

I Worked in Mao's China

David Erdal

China is one nation that remains profoundly unconcerned over the issue of human rights. But if only because China has more people than any other country, the issue is of importance.

The movement against Mao's wife, Chiang Ch'ing, and the "Gang of Four," for example: Was this essentially a democratic mass movement against vicious, nasty power-maniacs? When Chinese officials say that they encourage and welcome criticism from the masses, is it perhaps to this kind of event they are referring? What happens to a Chinese who speaks his mind?

For that matter, does the truth come out? Was Chiang Ch'ing really a bad dress designer? If she had the benefit of private showings of the best of Western cinema, why wasn't she able to pass along a few hints to the directors of the appallingly repetitious, wooden, and exaggerated propaganda films that were produced under her? And if the masses, as is now claimed, spontaneously repudiate her dastardly attempts to infiltrate the Socialist paradise with *Bourgeois propaganda*, why did they flock in the hundred millions to see those films at the time, not just once or twice, but seven or ten times each, and to quote them at their political meetings?

For they did. I do not exaggerate. I was there. I went to China in 1974 determined to further the international revolution and to benefit from the Chinese experience; I returned to Britain in 1976 with a passionate hatred of all totalitarian states. I hope that some of my experiences are as instructive to others as they were to me.

Before recounting those experiences I would like to outline the checkered path that led me to China—not for its intrinsic interest, but in order that the reader will have some understanding of the person who now makes such hard statements about China.

The family into which I was born in 1948 was well-off by British standards, but for a series of reasons (ill-health, bankruptcy) we were forced after 1956 to live on

my mother's inherited wealth. After undergoing the heavy influences of James Joyce and then Henry Miller, I went on scholarship to Oxford. There I decided, for no strong reason, to study Chinese, not understanding that China was Communist and understanding only little more what that might mean. My life at the university was typical; suit and tie, short hair, college rowing eight, skiing, flying, and learning the Oxford style.

The American sixties hit Oxford and me, and in my third year I took off for Hong Kong, ostensibly to learn spoken Mandarin. I encountered the Trans-Siberian railway, a Japanese Zen monastery, Hong Kong, and then the hippie trail from Calcutta to Istanbul. I returned to Oxford with the memory of being appalled by colonialism, exploitation, overcrowding, and racialism. By the time I took, very uncertainly, my degree, I was turning from classical poetry to Mao. A period of apolitical travel in the U.S. did not prevent me from returning to political questions: poverty, Vietnam, racialism, violence.

The apolitical dream was already fading when, casually reading Mao one evening, I came across the phrase "We should go to the masses and learn from them...." Bang! I went almost immediately to London to get a job and learn from the masses. I applied to the Chinese Embassy for a teaching job but was told none was available. Within a couple of months, however, with a strong Scottish accent to disguise my origins, I was a shop steward on a building site. During a thirteen-week national strike that summer of 1972 I was given area-organizing credentials by the union. Passing quickly through the tender ministrations of the ineffectual Maoists and the smug Communist party, I was embraced by the Trotskyists, with whom I worked for nearly two years. I became a trouble shooter, traveling all over the country in a Party van, injecting—I hoped—life into flagging branches. Seven-day-a-week, twenty-four-hour-a-day devotion.

After a car crash, a recuperative period (about \$3.00 for ambulance, five hours of first-class surgery, and a week in a hospital bed) gave me time to reflect, and I left the Trotskyists. After a season washing dishes in the

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Hebrides I received in the autumn of 1974, as out of the blue, an acceptance to my 1972 application to teach in China.

I arrived alone on December 5, 1974. My job was clear: I was to teach English for two years to the teachers and students of the Institute of Foreign Languages, Tientsin. I also intended to break down all barriers between us, in the name of revolutionary internationalism.

My hosts had other ideas on that score. A foreigner is a foreigner in China, and a Chinese is a Chinese, and never the twain shall meet; even the Albanian students suffered the same isolation and carefully vetted "friendship." The struggle to be treated as a fellow revolutionary led to most illuminating confrontations. My two years on the revolutionary Left in Britain had rendered me well versed in the Marxist classics: I could argue the pants off most of the bureaucrats in their own terms, quoting Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao. To little avail. I realized soon enough that it was not rational discussion that decided issues.

It took me ten months to get moved out of the foreigners' hotel and onto campus (after more than one "strike"), and the most enormous and repeated ructions before I could eat with the students and teachers or ride a bicycle. In fact, I heard a very small boy call me a "car-person" one day, excitedly and repeatedly. The only foreigners he'd seen had been in cars. (This dates from the fifties, when Russia demanded that none of its thousands of "experts" travel by bus or bike, queue up, or live with the Chinese and eat their food. The resulting ghetto of foreign teachers in Peking is a monument to this internationalist Big Brotherly love—it takes a garrison to guard it and keep out anyone without a pass or foreign face.)

But slowly and grudgingly they let me take part, and the people I worked with relaxed and became friendly. And after all, there was no point in upsetting the crazy foreigner; he was working well enough. Because I was a foreigner, they could not use sanctions against me—as was made very clear to me when I resigned.

But it took me some time to reach this conclusion. My education in some of these matters began soon after I arrived in China, with the Fourth National Peoples Congress in January, 1975.

The movement against the "Gang of Four" started, as have all the many movements over the last eleven years, with "big character posters" plastered by the students on the walls of Peking University. These posters are a peculiarly Chinese means of expression, and they are claimed by the Chinese to be a truly great and truly democratic one. Indeed, the right to stick them on the walls is enshrined, along with the right to hold Great Debates and the right to strike, in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

But when that Constitution was adopted in January, 1975, by the Fourth National People's Congress, not a single poster was stuck on a wall to greet it, not a single debate was held to examine it—in fact, not a single person mentioned it to comrades in the street or any-



where else. There was absolute silence on the new Constitution. Why? Because the whole Congress—billed later as "A Great Congress! A Representative Congress! A Congress of Unity! A Congress of Victory!"—was a top secret congress. Nobody even knew they were being represented at any gathering, let alone that a Great Debate was being held to adopt a new Constitution.

But when the lights in the Great Hall of the People were extinguished, after four days of secret but apparently representative discussions, and after the hundreds of large and comfortable limousines had dispersed, the official announcement was made. At seven in the evening the radio announcer said there would be an important announcement at eight. Then at eight we heard. In fact, no one could help hearing, for every available radio had been plugged into the ubiquitous loudspeaker systems, and the news boomed across the cities and the countryside alike, from the dockyards of Shanghai to the snowy mountains of the north and the tropical forests of the south: "The Fourth National People's Congress has been held...! A Great Congress! A Representative Congress! A Congress of Unity! A Congress of Victory!...Another Great Triumph in the Construction of Socialism under the leadership of our Great Communist Party of China and our Great Leader, Chairman Mao!..."

Again and again the announcement was made, and across the land lights glowed far into the night as the masses, I learned later, welcomed and rejoiced at the news. (Normally all lights except the amazingly dim street lights are extinguished by about 9 P.M.) That was a Saturday night. Sunday is the one day that colleges rest (apart from two weeks at New Year and two weeks in the summer rains), so I found out little. News sheets printed in red ink were sold on the streets (most unusual), listing the representatives and the leaders. Little groups of ordinary people huddled over them in the cold, excitedly establishing who came before whom. (Even at the lowest level in China the hierarchy is far, far more apparent in any group of people than it is in the West, outside of our armed forces.) But all day Sunday the radio announcements continued, blaring distortedly out of the loudspeakers.

So on Monday it was with excited anticipation that I cycled across the city, padded to the eyeballs against the dusty, dry, -15° winter, with the red sun rising behind me (as it does in Chiang Ch'ing's films), and turned across the little hump-backed bridge over the open sewer into the frozen, dusty huddle of broken-windowed and decrepit brick buildings that was our campus. And an astonishing sight greeted me. Everywhere were students, likewise padded, who had also arrived early, and who were now busily writing and pasting and putting up slogans—and big character posters. They were everywhere: all around the walls of all the buildings outside, and all along the walls of the corridors and staircases inside—“ALL HAIL THE FOURTH NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS!!” “WARMLY WELCOME THE CONGRESS OF UNITY, THE CONGRESS OF VICTORY!!”—in the large, slapdash brushwork that can look so elegant to the newcomer and expert alike. And the posters went into detail. “We, class three of the English department [these students were in their twenties] are filled with joyful vigor because the Congress has been held, and we resolve to show our enthusiasm by working hard....With this Congress comes a new high tide in the construction of socialism in our great Motherland....Long live the Congress of Victory!!”...and so on.

My delight at finding at last big character posters in action was quickly tempered by puzzlement. These weapons of “democracy among the people,” Mao's phrase, were unbelievably repetitious. It was clear that they were hardly the spontaneous and democratic means of expression and debate I had imagined. In fact, virtually all the phrases came from the newspapers, or else from Chairman Mao's writings. And all the posters had the same phrases.

Many months later, when yet another campaign was started by the students of Peking, this time against Teng Hsiao-P'ing, I pointed out sadly to the head of the college where I taught that the political life of our college was pretty drab. We could only wait for the lead of the newspapers and then copy them, but the students of Peking don't wait for anything, and in fact the newspapers tend to copy *them*. Why couldn't *our* students start a campaign? Why aren't *our* students as lively as the students of Peking? “Huh!” he replied. “It's got nothing to do with being lively. It's just that the students of Peking are close to the Central Committee.”

The next stage in a movement, after the slogans and posters, is the meetings. This cold winter Monday was no exception: Classes were canceled, and for four days we did nothing but attend meetings. And I, a mere Englishman, was allowed to attend. The thrill was far greater than seeing the posters go up. *Now* I was reaching the heart of the Chinese revolutionary experience.

At first every class held its own meeting. My class was a group of fifteen teachers of English, to whom I was trying to teach real English in the mornings. Our relationship was relaxed and friendly, by formal Chinese standards—so long as I did not try to convince them that in Britain there is no child labor in the mines, and that

working-class children can go to school. That reactionary propaganda caused intense embarrassment, but in the daily round of English teaching, keep-fit exercises, ping-pong, and noncontroversy we grew to know and like each other personally. Later I found that every statement I made, no matter how casual, if it bore the slightest possibility of being out of line with the official line of the moment, was noted, reported to the authorities, and filed. But these were the heady days of the “sunshine period” that nearly every visitor to China goes through before the distinction between the official line and the reality becomes clear. Unfortunately, most people go only for the three-week tour that the Chinese bureaucrats are expert at handling, and so most visitors never realize that the sun really doesn't shine out of the Chairman's back garden; they remain sunshiners for all their lives. But as I say, these were the heady days of my own sunshine period, when all seemed for the best in the best of all possible lands.

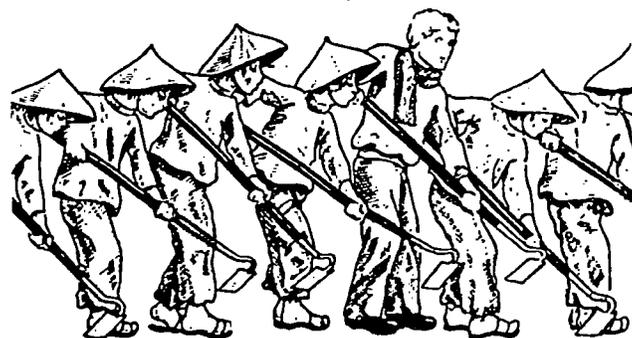
So when Wang Sheng, the merry forty-year-old class monitor (a Party member), opened the meeting, I waited eagerly for the workings of the dialectic. After his short introduction, in which he said that the Congress was great news and everyone should speak at the meeting, each of the teachers spoke in turn. And they all said the same thing! The pattern did not vary, nor did the phrases, nor the order in which they came.

“When I heard that the Fourth National People's Congress had been held, I was so thrilled that I had to stop studying my English dictionary/that I couldn't stop grinning/that I couldn't get to sleep all night....” (Here there was *some* variety, as they vied for the most colorful and extravagant expression.) Then:

“It was a Congress of Victory, a Congress of Unity! It shows how socialism has triumphed in our great Motherland/how united the country is under the leadership of the Communist Party of China/how warmly the Party and our great leader Chairman Mao care for the masses/how the people are the masters of the country and so rule it through representative congresses....I was deeply moved to be represented at this high level....In the old days the people were exploited and oppressed, but now we are represented at the highest level....” And so on and on, repeating the phrases culled from the radio announcements and the newspapers, and repeating them word for word, without variation.

That was bad enough. What made it unbearable was that they had tidily written out these phrases and were reading them, deadpan, without the faintest trace of expression.

It was my first taste of the ritual that binds the people together in China, Under Party Leadership. Again and again that phrase. Under Party Leadership. It is the key to the whole puzzle, and the ritual is part of it. The ritual is called “Political Study,” though it has nothing whatsoever to do with studying politics but is simply a ritual obeisance to the powers that be, i.e., to the local Party organization. Everyone has to attend, and everyone has to speak, if not this time then next. And everyone has to say the same thing, that is, what the papers say. For under the leadership of the



Party every newspaper in China is one big editorial, and political study is the repetition of that editorial, "the Official Line," "The Party's Line," "Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Line"—there are many names for it. But everyone knows without fail what he or she has to do: to get it by heart from the newspapers and then to repeat it, copiously and frequently, whenever there is the slightest opportunity or any doubt about what to do.

Sitting, padded, at the old scarred desks in the freezing classroom, with its broken windowpanes, cracked concrete floor, patched plaster walls, and the ubiquitous smell of the malfunctioning toilets along the corridor, everything as colorless and drab as the dusty winter campus outside, for the first time sitting and listening to the teachers going through this ritual, I felt increasingly uneasy. *This* was hardly the fiery stuff of revolution! I could hardly hold meetings like this to fill British workers with revolutionary zeal. Even in China, where they were obviously used to it, there was no pretense at paying attention. The voices droned on tonelessly, patiently uninterested, not making a speech but reading statements. People were chatting together and knitting and even playing Chinese checkers. And nobody minded; one's presence was all that mattered. Most striking of all, there was no actual discussion. Nobody made points against other speakers, or even replied to other speakers. This, I learned, was a Great Debate.

And this was the pattern of all political study, twice a week for everyone, except during holidays—but the term began and ended with a few days of solid political study to make up for that. For the eighteen months that I took part, through movement after movement and campaign after campaign, it was the same. It doesn't take long to realize that this endless stream of new movements keeps everyone on their toes, *really* obedient. It is not enough to get the line by heart once and then repeat the same thing at every meeting. No, everyone is in a constant flurry, getting by heart the *latest* directive. Not to grasp promptly the essentials of the latest movement is a sign of backsliding, of "ideological problems," and a dangerous departure from the ritual. The authorities take a serious view of that.

The "Campaign to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius" was just fading out when the "Movement to Study the Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" came along, and once we had a thorough knowledge of what was asked of us in that movement (as opposed to a knowledge of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat) it was time to "Criticize 'Water Margin' [a classical novel about a peasant/bandit revolt of yore] and Reject Capitulationism," which had hardly begun to blossom before the posters went up in Peking attacking "The Senior Party Member Taking the Capitalist Road"... and so on. And each time, the voices in the countless meetings would rehearse tonelessly from a written script the official clichés of the moment, regardless of whether the meeting was attended by five or five hundred comrades. The conversations went on continuously throughout, and many had their knitting. The only time the knitting stopped and there was concentrated interest in what the speaker was saying was when

we were given an official warning that a violent earthquake was expected in our area in the next few days. That caused real excitement, but it was fifteen months premature.

If, for any reason, a meeting is canceled on either of the two afternoons a week set aside for "political study," the cadres and masses devote their afternoon to memorizing the latest editorial so that they will be prepared to speak at the next meeting. But one should not have too long a memory. For six months in 1975 we studied nonstop two long essays that started as editorials and then were printed as pamphlets. We mentioned them no matter what came up; not a single official function went by without reference to them. They were the last word in Marxist theory, written by outstanding dialecticians. Now, no doubt, everyone is memorizing a different last word, one that has to do with the crimes of the "Gang of Four," with new crimes coming to light in every political study session. Everyone has forgotten the two essays that we studied so assiduously in 1975, written by Chang Chun-Chiao and Yao Wen-yuan, two members of the "Gang of Four." Apart from that, little has changed. And just in case people's memories are inclined to overextend themselves, not a few comrades who failed to make the transition from a movement lauding those two to a movement reviling them have been executed over the last few months. Shot dead.

All of this illustrates China's great refinement in the organization of the totalitarian state. The crime is the crime of expression. This is clearly a great development over the crude Russian repression, which is arbitrary (in that *some* dissent is allowed) and involves impersonal, unsmiling secret service men: China is more humane too. It is not the KGB men who let you know that you've had it; it is your own smiling, scrupulously polite comrades, the people you work with every day, who, anxious for your own best interests, shepherd you back into line. At political study.

I should point out that Bourgeois Liberals, of whatever class, cannot be expected to understand the truth; it is not in their class interest to do so. (If some of the logic escapes you, don't worry. What is important is Party leadership.) Bourgeois liberals think in terms of relatives and are incapable of grasping the absolute. For the absolute is the class interest of the revolutionary class. The revolutionary class is the proletariat. But the proletariat does not itself truly understand its class interest. Only the Party understands that. Therefore the Party Line is absolute. Q.E.D.

This means, among other things, that the leadership of the Party is infallible; it is guardian of the absolute.

There is no conceivable conflict between the Party Line and the truth, facts notwithstanding. Unfortunately, I am not joking. This is ostensibly believed and certainly practiced by the 800,000,000 or so Chinese privileged to live under the leadership of the Party. Whoever wins the leadership of the Party has those 800,000,000 at his whim. The total control through political study backed by absolute sanctions means that he or she can swing the 800,000,000 behind his or her latest line, just like that.

Let's return to the Constitution and the Congress of January, 1975. I knew a university student, aged twenty-two, who had worked for three years in the countryside and had then been elected by the peasants (under Party leadership) to come to one of the top universities in China, Nankai University of Tientsin. At university he had been selected to join the Party, and then he had been trusted enough to be given responsible work that brought him into contact with foreign students. In other words, this student was one of the most highly trusted of the top élite, being groomed for high power. We had the following conversation about the Congress:

I: Did you know the Congress was being held?

No, but we had discussed it in the Party branch some months ago, so I knew it would be held sometime.

Did you take part in electing representatives? [No one else even knew of it.]

Yes.

Was there any choice?

I don't understand what you mean.

Did some people vote for one person and some for another?

No. The leaders put forward a list of nominations. We thought they had chosen very well.

Did you know the people on the list?

I had heard of one or two of them.

Was there any discussion?

What do you mean, "discussion"?

I mean did people put forward their opinions and talk about the good and bad points of the candidates?

(Shocked at the idea. Adamant.) Oh no. People who have opinions are class enemies.

Those were the elections for the Congress that passed the Constitution that guaranteed the right to put up big character posters, and hold Great Debates, and to strike. At first I believed in the Constitution and laughed at his closed mind. But later I realized that the Constitution is the line but that he was talking about the reality, the actual practice. People who have opinions are class enemies. Ten months later, as if to underline the point, a storm burst in the Japanese Department. The result was an instructive lesson in the Constitution.

One of the students of Japanese was highly respected by the others, and he was also well liked by the college authorities. So he was elected (under Party leadership) to various high posts, including that of student representative in his department. The head of the department was a fairly young and very assertive bureaucrat, and for some time resentment at his handling of various matters had

been building up among the students, without ever reaching open expression. But the student representative now took it upon himself to approach the department head and voice the criticisms felt by the students. (A tenet of the official line is that Leaders Welcome Criticism From the Masses.) The response of the head of department was to sack the student from all his posts. Still, naively, taking the theory at face value, the student then wrote a big character poster, on his own initiative, *not* under Party leadership, and stuck it on the wall. Tension and silence descended upon the college. Everyone seemed to go around on tiptoe and speak in whispers for days. Everyone was painfully conscious of that single poster, and no one spoke of it. Everyone was waiting—for Party leadership.

I had been delighted to see the poster form used at last as I thought it should be used—in a genuinely critical and democratic way. The student criticized the head of department for acting without paying any attention to the opinions of the others in the department, showing no respect for the masses, and trying to silence criticism instead of facing up to it. Good stuff, thoroughly justified. So the reaction astonished me—not gay little groups of poster-writers taking sides, but silent tension, almost shamefaced, guilty, fearful.... I could not understand. Then the authorities spoke. I was excluded from the meetings, and everyone refused to talk to me about the affair. But it wasn't hard to make out what had happened. The poster was taken down by the janitors. The student was dropped by all his many friends; they wouldn't be seen talking to him. He withdrew from his confident, open self into a haunted silence, looking always at the ground, always alone. It was clear that he had "admitted his mistakes" at "criticism meetings" held in order to "help" him "remold his thinking." Mere verbal confessions are no good. You must genuinely repent your sins, otherwise the pressure of all your peers (under Party leadership) increases, and tomorrow there will be another session, and the next day, and the next.... They will keep it up just as long as it takes to break you, if necessary.

And not one of the students supported him, though nearly all of them agreed with him. I could not understand that. He had had so many friends, and he had been so clearly in the right. Why had they all abandoned him?

Well, if your friend is guilty of a crime, is guilty of expressing thoughts out with the Official Line, and if you don't report it, then there are two of you involved. That makes it a conspiracy. Likewise, if you didn't know about it, or say you didn't know about it, but you fail to criticize him when his crimes are exposed, that proves you are with him: conspiracy. So his friends had to be the most virulent in their attacks on him.

For if any of them had supported him, it would only have meant worse charges, and more pressure. But they all dropped him instantly, yelled their accusations at him (under Party leadership), and he was ritually purged when he broke down and confessed. It all went down on his record, which ruined his brilliant career.... But he was lucky: If they had supported him, or if his confession had not been accepted, then he would probably have

ended up in a labor camp, a School for Remolding One's Ideology Through Labor.

On another occasion I saw an old man, who had complained to the Party authorities above him, quail and shake at the simple mention of the words "We have patiently explained your mistakes...." He gave up the struggle immediately. He had only been asking for permission to buy a bike, which was refused.

So what about the Constitution? Where are these rights to debate and criticize and write posters and even strike, so lovingly entered ("because of Chairman Mao's express wish") in the Constitution? Not so long ago I put the question to a man in a very senior position on the State Council. At the time he was "patiently pointing out [our] mistakes" to my wife and me and threatening us with "serious consequences" if we didn't withdraw our resignation and get back to work immediately. But to show his friendship he explained about the Constitution.

These rights, he said, are not rights for the enemies of the people. They are only rights for those who use them *correctly*. That is the key point. Can we have counter-revolutionaries organizing strikes all over the place? Or voicing their incorrect opinions? No, these rights must be used correctly. We Chinese understand all that.

And what is the definition of correct? How can you tell if a thing is correct or not? Well, of course, it must be in the interests of the construction of socialism. What is more, he said (holding up his hand to forestall my complaint that that was surely a matter of opinion), something is correct only if it is under Party leadership. That is the prime criterion. Under Party leadership. Thus we have the right to strike, but not to strike just when we feel like it. We have the right to strike *under Party leadership*.

You Westerners, he explained patiently, are tainted with Bourgeois ideas about freedom. But we Socialists have real freedom, the freedom to work—under Party leadership. The freedom to choose one's work, the freedom to change it, or to refuse to do a particular job—these are Bourgeois freedoms. We Chinese are Socialists. For us the main thing is Party leadership. (I thought of the teachers I worked with: about a third of them are separated from their spouses and children, by the Party, "for the needs of the work." The real freedom.)

His words helped me to understand why I had had such difficulty trying to work with—that is, alongside of—Chinese workers. The closest I got to integration was in "Open Door Schooling," when students and teachers went together to factories, communes, docks, etc. to combine learning with labor and to "learn from the masses." In summer '75 I and a class of teachers spent two weeks working daily in the Tientsin No. 2 Woolen Mill. I spent a week on a roving machine with some very sweet factory girls, and a week on a spinning machine. Our task was to join threads when they broke or ran out—"light" work that proved exhausting indeed. The roving machines were Italian, and the safety guards had been taken off, so it was easy to let fingers slip among



violent steel combs. Why? "To increase production and help in Socialist Construction." But the mill was in the city, and I continued to live in the hotel.

Then in October I had ten days with other teachers on a commune to help with the harvest and "learn from the peasants." As far as possible—not very far in the primitive countryside!—they made it special for me, the foreigner. But I slept on the *kang* (heated mud-brick bed) with two of them in a peasant home, ate with them, worked in the fields with them. We carried water at dawn from the well in buckets hanging from coolie-style shoulder poles, picked corn, husked corn, picked cotton, and loved it. The bureaucrats cut it short to ten days, but they were my happiest ten days in China, and we made some excellent English lessons out of it.

The third "Open Door Schooling" was in spring, 1976, when I spent six weeks on a commune (I had had six weeks' leave in England in December and had gotten married; my wife, a teacher, was with me now, also teaching—at half salary, because I was employed as an expert, but she was only a wife!) By this time we had submitted our resignations. We were given a token two days carrying manure in baskets on shoulder poles and hoeing the young wheat, after which we were told to spend all our time preparing texts (while still living in peasant homes; I was on a *kang* with five others!). But we made a great friend: a lovely, lively, sixty-five-year-old one-eyed granny, with whom we ate every evening, unsupervised. She was the only "friend," as we found later, who did not report all we said to the Party.

All these things helped me finally see the connection: The freedom to have opinions, that is a Bourgeois freedom. And likewise the freedom to have information. The important freedom for a Socialist is the freedom to have *correct* opinions; that is, the freedom to repeat the Party Line. In other words, people who have opinions are class enemies.

Throughout China now the system of "Socialist Courtyards" is in force. This brings Party leadership right to your door. Every three or four families has one person appointed to report to the local Party committee. On everything. The Chang boy is playing truant. The Wangs seem to quarrel a lot. Young Chen is sometimes out late at night. If the appointee doesn't make these reports, that is conspiracy. Counterrevolution. This is perhaps why China is so ardently against the Helsinki agreements. Nowhere in that document is there any mention of the essential human right: the right to Party leadership.