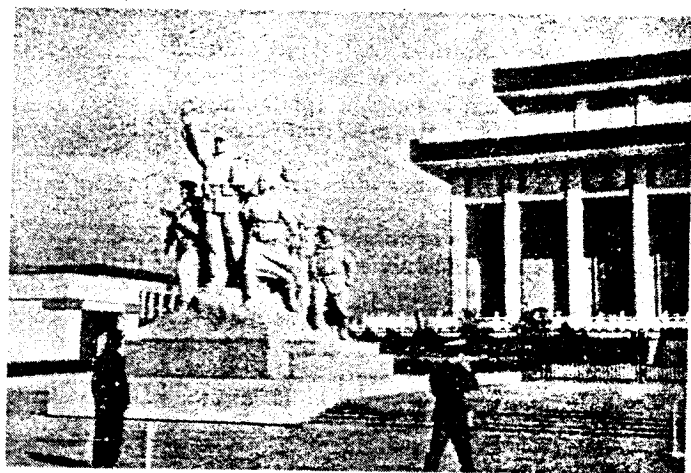


A PERSONAL NOTEBOOK

From Peking to Lhasa— A 16-Day Journey Through China

Chase Untermeyer, a member of the Texas State legislature, as well as a journalist, accompanied Ambassador George Bush on a 16-day trip to China that included a visit to Tibet. Following are notes Untermeyer took during their journey.



Statue symbolizing the unity of all parts of Chinese society stands in front of memorial to the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

Chinese, it means full diplomatic ties between Washington and Peking. But from the American point of view, our relations are already quite harmonious and "normal"—more so than with many countries with whom we have full diplomatic relations.

We have trade with China—nearly half a billion dollars' worth last year. We have cultural and scientific exchanges. Americans can travel to all corners of China and be treated with warmth and hospitality.

What real difference does it make that Leonard Woodcock, our current chief envoy in Peking, is officially classified as "Chief, U.S. Liaison Office," rather than as the Ambassador? Is the change in his official title worth what the Chinese demand: the abandonment of the Republic of China on

Smashing the "Gang of Four." On our second day in China, George Bush and members of his group are hosted at a banquet by Hao Te-ching, a retired Chinese Ambassador who heads the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs. His prepared text for the toasting sets a theme that we shall hear repeatedly during our journey: Great changes have occurred in China since Bush left his post as head of the U.S. Mission-Peking, in December, 1975, to become chief of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Hao cited the deaths of China's three major revolutionary leaders: Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Premier Chou En-lai and Marshal Chu Teh. He talked of the efforts of Mao's widow, Chiang Ching, and her associates—now known as the "Gang of Four"—to seize power after Mao's death.

According to Hao, Mao was aware of what the "antiparty" group was up to, and hand-picked his successor, Hua Kuo-feng, to "smash the Gang of Four." Hao predicted that on our trip we would "see that people up and down the country, under Chairman Hua, are in high spirits, eager to turn China into a powerful socialist country by the end of the century."

China's strong man. On the third day of our visit, we are received by Teng Hsiao-ping, Vice Premier of the State Council and Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Despite his ranking as only No. 3 in the present lineup of power, Teng is believed by Chinese and foreigners alike to be the strong man of today's China.

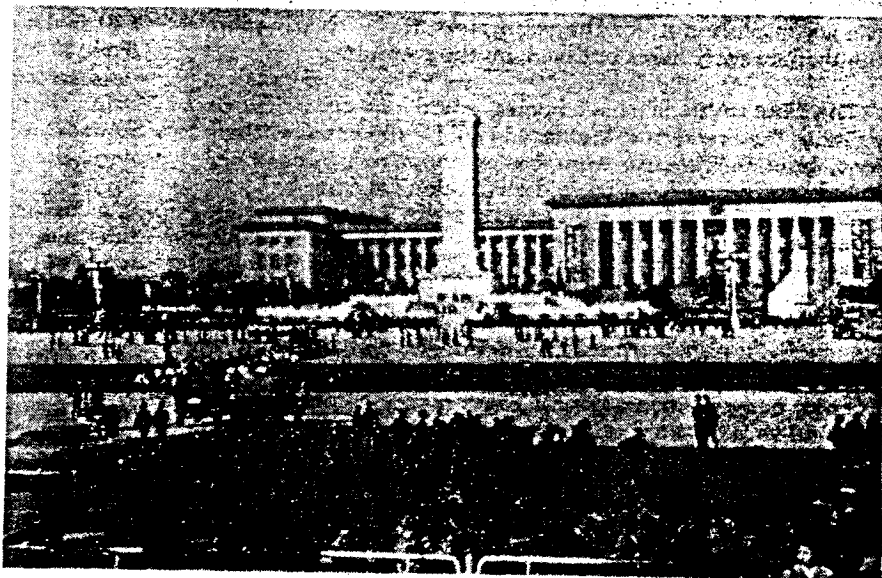
Teng, a tiny man in his early 70s who has survived two purges, fairly pops with self-confidence. He has a way of pivoting at the waist while seated to toss off a statement with an air of absolute authority.

We journalists are allowed to remain only for the opening pleasantries. Then we are swept out of the room while Teng talks with Bush. What filtered out provided insight into the way Chinese leaders view the world.

China and Russia. The Chinese are greatly concerned about the Soviet strategic threat to their country. Teng and his colleagues speak passionately of Moscow's military build-up and the treaties that it has broken. Russia is regarded as the greatest danger to world peace.

The Chinese complain that the U.S. only "appeases" Russia when it sells her grain, or when it backs off from confrontations in Angola or Zaïre, where Moscow has supported groups unfriendly to Washington and Peking.

U.S. and China. What is meant by "normalization" of U.S. relations with China puzzled me throughout our journey. Clearly, to the



In Peking's Tien An Men Square, Americans saw hundreds of thousands rehearse for the National Day pageant. In background is the Great Hall of the People.

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Taiwan to an uncertain fate—and possibly invasion by mainland China?

Crowded hospitals. In preparation for our visit to the high altitudes of Tibet, we are taken to the Capital Hospital in Peking for chest X rays, electrocardiograms and blood-pressure tests.

My tests were finished early, and I seized the opportunity to wander off from the brightly lit and lacquered foreigners' section of the old hospital to look at the area that is used by ordinary Chinese. It is darker, lit by low-wattage bulbs, and the corridors are crowded, wet and littered. People stand in line to register for appointments or to get a prescription. Some are sleeping on benches. No one from the hospital staff asks what I am doing there. But my always nervous escort from the Foreign Ministry's information department locates me. I pretend that I got lost looking for the men's room.

Dress rehearsal. Our private dinner at a superb Peking-duck restaurant is interrupted by the shouts of an organized group of young people who are waving red banners.

Fortunately, they are not moving against us—visible anti-Americanism has all but vanished in China—but instead are on a dress rehearsal for the National Day festivities of October 1. Thereafter, we see hundreds of thousands of people streaming into the vast Tien An Men Square, where the Great Hall of the People is located.

Most of the people are under 20, and many are dressed in the colorful costumes of minority nationalities. In a display similar to what Albert Speer might have stage-managed for Hitler at the Nazi rallies in Nuremberg, all the huge buildings around the square are rimmed with electric lights, and powerful spotlights stationed around the city cast their beams to one point above our heads. (Is this to suggest the celestial presence of the late Mao Tse-tung?) Then the spotlights move right and left in a rhythmical fashion, creating a cat's-cradle effect in the sky, while martial music blares from loud-speakers built into street lamps.

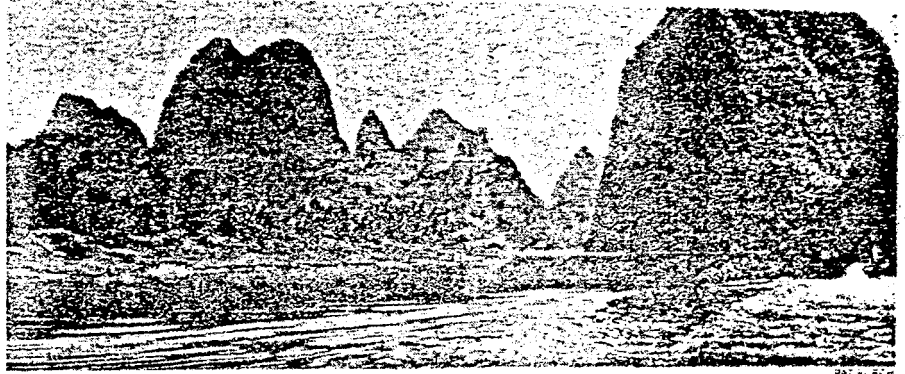
Without doubt, the participants had been ordered into Peking in the way that only a thoroughly controlled society can accomplish. But, for the youngsters, this is clearly more fun than an early lights-out back on the commune.

The Mao myth. We have been granted a special privilege: a visit to the brand-new Memorial Hall for the late Chairman Mao, built in Tien An Men beside the Great Hall of the People and across from the old Forbidden City.

Thousands of Chinese wait quietly while we foreigners are moved to the head of the line. In the entrance chamber, a visitor sees a large alabaster statue of Mao as he is usually portrayed—husky, decisive, benign, wise. At the foot of the statue are funeral wreaths, given by top members of the Politburo. In back is a magnificent needlepoint tapestry—an allegorical panorama of China.

From here, we enter the chamber where Mao's body lies encased in a crystal crypt. The sight is a shock. Far from being the remains of the larger-than-life subject of the statue, this is the preserved body of an old, emaciated man.

The designers must have known what they were doing. A visitor sees that the "Great Helmsman" was a mortal, like all men, and the mythical Mao of the entrance hall is now definitely dead. The Mao myth may live on, the subliminal message seems to say, but the actual conduct of China's



Weird rock formations of Kweilin, in South China, have been favorite subjects of Chinese artists for centuries. U.S. visitors find artists portray real scenes.

affairs must pass to new leaders—such as Hua Kuo-feng. China has not been "de-Maoified" as some diplomats and journalists have been speculating. But clearly what is now in progress is the Chinese equivalent of transition, at least in the mass public-relations sense. More and more you see paired portraits of Mao and Hua, with Mao still given first rank by being positioned on the left.

A popular painting shows what probably is an apocryphal scene of the two Chinese leaders sitting in Mao's study. Mao has placed a hand tenderly on Hua's, and the caption quotes Mao as saying, "With you in charge, I can rest."

More money to spend. I stroll along Wang Fu Ching, Peking's main shopping street, making a point of entering every shop for two blocks. The idea is to check the availability of consumer goods and their prices.

The shelves are well stocked. But some of the prices may have been out of the reach of a typical factory worker who earns \$20 to \$25 a month. [More than half the nation's factory workers were recently given a pay raise—their first in 10 years.]

A woman's buttoned sweater costs about \$8.50, a man's cotton shirt from \$3.50 to \$5. A standard Chinese-made watch costs \$55, the band another \$1 or \$2. But a Japanese watch that shows the date as well as the time is priced upward of \$285. A plain alarm clock costs from \$5 to \$7.50. The ubiquitous "Mao jacket" ranges from \$10.50 in cotton to \$30 in fancier cloth. A pair of matching trousers will cost from \$7.50 to \$20. And the unisex rubber-soled black slippers, so popular everywhere in China, sell for only \$2.

In other words, the essential adult outfit, meant to last for years, can be purchased at a reasonable outlay. But luxury items are expensive.

A lack of safety. Szechwan, China's most-populous Province and its richest rice-growing area, presents a welcome contrast to sterile and dusty Peking. The rice fields at harvest time are patterns of green and yellow, interlaced with trees and water buffalo. People are dressed more casually and colorfully than in the national capital. Since Americans are seldom seen here, we become the center of attention.

After a splendid meal that justifies the fame of Szechwanese cooking, we are taken to see the Chengtu Measuring Instruments & Precision Cutting Tools Plant. The broadly smiling "chairman of the revolutionary committee"—meaning the boss—escorts us through the poorly lit workshops, where the workers operate dangerous grinding and drilling machines without the protection of safety goggles.

China has many forms of rigid control, but lacks its version of America's Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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(OSHA). Later, at the gigantic Chungking Iron & Steel Corporation, we spot similar hazards.

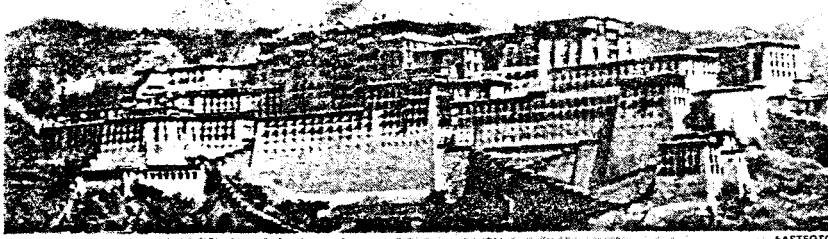
A "classless" society? An overnight train ride shows the gradations in this "classless" society. We ride in a private carriage with European-style compartments, table lamps and potted plants. It is not open to ordinary passengers.

Cobra for dinner. Chinese artists for centuries have painted scenes from Kweilin, in South China, of hunched-

over, warped-looking mountains topped by pagodas, with blue-green rocks and trees. Westerners who view these paintings have thought how imaginative the Chinese were to come up with such crazy notions of geology. But Kweilin is where the artist portrays real life.

American tour groups might be discouraged from coming here if they are given food similar to that served to us by the Kweilin Municipal Revolutionary Committee. It is heavy on snake: The "dragon soup" contains strips of cobra, and mao-tai drinks are made yellow by the bile of the reptile.

And on the "Roof of the World"



Potala, former winter palace of Dalai Lamas, in Tibet.

Nevertheless, the Chinese also are preserving the relics of Tibetan Buddhism. During visits to the breathtakingly beautiful Potala and the summer palace, Norbu Linga, we saw exquisite Tibetan paintings, wood carvings and statuary.

But even that which genuinely is part of the past is made to serve the political present. One exhibit of manuscripts purported to show that "the different generations of Dalai Lamas and other high Tibetan officials had to seek the approval of the central Government of China" ever since the thirteenth century. Without this

approval, our guide said, Tibetan decrees were invalid, which "shows that the relationship between the Motherland and Tibet is historically proven."

The Chinese leadership in Lhasa is sensitive to reports that Peking is deliberately settling more ethnic Chinese in Tibet to shore up its control of the region—not unlike what Israel is doing with Jewish settlements on the conquered West Bank of the Jordan River.

Tien Pao denied that any such settlements existed, explaining that some of the 120,000 Chinese now in Tibet are descendants of Chinese troops who came here in the nineteenth century and stayed on. Other ethnic-Chinese workers in Tibet, he explained, are technical personnel who are on permanent assignment—unless their health gives out—or are here for periods of service of two to three years.

But Tien confirmed a report that, last year, 1,000 Chinese newcomers settled in Tibet—educated youths who responded to Chairman Mao's call to go "down to the countryside" and "temper themselves" by working in communes.

One example of Chinese control: In the old town of Lhasa, friendly Tibetans followed our group in large and happy numbers—a veritable parade. Finally, our uniformed Chinese escorts barked at the Tibetans to permit the Americans to wander ahead by themselves. There was nothing we could do but look sympathetic and wave cheerfully at the blocked mass of smiling townspeople.

The past recalled. To Lowell Thomas, the saddest difference between the Tibet he remembers and the Tibet of today is the loss of "pageantry." He explained: "There used to be a different garb for every rank of Tibetan. The nobles would ride up on caparisoned horses to present silk scarves to visitors. Temple flags flew everywhere. In the Potala, you would walk through rooms that were filled with monks going through their incantations—they would never even notice you."

What has happened to the 25,000 monks? Said a smiling Tibetan Communist leader: "They have other jobs now. Some are married and have children."

"Everything has changed. Tibet is now part of China."

The speaker: Lowell Thomas, one of several Americans who were allowed to visit this remote land in October. Thomas was last here in 1949, the year the Chinese Communists forced the Nationalists to flee to the island of Taiwan.

Tibet's former theocratic ruler, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, now lives in exile in India. The new rulers of Tibet, which is larger than Texas and California combined, are the ethnic Chinese who make up only 7 per cent of the total population of 1.74 million.

Old and new. The Chinese run Tibet in a manner that is reminiscent of British rule in India before World War II. At the base of the imposing Potala, the seventeenth-century winter palace of the Dalai Lamas, is the "new city" of Lhasa. A grid pattern of tree-lined streets makes it look like other cities in China. This area is the Chinese cantonment, where most people are relatively fair-skinned and have moon-shaped faces. The Tibetans, who have thinner, stronger facial features and coloring roughly like that of American Indians, live in the ancient mud-and-stone old town of Lhasa or in the countryside.

You see signs of Chinese control everywhere. The Chinese language has precedence on street signs and wall slogans; the Tibetan characters are always second.

Tien Pao, the highest ranking Tibetan in the "autonomous" government, was unable to give the proportion of Chinese to Tibetans on the revolutionary committee, except that Tibetans have "an absolute majority."

A show staged in Lhasa by the "Song and Dance Ensemble of the Tibetan Autonomous Region" featured a ballet in which Tibetan girls joyously insisted on washing the uniform of a People's Liberation Army soldier. Next came a dance in "Jubilant Celebration of a Bumper Harvest," with two boys in the foreground gazing adoringly at twin portraits of the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung and his chosen successor, Hua Kuo-feng. In a duet, entitled "Praising the New Town," an old Tibetan man and his granddaughter sang ecstatically—in Chinese—of the beauties of the new section of Lhasa.