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Reporter

MAR 4 1965

Letters

FROM FRIENDS

IN CHINA

30¢

LETTERS

From Friends in China

Introduction

Letters from friends in China come in often. The usual time from Peking or Shanghai is eight or nine days and occasionally only five days. This issue of FAR EAST REPORTER consists of excerpts from some of these letters. David Crooks is a Britisher who has lived in China for over two decades and teaches in the Peking Foreign Language Institute. Mrs. Crooks is the daughter of former Canadian missionaries in China. Elsie Fairfax Cholmeley (Mrs. Israel Epstein) has also lived in China for over two decades; she and Mr. Epstein do editorial work; they have two adopted Chinese children, a son and a daughter. Doris Dawson was a naturalized American citizen now making her home in China with her daughter, son-in-law and Chinese grandchildren, and teaches in Kaifeng Normal School. The American living in Shanghai has also been a resident of China for more than two decades and does educational research work and teaching.

FAR EAST REPORTER is happy to share with its readers these excerpts from personal, unsolicited letters written by Westerners who are participants in the working world of China today — letters that reveal many aspects of daily life in that new society-in-the-making.

From David Crooks — Peking

Peking August 5th, 1964

Isabel, the three boys and I are just back from a week's trip to Tsinan, capital of Shantung Province. What impressed us most was a visit to a machine tool factory, formerly a small arms-repair shop under the Japanese, now turning out 25 foot lathes and presses with up to 1600 ton pressure. What had been the largest workshop under the Japanese now looks like an under-sized out-house beside the big new workshops, mostly built in 1958-59. As usual, those Great Leap Forward years were constantly referred to by the workers and managers showing us around as turning points when production shot up. What struck us was that the big lathes originally obtained from the Soviet Union, Germany and Czechoslovakia were not merely copied; they were being improved upon. We

were told that the stuff the plant turns out today is not merely abreast of the most modern now produced in those countries but in some cases is ahead of them. We saw one gadget for trimming and polishing some long spiral gear-wheels or shafts (I don't know the technical name); mechanizing this involved the working out of some complicated parabolas for the job previously done by hand; during the First Great Leap Forward they had a crack at it and turned out a machine that worked well; at first they modestly called it a "home-made job" (like the old backyard blast furnaces); then they found out that there was no machine used anywhere else for this purpose; so the "home-made job" evolved into a most up-to-date thing. This is typical of Chinese industry today. The rate of advance is due, I think, mainly to two powerful reasons: powerful motivation and the "mass line" which draws to the full on the workers' potentialities. As we went around the big, light workshops every now and then some one would point out a member of the management, an engineer or a university student or technical institute graduate; I always had to ask, "Which one?" It was impossible to distinguish them from the ordinary workers. The senior staff work at the bench for a set time every year and whenever there is some knotty problem to solve. Old workers team up with the new, college graduates team up with regular factory hands to "combine theory with practice." The managers (five out of six of them were formerly workers in the same plant) spoke well of the work of the Soviet experts who had been there, especially those before 1956; they said the reaction to the withdrawal of the experts was acting as a spur to their efforts, just as the United States blockade previously had been.

We saw evidence of the Great Leap Forward from the top of Mt. Taishan. From the top, looking down on the reservoirs in the various valleys, we asked when they had been constructed. Almost invariably the answer was 1958 and 1959. In a fruit production and research institute in Taian (the town at the foot of the mountain) we were given these figures: apple production in 1962 was 52 million jin (1.1 pounds); in 1963, when the trees planted during the Great Leap Forward began to bear fruit, it was 75 million jin. This too is typical. I have heard and read wishful references to the Great Leap Forward as a great leap backward, but in all our life and travels in China from 1958 till now we have never seen any evidence for an iota of truth in this statement. Of course in the vast outpouring of creative energy there have been some experiments which proved impractical; but to maintain that this makes the Great Leap Forward other than a leap forward is lunatic logic.

In Taian we also visited a big Agricultural Institute which incorporated those that used to be at Chingtao and Nanking. There were over 1700 students, more than 80% of them from farmers' families. The teaching and scientific research are closely

connected with production in the surrounding communes, where the Institute has experimental plots, information centers, research stations, etc. When we asked about the Institute's reaction to the Lysenko controversy we were told that all students study both Morgan-Weissman and Michurin and are urged to "use their own brains and form their own conclusions." The Dean offered his purely personal view, roughly as follows: Michurin is closer to dialectical materialism and Morgan has some aspects of philosophical idealism, but in recent years the followers of the latter school have tended to pay increasing attention to change as a result of the inner contradictions in things — which is of course in line with Mao Tse-Tung's principles in "On Contradiction." Michurin stressed environment. Actually while inner nature and internal contradictions are fundamental, they operate or resolve themselves only in the required environment. Therefore what is desirable is a close study and scientific synthesis of both schools. This is the spirit of letting the hundred schools contend. I hope I have succeeded in presenting his views accurately.

My own impression of our talks at the Institute and tour of the labs with their cases and cases of specimens gathered from the area was of advanced scientific spirit permeating the place. It was the same in going the round of the provincial museum in Tsinan where the exhibits of natural resources and historical relics, from the period of primitive communism down to the present time were arranged and explained with utmost scientific precision and clarity. I recalled Professor Needham's caustic comments on those who think that the West has a monopoly of science. A glance at the commune members, farmers with white towels on their heads, going around this museum would indicate how science permeates life here.

The last of our industrial jaunts was to a packing house in Tsinan. We agreed to go mainly in the interest of the boys for whom it seemed to hold a morbid fascination; I suppose we couldn't quite rid ourselves of the images created by Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle." The visit was a pleasant surprise. After the usual "introduction" over cups of tea we were provided with white coats, caps and surgical masks, just as if we were to perform an operation, except that for rubber gloves we wore rubber boots. The pig processing department was modern and mechanized, the animals first being stunned by electricity, then killed and slung on to an overhead cable. The bristles were removed by sending the carcasses through a tunnel of revolving razors; then they were coated with a mixture containing resin which was pulled off together with any remaining hairs. Every animal was numbered and a sample tested for disease in the laboratory. Hearts, tongues and livers, etc. were cellophane wrapped and neatly packed for freezing. The plant can store 10,000 carcasses. 50,000 tons of pork are being sent to

the Soviet Union this year. We were told that in 1962 production was 38% higher than in 1961, and in 1963 it was 65% higher than in 1962. These figures included frozen eggs and tinned fruit as well as pork.

The highlight of our tour was climbing Mount Tai (Taishan). We were blazing no new trails, for Taishan has been a place of pilgrimage for at least 2,500 years. (That makes Canterbury a bit of an upstart.) We were lucky enough to arrive just a few days after a series of editorials in the papers calling on the young people to scale the peaks, swim in the lakes and rivers (where, as Mao Tse-tung stresses, you can strengthen your will battling with the currents), and practice shooting and signalling, all as a part of "National Defense Sport." So we made our leisurely way up, sipping tea in the temples, admiring the view and puzzling over inscriptions on the rocks. But we were over-taken by droves of strapping young commune members (many of them girls), as well as students, teachers and soldiers. The army types just nipped up to the top in two and a half to three hours; it took us about four, not counting in the rests. Quite a number of the students and teachers we spoke to were on the way to Soochow, Nanking, Shanghai and other places for the summer holidays, but broke their journey at Taian to make the climb, see the sunrise from the summit (5125 feet above sea level), have a snack and rest and then go down to the train again. We did things more sedately and spent two nights and a day or so at the top. We got up at half past four to see the sun rise over the plain from the parapet of the old Taoist temple. I had expected to find a dozen others there; actually there were between two and three hundred. We climbed down in a high wind and thick clouds which made the rocks and twisted pines and rushing waterfalls emerge from the mist as they do in those quite incredible Chinese landscape paintings which are in fact utterly realistic.

There are still half a dozen monks in the temples and a like number of nuns. They look after the temples, which are national treasures, and get paid sixty yuan a month — which compares well enough with the income of commune members. We saw some incense burning in the temples and some small money offerings before the gods, mostly from old folks, especially women. The old beliefs are dying a natural, painless death with no evidence of pressure — other than that of the advance of history and science. Meanwhile, the People's Government allots 200,000 yuan a year for the maintenance and improvement of the beauty spots and historical relics.

August 6th, 1964

Chinese Christians, like other people here, are going back to the

old sources and giving them an independent analysis, not just taking them as dogma. Last year, at a Christmas service the preacher's theme was "You can't have peace on earth if you show good-will to *all* men, including such men as Herod." In fact, he said that the Three Wise Men were not so wise in first consulting Herod on their quest for Christ, for as the head of the established ruling class he sought to strangle the new-born infant as a threat to his rule. So he told the Three Wise Men to report back their findings. But they didn't. The shepherds who represent the simple labouring people, saw the light from the first. The preacher then went on to apply these lessons to the work today, proceeding from the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem to present-day Herods, quoting from the Second Declaration of Havana: that imperialism extracts \$4,000 a minute from Latin America, and leaves instead deaths from hunger, disease and exploitation. . . . Such revolutionary reappraisals are a feature of life here. There are debates on politics, philosophy, literature and history not only in the press but in our class-rooms. David, my son's, oral English course (given for the last few years) contained a piece by Charles Curwen on how he tracked down the sword of the Taiping Uprising leader, Li Xu-cheng. But historical research this year revealed that when Li was captured by the imperial forces he helped them against his former followers, in an unsuccessful attempt to save his own life. Would it be a good idea to go on teaching this piece about a man now proved to be a traitor? As it happened this produced a most lively discussion, for such questions are not regarded as merely academic matters here.

Lighter subjects, such as tight trousers have also come up for debate. In one current-affairs discussion it came out that a girl ordered a pair in Shanghai. The tailor tried to convince her that they would be ugly and uncomfortable; he proposed another type, snappy but not skin-tight. The girl stuck to her tights — and the tailor refused to make them. When the customer left in a huff, the staff called a meeting — to discuss whether the tailor had been right or wrong. They reached no agreement, so wrote to the newspaper. The letter was published, and brought hundreds of replies. Conclusion: what you wear is in a sense your own business, but still, those skin-tight trousers are an expression of the bourgeois way of life. After reading this summing up, as well as all the letters, the girl went back to the shop, said she was now convinced that the tailor was right and asked him to make her a pair of trousers in the style he had first suggested.

To return from tights to teaching: foreign language schools these days are, in the Chinese phrase, "springing up like bamboo sprouts after a spring rain." Since August new ones have been opened in Wuhan, Canton, Chingwandao, Harbin and elsewhere, to say nothing of a couple more in Peking. There has been a corresponding

increase in teaching personnel from abroad. Our own English Department, which for fourteen years or so jogged along with four of us foreign teachers (among dozens of Chinese ones) now suddenly has eleven — which is still not even half as many as we wanted. There has been a similar increase in the field of translation.

The explanation for the increase in foreign language teaching and interpretation is that China has 48,000 specialists and technicians in foreign countries and that in 1965 the number will rise to between 50 and 60,000. It also shows how high China's prestige stands abroad, especially in Asia and Africa, which makes nonsense of talk about her being "isolated."

From Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley — Peking

August 1st, 1964

Yesterday we went to Shanhaikwan and Chingwandao; we were amazed by the greenness of the country and the general look of well-being. Much formerly uncultivated land is now thick with crops beautifully lined up in the large fields; and there were whole herds of cows, flocks of sheep and many pigs everywhere. There seems to be a good crop of apples and peaches, and also of peanuts — one can buy all one wants on the open market. Fruits and vegetables are abundant in all the shops we have seen both in Chingwandao and Peitaho. . . They come in by the truckloads and were piled high on every piece of ground along the streets — eggplants, cucumbers, cabbages, beans, tomatoes and marrows. Every one is making comparisons with the Big Leap Year (1958) and it is very much like that, although now, six years later, the people take it more in their stride, for they know, once having done it, improvement was bound to come, once the factors of the three years of natural calamities were overcome. Of course they are not yet completely overcome, but now we can have much more rain with far fewer floods and much less damage; and droughts are no longer the menace that they were, since water storage everywhere is vastly increased; and probably the most important of all the huge number of pumps that have been installed, making the communes independent of the old carrying pole for irrigation.

September 22nd, 1964

We went off for two weeks to Inner Mongolia, including nine days in the grasslands of Silingol. The country up there was absolutely lovely and it was one of the most exciting and exhilarating trips I have ever been on. Sitting in the yurts and talking to the herdsmen one got a real sense of what socialism had meant to the

people, as they told their stories in a most direct, vivid and moving way. We also saw something of the small local industries and also the regional ones in Humehot, all built up from scratch since Liberation. Quite a number of the old herdsmen are still illiterate but there are radios in most of the yurts and these are a very important part of their new facilities; in fact we heard a popular song in praise of the Shanghai transistors. They told us they had regular discussions and when we asked what they were currently discussing they said, "Chairman Mao Tse-tung's works, the situation in Viet Nam, class struggle and revisionism." When we asked people in the factories what they meant by building up from scratch (it meant from a grass plot) and how they did it they said, "We read Mao Tse-tung's works, follow the policies laid down by the Party, and follow the policy of self-reliance." One saw in concrete terms what this meant. A small milk-processing plant up in the grasslands was turning twenty tons of milk a day into powder which had reached top quality by national standards and was bottled and sealed with plastic caps. A small carpet factory which a year ago was able to produce goods only for local use was now making carpets with sculptured design for export, and this also up to top grade by national standards. The milk plant, incidentally, was built with only 100,000 yuan capital put in by the local authorities, and most of the machines (except for the motors) had been designed and built locally.

December 7th, 1964

Here everything is busy and going well. Confidence is at a new high because understanding deepens all the time. In Peking there is much new building and much repairing of the old which was suspended during the years of natural disaster. We have just had the biggest trade fair by a Western country ever, when the British came last month; it was accompanied by about three hundred business men; they seemed genuinely amazed by what they saw, by the cooperation they received and by the efficiency with which everything was done. We met some of them. They couldn't get over the courtesy and willingness of all service workers, service without even a tip! But they were a bit foxed as to how business is done in a socialist country and worried that questions, and deep questions, were asked about everything without any immediate conclusion of a deal! They went to see "The East Is Red," the song and dance epic of the revolution, with 3000 performers, and they seemed absolutely dazzled. It is a most moving performance with many, many of the old revolutionary songs, a most exciting and new dance movement.

From An American Living in Shanghai

May 3rd, 1964

Last week I had the happy opportunity of joining a foreign experts group from the Foreign Language Press, Peking, for a trip to Hangchow, Shaohsing and Hsinankiang. We were quite an international group — Belgian, Jordan (really Palestine), USA, Japan, Nepal, Italy and France. We stayed at the same hotel you and I stayed at in 1959 and also visited the West Lake People's Commune, as we did then, and I met the very leader of the Mei Chai Wu Production Brigade, Lu Chen-hao, with whom we talked in 1959. The average yearly income per family of three adults and two children in this brigade is now 919 yuan as compared with 712 yuan in 1958. We saw many improvements for which the Brigade itself had paid the costs; the main road has been resurfaced, the bridge reconstructed with stone carved railings; a large auditorium has been built and used for many other purposes than just meeting; a modern primary school is under construction. All the children above seven years of age are in school — a total of 220; and the principal and seven teachers are all from the Brigade itself; the salaries are also paid by the Brigade; the students pay only for their school books. Eight from the Brigade are now studying in universities.

Though the Brigade has bought 26 machines for tea processing, the hand method which we saw in 1959, is still used for the first grade tea, because the leaves are too fine and tender for machine treatment. The processing plant which we visited, the same as in 1959, was humming with activity for the first crop of the season was in the works. Fully ten to twelve clusters of copper kettles (5 or 6 kettles per cluster) were fully manned. It started to rain during our visit and there were the girls all decked out in plastic raincoats of different colors busily picking tea leaves despite the rain. The Brigade now has 1300 tea bushes on the hill sides which are best for tea cultivation. The head of the Brigade looked to be in much better health than in 1959, for the most difficult years are a thing of the past. His young brother, by the way, is one of the primary school teachers.

May 24th, 1964

The Fifth "Shanghai Spring Festival" held a grand opening last night at the Cultural Square which seats more than 10,000 people. The performances portrayed the history of the Chinese Revolution from the October Revolution of the USSR to the present through music and dancing, with the transitions by spoken dramatic recita-

tives. The massed choruses, dancers, and orchestras, both Western and traditional Chinese, involved 3,000 participants; the artistic backdrops which changed with each of the eight episodes constituted a most dramatic presentation of high artistic quality. The participants were drawn from many different organizations and groups, thus combining to put on a truly mass-based performance. The remainder of this Musical Festival extends over two weeks, drawing in song and dance troupes from the six East China provinces. What rich cultural fare we do enjoy, and doubly so because we know that the masses are participants, creating and enjoying all this too.

Hsinankiang really is marvellous and even more impressive when one realizes that the whole project (hydroelectric) was designed and executed by the Chinese themselves. Four of the giant turbines are already working and the remaining five are being installed. Not only are the dam and hydroelectric plant tremendous achievements, but the reservoir which in area is 300 times the size of West Lake (in Hangchow) holds great promise in its future development as a source of food, fish, fruit, not to mention vacation resorts on its hilly shores and the expansion of water communications. When completed the dam will include locks to raise and lower boats between the reservoir and the river, and also provide a fish ladder.

May Day was bright and sunshiny. A happy day with much visiting back and forth and celebrating in different districts. It was only Peking this year which had a large parade. In the evening a friend and I took a jaunt by pedicab to see the lights along Nanking Road, the Bund, Yen'an Road and Huai Hai Lu. The busiest part of Nanking Road was blocked by traffic for there were crowds and crowds of people, parents with children, old and young, strolling at ease to enjoy the sights. Actually our pedicab man was our guide; once he learned we were interested in seeing the lights he determined our route, circled back and forth on the bund so that we could get the full effect — truly brilliant — and later parked in the Peoples' Square where he rested and smoked a cigarette. He seemed to enjoy the trip as much as we did and took great pride in showing us the sights. You felt that he knew that all this splendor belonged to him too.

June 1st, 1964

Let me add another paragraph of information about tea cultivation as told to me by the head of the production brigade at the West Lake Tea Commune. Every time I relay this data to Chinese friends they say they have never before realized how long-lived and productive tea bushes are. Tea leaves are picked three times a year: 1) picking starts on April first; this is the "Spring Tea;" picking

continues until about May 20th and then there is a rest for ten or fifteen days. 2) Then picking starts for the "Summer Tea" and continues till early July. Again a rest of ten days. 3) "Autumn Tea" picking begins the last third of July and continues until October. Then the bushes are given a rest all through the winter until the next April. During these three sessions a bush can be picked more than thirty times.

Fertilizer is applied four times a year: thirty percent chemical fertilizer and the rest natural organic fertilizer. The soil around the bushes is loosened three times a year, weeding is done five times a year, and insecticides are sprayed ten times. The bushes are watered in dry weather and covered with straw in cold weather. It takes four or five years for a new tea bush to mature for picking. Then it can be picked for twenty or twenty-five years, after which the bush is cut down to a few inches above the soil and new shoots spring from the roots. Then after two years the picking can start again. This process of cutting back the tea bushes can be repeated ad infinitum, provided of course that there is proper cultivation all the while. The Commune had some bushes which are three hundred years old and still producing. Tea grown on the hill sides is more fragrant and of better quality. Also, the tea is of even better quality in the first seven or eight years after regenerating the bushes by the cutting back method; that is, it is better than the tea picked on the original bush before the cutting back. Did you know that red (black) tea and green tea are produced from the same raw material? The difference is due to different processing methods: red tea is fermented, green tea is toasted or baked (such as we saw in 1959). The Production Brigade had reminded us that the best results in brewing tea are secured by using hot water at the boiling point.

June 14th 1964

If the American people continue to swallow what they read in the reactionary press about Peoples China, they are due for a good shaking up, (perhaps, quite unsettling at first) when they seriously put their minds to understanding the new life being created by the Chinese people themselves. Strength, confidence, enthusiasm, humility, eagerness to learn more and more and to master science—these are all characteristics of the day which are steadily changing and enriching life on every hand.

About a month ago I found myself in the neighborhood of the Bubbling Well Temple on a Sunday. There are always many people out shopping on Sunday, but I was attracted by an unusually large crowd surging into an open-front meat market and spilling out over the curb into the street. What was the attraction? I sidled up to the bulletin board and read "30% discount in the price of

frozen pork." No wonder people were taking advantage of this bargain. Before long I saw truck loads of frozen pork being delivered to the shop. The space inside was too limited to accommodate such a large supply, so the frozen carcasses were piled up on the cement sidewalk like a huge cord of wood. This cut in the price of pork was not just a one-day bargain—it lasted fully one week all over the city. Why? Such an abundant supply of fresh pork was coming into the city that the storage plants had to move out what they already had on hand in order to make room for the new supply.

The cultural revolution is gathering momentum; over a year ago we witnessed the Modern Drama Festival put on by drama troupes from the six East China provinces here in Shanghai. Similar modern drama festivals have since been held in different parts of the country. In quick succession the different schools of opera began performing modern, revolutionary themes culminating in a national festival in Peking. Music, the dance, and films are also reflecting this new trend. For music and dance, the performance of "The East Is Red" by 3000 artists with mass chorus and orchestra during the October First Celebrations in Peking set a new high goal. We had a kind of preview of this type of brilliant historical pageant in song and dance last May during the Annual Spring Festival of Music in Shanghai, but the Peking presentation surpassed Shanghai's effort. Meantime, all the new film scripts are being studied intensely, also the scenery, layout, etc., so as not to make the mistakes which appeared in several films last year, films which glorified bourgeois life and ideology and ignored the class struggle

From what I have seen on the stage, I like the new dramas and operas immensely; they have so much life and verve, preserving many of the art forms of the old Peking opera but enacting new modern themes, some dealing with the problems of every day life in a commune or factory or family, some operatizing scenes from such revolutionary works as "The Red Crag" and "Tracks In The Snowy Forest." Thus we are promised an almost unending stream of the best of the dramas and operas which have been performed in the regional and national festivals.

The one drawback to a full enjoyment of this rich cultural fare is that one simply cannot go to the theatre every night of the week and give one's best to one's daytime occupation! Therefore one must select! At the moment "Letters From The South," dramatizing the two volume "Letters" from South Vietnam to relatives and friends in North Vietnam, is running in many theatres. The performance I saw last night was excellent—so moving. Tonight I am taking in the United Arab Republic Dance Ensembles now touring China. Several weeks ago we were treated to the Congo (Brasse-ville) Dance Troupe, a Maori Song and Dance Troupe from New Zealand, and the excellent Japanese Dance Troupe

which had toured China several years ago. There were also other foreign ensembles which I had to forego.

The Spring Festival is less than a month away. Already people are laying in supplies (the traditional delicacies are in abundant supply) and preparations for these family-get-together holidays are under way.

January 10th 1965

Just one week ago the National People's Congress and the National People's Political Consultative Conference sessions came to an end. Premier Chou's report gives a balanced (I would say "restrained") picture of conditions within the country. The life around us every day substantiates everything he reported. Our markets are fairly bursting with eatables; never before have I seen such abundance of fruit in variety and quantity; consumer goods do not lag behind; synthetic fabrics—nylon, drip-dry, dacron, etc.—are flooding the shops.

January 11th 1965

Your letter of January 2nd came in on the 13th.

From Doris Dawson — Kaifeng

Editor's note: Mrs. Dawson a naturalized American citizen visited her daughter in China in 1962 and 1963 and in 1964 again went to China to make her home there. She writes: "I chose American citizenship in adulthood. Through the books of her great men, her dreamers and her poets, and by reading her Declaration of Independence and her Constitution, I consciously chose her above my own Motherland, (Britain). I was glad it was my considered action, when taking the oath of allegiance, all the greatness and beauty in her past received my vow, 'I will be true.' Because to me this was a mutual pact, and I cannot now condone the arrogance, dishonesty and brutality of her dealings with other countries, I have left her. I have come to China for three reasons: first, and most obvious, to be with my daughter and her family, after seventeen years of separation; secondly, on a shorter visit to China I was struck by the honesty, the integrity and mutual helpfulness of her people, and most of all by the courage shown, even among the least literate, in realizing the enormity of loss and tragedy that a nuclear attack could bring, and their united refusal to be blackmailed by the threat of one; and thirdly, and chiefly, I would rather live in the country most threatened by nuclear weapons than in the country most likely to use them."

September 5th 1964

I am here in Kaifeng teaching the "middle teachers"—or rather, helping them in their standard of English, which is surprisingly good, their accent being better than I have heard elsewhere. I don't believe I will ever be sorry I came, although of course I am going to miss the family I left behind as much as I enjoy the family I have come to. School started this week, and I am the only one on the campus (3500 students) who has little to do—as until Sunday they are discussing the problems of teaching, of the errors of the past to be corrected, and of the wisdom of the new idea, to be tried or not, as they decide. One of the big questions, "Red and Expert—how much weight should the latter have?"

This year none of the best academic graduates have been kept here for the teaching staff; the four that have been kept all have ability to bring their standard up and are likely to have special help in this from everyone. I expect my evening hours will be taken with visitors eager to improve their speech!

October 16th 1964

My daughter Shirley next year will have spent exactly one half of her life in China (she will be forty) whereas I have been here less than three months. When I arrived the college gave me a temporary room until my comfortable quarters were fixed. Shirley was shocked to find no screen in the window and the mistake was rectified immediately with an apology. I remembered that on my visit two years ago there were no screens anywhere in the town. The advance in small things surprises the returning visitor, while the resident is quite used to them now. Matches, both here and in Peking are of good quality where they were horrible in 1963. Toilet paper is plentiful and there are flush toilets throughout the college. Packages are wrapped (they weren't even in Peking on my last visit.) Buses are frequent and not too crowded. The universal cart drawn by a horse in a shaft and a donkey alongside (we used to argue whether it was for moral support, or really helped pull up hills) has given way to carts with a pair of horses in shafts, and even these are less frequent for there are many motor trucks; and there are a great deal fewer man-drawn carts. People, including Shirley and her children, still wear patched clothes; and blue pants and white shirts are still usual, but every one turns out in better clothes on occasions; the little girls are nicely dressed; the teenagers by preference dress very soberly as do the adults—my gaudy winter pants are amusing to most of them. Food is plentiful; when I read an item that there were seventy varieties of vegetables in Peking over National Day Shirley counted 29 common ones that we eat every day, and of course there are many of the more ex-

pensive. The only edibles still rationed are cereals, sugar and oil, but the ration is generous enough for every one to laugh about their stock of grain tickets which are never used; and we always have sugar and oil tickets over. Electricity is universal; and their are faucets in most communities outside the houses. We have one in our courtyard. There are large public trash bins in every block, well-made of concrete and cleaned every day—a contrast to Manila where, when we passed through, the trash heaped in the streets had not been collected for a month. I came here all prepared to rough it without complaint; instead, I have three rooms—a very large office-sitting room, a large bedroom and a kitchen—comfortably furnished with two stoves to keep warm through the winter; I turned down the offer of a third stove as I prefer a cold bedroom.

When I was here last, people were joking about “The Great Rest” that followed the Great Leap Forward, not because of the Leap but because of the hard years that followed with drought and flood, when every one was on light rations so that no one should starve. Hours of work were cut, people were on their honor to get eight hours of bed each night, exercise was not stressed, nor “labouring” for schools and officials. Now there is complete recovery, and life is getting back to the strenuous norm, which is hailed with joy by the people at large—for in the slack time many “bourgeois remnants” took on strength. Especially in the colleges students, many of them living a softer life than ever before and all being able to give full time to books—some of them developed the intellectual snobbery and selfish desire to shine personally and to not soil their hands—this showed enough to generate a nation-wide campaign against it.

All our graduates will spend one month in the factories (if they have been assigned to towns) or in the field before beginning to teach in the schools. One of Shirley’s students who had gone North wrote to her “in a joy of uneasiness.” He had the assignment he longed for, with the Research Committee; but before taking up the job he will spend a year in “social study,” in other words, living with the peasants in quite a primitive village, working with them and sharing their life, getting to know their language (Vi, I believe it is spelled) and their problems. He will never do “research for research sake” but to meet the problems he knows at first hand. I feel the Chinese intellectual is giving up his ivory tower for a place in the sun, and he is going to be a lucky man. But not all of them will realize it unless the faculty, and especially the older members, do a job of watching themselves for traits that can mislead, for a wrong word or teaching material. I find it far more challenging than if China were a country contented with its accomplishments, and also a tremendous personal incentive to delve for the best that is in one and try to become it. Most of the students

are very fine stuff; of course those who aren’t are attracted to the “new foreign teacher” and want to hear of life in America, and “the American standard of living.” I have taken these weeks to pick them out, to try the soft and easy way for the right conversation when they come around, and am now schooling myself for what is my weakest point—to be frank and hurt them without breaking the friendship that may lead them to discuss their short-comings and do something about them; there are only two that are far off the track and the kindest thing is to save them from a complete wreck, if I can.

I broke off there to go and see a movie, “A Family Problem”—on just what I was writing about; it was about an intellectual returning to a city working-class home with quite the wrong outlook, and his reeducation and that of his mother who fully supported his superior outlook. All these films have strong social content, but they are handled with so much humor that they are delightfully entertaining too. It was good to hear the roars of laughter when the boy in the film came out with ideas fairly common on the campus, but so obviously absurd in the mixed life outside college that it was salutary to hear.

We have been gardening this afternoon. Our lovely court will be lovely next year—it is quite large, with the Russian lady and me occupying one side, and the other rooms around it for the single teachers, except Shirley’s large study next door to mine. We have planted a variety of annuals for the spring, no need for vegetables in the garden now.

January 4th 1965

On Sundays and holidays peasants flock to visit sons and daughters in college, always with bundles—a new suit, something good to eat—and often with the whole family. On New Year’s Day I visited an old man who was spending two days with his son; the wonder of his experience shone in his eyes; he seemed fascinated by me, his first foreigner. I accepted a cup of hot water but declined the sugar. “Oh,” said the son, shovelling it in, “You must have sugar. My father asks that you drink it bottom up.” Stunted to child height, the father is fourth generation from the time the family’s land was lost by debt to the landlord. For two generations they had begged for their bread; in the third they advanced to peddling; at thirteen he was apprenticed to a maker of steamed buns—“His growth was steamed out of him,” the son said. He married and started a family on this trade but while the children were still small a Kuomintang official developed a fondness for his buns and bought most of his supply each morning. When he tried to collect for the buns he was beaten but forced to continue

“selling” to the man. After the third and severest beating there seemed to be no alternative to starving but to flee the town and beg. However, Liberation came: the family was saved, and here he was, visiting a son with a whole room to himself, a teacher in college!

Old customs change in China; some evolve; others which have been empty formalities are filled with new and meaningful content. For weeks, the students have been practicing in every spare minute their full schedule allowed for the big concert on New Year's Eve—the orchestras, the dances, the songs and skits from each of the nine departments. Before, on New Year's Day the custom was for students to set out early on a round of visits to each of their teachers, who in their turn would have to forgo that extra holiday hour in bed or gatherings with their own friends. This year, by common consent, the *old* custom was discarded. In its place the students spent the day visiting the families of soldiers and of heroes and martyrs (those who had died in battle or were tortured and killed under the old regime). At each place where the family's ablest man was dead or in the army the students did the chores, carrying water, chopping kindling, washing windows. Those whose performances were especially good, in content as well as art, spent the day on the streets, performing for the holiday crowds. All the schools had their concerts and joined in. My oldest granddaughter, Lil-li gave a comic dialogue with another girl, and she was out all day, repeating it on the streets. This is “propaganda work”; besides the social content there is much to learn in good music from the young folk, and in their carrying on of treasured folk song and dance. So, the empty formalities of the old custom are ditched, but the custom is not ditched—it is filled with meaningful and useful content.

My days get shot here as badly as in America. A teacher came in with the problem of “in,” a little word which I have used all my life and never thought about. If you will do a certain work “in a year,” does it mean within? or after?

Political education is a must; though I cannot attend the meetings on the subject I get it second hand through Shirley (my lack of Chinese is the only reason I don't go). There are many examples I run into, with Shirley there to interpret: An older woman cleaning up a toilet after a former occupant, and muttering, “Where is her political understanding?” Or, my younger grandson being scolded by others for having accepted a penny in return for lending one of his books: “You want to join the Pioneers when you are old enough? You want to go into the Navy? Do you think they would take a degenerate like you?”