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PEKING: HEART OF ASIA

by Ross Terrill

"Change" in the Far East has been measured in recent years in terms of economics. In Peking, change must be assayed in broader terms. It is social, psychological, and political. And, says the author, "The way Peking changes is a clue to China's condition." Here is a profile of the Chinese capital.

In Peking you feel at once the dry air and sense the high, open sky of north China. The light is soft, not a relentless glare as in steamy south China. The bone-dry texture of Peking days makes for physical well-being. You hardly need the statistics which show Peking folk to be highly resistant to epidemics. Only look around at the razor eyes and the silky complexions.

Not that every face in the streets is a Peking one. The capital is a magnet drawing people from all China. They come for work or meetings, on behalf of their province or as a step up from a previous local post. The "floating population" from out of town is almost half a million, and the four thousand eating houses have plates to satisfy every Chinese culinary taste. "Fragrant chicken" of Kiangsu; "red-sauce" meat of Fukien; dishes of Tibet, Mongolia, of the Moslem people.

But the city's reach is more than territorial. Peking is perhaps the one city in the world that presumes to relate itself to the cosmos. The Temple of the Sun was built in the eastern city. The Temple of the Moon faced it from the west. To the Temple of Heaven, in the south, emperors would go to pray for a good harvest. On a north-south axis lay most of the great buildings, facing south to snare maximum sunlight. Even ordinary houses made this same arrangement with nature; their best rooms faced south to a courtyard.

Pekinese have been for centuries—and still are—as much oriented to "east" and "west" as to "left" and "right." Taxi drivers talk of turning north; they enter a street from its "west mouth." The winds have a say in where factories are built. Since the main winds come from the north and the northwest, the city government has steered new industry east and south of the city center—to cut down air pollution.

Longtime residents of Peking seem part of the city, as the city seems part of nature. They dwell in the shadow of a rich past. It is a place, someone has said, "where ghosts might walk with men." This lends a touch of class to Peking.

Not only the elite of Peking have a sense of history about their city. Like a tangible mist, Peking's culture touches every resident with its cloying power. In old Peking, the man in the street had a cultural pride, as if by osmosis or inheritance. Even more so today is Peking's culture pervasive; as everyday energy, as an awareness of quality. The very walk of a Peking man—erect, unhurried, square-footed—expresses his assured place in the large compact of things. Living in Peking confers status, even in the People's Republic of China.

This prestige has its reasons. Pekinese share walls and willows with Chairman Mao, as great a leader as China has ever had. They speak the Chinese accent—once called Mandarin or "Peking speech," now known as "ordinary speech"—which ...nds

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of their watches show a time which, despite China's five-thousand-kilometer breadth, the whole nation must call its own.

People in other cities of China do their part to sustain Peking's prestige. They look up to "China's capital, Peking," as they term it. During the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards in the provinces, alienated from the establishment as they were,—marched off in good faith to "tell Peking" their views. During the recent campaign against the influence of Confucius and Lin Piao, citizens from Dairen traveled to Peking, expressly to register their grievances in wall posters which they stuck plaintively to the gate of the Peking city government. It was like coming to address a trusted elder whose nobility would guarantee a fair hearing.

Peking folk speak of the city as if it were a personification of authority. To me, as a foreigner, Peking exudes another kind of authority: it is Asia's last big-league holdout against the seduction of Western civilization.

There are several "Asias" which are mirror images of a particular Western impact. A British Asia, where London used to rule, English is widely spoken, and ready access is given British religion, ideas, and products; a French Asia; also, since World War II, an American Asia.

Peking is outside the West's tamed Asia. It looks up to nobody, rests content with its own values and culture. Not foreign products, but Chinese, fill the fast-selling spots in the department stores. No Pekinese, planning a fine meal or a special occasion, would choose a cuisine other than China's own. Peking intellectuals do not make their high flights in a Western tongue; it is considered enough for a Chinese sage to express himself in Chinese.

In the present era of the West's decline in Asia, China emerges carrying the torch of Asia's confidence in itself. Peking, which was never really part of the "Asias," turns out to be the heart of Asia.

It is 11:00 P.M.—a late hour in Peking—as I leave the New Traveler Hotel in old Legation Street where I have been drinking ginseng wine with a journalist friend. The summer night is soft and I decide to return on foot to my own hotel, the Nationalities. The two hotels lie east and west of the main public buildings of Mao's Peking. An hour's walk shows me much of "new state Peking."

Flashes of lightning make Tian-an men Square seem like a vast white skating rink, its big surrounding buildings like pink hills. Built during the early Ming, the square has been the heart of empire, republic, and people's republic alike. It is China's national emblem; the motif on the Chinese airline's air tickets; the "red sun" in people's hearts. It is Peking's flat smooth stomach.

During the Great Leap Forward (1958), Tian-an men Square was rebuilt and enlarged from twenty-seven acres to a hundred acres. A staggering ten thousand trees were planted around it. Graceful willows, solid pines, maples with a rosy surprise up their sleeves for the autumn.

As one series of jumps within the Leap, Peking put up ten new buildings in ten months, to celebrate ten years of liberation. Most of the "triple ten" projects are near the square. The entire skyline of Peking today is made up of new public buildings, including the clocks of the railway station, the spire of the TV center, the Agricultural Exhibition Center, the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, the red star on top of the Military Museum.

Emperors used to hand down edicts at the northern fringe of the square, near the palace moat. An edict was held in the mouth of a gold-painted wooden phoenix. Down from the Gate of Heavenly Peace the bird was lowered. A mandarin of the Board of Rites took the edict on a tray decorated with clouds and carried it off to be copied on yellow paper and sent to every corner of China.

Here I am at the moat, and it is still called Golden Water River as under the Ming. Edicts are handed down these days through the *People's Daily* rather than a golden phoenix. Ceremony is still frequent, and now an affair of the masses. A streak of lightning suddenly turns the paving beneath my feet into a silver lake. Each flat square flagstone has a number on it. So *that* is why China's parades go like clockwork!

On the square's eight-hundred-meter eastern flank, where the old Board of Rites and Board of Astronomy stood, I pass two new museums. Both the Museum of Chinese History (up to 1840) and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution (since 1840) were part of the "triple ten" project, shooting up during 1959 like mushrooms after spring rain.

They are done in the quite pleasing style of new state Peking. Long (three hundred meters) in relation to height (forty-five meters), they do not chop off the view, or take away Tian-an men Square's sense of deep space. They match the Great Hall of the People, which faces them from the western flank, where the Court of Censors and Board of Punishments used to be. Pink granite at the base; fawn walls relieved by simple colonnades; upturned eaves of green- and gold-glazed tile.

The Great Hall of the People was the star of the "triple ten" spasm. It can hold a meeting of ten thousand delegates, mount a dinner party for five thousand, provide a chic salon for a quiet interview. There is an air of the grandness of public life inside this Parthenon of new China.

Ross Terrill, a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*, is a native Australian who teaches at Harvard. This excerpt is drawn from his forthcoming book, *Flowers on an Iron Tree: Five Cities of China*.

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Once I used the hall's southern entrance for a meeting with Kuo Mo-jo, China's top cultural politician. I came in from a lobby; he glided in from behind a curtain the height of a theater stage. As we stood for photos in front of a wrought-iron landscape in Anhwei style, Mr. Kuo explained that the hall has at least one room decorated in the style of each of China's provinces. For our conversation a small room of bare elegance had been chosen. Thick rug of cherry red; paneled walls; drapes of golden silk. Deep wicker armchairs for Kuo Mo-jo and myself, as well as for three people writing down what we said.

On another occasion, for a session with Premier Chou, we entered from the north door. It seems so far from the south door—310 meters, in fact—that you feel you are in a different part of Peking. Things are on a grander scale at this end. Up the big flight of steps which Chinese architects still consider essential. Corridors; chandeliers; red carpets.

The Premier was not quite ready, so we waited in an anteroom the size of a basketball court, its wooden doors like lofty pines. The room for the session itself is not one of the Great Hall's biggest, but it is immense. From our seats the photographers and tea girls against the walls seemed like miniature figurines. Sunk in a wicker chair, I had the sense of sitting on a deck chair at the beach.

New state Peking is everything that old dynastic Peking was not. Its buildings are fairly high; the old city was very low. They are only half Chinese in style; roofs alone identify them with their dynastic sisters. Inscriptions used to be allusive ("Pavilion of Pleasant Sounds"). Today they are direct and assertive ("People Alone Are the Motive Force of History"). They used to evoke a purely Chinese range ("Salute the Son of Heaven"). Now an international strain has entered ("Working Class of the Whole World Unite!").

The buildings of new state Peking seem to point beyond themselves to something else that is new: the creation in China of a state mentality. During most of the dynasties the Chinese were not a very state-conscious people. They were led by an emperor; image of a family head writ large. They were bossed by mandarins; image of cultural gurus, rather than political operators.

This new Peking is made of transformed values as well as piles of smooth fawn marble. The family; the pull of a ripe culture—these are still strong bonds. But lying over them, squeezing them into new patterns, is the new entity of a national state bent on reforming the old society.

It is near midnight as I reach the northern side of the Great Hall of the People. The hundred-acre square looks even vaster than usual as lamplight reflects from sheets of rainwater on the flagstones. Red Flag limousines—the premier Chinese brand—are lined [illegible] feurs smoking in groups. Smaller Shanghai cars come and go, bearing documents or lesser officials. Under way is the round of meetings leading up to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Tenth Congress.

There is a small stir as a woman comes out the northern door, attended by half a dozen aides. It appears to be Chiang Ch'ing, wife of Mao Tsetung. Chauffeurs stub out cigarettes, dissolve their groups, polish the already gleaming bodies of their long black vehicles. The woman strides to her curtained Red Flag, is whisked away with a bodyguard seated beside the driver.

A flutter of self-importance surrounds the Great Hall as plans are laid for the congress. It is a special moment for new state Peking. Low-key, done at night—like so many political things in China—and with the feel of steel about it. Firm hands have a grip on China, and the present is a political age par excellence.

For the people this means that they are not only fathers or daughters, and sharers in the ability to read and write Chinese characters, but also citizens of a new Leviathan. They do not goggle from a distance at the golden phoenix; they join in and shout slogans at Tian-an men's orchestrated rallies.

The city of Peking is unusual for having its highest buildings mostly on the fringes. Except for new state Peking, the center is low as well as flat. Homes are one story; shops rarely more than two.

I am referring here to the forty square kilometers of Peking which used to be ringed by walls and a dozen gates. The northern part was called the Inner City (Nei-cheng); foreigners knew it as the Manchu or Tartar City. The southern part was called the Outer City (Wai-cheng); to foreigners, the Chinese City.

Two factors explain why central Peking became a low gray jumble flecked with palaces. Within the Inner or Manchu City lay the Imperial City. The Imperial City, in turn, enclosed the Forbidden City, China's White House. No emperor since the Mongols would allow anyone to build a home which might overshadow the emperor's.

And Peking bourgeois liked courtyards and privacy. Anyone who built a tall house would be able to see into the courtyard of his neighbors—unacceptable to all concerned. The middle classes built antisocial homes. Rooms issued onto a courtyard; a blank wall was turned to the outside world.

Even today the architectural staple of inner Peking—one can hardly call it downtown Peking—remains these Ming and Manchu houses. But they are old vessels into which new wine is being poured.

Each house used to serve one family circle; each courtyard was a sibling's hearth. Today such a house has become a locality. It is no longer the [illegible] of one family, but a slice of rebaked Pe-

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king society. Half a dozen nuclear families live where one extended family once lived. Working-class folk have taken over courtyard living from the middle classes, and they have made it communal instead of tribal.

Here is a neighborhood called West Eternal Peace, a cluster of streets close to the Boulevard of Eternal Peace. Morning sunshine lights up the yellow tiles of the old Imperial Palace as I leave the boulevard and enter the lanes of a residents' area within the neighborhood.

Most of these homes are a century old. In gray brick with red lacquered doors and pillars, they resemble smoky cats with bright bows at the neck. Latticed windows reach high to eaves decorated with tableaus of birds. They are filled with paper (glass is a new thing in China) which is replaced twice a year. Roofs are made of U-shaped, overlapping gray tiles, Spanish in appearance except that the gable is not so sharply angled.

Mr. Cha of West Eternal Peace's office leads me into a courtyard of his choice. It is large and yet cozy. Spaced around the flagstones are flowers in porcelain pots. Fruit trees twist their way toward the block of light offered by the courtyard. In the middle there is an old well with a pump. Over raised thresholds, heavy brown doors lead to half a dozen single-family apartments.

Some families have roots in early Manchu times. This single dynasty, it takes an effort to recall, runs back as far as the English settlement of America. West Eternal Peace's five factories occupy converted houses from the Manchu. Their workers, 78 percent of them women, make buttons and do tailoring; they fold book leaves; they make locks and magnetic motors for farm implements.

Civic pride seems high. A woman died not long ago, leaving the husband with four children, aged three to nine. The man did not have to devise an individual scheme for coping, since the residents' committee pitched in with a plan. X would cook a meal for the family three times a week. Y would mind the small child. Z would keep an eye on the household's sewing needs.

When I remark that the stone yards and dirt lanes are clean, Cha tells me about garbage collection. As well as penalties against a household that does not put out its rubbish daily, there is a cunning rule to prevent smell and litter in the lanes. Garbage cans may only be brought to the lane once the streetlights go on (pickup is soon after).

I ask to choose another courtyard for myself. We wander into one that turns out to be similar to the first. In fact we hit upon a man with a very high salary, a cadre in the Bank of China's head office. He brings home 150 yuan a month, spends four yuan of it for the rent of his three tasteful rooms. (I see only two rooms, one very big, but Cha points to the ceiling, where a beam runs across the waist of the larg[e one. "We] count rooms *by the beam.*") The rent, which includes water and electricity, is extra low and I ask Cha about it.

His answer gives an interesting glimpse of Peking's housing setup. Most houses are owned by the municipality's Bureau of Real Estate Administration. (With its branches in each of Peking's six urban districts, it employs thirty thousand people, has its own training college.) But a sprinkling of houses are owned by work units, like this one belonging to the Bank of China. The rent for these homes is cheaper.

The banker smiles with modest pleasure when we talk about his good housing deal. Cha and I move out from the living room, lined with more than a fair share of Chairman Mao's works, into the well of sunlight which is the courtyard. A child is ready to sing us a song, but Cha turns to me with a further remark. "Before the Cultural Revolution," he says quietly, "most of Peking's houses, except for those owned by a work unit, were privately owned."

We enter the lane with a cortege of kids behind us. I say nothing—I am not sure of Cha's opinion about the change in house ownership—but Cha resumes. "During the Cultural Revolution the houses were handed over. But maybe they will be handed back." I bend down to shake the hand of a tot who has broken away from a game of jumping-the-rubber-band to present me with a flower. I am eager to let Mr. Cha say what he wants to say. "You know," he adds, "the constitution of China permits private ownership—have you read it carefully?" He looks at me with a steady eye. "It is now being discussed whether homes should go back to private ownership."

A knock on the door and in bounces Wang Hsi, deputy editor of China's worldwide weekly, *Peking Review.* I had asked for the meeting, having found Miss Wang on a previous occasion to be frank and amusing. Usually one interviews people at their place of work or in a reception room; certainly I did not expect Wang Hsi to come rapping at my room in the Nationalities Hotel. It is a sign of the relaxed air of 1973.

Miss Wang is fifty-six, stocky, gregarious. She has no airs and could pass as readily for a bus conductor as for an editor. Working as a journalist on a magazine sent abroad, she is more aware of foreign ways than the average Chinese cadre.

Wang Hsi has charge of the *Peking Review* before it is translated into English, French, Spanish, German, and Japanese. Not published in Chinese, the *Review* began in English only in 1958 (successor to *People's China*), added the extra tongues later. It sells 200,000 copies in its five editions, 10,000 of these in the United States.

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trigues her, sympathetic halfway house between the United States and Asia. She once wrote these words about it: "Only after visiting Hawaii did I get a deeper understanding of the time-honored friendship between the Chinese and American peoples."

Drugs, unemployment, the surge of religious feeling. Wang Hsi raises these U.S. phenomena with an air of wonder, as an American might take note of the alien laws of gravity on the moon. It had stuck in her mind that one U.S. worker likened to a "lottery" the chances of getting on in America. But editor Wang's main point about the United States concerns her trip there in the spring of 1973, and comes as a small bombshell.

She begins with a question: "Is America really so dangerous that the Secret Service has to protect Chinese visitors every moment of the day?" Then she launches into a discussion of "overprotection" that could have dropped from the lips of many an American visitor to China.

"In New York they forbade us to ride the subway. We only met people at receptions and banquets. I never sat down with a single blue-collar worker. Here we are, you and I, chatting like two friends in your hotel room. In the United States this was impossible for us. The State Department was, I suppose, trying to be hospitable. We were disappointed."

Wang Hsi brings me up to date on the froth and bubble of life in Peking. The affectionate prefix "old"—as in "Old Chen" or "Old Teng"—is no longer used only for men, but is just as common now as the term of address for an older woman. Yes, it's true that an egg costs the same, nine to twelve fen, whether you buy it raw in the shell, or cooked and ready to eat. As a new antipollution step, separate chimneys for heating individual buildings are on the way out, in favor of a few vast central heating systems in key districts. At middle schools, boarding and "busing" are far less common than before the Cultural Revolution, and schools now serve only their immediate environs.

Politics is not Miss Wang's cup of tea, but she has her views. Here she is summing up Liu Shao-ch'i and Lin Piao: "Look, they were both the same, as far as I am concerned—they departed from socialism."

But isn't it hard to know ahead of time what is a departure from socialism? "I have that same problem," comes the matter-of-fact response. "I had not considered Liu's *How To Be a Good Communist* a bad book. Then our *Review* ran a piece criticizing it; I saw things I had not seen before. Such is the power of revolutionary criticism."

When I meet the political writer Hu Sheng, he tells me it is the first time he has received a scholar fro[illegible] ible to foreigners [illegible] cept for lengthy trips in Russia—Hu Sheng has been one of the CCP's leading propagandists: deputy director of the Propaganda Department of the Party, a top man at *Red Flag* magazine, writer of important works of history, influential voice in the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences.

We sit among electric fans and tea mugs in a reception room of the Nationalities Hotel. Hu is above middle age, slow and polite in gesture, with a stiff bearing more common in Prussia than in China. A native of Kiangsu, he has the flat face of east China, and eyes that are big, expressive, easily amused. There are moments when he simply gazes at me and offers a smile in place of an answer.

One reason I wanted to see Hu was that his book *Imperialism and Chinese Politics* is one of the works published in Peking that I most frequently suggest to students at Harvard, and some of his articles in *Study* (a forerunner of *Red Flag*) and *Historical Research* have been much discussed in China and abroad.

Winds of change have blown over China since Hu wrote these things. Hu fell from favor during the Cultural Revolution. He tells me that *Imperialism and Chinese Politics* is now a "reference book"—which means it has errors. This does not lessen my interest in his opinions. And I want to know what is wrong with his book.

Hu coolly remarks that Marx's five stages of historical development are not always fulfilled. "In China, for example, some of our minorities have gone directly from slave society to socialist. No feudal or capitalist stage in between. Marx did not predict it, but it has happened." This does not make Hu believe in a special Asian mode of development. Marx's laws "basically" apply to the whole world.

If this is a wavering from strict Marxism, it is Hu's only one. I soon feel, in fact, that Hu is an old-fashioned Marxist, that this fidelity itself brought him troubles after the split with Moscow, and especially after 1965.

His book, written in Hong Kong during 1947, deals with imperialism in China from the Opium War until the 1920s. What about the decades since; where is the cutting edge of imperialism today? This does not lead Hu to attack "social imperialism" (Russia) as one might expect. It is U.S. imperialism on which he concentrates.

I tell Hu Sheng that I have been struck by a relative soft-pedaling on Japan in his writings about China's suffering from imperialism. "When I wrote a lot of that," he replies, "during the late 1940s, Japan's imperialism had become clear to all. Not enough attention, though, was being paid to rising U.S. imperialism."

Two days before, Chang Wen-chin, Assistant [illegible] t to me [illegible] to say:

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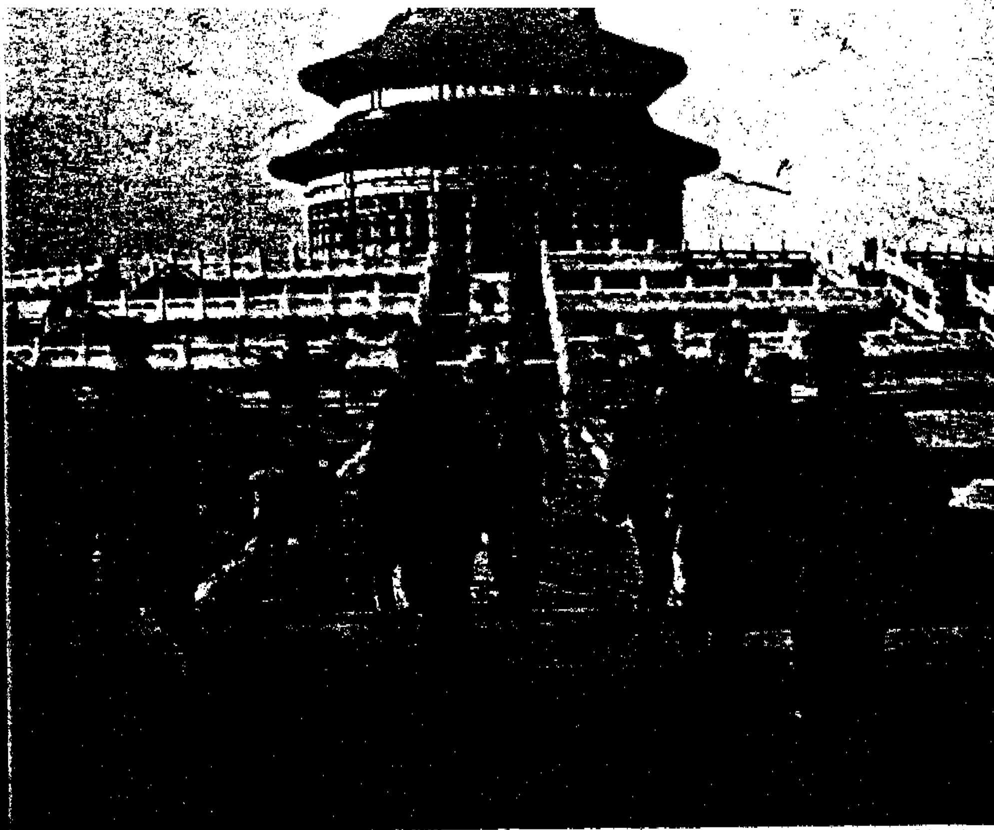
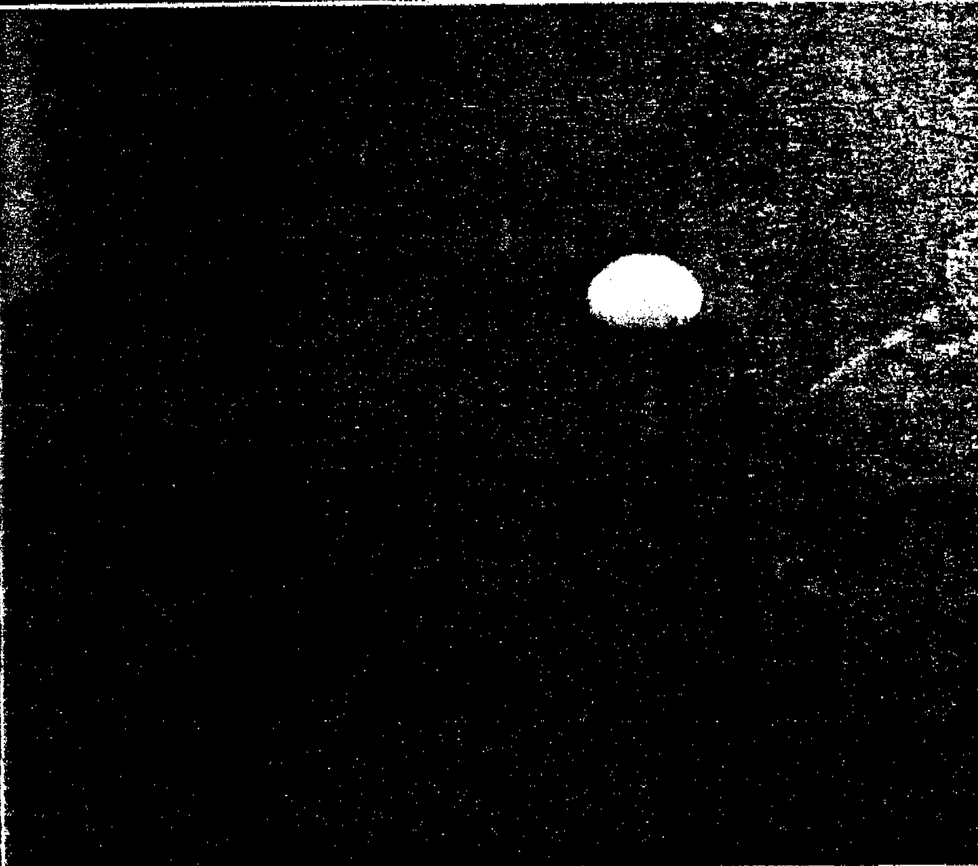


Clockwise from the top: Peking factory worker; Temple of Heaven; Peking's industrial area; the South Gate of the Forbidden City; in Tian-an men Square; entrance to a Peking home.



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"From the late 1960s, the rising imperialism is that of the Soviet Union. Asian people were slow in the 1940s to see that America was the new problem; now they are slow to see that America is past its peak and Russia is the ambitious one." But Hu Sheng does not draw this parallel.

Hu had been criticized before for mechanical interpretations. For being too tough on the Boxers, whose movement he called a "perversion." Too unappreciative of the policies of "national and race salvation" of the 1898 reformers. Too rigidly opposed to private enterprise (in some 1952 articles about the "Five Anti" movement). His plodding, 1950s-type Marxism was apparently called too close to the Soviet line during the Cultural Revolution.

Now I ponder most carefully Hu's words. For on the occasion of National Day, 1974, Hu Sheng sprang back to favor. At a grand reception in the Great Hall he, along with other key "revisionists," made his first reported public appearance since the Cultural Revolution. Then in January, 1975, Hu was not only a delegate at the National People's Congress (China's parliament) but was elected to its standing committee. An interesting straw in the wind.

If Tian-an men Square is Peking's stomach, Eternal Peace Boulevard is a belt drawn across it. North of the square and a little east of the former Imperial Palace lies another old commercial quarter. Its core street is Wang-fu-jing (Well of the Princes' Residences). The Wang-fu-jing. Peking's largest department store, has the informal air of a church bazaar. It serves each day 100,000 customers, whose purses are fatter in 1973 than they used to be. Goods are more various; shopping baskets are fuller; the counters are more crowded than two years ago. A long line of people wait to buy sets of festive electric light bulbs in multiple colors. I am tempted only by a pair of crisscross Peking sandals, the most comfortable kind I know.

Eastern Market sells seventeen thousand kinds of products, including single socks, gloves, and shoes. The stalls are better stocked and laid out than two years ago. But the secondhand book section is a shadow of what I recall from 1964. The foreign books are mostly dictionaries and technical manuals, with a scattering of noncontroversial titles such as *Familiar Trees of Hopei* by F. H. Chow.

North of Lantern Market Street and Pig Market Street, the establishments are less solid, even scraggy. There are curbside markets which are a whirl of apples, babies, cabbages, bicycles. The leathery faces of farmers, up from a commune to sell their fruit, stand out from the pale radiant Peking faces.

The boss of one little mart is about seventy but firm and ene

most to his bare spindly ankles, which shine like lizard skin. Above his darting eyes a bald strip runs back between two close-cropped sides of an oval head. He dispenses pears and peppers with the speed of a computer, calling out their virtues as he does so.

A store that will sell a single sock! Is this a supreme badge of poverty? To me, it is at any rate a badge of China's high standard of practical, flexible service. Shops have been relocated so that the people in most residential areas are very close to whatever they might need. Opening hours are adjusted to suit the work patterns of the neighborhood. There are shops-on-wheels, mounted on pedicabs, which visit out-of-the-way lanes. Shops are not allowed to raise prices just because demand soars.

No simple item exists that you cannot get repaired in Peking. Things lost in this city of seven million can often be retrieved at lost-and-found depots run by Public Security. Some theaters carry flexibility to the point of selling tickets on the basis of small time segments—two fen per ten minutes—so that patrons can come and go as mood and schedule require. Peking even sent to Shanghai for tailors, hairdressers, cleaners, window dressers, to lift services to Shanghai's unbeatable level.

Buses have a "Suggestion Book" hanging on the wall. Conductors call out the time when they announce a destination, and they are trained to live up to the proud slogan "Every Conductor a Walking Map." The Peking consumer, in brief, is by no means an unheeded victim of Moscow-type bureaucratism.

Through a small wooden door in Wang-fu-jing I find my way to the Bright and Flowery Bathhouse. It is a refreshing spot after shopping or on the way home from work. The blackboard by the entry is scrawled with a complex list of services available, many of which I cannot decipher. A well-scrubbed boy of fifteen rescues me, leads me through glass doors and up a stone staircase. Little Ma (as he introduces himself) swings a small cloth and whistles an aria from *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*. Into a small bathroom he puts me and says it will be "comfortable and convenient."

But this is not what I have come for; my hotel has such a Western bath. I ask Ma to slow down his rapid Shensi accent. We consult. Soon I have a ticket for the Public Room (thirty fen), which turns out to be a big clean hall with sixty or seventy bathers.

Little Ma seems pleased, after all, that I have chosen to join the masses. Dozens stare with interest and amusement as he shows me around with grand gestures. Finally he leads me to my couch and leaves me with two towels.

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towel. There are cloths, sandals, and a teapot on a small table beside the couch. Each bather also has a locker for valuables; an attendant keeps the key.

The hall accommodates three long double rows of couches and there is, I find later, a similar hall downstairs. It is all modern; Little Ma says Bright and Flowery was built after Liberation (1949). Corridors lead off to other rooms for massage, haircutting, foot care, laundry—done in the time it takes you to bathe and rest.

My feet half in straw sandals that are too small, I go to the bath itself. The scene is one of steam, soapsuds, brown bodies tinged pink with the heat. I slip off the sandals, hang up my towel, take a shower before choosing a pool. There are three pools: Warm, Hot, Most Hot.

Little Ma rushes up to suggest I do not try Most Hot. I have already made a mental note to the same effect. Six or seven people lie around in both Warm and Hot, smiles of well-being on their faces. Most Hot has only one, a wizened old guy who seems to be making a supreme effort to stay in the water. Heat waves rise from the surface in slow undulations.

For a long time I wallow in Warm and Hot—not even a foot will agree to stay in Most Hot—and watch the action. Here are two pals about eighteen years old, one a factory worker and the other a middle-school student. At the Warm pool they scrub each other's backs. Later they read comic books on their couches.

A middle-aged man comes in who is not a manual worker. His hands are soft, he walks with a certain dignity, he is not in good shape. He is with a lithe youth, who soaps him down as he lies on the edge of the Hot pool.

One thing is clear about age differences at Bright and Flowery. The older men are smaller than the younger. It is not just that some are wizened and shrunken; that some betray malformations (a limp, a spine problem). The young workers and students are simply bigger in stature.

Soft and pink I retire to my couch. It is the custom to linger. There is no extra charge if you stay a long time or use more towels. Some swathe themselves in a towel and sleep. A group near me lie smoking cigarettes and chatting from their couches.

A few read books but no one has a newspaper. A man of forty across the aisle is absorbed in *Red Flag*, which I have rarely before seen anyone in China reading. He may be a cadre; hard to tell in the reclining naked state.

There is an air of peace and renewal. No trace of tension in the room; a pleasant chance to converse. But the accents are often thick. Are these men out-of-towners, cleaning up, perhaps, during a few hours' stopover at the Peking railway station? I meet one such, but many are regulars. The majority are working-class; sunburn marks follow the line of their undershirt straps.

One evening I go to another bathhouse in the cramped lanes outside Front Gate. I am fiercely massaged by a grinning giant from Liaoning. He talks at me as I grit my teeth. The bathhouse, Great Fragrant Garden, closed up, he says, for eighteen months during the Cultural Revolution. "There were criticisms," he declares as he stands triumphant on my spine. "We came in every day and discussed things. But there were no customers."

Some people in Hong Kong are surprised when they hear about bathhouses in Peking today. They had thought the CCP put an end to them. In fact the only thing that has gone in China's bathhouses—standard in Hong Kong's—is the service of being soaped and scrubbed by a bath-boy. Replacing this in Peking, it seems, is the custom of friends washing each other.

The steamy informality of Bright and Flowery and Great Fragrant Garden gives the foreigner a fresh angle on Peking. He will enter few homes in a purely social way. The bathhouse is the best place I know to relax with ordinary folk, without prior arrangement or agenda. The PRC (People's Republic of China) naked, after all, is not less a part of Chinese life than the PRC on parade.

Let us go to Peace Zone (He-ping li), one of ten neighborhoods in East City district. Here is a new Peking, on which nostalgia lays no claim. Before Liberation it was wasteland; today it is an industrial suburb of sixty-five thousand moderns. The veterans among its population were all in service trades before 1949. Now most of the people in Peace Zone's twenty-three residents' areas work in machine plants and textile mills.

In the east, and to a degree in the southeast and west, Peking has become what it never seemed cut out to be: an industrial city. It is home to 1.2 million factory workers. It offers employment to thirteen times the people it did twenty-five years ago. Its industrial production has leapt up a hundred times since then. Can these rows of blocks and chimneys still echo Peking's old self-understanding?

Within a year of the CCP victory Peking had changed in spirit and organization. Civic pride arose as if from thin air; a net of control fell over each citizen; streets were cleaned up and began to buzz with purpose. Because they impeded traffic, the city walls were torn down, and most of the gates too. New round-the-city roads were built, which "checkerboard" Peking hadn't known before. Public transport took a quantum jump forward; a mere 164 vehicles in 1949 has turned into 2500 (trams losing out en route to buses and trolleys).

Columns of smoke soon announced that Peking, for the first time in its highly political history, was making steel, chemicals, machines, cotton yarn. The city no longer had to buy all needed manufac-

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tures, except handicrafts, from Shanghai and Tientsin. Each year new products appear. Among the latest in the light industry area are ultra-high-pressure xenon lamps and a durable fabric which is part polyester and part goat hair.

Completely new, too, are the five- and six-story housing blocks, into which 700,000 Peking households have moved. The new blocks have wrought a revolution in the daily life of Peking man.

Residents used to courtyard living find themselves thrown together, yet in a way more alone than before. For lucky families who had a lot of space, the old homes were wells of privacy. The new blocks have no walls to keep out the eyes and cries of neighbors.

Yet for ordinary families the new blocks give more room space than they had before enjoyed. Modern apartment living helps make them true individuals, encourages a sense of oneself, an awareness of capacity, a feeling that there is an open path ahead. Links with other people are broader, more arbitrary, more stimulating. And rents have come down. Twenty fen (10 cents) per square meter is the standard rate, which finds the average family paying only 6 percent of its income on rent.

As factories and apartments went up, the *People's Daily* spoke of a "great high tide of Industrial Revolution." Such a mood does stalk these avenues of brick oblongs, blue overalls, young trees. Here is the buoyancy of a generation that by its own hand has changed its way of life. Here, too, is a certain parochialism and self-preoccupation, as these newly moderns delight in things which are taken for granted in most big industrial cities.

There is a sense of involvement in what has been achieved, which is the result of endless mutual consultation. No more does the Chinese worker do only what he is ordered to do. Told the purpose of what's going on, he gets prizes and publicity if he suggests useful improvements. "Exchange of technique" meetings give the worker a chance to demonstrate to others a new method he has hit upon. He is dared to think, to make connections, to be a poor man's Prometheus.

I sense this participant's pride at Peking General Petrochemical. This plant, started in 1968, refines several million tons of oil a year.

I walk out among pipes and red banners to the unlikely sight of pools of goldfish and Peking ducks in cane pens. There are smiles when I ask how these can stand the polluted environment. "You have seen the point," says a PLA (People's Liberation Army) cadre with a knowing grin, "but upside down." The fish and ducks are the living fruit of ingenious efforts to beat pollution.

The plant emits waste water, the PLA man explains, which contains harmful sulfides and phenols. If allowed to run away it would damage crops and f[illegible] evil, it was reasoned, is to turn evil into good.

Here is a tower where sulfides are removed from the waste water. Over there a cement pool where the residue of oil is skimmed off it—and sent back for refining. Nearby, an aeration tank where compressed air and a flotation agent are added to the water.

The water then flows into pools in which the emulsified oil and flotation agent are scooped off. Still left are the phenols, but with the aid of a rotary beater they are absorbed by microorganisms. Now the water is ready for the fish and ducks, as well as vegetable plots which help feed the plant's workers. Everyone grins with satisfaction as we survey this cunning sequence.

Back at Peace Zone, I find that family patterns have changed out of recognition since Manchu days. Here I am in the neat bright living room of Mrs. Heng. She is a cylindrical woman with a heavy jaw but sparkling eyes. As an official of Peace Zone, Mrs. Heng (her name means "persistent") keeps a finger in many pies and knows the social scene well.

Mrs. Heng says divorces among Peace Zone's fifteen thousand households run at seven to nine per year—still a low rate, because of social pressure to "patch up," and because bad conduct can be explained away as a hangover from the old society. As the divorce rate slowly rises, the birthrate quickly falls. Last year it was eleven per thousand; the district wants it brought down to ten per thousand.

When we talk about unmarried mothers, Mrs. Heng deals me a small shock: "The girl no longer has to kill the child, nor get an abortion unless she wants to." Have I misheard the Chinese terms—confusing killing with aborting? No mistake; Mrs. Heng is harking back to infanticide. She recalls it from her girlhood. "Bathing the baby" was the chilling euphemism for drowning an unwanted infant.

At a stroke I am reminded of the leap Mrs. Heng's generation has taken from feudalism to factory. Hardly to be imagined by the mandarins that an ordinary woman like Mrs. Heng could be an arbiter of social norms and a leader of economic enterprises.

The city that made only handicrafts and specialty goods is now a city whose coinage is machine tools, chemicals, polyester. And what has become of the stagnant dumps of garbage and sewage? They are now a park which resounds to the thump of basketball and the shouts of tots on swings.

I am curious to see South Church (Nan-tang), near the gate called Trumpet the Military. It is Peking's orphan cathedral; the city's only operating Catholic parish.

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Christianity in China was cursed with an alien face. Entering the high arched door is like leaving China, going back into a past world of European piety. Saints with white faces; a Western ceiling; stained-glass windows; madonnas with Italian noses.

The most famous Catholic missionary to China, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), lived in a house on this spot, and the first Catholic church in Peking was built here in 1650.

This morning there are fifty-four people in the congregation, sparse like winter leaves against the brown benches and fawn marble panels. Twelve are Chinese. Half of the forty-two foreigners are black Africans. At 9:30 A.M. two priests enter and switch on the lights. Electrically lit candles spring to life on the altar. The Mass begins. From my pew near the back the mumble is quite inaudible. I move twenty rows toward the altar; still all I can tell is that the priest is using a mixture of Latin and Chinese.

The service drawls on with no high or low point. It seems quickly over and we troop out. An offering box stands at the rear of the church; its contents surely cannot maintain even this ghostly parish.

Another morning I look for Peking's Protestant parish. No accident that it is in the Rice Market district, which used to be upper class. A golden sun grips Peking as I set out. Ask a hundred people in the street, but no one has heard of the church. Luckily I know that it is near Red Star Cinema. I clamber on to a bus, buy my ticket, tell the conductress I'm going to Red Star.

As we enter Rice Market Street, she informs me that my stop is near. I alight and soon find myself at the green wrought-iron fence of the church. Although I recognize it, I need to find a proper way of entry. I stop a youth as he comes out of a gate next door. "Is that building a church?" He seems a little nervous as he replies that it is. When I ask about the time of the services, he excuses himself, hops on his bike, pedals off.

Rice Market Church is an old YMCA building in relaxed semi-Chinese style. It is three stories, with airy windows and wide, turned-up eaves in green tile. (The Protestants do not, like the Catholics, have the disadvantage of a Gothic ecclesiastical bastion.)

Suddenly I see a congregation of a dozen or so people quietly coming out of the church's doorway. In a moment I am chatting with the pastor, Yin Chi-chen. Yin used to work with the American Brethren Mission in Shansi province, later with American Presbyterians in Peking.

Pastor Yin briefs me on the 1973 Peking Protestant scene. Apart from Rice Market, all church buildings have been rented to banks, bureaus, welfare agencies. "It is true," says Yin, "that the number of believers is less than ever before, and that most of the Sund

Maybe there are five hundred believers in Peking. A small seed in a city of seven million. Pastor Yin also points out that since the Cultural Revolution there are no sermons, baptisms, weddings, or funerals at Rice Market Church.

He gives a frank explanation of why the trend of attendance is downward. "So many people are working on Sundays now"—he gestures toward the busy street beyond the gate—"that Sunday is no longer a day for extra activities."

The pastor's last point is a key one. If the Christian church in China seems doomed, the reason lies deeper than the Cultural Revolution, during which Red Guards occupied Rice Market Church and gave political lessons to the parishioners. The church is a dying force since it never took root in the new society.

Chinese Communist friends are always polite about religion. But they quickly sniff—when Westerners show interest in Chinese churches—the old effort by foreigners to remake China's soul. They also point out that toward religions other than Christianity the CCP has been no more hostile than was the Republican government of Chiang Kai-shek (1928-1949). And that the CCP—this is seldom recalled in the West—has been less disdainful of non-Christian religions than were the cocky Christian missionaries.

At the same time, the bleak agony of religion in a Marxist society raises the fundamental issue of individual freedom. A Christian believer may be the final swallow of a sinking summer; he is also a human being. The Bible he would read is not compatible with Marxism; but does it reduce his value as a Chinese citizen if he reads it?

A talk with Pastor Yin leaves an impression of a Christianity which is fading. First, because its ideals have lost their power. (In 1964, a previous pastor had talked with passion about Saint Paul and the Fourth Gospel, but Yin never gets to hard-core religious matters.) Second, because the sociology of new China leaves no niche for a church.

Pastor Yin's predicament is just an extreme form of one shared by Christian clergy in dozens of countries. The church as an organization is ebbing. Christianity evaporates from its institutional vessel, becomes a diffuse world view.

You can think of Peking as an *abstraction*. Peking opens its arms to Sihanouk of Cambodia; Peking does not believe in peace. You can think of the city as a *mecca*. Peking is the red sun of our hearts: Peking will not fail the oppressed peoples of the world.

I have been speaking of Peking as a *functioning city*, as a place where people live, get up in the morning, do the jobs of the 1970s, go to sleep or make love. This Peking does not stand still—

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age—but moves on as the result of its own eager zeal to shake off the past.

By 1973 Peking has known interesting changes, compared with my visit of 1971. Wages are up, people spend more. There is almost a big-city atmosphere on the Boulevard of Eternal Peace. It's quite a battle now to cross the road. Mostly bicycles, rather than cars, bar your way, but there are lots of commercial vans and swampy-green Corona taxis from Japan.

Daily life is more relaxed than in 1971. Cardplaying; spitting in the street (or over the back of the chair at a dinner); a tendency to take it easy on the job from time to time. A few museums, a mosque, a church or two have opened their doors again.

At West Eternal Peace neighborhood Mr. Cha is frank about the fate of Mao badges. Why are there no more badges? "In summer we change our clothes often," he first ventures, "so it is not convenient to wear a badge." I gently say that during the summer of 1971, every man, woman, and child wore a Mao badge. Cha smiles and comes to the point: "In those days the political temperature was high; now it is down a bit."

In the eased-up mood there is a tendency to evade responsibility. "The state will decide," says a factory chairman who does not want to commit himself on a question of policy. Who will take the initiative when the crucial signals from on high are unpredictable? The "in" term "responsible person" is a giveaway. If a few leaders in any unit are the "responsibles," the rest by definition do not and cannot take any responsibility.

Before your eyes there takes place an evolution away from the "institutions" of the Cultural Revolution, and toward renewed Party authority over spontaneous impulses. The Communist Youth League eclipses the Red Guards. Trade unions are back. Party cadres dust themselves down after a spell at a correctional school and generally find their desk and chair warm. The PLA has resumed a low profile; no chance is missed to say that the army is under the leadership of the Party.

Few things are more striking after two years than the new official warmth toward Japan. No more talk of Japanese "militarism"; trade and visits are on the rise. One Chinese official, just back from Tokyo where technology had dazzled him, tells me with enthusiasm how the Japanese used *cranes* to whisk away right-wing demonstrators from his Chinese delegation's hotel.

And the issue of the United States has come out from behind the curtain, where it was in 1971, to a central place on Peking's official stage. A lot of the old tension has gone. My U.S. links are no longer a liability. You fly from Canton in a U.S. Boeing instead of a Russian Ilyushin, as before.

It is quite moving to see the Americans in their liaison office, in busy harmony with a Chinese staff. One looks at the scene and recalls the faith of Mr. Dulles twenty years ago that the CCP government would "pass away." (Peking has the same premier now, Chou En-lai, as it did then.)

Here in a defense shelter at Peking Construction Tool Plant I sniff the new Sino-U.S. atmosphere. Who might attack China, I ask, and the answer is, "Imperialists." But since there are two major types of imperialism, I decide to press my question through a back door. Have any Americans visited this shelter? "Mr. Edgar Snow came here, and later on Mr. Joseph Alsop." Have you had Russian visitors? The chairman of the shelter dismisses the idea crisply: "This place is only for visitors from friendly countries."

The *way* Peking changes is a clue to China's condition. In most of Asia the changes of the past decade have been economic, especially those which resulted from the movement of the international capitalist economy. Manila gets bigger; Hitachi signs multiply over Taipei; cars are on the increase in Bangkok. The changes I see in Peking are mostly not economic, and the steady development of the economy that has taken place owes nothing to international forces.

The change is *social:* role of women, spread of education, firmer local community. It is *psychological:* students lose their awe for teachers, a feeling of pride in China's new world stature arises, a controlled theater constrains people to embrace the political myths of the CCP. And it is *political:* Mao makes a fresh analysis of America; the PLA is called in and then called off; the high are brought low and the low ushered into their places.

All this is change with a purpose, not change as a result of the onward march of economic mechanism. Some moves have been ill-advised—assigning Red Guard impulse to do the job of Party organization—and have had to be canceled. But the purposive change the CCP brings about speaks strength, independence from fashions and pressures in the world, leadership that uses political power in the service of values, minds that believe society can progress far beyond today's levels.

And it is change that produces not just new *things* but new ways of living in society. Maybe this makes change in Peking more basic—because more self-moving—than change in most of Asia. Some call it the making of a "new man." I do not think the CCP has made a new man. But it has called into being new social circumstances which make men and women able to behave in new ways. This is true social development, beside which all the gadgets of "growth" are dross.

And who cares if communism obviates itself by the self-moving nature of the change it sets in motion. Isms cannot matter as much as the minds and bodies that invent them for a purpose. □

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