

Reader's Response I

What We Know About China and How We Know It

To the Editors: I have read with interest and some benefit your recent series on "The Other China" (*Worldview*, May, June, and July-August). It is perhaps good that the American liberal public, to whom China has always been a fascinating—and exasperating—land now has before it the testimony of common people to help us take seriously what Chou En-lai and other Chinese hosts have repeatedly told their guests: "We are only beginning; you should not expect too much."

Yet the net effect is as false as the uncritical and credulous reports of visitors who, without background, generalize from the limited and sometimes (but not always) stage-managed scenes they are shown. One detects a certain glee in the exposure of evidence of food and other commodity shortages; and a logical gap in the adducement of accounts of famine in the early sixties to prove that the same thing is happening now. That there are floods and drought today too is inevitable; Mao has not yet been able to control the weather. But an honest picture of the situation must compare it with the prerevolutionary situation. Is or is not progress being made in flood control, in the delivery of goods from the areas of surplus to those of deficit? Evidence to indicate progress is quite generally recognized. In spite of a continually growing population there seems to be more for the peasant than for decades. A friend of mine, a recent emigré who maintains as sympathetically critical a view of China as anyone I know, says that the peasants are undoubtedly better off than at any time since the comparatively prosperous years just before the Japanese invasion. On conditions before 1937 he will not commit himself. A true picture of China requires some historical perspective.

The authors must be among the few scholars left who were expecting (until corrected by their emigré peasant informants) that peasants in China would work harder on communally farmed land than on their private plots. I would have thought that data long available from the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Tanzania, not to speak of the experience of the American tenant farmer, would have taken the surprise out of that situation.

If socialist China makes claims to more rapid economic development because of socialism, that claim is to be expected and discounted. The free enterprise system has by now been pretty well proved to be the most effective means of stimulating GNP growth, if that is all that is aimed at. But Marxists and many others of us do not see GNP growth as the highest value, if it must be accompanied by economic exploitation and the

concentration of wealth. The authors make no mention of the trade-off between justice and efficiency in production. A colleague of mine; Father Parig Digan of Brussels, who visited China recently, makes this comment, which seems to me to show some understanding of the Chinese Party value system:

It will take a long time after the Chinese experience before the majority of mankind is likely to be persuaded again that there is nothing it can do to check the flow of the world's good things into the richest hands. We may not yet know whether the Chinese themselves have found the right way to check it, since after all there are not too many precedents to go by; but we have surely not yet seen a more impassioned attempt to reverse it once and for all, or a more uncompromising estimation of the force needed in that attempt.... Even if everything has already begun to go wrong with the Chinese experiment (as in any case something must go wrong with it sooner or later), the world will remember that there was at least one nation which for one generation did not fall short in taking the measure of human greed, and did not fail to put up a titanic fight to deny that greed the final say in its affairs.

That the Chinese peasant is not satisfied with the situation seems, however, to be the fact. A remark by my emigré friend confirms in a way the judgment of your authors. When asked if the peasants were not supportive of the system, he replied: "Of all groups in society the peasants are the most critical." Not only because in any country it seems that the hard-working farmer is always discontent with his share (witness the USA), but because he has seen the cities prosper more than he has (Maoist doctrine is based on the peasant, but the urban industrial worker is, in good Marxist fashion, still the favored subclass), he has seen the problems of city population unloaded on him, and he is still at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

The Londons spend a good deal of space to defend the validity of the testimony of their refugee and emigré sources. What puzzles me is their reliance almost exclusively on such sources, which, whatever may be said, does present some problems. There are in Hong Kong now hundreds of thousands of Chinese who have visited the People's Republic and who have gotten into the countryside. They do make genuine and keen observations, and they are at least theoretically less likely

to be self-justifying, more balanced and discriminating than new refugees. To build a case on a single source, the reliability of which is, to say the least, hard to test, is as unjustifiable as to rely completely on the testimony of guided tourists.

Finally, on the question of *face*. One could add other stories to those the Londons tell. About the model university professor's apartment at Kwangchou University, especially furnished for foreign visitors to inspect. About the hospital staff that gladly endorsed the application of an overseas Chinese colleague to leave China after some years of service there because his presence drew foreign visitors and before each visit the cosmetics had to be put on.

But there is another side. To offer the guest one's best is part of hospitality. To do less is both a mark of lack of pride and failure to appreciate the guest. Chinese visitors to New York have noted that their hosts refused to take them to visit the slums of Harlem. The reason given was "security." Was the real reason any different from that of the Chinese? One does not assume that a family eats every day what is set on the table for a dinner party. And for visitors to China to make this kind of generalization is inexcusable.

Still the question is not fully answered, for there have been undoubtedly at points deliberate attempts to mislead. And all too often—so often as to make it a law of social science—the preservation of appearances is managed only at the cost of substance. So the bound feet in old China; so the showmanship of new China. One reason that has been given for the loss of millions of lives in the famines of the early sixties in Central China is that some officials were so intent on preserving the appearance of success that they insisted on deliveries of grain outside the province even though there was not in fact enough to eat at home. (It is also reported that heads rolled for this misplaced zeal for appearances. I see no reason for accepting Father La Dany's figure of fifty million rather than one of ten million given by a Chinese who was there.) Face-saving is an old evil in China, and elsewhere not so far from home. When the Party starts a campaign against that old tradition we will know that the cultural revolution has really come to China.

Arne Sovik

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To the Editors: I think Miriam and Ivan London make an excellent point in questioning the validity of much of the data obtained by foreigners working in China—and I had that experience for three-and-a-half of the most frustrating years of my life. However, I think that there are many faces to reality, and the outwardly calm and self-sufficient face one appears to see everywhere one travels in China is as valid as the picture of disorder and misery given by many refugees. The truth must be an amalgam somewhere in the middle.

Western observers of China—and I do not except myself—have all too often dropped their standards of intellectual enquiry, in response to overwhelming hospitality and good organization on the part of their hosts, historical guilt feelings, and a kind of subtle brainwashing that seems to afflict nearly every foreigner in his first few months in China. Add to that the almost total lack of access to information discreditable to China, and the naive assumptions of many foreigners living in

or visiting the mainland are easy enough to understand.

Those who wrote "negatively" about China in the fifties and sixties are partly responsible for the fact that in the early seventies an over-rosy picture has been propagated. People arriving in China expected an oppressive, gloomy atmosphere, and were astonished to see the widespread cheerfulness of the people and hear officials discuss certain questions in a reasonably open-minded way. It is only after longer experience of officialdom in China that one realizes the extent of the untruthfulness to which one is subjected, and the futility of attempting to challenge it directly.

On the other hand, while accepting the Londons' evidence that there was famine in China on a large scale in the early 1960's, and in scattered pockets thereafter, I must say that I have never seen a beggar or obviously undernourished person in China—and I must have seen literally millions of Chinese. I do not think that it is within the organizational power of the authorities to control what the foreigner sees in the way Catherine the Great's officials controlled what she saw. If there were genuine and obvious hardship, foreigners simply would not be taken to the place in question. And admittedly there are very large areas of China where no foreigners are ever admitted. But there is no visible evidence of influx of real "tao huang" beggars into any of the couple-of-dozen major cities and surrounding areas that foreigners commonly visit. The appearance of the people is generally placid and healthy.

In my view the big question hanging over China is not whether there are isolated pockets of undernourishment today—which there probably are—but to what extent the post-Mao regime will prove capable of continuing the rigid politico-economic policies that financed, in terms of nutrition, the enormous increase in population since 1949. It may well be that China really has allowed itself to become overpopulated and that this will result in widespread food shortages, perhaps even large famines, if the present degree of political organization breaks down in the wake of Mao's death. If so, there will probably still be modern equivalents of Anna Louise Strong to write rosy reports on things of which they know nothing. But there will also be the refugees to tell the other side, and scholars of the caliber of the Londons to write it down.

David Bonavia

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To the Editors: Why did *Worldview* publish a series of articles on China focused on the problems of feeding 850 million people with no presentation of the documented gains of the past twenty-seven years, relying almost exclusively on reports of refugees in Hong Kong, and virtually ignoring the researched reports and studies of dozens of specialists from Japan, Europe, and North America? The stated purpose of *Worldview* is "to place public policies, particularly in international affairs, under close ethical scrutiny." It is *unethical* to present readers, most of them novices in knowledge of China's agricultural economics, with an article-series of this magnitude, which distorts the historical perspective (focusing on the post-Great Leap Forward "three bad years, 1960-62) and ignores the plethora of respected scholarly studies available. Casual readers will be left with the false conclusion that

widespread hunger, malnutrition, and beggary prevail in China today.

The authors of these articles, neither of them specialists in China's agriculture or economy, conclude that "China has struggled in vain since 1949 to solve the unending food problem and at terrible cost; the major cities are more or less adequately supplied, while many peasants continue to go hungry." None of the top-rated scholars would concur with that estimate.

In contrast Benedict Stavis, Cornell University specialist on China's agriculture and author of *Making Green Revolution, the Politics of Agricultural Development in China*, writes: "China is almost unique in Asia as a land free of widespread hunger, malnutrition, and famine." His statistical tables put China in the upper group of developing nations in annual average food production growth rate 1952-72 (4 per cent), and second only to Thailand in food staple production per capita 1972-73.

Numerous groups of distinguished scientists from North America have visited China. Among those was the Plant Studies Delegation, ten top American agronomists including Dr. Norman Borlaug, father of the "green revolution," who visited China in 1974. The delegation leader, Dr. Sterling Wortman, a specialist in rice and maize genetics, said after their return: "I'm going to quit worrying about the Chinese feeding themselves. Every crop in every place we visited was uniformly good." The delegation's *Report* (National Academy of Sciences, April, 1975) concludes that China is self-sufficient in grain production. "The best criteria of progress in agricultural production are the physical condition and vigor of the people and the observed conditions of the crops....The standard of living—especially as it refers to nutrition, clothing and medical care—of the masses in the People's Republic of China is far better than that of the masses in most Third World nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America."

Dwight Perkins, Harvard economist and China specialist, is quoted in *China: A Reassessment of the Economy. Papers Submitted to the Joint Economic Committee of Congress of the United States* (July 10, 1975). After 1963 China's average annual rate of increase in food production was 3.9 per cent, well ahead of population gains, estimated at 1.9 per cent. "...thus by 1967-70 China had made up for the ground lost during and after the Great Leap Forward."

Perkins summarizes reasons for China's success in keeping food production and consumption levels ahead of population gains. "First, China seems to have succeeded in eliminating the most extreme fluctuations in farm output, although several decades more of experience will be needed to fully confirm this achievement....Second, the rationing of essential foods [rice, oil, sugar] means that all people are guaranteed their minimum requirements as long as nationwide supplies are adequate. Because China has largely solved the food distribution problem...the nation could suffer through a fairly prolonged period of output stagnation before people began to suffer serious malnutrition."

Not one of these respected specialists, nor their colleagues, is mentioned in the *Worldview* series. Aside from brief references in two paragraphs, the authors choose to ignore the work of scholars, instead devoting the bulk of this nineteen-page series to brief, sensational quotations and anecdotes lifted out of context from interviews conducted with refugees in Hong

Kong. Many of these are subjective recollections fifteen or more years after the events by persons who were children at the time. None is described as a professional observer. In fact none is described in any satisfactory way at all. For example, Chai Yu-kuei, one of their favorite informants, is quoted four times in the second article of the series, a total of two columns of eyewitness reports without benefit of identification by the authors. He traveled in China. When did he travel? On what business? What are his credentials as a reporter of events? What systematic methodology was used by the interviewers to authenticate his recollections and those of thirty-nine other refugees briefly quoted in these articles? We know them only as "a peasant from Kwangtung," "a student from Hainan," "a worker from Amoy," "a peddler and petty speculator from Fukien."



Chai Yu-kuei is one who describes beggars encountered in his travels. No dates or historical context are given, leaving the impression that beggars are commonplace in China today. *This is simply not true.* There were beggars and hungry people during the "three bad years"—a time of hardship acknowledged by scholars and the Chinese press alike; but no scholarly source has reported a problem of beggars in China in recent years. Thousands of visitors from most countries of the world have visited China. Hundreds are living there as students, technicians, journalists, diplomats. Many have traveled widely in the interior provinces, away from the great coastal cities. It would be impossible, as is implied by the writers of the *Worldview* series, to set up "Potemkin Villages" at every bus stop and waypoint. Documentary films by foreign producers do show villagers and city dwellers living in austere, even primitive, conditions. But no beggars are seen, and the people are adequately dressed, with no signs of malnutrition.

In an effort to discredit the work of visiting scholars, the writers report the preparations for Richard Nixon's 1972 visit, described by several refugees as a "complete show," arranged for the Presidential delegation. While probably true, it's irrelevant to cite preparations for the visit of a chief of state, implying that this is some kind of norm.

The writers of the *Worldview* series observe that "The study of China is further complicated by a fundamental anomaly: the Western mind trying to comprehend something outside its experience." True—these writers being a case in point! But they completely ignore the most reliable reports of all, undisturbed by the bias of the Western mind: the ethnic Chinese from Europe, Asia, and America, many of them scholars and scientists, who have made extended visits, some for six months or longer. It is estimated that over half the Americans who have visited China since 1972 were of Chinese ethnic origin. They are not required to travel in groups or with guides;

they speak the language and blend into the crowds; and they travel widely into the provinces to visit their kinfolk. Their reports, and their scholarly works, are available to us in significant numbers. Not one is cited here. None, to my knowledge, has reported a problem of beggars or starving people.

The writers justify their dependence on refugees as information sources on the grounds that scholars working at a distance need "some way of touching down to the human scene.... It is here that people with Chinese life experience must be drawn into the research process." True, the Hong Kong Chinese, many of them originally from China, have Chinese life experience. But why rely on them exclusively? Many scholars refuse to cite refugees at all on the grounds of probable bias and skewed sample. In Hong Kong "professional refugees" who make their living giving interviews are suspected of shaping their responses to fit the particular apriorities of the employer-interviewer.

As social scientists, the writers owe their readers a careful description of their research methodology. Instead we are given bits and pieces. Moreover, loose generalizations and journalistic jargon substitute for precisely defined terms and situations. What is a "major famine"? A time of acute food shortage, or a time when large numbers of people actually die of hunger? If the latter, how many people die in a "major" famine—tens, hundreds, thousands, millions? An estimated three to six million died in a three-province famine 1928-30; nearly four million in the Yangtze River flood of 1931. Other localized famines in the decades before 1949 caused deaths of hundreds, thousands, or a million and more. There is no evidence of famine by these definitions since 1949. Nor is mention made here of the massive flood control and irrigation projects that now greatly limit the impact of weather, or the transportation network that can quickly shift food reserves from surplus to deficit areas.

As for definitions of hunger, according to federally established guidelines nearly 25 million Americans live on incomes below the poverty level, and 14 million suffer from hunger. By American standards all Chinese workers and peasants live in poverty and suffer from hunger. But is a Chinese peasant with three meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables, and adequate fish and soybean protein in his diet hungry because he eats little beef, pork, dairy products, or potato chips?

There is other gross irresponsibility in this series, like the grotesque reports of rumored cannibalism—none of them witnessed by the informants; and the so-called "realistic estimate" of fifty million deaths due to food shortages in 1960-62 based on refugee reports and letters received in Hong Kong. No respected scholar would even try to quantify estimates based on such flimsy sources; the consensus is that 1960-62 was *not* a time of mass starvation, but of food deficiency and malnutrition. The crisis was soon passed with new agricultural policies and better harvests.

Why publish a series of articles on China's food economy? With the threat of Malthusian disaster hanging over the entire world we need to know the truth, insofar as possible, about the policies and techniques used in the struggle for survival of the world's most populous nation. China has floods and droughts, like any continental nation. They don't have the range of choices we do in our supermarkets. Their industrial base cannot yet provide the power, mechanization, and chemical fertilizers that make it possible for 4 per cent of the American

population to operate our farms. They do live spartan, austere lives dominated by hard work. And, despite increasingly effective population policies, their numbers increase by fifteen million each year. All the more reason, as the famed economist Barbara Ward said at a conference some years ago, for us to rejoice that they have mobilized their people and resources sufficiently to feed themselves; they are not our or the world's responsibility. Beyond that it may well be, as some Western specialists project, that China's program to limit population growth and mobilize the nation's human and material resources for optimal food production and distribution will have profound implications for the struggle for survival of all peoples in future decades, particularly those in the developing nations.

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To the Editors: I am personally acquainted with Miriam and Ivan London and can attest to the carefulness with which they attempt to get evidence before writing. They would not be allowed into the PRC as independent research scholars, so they do their best to get data as reliable as possible from which they are most careful in making any extrapolations.

Frank N. Trager

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To the Editors: ... We have long been interested in the efficacy of the interview procedure applied in this sort of setting. The work is very nicely illustrated by the contributions of Miriam and Ivan D. London. Their work is very careful, considered, and sensitive.

Worldview has made a contribution to the people in the world who wish to know about China and who are interested in the well-being of the Chinese and their own relationships with the peoples who live there. Whether the Londons are correct or not, what they have to say must be heard and evaluated. This will take time, and most of us will be in no position to pass final judgment without further information of an unbiased nature out of China herself.

Carol H. Ammons

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To the Editors: The series of articles, "The Other China," by Miriam London and Ivan D. London are a major contribution to our understanding of that land so vital to America's future peace and stability. The new relationship this nation has been building with China is based mainly upon a thin level of contacts with a few rulers of that vast country. Nowhere else in

the world does the fate of our primary foreign policies—for our association with China is intimately linked to our relationships with the Soviet Union—depend upon so restricted a base of information.

Most of all we lack the ability to make meaningful planning assumptions on the basis, at least in part, of an understanding of the role, if any, played by the general population of a country. Any new sources of data about China's diverse peoples is immensely useful and welcome. In their interviews with Chinese refugees (extensive in time and numbers) the Londons have provided a new source and instrument as well as highly suggestive data.

Two years ago in Hong Kong I saw some refugees from China who had just made it ashore. I had known that, after many years, the movement was continuing toward what the Londons describe as "the glow in the night sky." I had not realized until very recently, however, that there is also a Chinese refugee movement to the Soviet Union. A Soviet dissident *samizdat* article recently received through Frankfurt (translated by Possev) provides further insight into "the other China." Writes A. Uchitel:

One group at the Pot'ma Station was heading for the labor camps while the other one had just departed from there. I was in the first group....Among these two groups of inmates there turned out to be two "foreigners" who were being shipped to the labor camp #5 for foreign citizens. They were the refugees from China: one was a Kazakh, and the other a Kirghiz. Both spoke Russian very poorly but we managed to learn a good deal from them nonetheless. Most remarkable was the fact that they not only did not complain but were even happy with their new lot: "I have a bunk, light bulb in the cell, we get food every day—even fish. What else do I need?" said one of them to me.

Who were these people for whom a Soviet prison represented a level of existence unattainable in the freedom of China? One of them was still quite a young fellow who had escaped from China to join his family which has been living in the Soviet Kirghiz Republic since before 1969, the year in which the USSR stopped the refugee flow. The other prisoner was an emaciated old man barely able to move about because of an untreated hernia which he had acquired during his flight across the border. His situation could be summarized by the wisecrack of Stanislav Letz: "So you have busted a hole through the cell wall with your head....What are you going to do now that you are in the adjacent cell?" In China the old man was also in prison, from which he managed to escape into a Soviet prison! Naturally, we were all interested in learning about the Chinese labor camps and the story told by the old man was depressing indeed. The prison from which he fled was nothing more than a pit in the ground in which the inmates sat and slept on bare earth. At night the pit would be covered over by wooden planks. During the day the inmates were taken to a stone quarry from which they carried rocks using shoulder yokes for a distance of over 40 kilometers. The prisoners were in leg irons at all times and their only food consisted of cabbage soup and unleavened bread. He had thus survived 17 years of his open-ended sentence ("until rehabilitated") for his heinous crime: he had been the owner of two thousand head of sheep at the time the "People's Government" was established.

A conspiracy of silence surrounds the Death Archipelago of China and of its satellites in eastern and southeastern Asia just as thoroughly as the Soviet Gulag Archipelago was concealed from the world in spite of dozens of testimonials including that of Solzhenitsyn. Even now, quite recently, H. Böll declared that "...as is well known, there are no labor camps in South Vietnam."

Perhaps the truth of the tragic lot of the Chinese refugees in the USSR may give pause to those who naively like to juxtapose the "good" and "bad" national varieties of communism:

Leonard R. Sussman

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To the Editors: I have read the series of articles by Ivan and Miriam London....The Londons are among the very few who try to look behind the bamboo screen of Chinese propaganda. I found their articles knowledgeable, colorful, and stimulating as well as scholarly and well-written. It can only be hoped that articles of this kind help to correct the overoptimistic and often very naive image of China in the West.

Arnulf Baring

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To the Editors: Your series of three articles by Miriam and Ivan London on "The Other China" are a "sobering" contribution to the plethora of articles and even books about China in the last few years. The reference of the authors to the difficulty the general reader has in knowing what to believe about China is underscored by the articles themselves. However, the analysis of the problem and suggested approaches to answering it in the third article are helpful. Disclosures of the goings-on behind the facade in our own country in recent years certainly alert us to the fact that we dare not *carte blanche* accept "official line" information in any country—whether China or America—without some further information and evaluation based on what is really happening. Nor should we be ready to discredit the positive change that might have been happening, despite a great deal of adversity along with it.

A fact that remains is that feeding 800 million people—even on differing levels of caloric intake—is a monumental undertaking. Even more monumental is feeding 4 billion that make up the entire world, especially when indications are that not only in China—according to the article—has per capita food production hardly been keeping pace with population increase.

A hundred million children in danger of serious malnourishment and prospects of up to three million people dying of starvation in the next twelve months. These are the kind of challenges calling for responses by all of us. Chinese, American, whoever, especially those of us who bear the name Christian. Solutions are not simple, but we had better be working on them.

Paul H. Strege

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The Londons Respond:

We are grateful for the letters supporting our work, and we welcome the opportunity to respond to those who question or challenge that work. We shall consider first certain objections raised by Mr. MacInnis and in the process respond, we hope, to reservations expressed in other letters, particularly that of Mr. Sovik.

Mr. MacInnis is apparently willing to accord respectability only to the comparatively few agricultural economists who appear to support his conception of things. He gives the impression, moreover, of a consensus among "top-rated scholars" (top rated by whom?) as to the ultimate authorities on the Chinese agricultural scene. Nothing could be less true. As for Benedict Stavis, whom he cites as a virtually unassailable expert (Mr. Stavis, himself, is undoubtedly more modest), Mr. MacInnis neglects to mention that Stavis's monograph on *Making Green Revolution* is itself the subject of controversy. For example, in *China Quarterly*, No. 64 (December, 1975) a review of this work by the agricultural economist Thomas B. Wiens warns the reader of the "author's propensity for converting fragmentary or inappropriate data into estimates of national aggregates. This warning applies to his figures on yields and crop distribution, area under mechanical irrigation, high and stable yield acreage, relative importance of chemical fertilizers and current levels of rural income." The reviewer also points out that some of Stavis's "assertions rest on quantitative breakdowns which may most charitably be termed impressionistic" (p. 759).

In the publication *China: A Reassessment of the Economy*, to which Mr. MacInnis refers, he must have overlooked the article preceding that of Mr. Perkins, "China: Agriculture in the 1970's" by Alva Lewis Erisman (pp. 324-49), in which the author concludes that "even with the accelerated programs to modernize agriculture, the PRC may not be able to attain self-sufficiency in both grain and essential nongrain crops by the end of this decade" (p. 349).

As it is, Mr. MacInnis leans a bit too heavily on certain statements in Mr. Perkins's generally cautious article, "Constraints Influencing China's Agricultural Performance" (pp. 350-65). All experts on the Chinese agricultural economy, including Mr. Perkins, know and make clear that they are dealing with a shaky house of assumptional cards. Pull out one card—for example, a misestimated population level—and the whole house could fall down. But more important, all these experts, whether they over- or underestimate key variables, are dealing with per capita consumption that hovers around subsistence levels, not excluding Mr. Perkins, who speaks of guaranteed "minimum requirements as long as nationwide supplies are adequate." We must also stress that estimates of per capita consumption are *abstract national averages*. If these figures still do not exceed "minimum requirements," this means that *in practice, locally*, some of the population must live above subsistence level (especially in the cities) and others below it (in the poorer countryside). Rationing itself is differentially administered and is stacked in favor of the city dweller, with the peasant too often paying the piper.

Mr. MacInnis has, of course, the right to choose his experts

and disagree with our conclusions, but we suggest that he stop bandying about words like "unethical" and explore his own vulnerabilities.

As to the testimony of visitors to the People's Republic of China, unfortunately there are visitors and visitors. It is not at all true, incidentally, that Chinese from abroad "blend into the crowds" and are invariably allowed to visit their kinfolk in their native dwelling places. Overseas Chinese are generally immediately recognizable as such to the internal populace by their clothing and shoes, however downplayed, and even by their deportment, which reflects an outside world and different mentality. Even so, Mr. MacInnis is clearly unaware of large numbers of Chinese travelers who might indeed provide "the most reliable reports of all," but not of the glowing sort he imagines. As Simon Leys (the pseudonym of an eminent China scholar and recent foreign resident in Peking) states in his book *Ombres Chinoises* (1973), soon to be published in English translation:

The loquacity of Chinese travelers [to the People's Republic of China] is generally in inverse proportion to their information. Those [from Hong Kong and Macao] who have the opportunity to share their relatives' way of life in the villages of Kwangtung exhibit a great disinclination to be interviewed; they confide their impressions only in private or under conditions guaranteeing anonymity [p. 30].

Nevertheless, a number of accounts by such travelers have appeared pseudonymously in various responsible Hong Kong newspapers and journals (for example, *Ming Pao*), a source of information that many students of China like Mr. MacInnis have rather arbitrarily ignored.

Moreover, we are not especially impressed by the illustriousness of a particular visitor as an indicator of the value of his observations. As former Sovietologists, we are acutely aware of the egregious failures of judgment, now most embarrassing, of a whole stream of distinguished foreign travelers to the Soviet Union during Stalin's time. The effulgent pronouncements of those formerly "top-rated" authorities on the Soviet system, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, authors of *Soviet Communism, A New Civilization?* are now thoroughly discredited along with their book. In 1933 Prime Minister Herriot of France, after visiting the Ukraine, then in the throes of a catastrophic famine in which it is now established at least 10 per cent of the population starved to death, "told representatives of the press [on his return home] that everything he saw in the USSR was wonderful. He categorically denied the lies of the bourgeois press about a famine in the Soviet Union" (*Pravda*, September 13, 1933). This was also the time when the Pulitzer Prize-winning Moscow correspondent of the *New York Times*, Walter Duranty, reported in that newspaper (September 8, 1933): "The writer has just completed a 200 mile trip through the heart of the Ukraine and can say positively that the harvest is splendid and all talk of famine now is ridiculous."

The presumably sensitive writer, Lion Feuchtwanger, on visiting the USSR in 1937 at the height of the *Ezhovshchina*—the period of extreme Stalinist terror, when millions were being arrested and exiled or shot—wrote of "the individual's feeling of complete security, his comfortable certainty that the State is really there for him and not he for the State.... Indeed everywhere in that great city of Moscow there was an atmo-

sphere of harmony and contentment, even of happiness'' (p. 107 in David Cauter's *The Fellow Travellers*, 1973).

Familiarization with the history of Sovietology would indeed be salutary for many scholars working in the Chinese area, not because of any implied similarity between the Maoist and Soviet systems—on the contrary, as students of both areas, we are only too aware of the significant differences—but because of many parallels between present approaches and attitudes of foreigners toward the People's Republic and those of their counterparts in the past toward the USSR. We must also stress that the first great avenue of realistic information about the Soviet Union, which eventually led to a transformation of major areas within Soviet studies, was opened precisely by those nameless and "biased" Soviet refugees, scorned and derogated as a "skewed sample" by intellectual luminaries of the time.

As we have explicitly stated in our third paper of the series, our method, like every research method, has its limitations and "must operate in concert with other traditional research procedures for optimal results." We have chosen to concentrate on an important but relatively neglected source of data within our field of competence—the refugee interview. This does not preclude but, in fact, requires constant cross-checking against available evidence from other sources. Unfortunately, some scholars who make a great point of using published information exclusively, whether from official documents or visitors' accounts, do not fully utilize even these resources.

Let us take the question of beggars, for example. We have already mentioned two periods in which large numbers of beggars are consistently reported to have been seen by both refugees and legal emigrants from China: the period of greatest economic distress in the early sixties and the years of the Cultural Revolution. These were both times, however different, of breakdown of discipline and slackened control—the implication being that there is a connection between strictness of control and the emergence of beggars into general public view. It is not surprising that many honest observers in the most recent years have personally not come across beggars in their travels. On the other hand, this does not mean that other honest observers have not seen and reported them. We offer the following brief illustrations of widely disparate origin:

1. In his book *Ombres Chinoises* Simon Leys writes that in 1972 "in a cheap eating place in the suburbs [of Canton] I was astonished to see an old beggarwoman in rags come to glean from under the tables, between the very feet of the customers, crumbs of food which she then tucked one by one into her basket" (p. 64).

2. A Chinese-Swiss pharmacologist, Chang Sin-ren, visited China in 1973 after a twenty-five-year absence, and on his return published a diary, *Als Chinese nach China: Widersehen nach 25 Jahren* (1975). This book is characterized by enthusiastic endorsement of China today and is unusual in containing the names and photographs of his family there—practically a guarantee of the "friendly" orientation of the book. While visiting his relatives in Wuhu, Anhui Province, he accompanied his brother one day (December 7, 1973) to a restaurant where "my brother ordered our breakfast and turned over the required coupons. Meanwhile, I took a look around me. The male and female workers in the restaurant had their hands full. Several wore red armbands. Then suddenly several

beggars caught my eye. My brother noticed this and explained to me that the female workers with the red armbands, besides doing their job, had also to maintain order and keep beggars away from the patrons. I was astounded: 'Are there still beggars around then? Why haven't I seen any till now?' 'Certainly [there are]. You don't find beggars in the streets. Instead, they show up in eating places.' Again I asked my brother: 'Why do they beg? Everybody works—even the elderly. Why do the authorities allow this?' 'The authorities are lenient with these people. They give them many warnings—but to no avail. On the other hand, [these beggars] aren't doing anything very bad. If any of them should really do something wrong, then he'd be sent away by force to work and they'd try to reform him. Anyway, you'll see that there are only these few in the whole town'" (pp. 77-78).

3. In the Hong Kong monthly *Nan Pei Chi*, No. 71 (April 16, 1976) Chin Shih, a resident of the Colony, wrote about his recent brief pleasure trip to Canton in an article entitled "Canton Travel Notes." In this chatty account he mentions two encounters with beggars:

When I was passing by Chung Shan Medical College, which is located to the right of the People's Hall, I saw a young man about 20 years old leaning against a wall. A broken bowl was placed in front of his feet. His face looked haggard. I really didn't know whether I should give him any money or not [p. 62].

Later, upon leaving a movie house, "I met two children on the street, who begged money from me. I gave them 40¢" (p. 64).

4. On July 25 of this year Ross Munro, correspondent for *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto, cabled a report from Peking that appeared on July 26, 1976, in the *New York Times* under the title "Hints of Unease and Indiscipline Are Discerned in China" and contained the following observation: "Last year one listened skeptically when someone said that there were still beggars in China. This year one sees a couple of beggars who are bold enough to operate even when foreigners are around."

In writing "The Other China" series we had hoped to bring to the attention of the interested reader certain facts about China that have, of late, been obliterated by an avalanche of uncritical and often blatantly propagandistic books, articles, and films. In this sense, our function may have been corrective. We have had to present what we believe to be the unpleasant realities, not out of a desire to denigrate, but in an attempt to redress the balance in the direction of truth.

In his gracious letter Mr. Bonavia speaks of truth as an "amalgam somewhere in the middle." This is frequently so, but not always. Sometimes truth lies at an extreme that is difficult to accept; sometimes it is simply outside the range of what is known. In the past, Soviet refugees were for a while almost the sole bearers of the most unbelievable truths—the famine in the Ukraine, the Stalinist terror and forced labor camps, the Soviet massacre of Polish army officers at Katyn. But they also brought with them a first sense of that amalgam in the middle, the intricacies of a reality in which good and bad are mixed and in which official blueprints translate into the most unexpected human situations.

It is now possible for scholars to write realistically about the Soviet Union without arousing the sort of passion that true believers vent on infidels. Eventually the same will be true of China.