-exports expanded from virtually zero for local manufacture before the War to 10% in 1947, to 25% in 1952, to 70% in 1959. "Hongkong's industrial labor force before the war was 30,000 persons; today more than 200,000 are registered as industrial workers, with about 50,000 engaged in textiles alone . . . Textile manufacturers stepped up production until their machines were running day and night." (*N. Y. Times*, 3/27/60) Comments the *N. Y. Times* (1/15/60): "In a way the refugee has become Hongkong's salvation. The exodus from China has given the colony a labor force that has enabled it to develop a remarkable growth in export industries."

Disgruntled Individuals Go to Hongkong

Of course it is true that there are disgruntled individuals in Communist China. A landlord, or a money-lender, a rice-mill owner who bought at cheap prices any surplus the peasant might have, exploiters

who lived by their wits or by cheating people, anti-social individuals who just can't get along with others—these are people who find it difficult to change their life habits in a competitive society to the ways of living in the cooperative society that now exists in China. It comes very hard for some individuals who had status in the old society to have to live in a village, now a part of a people's commune, where a former landless peasant—and sometimes a woman peasant—is now the chairman of their commune (formerly county) government. And the former local boss, or gangster member, or brothel keeper, or money-changer in an urban area now has to face up to the Neighborhood (Street) Committee standards and mend his ways: some can't make the adjustment to a decent society. In the early years after World War II Chinese from the mainland "poured, unchecked across the border: Kuomintang soldiers, officers and officials; merchants and industrialists; millionaires with their gold bars and jades, often with their opium pipes and concubines; big and little landlords; the petty bourgeois; intellectuals, farmers." (Peggy Durbin, *N. Y. Times*, 4/3/60) For all these individuals who just can't "take it," Hongkong is a near-by refuge.

The Pull of Relatives, Crafty Travel Agents, Greener Looking Pastures

Some of those who move to Hongkong come on the urging of relatives or fellow-townsmen already in Hongkong who see the numerous jobs opening up in the many new factories, in the building trades and in transport; some of those already there may believe the lies told about living conditions in China and exert pressure on their mainland relatives to move.

Some move because of the commercial propaganda of crafty travel agents who make a living by encouraging migration—at an average charge of \$25 for adults and \$5 for children; these agents can tell as tall tales and make as shiny promises as the shipping agents who lured emigrants from Europe to the United States in earlier days!

Some of those who move, or their money-minded relatives in Hongkong, see a chance to cash in on stories told to receptive foreign correspondents, stories often embroidered with untruths and half truths and anti-Chinese headlines in the American press.

The majority of those who move from home to the big city of Hongkong go for the same reason that their predecessors went before 1949—lured by the greener-looking pastures that seem to offer a better economic life. *Before 1949 they were not called "refugees"; why are they now presented as "escaping" "refugees"?*

Why Are Migrants Pictured as "Refugees"?

One answer may be in terms of the current policy of the United States. Part of this policy consists of discrediting China on every possible angle—trying to make China appear as "cruel," "unable to satisfy its population," "backward" as contrasted with the capitalist economy of Hongkong and the West. This is a part of the effort of American policy makers to diminish China's influence on the overseas Chinese and on the neutral nations which, like China, are emerging from an colonial to an independent and modern society. American "aid" policy is directed at lining up these emerging new societies in the "free" (capitalist) world and using every possible means to picture China's socialist society as something to be avoided.

Another answer is in terms of another aspect of American foreign policy—a policy of modern colonialism, not territorial but economic penetration; this is the policy of taking over or horning in on the colonial preserves of Washington's allies—as in French Indo-China, in the Middle East and in India. Hongkong is one of these preserves, a British colony. Already the United States has eased out Great Britain as the biggest buyer of Hongkong exports, the U.S. purchases accounting for more than 24% of the colony's exports, while Britain's share amounts to slightly less than 20%; in dollar terms, exports to the United States jumped from a little more than \$1,500,000 in 1954 to \$85,000,000 in 1959. And imports from the U.S. are now 10% of Hongkong's total imports.

It is not only *trade* that is indicating increasing American involvement in Hongkong's economy, but even more, the greatly stepped up *American investment* in Hongkong. American investors are now "taking a closer look at Hongkong. This year work will begin on a new watch factory, built with American capital amounting to \$500,000. Other projects planned or under consideration by U.S. investors are the establishment of a paint and plastics factory, toy manufacturing, the construction of a new hotel. Already there are 170 concerns representing U.S. manufacturing, trade, oil, shipping, airline, banking and investment interests. . . . Five years ago there were 50 companies." (*N. Y. Times*, 1/12/60)

Why this interest in American investment? Hongkong is the source of cheap blouses, blousesettes, shirts, trousers, pajamas, sports shirts, brassieres; cheap labor is one of the main lures of Hongkong. "In the competitive labor market skilled refugees are willing to work long hours, often twelve a day, for less than a dollar's pay. Regulations against

sweated labor were introduced in 1955 but were not enforced until last year. The principal effect is to restrict the hours of work for women and young people. Under pressure from the Government and labor unions Hongkong employers have improved wages a little but they still rank with the lowest in the world." (*N. Y. Times*, 3/28/60) "Most of the jobs pay less than one dollar a day." (Gleason, *N. Y. Herald Tribune*, 3/12/60) Of course, those who are building new enterprises and factories in Hongkong want to postpone as long as possible the day when Hongkong will revert to China and there will come an end to cheap labor. The current discrediting of China, picturing her as so "cruel" that her people "escape" to Hongkong is a part of the attempt to maintain a colonial Hongkong, now increasingly serving American interests.

Chinese Investors in Hongkong

As for Chinese business men who participate in the expanding economy of Hongkong, they know that eventually Hongkong, Island and mainland area, will revert to China. The New Territories revert by treaty in 1997, and probably long before that the whole Hongkong area will have ceased to be what it is now, a left-over from the colonial era. The Chinese business men, capitalists and investors, are at worst exploiters of their own people there, exploiters of cheap labor; at best, they are Chinese patriots participating in the building of a city that is destined to be one of China's finest ports.

* * *

In December, 1958, *Life* printed an article based on tales, so it said, of dissatisfied Chinese who had "escaped" to Hongkong from nearby communes. Anna Louise Strong, early in 1959, spent weeks in that area checking on *Life's* tale; her findings, sent in a letter to *Life*, were not published by that magazine. FAR EAST REPORTER received a copy of that letter in March, 1959, and now takes pleasure in sharing with its subscribers this piece of superb reporting—taking advantage of the opportunity to reprint the letter from the February, 1960 issue of *Mainstream*.

THE LETTER *LIFE* WOULD NOT PRINT

(*Mainstream*)

"Anna Louise Strong

Canton, China, February 28, 1959

Editors, *Life Magazine*

Dear Sirs:

At New Year's a Los Angeles friend sent me the article on China's Communes that you published at the end of December and asked my comment. I replied that the tales were clearly slanted, and in some cases seemed obvious fakes, but that it was hard to check on tales by refugees in Macao, this Portuguese colony being not only a hostile frontier, but a city with an old reputation for gangsters, smuggling, wide-open gambling and brothels, without even Hongkong's restraints.

As a news-analyst, I broke the article into three parts. First, a spy execution that had no proved connection with communes, which was used to provide a frame of violence and mob action. Next, some tall tales by a Chang Hsi-lan of villages burned without reason and a population confined in barracks where sex-life was run more like Macao's cheapest brothels than like anything in China today. Lastly a tale by a Kwei Pai-sin, alleging overwork and a compulsory nursery, which, if it occurred, was illegal in China and certainly not typical of communes. In short, the first part seemed irrelevant, the second a possible fake, the third a possible but untypical fact.

I let it go. But the past five weeks I have been in and around Canton, in the province which adjoins Macao, and I was able, with the help of some thirty people, to check your article. My first estimate now seems too mild. The article was a conscious fraud on the American people, and an evil dangerous fraud, in that it seeks to make Americans regard Chinese people as lawless and sub-human, who might with clear conscience be atom-bombed out of the world in the next Taiwan Straits War. In this evil fraud you are participants. I hope unwittingly. I think I should tell you what I learned and suggest that you repudiate that article.

Neither the island, the commune, the village, the Communist organizer nor the peasant refugees you list exist in any area adjacent to Macao by the names you give. One man you named was located, some incidents occurred under quite other conditions; some never occurred.

1) *The spy execution.* There actually was a spy execution on the mainland opposite Macao; it was last September 29 and was published in the press. All details you give are embroidery. You place it on "Lappa Island," with 20,000 people, 600 yards from Macao, hence visible and audible from Macao. You state that "last July" these 20,000 people were driven from their homes into fifty big barracks, and thereafter Macao saw them working "nineteen hours a day world without end." You speak of "cries in the night: 'We won't work any more,'" followed by a dawn arrival of troops and a "mass tribunal" by the populace on the parade ground, on three victims with hands bound. "The trio," was then executed "in sight of horrified Macao." You try to imply by this sequence and by using "spy" in quotes, that the victims were men who refused to work.

All this is nonsense. There is no Lappa Island known to Chinese. What is opposite Macao is a peninsula called Wan Tsai; it was here the execution occurred. I succeeded in meeting a local resident who gave me facts confirmed by others. We excuse "Lappa Island" for who knows what the Portuguese call it, and at high tide it is almost an island. Its population is not 20,000, but 9,000, of whom 4,000 are fishermen and the rest peasants. NOBODY was moved from his home last summer; no barracks were built. There was *no commune* in Wan Tsai or any of that country last summer; communes were first discussed there in October and organized in November, after *Life's* article was in press. There were no "voices in the night"; the resident estimates the distance from Macao as 800 to 1,000 meters and adds: "Voices do not carry across."

"Did anything at all happen last summer that an honest man, seeing it from Macao, could mistake for building fifty barracks and putting people in?" I asked.

"No building at all," he answered. "In July the peasants were reaping the rice, and then sowing the second rice crop. Anyone who talks about fifty barracks is not mistaken but just lying." So much for that.

If you care about the spies I can tell you. There were two, not three as you state. They were not caught in a night disturbance and rushed to doom. One was caught a year earlier in an adjoining township, on October 1, 1957, with explosives designed to blow up a festival. The other was caught in Wan Tsai, after he recruited a local fisherman as

agent for Chiang Kai-shek. The local man got conscience or cold feet and gave it away. Both spies got the three trials they are entitled to before death sentences can be executed under China's present laws. They were first tried in Chungshan County Court, where it was shown by evidence of documents and witnesses that they were paid agents of Chiang, working for 150 Hongkong dollars a month retainer plus a bonus for every report. They sent military data and smuggled explosives for sabotage. The appeal then went to Kwangtung division of the Supreme Court and finally to the Supreme Court itself in Peking. All confirmed the sentences. For espionage in war-time with a shooting war in process in the province next to the north, the penalty was death.

What happened in Wan Tsai was not a "mass tribunal" but a meeting, not "on parade ground" but in the yard of the primary school, to acquaint Wan Tsai with the details of spying that had taken place in their town and about which they were stirred up. The meeting was visible from Macao, as stated by you. The execution was not. It was held behind a hill, where it was seen neither by the Wan Tsai public in general nor by "horrified Macao." "It might have been seen from the top floor of the International Hotel in Macao," conceded the local resident.

2) *Kwei Pai-sin.* I take Kwei next because he can quickly disposed of. You say he ran away from Shekki Water Commune. He did. Shekki is a well known place, easy to check. I sent the article with your photo of Kwei to his wife and children. It was recognized by many neighbors. Only they said, his name was never Kwei; it is Liang Chen-Pao. He is not 37 years, as you said, but 42. Moreover, the woman with him is not his wife but a concubine. The wife is still in Shekki and is very angry at the man because when he skipped out he stole over a hundred pounds of fish belonging to her. The three children are with her and support her against dad; they say she was the one who supported them in these years.

"Kwei"—Liang has a record known to all. Pre-liberation a "loafer" and hanger-on of gangsters, who once drew a gun on his uncle and somehow got money to buy a concubine. Post-liberation a drifter, went to Shekki in 1950 as a docker, but disliked the hard work and returned to his village Kong Kou to farm, disliked farming and went again to Shekki in 1954 as fisherman and joined the fishing cooperative. Lazy, cheated in petty ways. Took Hongkong money from a neighbor to change into Chinese Yuan; this incidentally is illegal, but nobody seemed to mind. What they minded was that Liang never paid back in any currency. Borrowed from Yeh Ho and Hwa Keh and others. Ran off to Macao last October. "From overwork?" as *Life* said. The neighbors

laughed. They said Shekki commune had a work norm of 25 days a month, but "Liang never did more than 20." Besides, "October was slack season anyway." They think he skipped because he owed so many neighbors that it began to be unpleasant and then he got the chance to steal his wife's fish. They have heard that he is begging in Macao.

"Everyone knows that Hongkong and Macao have organizations with imperialist money for refugees, and the worse tales you tell about China, the more help you get." That is Shekki view. Whether Liang changed his name to Kwei or whether your correspondent did it, I wouldn't know. Since many names were changed, I judge it was the correspondent.

Shekki Water Commune flourishes. Wages rise steadily, working hours are supposed to be eight a day. "You can't keep to that when fish are running at sea," they admit frankly, "but eight hours is the norm and we even it out on slack days, or by longer shore rest." Shekki Commune has 300,000 Yuan in the bank in its Housing Fund, putting up homes for boatmen who have had no settled homes. It has already built 300 apartments, of several rooms each, to house 2,500 people in brick buildings with tile roofs. It also has a stadium and a theater for 2,000 people, where dramas, meetings and operas are attended by members.

3) *Chang Hsi-lan*. *Life* identified him as originally a fisherman, later of Kao Yeung village, member of Li Hing Commune, persecuted by Communist organizer Lee Tak, who arrested his father for "smuggling," and who later burned down the village and drove the people into barracks where men were allowed to see their wives only for a few minutes on occasional Saturday nights, under supervision and timing on their sex-life. A check by thirty people in all areas within a day's journey by sampan from Macao, fails to find any commune, village or organizer of these names.

The area behind Macao is Chungshan County. Last autumn it had 33 communes which soon combined into seven. Then the county combined with Chuhai County; the enlarged Chungshan has eighteen communes. None of these communes in any period was named Li Hing. There was, however, a Li Shang Commune, and since it was ten hours by sampan from Macao, and grew rice and sugarcane, as stated by *Life*, it seemed worth looking into. However, of its six large villages and ten hamlets, none was named Kao Yeung, and of its Communist cadres none was named Lee Tak. As for the arrest of Chiang's father for smuggling, Li Sang Commune is proud to state that nobody was arrested for anything on its territory in the whole year of 1958. As for the burning of a village, no village was burned. The only houses destroyed during the year were fifteen in Ta Chung village, whose thatched roofs

leaked so badly that the commune built new brick and tile-roofed houses for their families in Yu Tang village. The old houses were then taken for fertilizer, the normal use for rotted thatch and old clay walls.

Nobody anywhere recognized Chang's photo but several people said he wasn't like the people in these parts for people do not wear their hair that way. . . . By this time, after checking adjacent counties and finding no commune named Li Hing, I saw no use in looking further for Chang. I am ready to put him down as a synthetic product of Macao, cleverer than "Kwei"-Liang since he invents more lurid tales and leaves no address.

4) During this research I learned facts about Chungshan County that seemed worth noting. The county has just over a million people, of whom 848,000 engaged in farming and most of the rest in fishing. It has 232,214 houses, of which 190,101 are peasant-owned. Cultivated area is 310,000 acres, mostly rice and some of it sugar-cane. The rice lands produce three crops a year, two of them rice and the third vegetables. There are 17,000 acres of fishpounds besides the deep-sea fishing.

One of its chiefs of agriculture came to Canton on business and I had a three hour talk with him. He told me that Chungshan was Dr. Sun Yat-sen's county. "A good area," he said, "and a great change after liberation. The livelihood rises every year. Now with the Communes it will rise much faster." He added that peasant income was only 30 Yuan per capita annually before liberation but last year 105 Yuan per capita, three times as much. I replied that this was only about \$46 a year in American money, or about \$250 to \$300 for the average family.

"It is still small," he agreed, "because of our high costs of production. It will be much higher in a year or two when we do not pay out so much." He stated that the gross income in 1958 was 384,000,000 Yuan, which is about 375 Yuan per capita. "But everyone decided to take only 105 for consumption and put the rest into production."

Where did the rest go? I asked. In taxes? He replied that all the taxes were less than twenty million and had been deducted before the 384,000,000 Yuan estimates was made. More than half the gross income went for "production costs." He listed new motor boats for the fishing, and new nylon nets, replacing the heavy hempen nets. Nylon nets were lighter and hence could be much larger, and this was why the fish catch in 1958 was more than three times any previous year. . . .

"Then there are the sea-dikes," he said. "These cost a lot but everyone agreed that they are a fine thing." I thus learned that Chungshan County, with its county engineer's plans and with local labor but some government help in a subsidy of four million yuan for this and some

industries, is building five great sea dikes to reclaim close to a hundred thousand acres of "drowned land where the sea came in with tides." This will increase useful land area by more than 20 percent in the single year of 1959.

The communes in Chungshan County are thus ploughing back more than half their gross income into major improvements which we would call new capital investment but which they call simply "production costs." On these they predicate a rapidly improving future. The Chien Wu Dike, already finished, has sea walls of 5,660 meters in length. "It will give us a fishpond of 3,000 acres and a grass pasture of 15,000 acres, some of which we will improve for rice. It was done in four months by 8,000 workers. We could never have done it before the communes. The other four dikes will be finished this year of 1959."

Do you have the eight-hour day on dike work? I asked, not really imagining they did. He replied that they worked by assignment of tasks to each group, but these were reckoned on what could be done in eight hours. Was the work by men or also by women? He said the dike-building was by men, as it was heavy, wet work, but most of the service work in offices and dining rooms was done by women. The workers came from all over the country, each commune stating what labor could be spared and for what times. Sometimes army tents were borrowed for this temporary housing but now they usually put up temporary bamboo dwellings, of poles and matting, which could be easily moved to new jobs and were better than tents. Men went home from time to time to see their families, but it was too far for most to go every night.

It thus appears there are now actually "barracks for men" behind Macao, but these did not appear until December, after the *Life* story was in print, and they are for temporary jobs, not replacing the homes.

What was the biggest change made by the commune? I asked. He replied that it was the great increase in production. By country-wide planning of land and labor, they could both double crop yield and also start small industries. Already they had 860 factories, built in 1959. They made farm tools, brick and tile and supplied their own needs widely, even to building new houses. "Things we formerly were unable to do."

"How do the people feel? Was there any opposition to communes?" He replied that the chief change in the people was a great ease of mind, from the belief that their future was secure and could be controlled. People say: "We used to worry in three directions: about food, about the household, about how to get extra income from side jobs or trade. Now the food is secure and the household is taken care of, and instead of hunting side jobs there is regular industry for the slack seasons in

farming. So now we can give our whole hearts to production. And when we work with whole hearts, we do things our ancestors never could, like reclaiming the sea-drowned lands"

Some ex-landlords, he said, had spoken against the communes at first but they quickly shut up because the people were so strong for the communes. As for freedom, people were completely free in all details of private life; nobody had to use the canteens or nurseries unless they wished. But in work there must be discipline. All regulations for work were discussed and adopted only after general agreement. Choice of jobs was made by individual petition for jobs, followed by group discussion as to who could best do the work. There were of course disagreements and people felt sore sometimes when decisions went against them. These did not last. Everyone approved the idea of the commune as a whole. "Everyone says this Big Family is very strong and good."

All of this agrees with what I have seen in many parts of China. Rewi Alley, who has spent the past six months travelling to ten provinces into the remote parts, reports that everywhere the peasants drive ahead with energy and enthusiasm. The Communes have difficulties and lacks, but they are difficulties of management, organization, adjustment, group rivalries, and these are not the things that interest you. You seem to want lurid tales of quite irrational and pornographic actions, such as wanton burning of villages for no reason, or the forcible separating of husbands and wives with supervision of their sex life. . . . Such things do not occur in any rational community and certainly not in China, whose people are as rational and decent as any in the world.

If you want to attack people's communes, find better evidence than you used in December.

Very truly yours,
A. L. S."

FOOTNOTE

Americans can well keep in mind a comment made by TV Producer Reuven Frank as he prepared the March 19th program on Channel 4's "World Wide 60" series, a program in observance of World Refugee Year. Producer Frank said:

"Most of these refugees left Communist countries in response to the idea of freedom; in a great many cases their decision was inspired by Western propaganda broadcasts. What happened is that they traded a degree of security and a useful life for stagnation, forced idleness, rootlessness, and anonymity." (N. Y. Post, 3/4/60)

The Hongkong migrants while faring better than most of the world's real refugees (in that they go to a Chinese city and can fairly easily return home) go to no heaven.

Reports the *N. Y. Times* (1/15/60), "As many as fifty live in one room. Dark, narrow stairways . . . lead to cramped quarters shared with relatives or friends. The rest find their way to shanty towns that straggle up the bare brown slopes of Hongkong's harborside hills, where a home is a hut of tin sheets, cardboard and sacking, and congestion is so great that people sleep in shifts. . . . In the tenements of Wanchai and Old Kowloon the density of people to the acre is 2,500—16 times the population density of New York's most congested slums. Refugee children roam the streets . . . Little bundles of rags in streets turn out to be sleeping infants. Often before they can speak refugee children are vagrants or beggars or 'runners' for narcotics peddlers and gangsters."

N. Y. Herald Tribune's Gleason reports: (3/12/60) "The tiny minority of prosperous Causians looked disdainfully out of their skyscraper apartments at the squalid clusters of hillside refugee shacks—a jerry-built jumble of burlap, flattened kerosene tins and scrap lumber. Inside these flimsy horrors families of five or six often shared a five-by-ten room with their goats, pigs and chickens. Lights, water and sewers were lacking, but the hillside shacks had a full share of brothels, gambling joints and opium rooms. . . . Private capital could do nothing and the colony government was determined to keep out of public housing projects." But a terrible fire on Christmas night 1953 wiped out 45 acres of shacks and left 60,000 persons homeless; so the colony government "met the crisis with a firm pledge to construct more than \$25,000,000 worth of refugee housing . . . and by the end of 1959 the colony had completed 100 resettlement blocks housing 300,000 refugees . . . Americans would consider these concrete structures bleak and overcrowded but they are clean and fire-proof, equipped with electric lights, communal bathrooms, roof-top playgrounds for children, clinics, workshops and sanitary garbage and sewage disposal." But "700,000 squatters are still struggling for life in hilleside shacks," Mr. Gleason adds.

Peggy Durdin (*N. Y. Times*, 4/3/60) comments: "These low rent edifices have themselves become new tenements, with three or four families jammed into a room intended for one."

Miss Durdin describes this city of Hongkong as "a city where there is nothing startling in having a legal address, 'The roof-top, 70 Lockhart Road'; where secret societies and heroin vendors prey even on little shoeshine boys, and where petty crooks sell to the ignorant charms 'for relief of evil and misery.' It is a city where vicious loan sharks take

such high interest that borrowing is called 'drinking poison to relieve one's thirst': where malnutrition is endemic; where crowded tenements have no electric lights, little or no water, and latrines are simply wooden buckets in community kitchens. . . . It is significant that, according to a Hongkong psychiatrist, the two noticeable waves of mental breakdown among the refugees occurred a couple of years after the two greatest influxes of mainland Chinese into the overcrowded colony; two years afterward, he says, not because by then they were starving, but because *they saw no way to improve further either their own lot or that of their children.*"

Mr. Gleason (*N. Y. Herald Tribune*, 3/12/60) telling of two families who fled by junk to Hongkong tries to paint their life in mainland China as something from which to flee, saying, "The Reds had drafted them into cooperatives after assuming ownership of their junks and fishing tackle. The government had requisitioned 80% of their catch, paying them only for the remaining 20%; laws restricted adults to a daily ration of a pound of rice with a third of that amount for minors." The facts behind this picture are that China's rural population has successfully moved toward increasing collective organization, action and ownership—from mutual aid teams, to cooperatives, to collectives. It was not the government but the peasants' own cooperatives and collectives that gradually "assumed ownership" of the means of social production. "A pound of rice a day" certainly does not mean a starvation diet for an individual! For almost two years now the latest form of collective organization, action and ownership has been the people's communes; in addition to regular cash wages for work in the commune and cash income gained from their private gardens, chickens, pigs, etc., the communes have worked out for themselves a system of free supply—and already most of China's rural population of over 500,000,000 people have free food, free medical and educational benefits.

The vagrant and beggar children of Hongkong would have been in nurseries and kindergartens if their families had remained in China; a year after the establishment of the people's communes there were eight times as many children in kindergartens and twenty-eight times as many in nurseries—this great increase due to the spread of children's education to China's rural population.

Secret societies, opium and heroin vendors, brothels, gambling dens, petty crooks, loan sharks, burdens of interest, charms against misery and evils, malnutrition, hovels for homes, beggars, gangsters, poverty—and a bleak future—these are things of the past in China. In their place has come security and dignity, the products of a useful life in a cooperative society.