

Visitors to China

Impatient Giant: Red China Today,
by Gerald Clark.
David McDay Company, Inc., New York, 1959.

What's Happening in China?
by Lord Boyd Orr and Peter Townsend.
Doubleday and Company, Inc.,
Garden City, New York, 1959.

The Yellow Wind,
by William Stevenson.
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1959.

*The Communist Persuasion:
A Personal Experience of Brainwashing*,
by Eleutherius Winance, O.S.B.
P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York, 1959.

Reviewed by Richard L. Walker

IN THE LONG COURSE of Chinese history, the Middle Kingdom had far more contacts with the outside world than have usually been noted in the West, where it is commonly supposed that China existed for centuries in a state of almost hermetic isolation. Actually, there were quite a number of early foreign visitors to China, and it is an interesting fact—as the English historian G. F. Hudson has noted—that practically all their accounts, from Greek times down through the 18th century, remarked on the good government and resultant security which the Chinese people enjoyed.¹ For example, the Arab voyager, Abu Zaid, commented in 916 on the “orderly and upright administration” of China, and in the 12th century the Italian geographer, Edrisi, noted the “perfect security” prevailing in China’s three hundred flourishing cities.

¹ G. F. Hudson, *Europe and China*, London, 1931.

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Interestingly enough, the most glowing accounts of the administration of China and the security and contentedness of its people date from periods when the Chinese were under the effective control of foreign invaders, first the Mongols and later the Manchus. Writing of his wanderings in 14th-century China under Mongol rule, the African Ibn Batuta remarked: “China is the safest as well as the pleasantest of all the regions on the earth for the traveller. You may travel the whole nine months’ journey to which the empire extends without the slightest cause for fear, even if you have treasure in your charge.” Batuta’s observations agreed with those of another 14th-century voyager, Pegolotti, not to mention their famous predecessor, Marco Polo.

The Jesuits, who had access to the court at Peking in the 17th and 18th centuries during which Manchu power reached its peak, were even more enthusiastic, and their writings profoundly influenced the political theories of the European *philosophes*, among them Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Hume. Typical was Du Halde’s *Description de la Chine* (1735), which claimed, “No laws or institutions appear in the general so well contrived as the Chinese, to make both King and people happy . . . despotic . . . yet mild . . . perfect submission.” The physiocrats, especially Quesnay, used the example of China as a justification for political absolutism based on economic considerations. Voltaire exchanged poems with the Manchu Emperor Ch’ien-lung who — like Mao Tse-tung today—fancied himself quite a poet, yet carried out one of the most comprehensive book-burning and literary purges in Chinese history in order to maintain the myths of Manchu legitimacy and infallibility.²

Because the majority of these early visitors to China dealt primarily with the ruling groups, in some instances serving in official capacities under the Mongols and Manchus, they naturally tended to stress such things as the system of public granaries for famine relief, the dispensing of medicines to the poor, and government support of schools. Few, on the other hand, noted the dis-

² See L. C. Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch’ien-lung*, Baltimore, 1935.

content of the native Chinese or their contempt for their foreign oppressors, and none showed much understanding of the subtler methods of control which characterized ancient Chinese despotism. There was, for example, no discussion of the system of organizing the population into mutually responsible groups of ten (*pao-chia*) or eleven (*li-chia*) families—aptly described by the Chinese historian Hsiao Kung-chuan as a “do-it-yourself police and tax system.” Nor was any notice taken of the *hsiang-yüeh*, or village lecture system, which served as a means of “do-it-yourself” indoctrination.

THERE ARE SUFFICIENT parallels between some of these early accounts and the four volumes under review not only to emphasize the historical depth of despotic rule in China, but also to bring out some of the traditions upon which the current rulers have been able to draw in order to gain compliance with their dictates. The parallels indicate that the security and order reported in the present-day accounts of China are by no means Communist innovations nor evidence of the superiority of Marxism-Leninism, as China’s new leaders claim. There is another important parallel in the extent to which even such experienced observers as the present authors can be led to accept official Chinese Communist interpretations, just as the versatile Jesuits frequently accepted the viewpoints and versions of history current at the court of the Manchus.

Thus Stevenson, generally a critical and observant writer, repeats versions of Mao’s early career and of the 1952 campaign against the writer Hu Feng which are obviously based more on Communist “operation rewrite” accounts than on documented facts. Lord Boyd Orr accepts the official version of Mao’s “land reform,” which even Communist statistics do not substantiate.³ Or again, he speaks of the puritanism evidenced in China today as a “revolt against the license of an outdated feudal ruling caste”, thus accepting the imposition of the Marxist class analysis and view of history on a society where it is singularly inappropriate. As a final example, both Boyd Orr and Clark comment on the “practical value” of the backyard blast furnaces which they saw in 1958. Ironically enough, by the time their books appeared, the Chinese Communists themselves had admitted that steel production by such primitive methods was not only of little real usefulness, but also had disrupted transport and the harvesting of crops.

But despite the existence of certain parallels, there is

³ See the author’s “Collectivization in China: A Story of Betrayal,” *Problems of Communism*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (January-February, 1955).

also a significant contrast between these current books and the writings of the observers of China in its Confucian days. The early observers saw a China that was essentially humanistic and placed the family at the center of official concern, a China whose political authoritarianism was tempered by built-in checks to total power under a doctrine that stressed inter-personal relations rather than impersonal materialistic forces. It is a sharply altered picture which emerges from the books under review. All four, in different ways, paint a China in the grip of unlimited despotism, a frightening system of total power and total control that, in retrospect, almost justifies Du Halde’s description of the former rule of the Manchus as “mild.”

WILLIAM STEVENSON travelled extensively in and around China from 1954 to 1957 as a correspondent for the Toronto *Star*. Though never successful in achieving his ambition to get into Tibet, he did manage to visit some of the outlying national minority regions and probably saw as much of Mao’s domain as any Western correspondent. His book, even if loosely organized, is good reporting as well as fascinating reading, and it reflects the mind of a keen journalist willing to dig a bit deeper than the Communist rulers would like. Gerald Clark, also a Canadian and chief foreign correspondent of the Montreal *Star*, roamed through China on a much more restricted scale during 1958. His smaller volume makes a good companion for that of Stevenson.

Both Canadian journalists found the life of a reporter in Communist China fraught with difficulties and barriers, and they indicate that even correspondents from Communist countries experience their share of frustrations. “At no time,” states Clark “did I succeed in having an informal chat or a casual, social meal alone with a Chinese.” The deceptiveness of appearances is also stressed by Stevenson. Recounting some of his experiences in Communist-controlled north Vietnam (including an interview with Ho Chi-minh) he quotes revelations of “lonely deaths from hard labor and starvation,” of law being trampled underfoot, and even Communist Party members being “executed one after another.” Yet Stevenson was blandly assured by the Ho regime’s chief of security police, “No, we have not executed anybody.” This experience, he concludes, “proved how dangerous it is for Western observers to trust their eyes and ears inside any Communist camp.”

Clark’s travels in China during the year of the “great leap forward” (1958) enabled him to see the frenzied economic effort of the Mao regime at its peak, and he is frankly worried by this “drive and fever unmatched at any time in China’s past.” Indeed, the mass labor projects,

the sweeping reorganization of rural China into people's communes, and the supreme self-confidence of the Communist leaders evidently impressed him so much that his book tends to accept many of the Communist figures and claims at face value. He notes in his "Foreword" that, just as his book went to press, the Communists revised some of their previously-claimed production figures for 1958 sharply downward, but he still feels that the "main facts of industrial and agricultural progress remain impressive and, indeed, disquieting." (p. viii) With regard to the communes, Clark repeats the official version that the peasants accept them, that families are not being broken up, that old people are pleased with the "happy homes for the aged," and that "communization" means more efficient agricultural production. (Chs. 7 and 8) However, this reviewer's talks with refugees in Hong Kong in January 1959, letters written by Chinese on the mainland to relatives abroad,⁴ published Communist self-criticism, and the many signs of increasing difficulties for the Peking leadership during 1959—all indicate that neither the com-

⁴ For translations of some of these letters, see "Letters from the Communes," *The New Leader*, (New York) Section Two, June 15, 1959.

munes nor the great leap forward were as successful as Mr. Clark pictures them. He does, however, convey an understanding of the tremendous control power implicit in the phenomena he witnessed.

Stevenson is far more critical in his judgments. With regard to the communes, for instance, he notes a statement attributed to General V. P. Moskovski, head of Soviet domestic propaganda, after a visit to China, to the effect that the Chinese were "headed in wrong and dangerous directions." He likewise has more doubts than Clark about the effectiveness of the Communist industrialization effort. He tells, for example, of visiting a former aircraft factory outside Kunming where some 500 mechanical craftsmen and 3,000 semi-trained technicians, equipped with precision machinery, had been directed in 1950 to produce Soviet-type machine tools. These were, to begin with, unsuited for Chinese use, but in five years very few were actually turned out anyway. The factory manager had much to say about learning from the Soviet Union, and about remolding thoughts and style of work. Comments Stevenson: "This gobbledygook boiled down to the fact that the crucial years had been wasted in a vain attempt to copy the Russians."

There are still other areas of disagreement between the two Canadians. Though both talk of the flexibility

HUMAN SACRIFICE AND THE POWER OF PERSUASION

"Cannibalism," said Fang, "is bad for production. . . ."

Fang's melon face split into a grin. . . . He was chief executive on the Yunnan National Minorities Commission and confessed that his job among jungle tribes was a severe test for any emissary of Mao.

"Take this business of human blood as fertilizer," he said. "What a waste. But it is all part of Ka Wa superstition and we have to be careful."

"We were on the edge of Ka Wa territory, on a high ridge above the Shweli Valley [South China]. Fang sucked mandarin oranges bought by the driver of his Molotov truck and we sat in a long-hut on stilts. . . .

"The sacrifice of a man among the Ka Wa's is the result of good motives," Fang continued. "Only the method is wrong. The good intention is to pacify the gods and so increase food production. . . .

"We have practiced three kinds of compromise when the problem of human sacrifice comes up. Sometimes we can persuade several tribes to share one man. The victim is beheaded and each village borrows the head in turn. Secondly, if we can trick them into accepting a fresh corpse, we dig up a body and let them perform the rites on *that*. Thirdly, we may buy an old man." . . .

Fang seemed to relish our astonishment.

"Yes, we find some very old, very poor man and we offer the money to his family. Old men are a burden to others, they are not productive and usually the family is glad to improve its prosperity a little."

"But what about the old man? What does he get out of it?"

Fang offered me an orange, cocked his head on one side and said: "We persuade him." . . .

"How do you persuade an old man it's in his interest to lose his head for a sum of money paid to his family?"

"*Persuasion*," said Fang smoothly. "Persuasion is essential of course. Force is forbidden. We convince an old man. We make him understand how necessary it is for the progress of society and the welfare of The People that he should—er—*take part*. Usually this process of explanation is sufficient." . . .

"Do you lose many men?—that is . . ."—I hesitated, then drew a finger across my throat.

"Oh yes." He paused. "Yes, we have had some comrades unfortunately, as it were, eliminated."

He bowed his head. "They died, of course, in a glorious cause."

—From William Stevenson's *The Yellow Wind*, pp. 70-73.

of the Chinese Communist regime, Clark feels that it "believes in infinite patience and gentleness," whereas Stevenson speaks frequently of the Communists' use of shock tactics as a standard operational weapon. With regard to Communist China's external ambitions, Clark quotes a reassuring statement given him by Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi to the effect that "we are not interested in leadership—not only in the Far East but in the world." On the other hand, Stevenson's observations around the borderlands of Red China were far from bearing out Ch'en's disclaimer. He noted, for example, heavy Chinese Communist expenditures for airlifting propaganda materials into Nepal, as well as the training of thousands of students from neighboring Southeast Asian countries to propagate communism "throughout adjoining territories." His book thus throws light on the background of current Chinese military and political pressures along the Burmese, Indian and Pakistan borders.

While Stevenson and Clark both would have profited from a better background knowledge of China and its present regime, their books nevertheless provide useful first-hand glimpses of China under its Communist masters. Of their major theme there can be no question. Both are appalled by the regimentation imposed so effectively on so many people in so short a time. Their message is that the outside world dare not underestimate the techniques of thought control that have been developed by communism in China. Stevenson talks of an "age of collective submission" to "the brute force of endless argument," of a "nation whose millions upon millions of people seem these days to think alike just as they all look alike," and Clark describes a visit to a prison that gave him "a terrifying, revealing picture of how the brain is reshaped to suit the system."

THE CORE of the Communist effort to turn the Chinese into unquestioning automatons is to be found in the small "study groups" (*hsüeh-hsi hsiao-tsu*) in which practically everyone in China is required to participate—under the watchful guidance of party cadres.⁵ Both Stevenson and Clark stress the extraordinary effectiveness of the massive machinery of persuasion and thought control, in which the study groups are the central cog, supplemented by "street committees" in the cities and a host of similar organizations. Of interest is Clark's description of the functioning of a street committee:

⁵ For an excellent analysis of the importance of the study groups in the control structure of Communist China, see H. F. Schurmann, "Organization and Response in Communist China," in H. L. Boorman, Ed., "Contemporary China and the Chinese," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 321, January 1959, pp. 51-61.

The chairman of each committee, usually a housewife who can stay home and keep an eye on the activities and habits of her neighbors, has three main tasks: to explain the aims of the government, to reflect and transmit the opinion of ordinary Chinese to party workers, and to administer public welfare. Thus a two-way channel of communications is established. If, on the one hand, something like a fly-swatting campaign is decreed, it is madame chairman who sees to it that the two hundred or so families under her wing get into the proper spirit. The usual start is at a street rally, with madame chairman and members of her committee exhorting the residents to toil for the common good. If persuasion fails, shame is employed. At one rally, attended by upward of three hundred men, women, and children, I heard the woman leader cry out, "The people's eyes are snow-bright and are on you, Li Cheng." And Li Cheng, a shop clerk, crept away, presumably so mortified that he would promptly volunteer for a weekend of digging a dam site in the country (pp. 42-3).

THE FRIGHTENING POWER of the Chinese Communist system of persuasion to twist men's minds emerges still more forcefully in Father Eleutherius Winance's book, an analytical account of his own personal experience of "brainwashing". A Benedictine monk and educator, the author spent 16 years in China, whence the Communist regime expelled him, after trial, in February 1952. His book is divided into three parts: the first analyzes the system of persuasion as he experienced it; the second, based on his diary, describes the ordeal of his trial and expulsion; and the third consists of an appraisal of the Chinese Communist theory of brainwashing and its effectiveness, plus an account of the fate of the Catholic Church in China since his departure.

The tone of Father Winance's book is humble, calm, and dispassionate. He explains how the constant and unrelenting indoctrination within the study group leads "you unconsciously to your own negation, to the negation of your own personality, and the fallacious pretext that whenever you say 'I' or 'mine' you are guilty of the most sordid selfishness. In a situation like that, could I possibly talk about 'my' right or 'my' opinion?" The process of persuasion eventually causes a destruction of self, a disavowal of former loyalties, and a "scientific conversion" culminating in selfless devotion to "The People" or, to be more precise, the party. Father Winance feels that, in practicing this technique of mental suasion, the Communists enjoy a great advantage deriving from the nature of Marxist ideology:

For the Marxist doctrine—an intellectual construction having the seeming radiance of steel—comes face to face with an amorphous mass of values that are complex in their delicate shades of meaning, which often seem in conflict with one another, and which are insufficiently thought out (p. 63).

Noting the regime's ability to thrill the youth with ideals of justice, devotion, heroism, or patriotism, Father Winance also suggests some practical reasons for the austere moral code which the party imposes on its cadres. "Without wishing to cast any doubt on what others have said in this matter, and speaking only from my own experience," he writes, "I witnessed only a policy of discipline and integrity. . . . The Communists knew that a young man loves to play this role of judge, protector and defender of the common good."

In part, the author feels that this appeal to idealism derives force from the deceptiveness and ambiguity of Communist terminology. The Communists, he points out, "are continually making use of a vocabulary identical with ours, to be sure, but with new meanings (conformable to their ideology) attached to the old terms." Stevenson expresses the same general idea in commenting:

When you cross the great divide between East and West, you step through Alice's Looking-Glass which transformed left into right. In modern Chinese jargon it often happens that Peace does mean War, Freedom is Slavery, Liberation spells Invasion.

The new dimension of power represented by the Chinese Communist system of total thought control is disturbing indeed. The condition of the individual under it, described in the three books thus far discussed, is in many respects one of "subhumanity." Father Winance reminds us:

It is absolutely necessary to keep in mind this systematic disregard for human dignity if we are to give a wholesome judgment on the gigantic material progress that strikes the eye of kindly visitors in China. There is no point at all in denying the spectacular achievements of the Chinese Communists; but on the other hand, those visitors from the West who praise them without reserve are obviously either childishly naive or culpably cynical (pp. 196-197).

THIS MAY PERHAPS be too harsh a judgment to level against Lord Boyd Orr, but in some respects his book appears to justify it. His short volume records the superficial impressions of a two months' tour of mainland China in the fall of 1958, and was written with the help (how much we do not know) of Peter Townsend, who had been in China from 1942 to 1951. If nothing else, the book demonstrates the powers of persuasion of the Chinese Communists when dealing with a favorably-disposed foreign visitor. The author repeats as observed fact the statistics and claims of his Chinese hosts, almost to the point of absurdity. We can only hope that his prior distinguished reputation gained as head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and

honored by the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, will not suffer as a consequence of his book.

In his "Foreword", Lord Boyd Orr frankly states that he has "avoided the question of civil liberties" and taken "the most favorable view of developments so far as it seemed to be supported by facts." He feels that he is "too experienced to be taken in," yet his book contains such ludicrous statements as, "in general, we found the Chinese cautious and conservative in their claims, rather than the other way about." But then, how was he to know that internal strains would force the Mao regime less than a year later to pare drastically the very same figures for food and steel production he had accepted and reproduced?

Boyd Orr paints a China no one would ever want to leave—a China with "no evidence of hunger," where "the people looked healthy and vigorous," and where "well-stocked shops and department stores" were "crowded with customers obviously having money to spend." He also accepts the general Communist view that there was no progress at all until Mao came to power, and that there has been nothing since but dramatic success. He remarks for example, that "except for Manchuria, which the Japanese developed, China had no real communications system ten years ago." Evidently his Chinese hosts failed to tell him that more than 75 percent of the roads and railways now in operation on the mainland already existed before the Communists came to power. It is perhaps appropriate that Boyd Orr entitles his report *What's Happening in China?*—with a question mark at the end. The question mark still belongs there after reading the book.

But Boyd Orr's work does have value in that it demonstrates how effective a guided tour can be in creating a favorable impression on the mind of the sympathetic visitor to China today, just as interested visitors to Confucian China frequently came away with glowing reports and failed to see many of the unsavory aspects of China's former despotism. All four books under review stress the tremendous human energy that has been harnessed by the Communists, and the prodigious changes taking place in China. Organized persuasion is telling the Chinese that modern industry, jet airplanes, and the other wonders of modern science are impossible without Marxism-Leninism. The Chinese Communists are, indeed, far more blatant than their Soviet big brothers in identifying progress with socialism. For example, the *People's Daily*, in its editorial of October 12, 1959, hailing the third Soviet cosmic rocket, said: "This again shows the superiority of the socialist system."

Under the influence of this identification, visitors from abroad as well as many Chinese may often mistake the

enthusiasm of Chinese students, engineers, scientists and others for their work as an indication of support for the regime. It is worth remembering that the enthusiasm of German rocket scientists did not necessarily signify enthusiasm for Hitler; nor was their success in creating the V-2 in any sense a demonstration of the superiority of the Nazi creed. The thousands of refugees still pouring into Hong Kong and Macao today offer ample reason to doubt the extent of popular support for the Mao regime. Unfortunately, none of the authors under review availed himself of the information these Chinese have to contribute.

The four books offer scant comfort either for China's Asian neighbors or for those who look for an early

collapse of this new totalitarian colossus. All four authors feel that Mao and his colleagues are firmly entrenched in power. But then, the early observers of China mentioned at the start of this review felt the same way about the regimes they observed. Yet the Mongol rulers were ousted from China shortly after Pegolotti's book was written, and the Jesuits who wrote of the stability of the Ming Dynasty were surprised by the suddenness of the Manchu conquest in 1644, as they were again by the rebellions which heralded the decline of Manchu power. Events move far more rapidly today, and developments in China since these books were published indicate that all is not smooth in the land where "Communist persuasion" reigns supreme.

Dictatorship and the Press

The Press in Authoritarian Countries,
Published by the International Press Institute,
Zurich, and F. A. Praeger, N. Y., 1959.

Reviewed by Philip Foisie

THIS 200-PAGE SURVEY represents an attempt by an association of free journalists to understand what happens to newspapers when journalists lose their freedom. A major portion of the survey is devoted to an assessment of the press in eight Communist countries, but it also includes a more cursory study of conditions in 13 non-Communist authoritarian countries. The section on Communist areas dwells primarily on the methods of party control of the press and on the phenomenon of "liberalization," which was still developing at the time the study was made, from 1956 to 1958.

Those aspects of the press which are common to all "non-deviationist" Communist regimes—the Marxist-Leninist view of the newspaper as exclusively a propaganda and organizational weapon, and the aims and methods of news manipulation that follow from this doctrine—are touched on only in the chapter on the Soviet Union, and indeed only the Soviet press is examined in any depth. A good deal of repetition is thus wisely

avoided. The study omits Albania, North Korea, Outer Mongolia and North Vietnam on grounds that their press "does not offer any peculiarities of special interest." Also omitted is Bulgaria, presumably for the same reason.

In the Communist countries that are included, the emphasis is on those aspects of the press where there has been a significant departure from the Soviet example. The chapter on East Germany, for instance, contains details on the only experiment with "liberalization" to antedate destalinization (it was prompted by the 1953 revolt); here a close look at the Communist press was possible, thanks to the relatively large number of East German newsmen who have fled to the West.

The chapters on Rumania and Czechoslovakia stress the techniques of suppressing opposition newspapers under circumstances of a piece-meal assumption of power. In these and most other cases, the feature distinguishing a particular press from its Soviet "model" emerged during the early stages of its development. The survey affords ample evidence that the East European press as it exists today, however, has shed its "original" characteristics, and conforms to the Soviet pattern both in content and operation—except, of course, in the cases of wayward Yugoslavia and of Poland, where many of the achievements of the October 1956 upheaval are still intact.

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