

## CHINA - SUMMARY

I am nothing if not presumptuous, so I must attempt to draw some political conclusions on the basis of my scanty and superficial China exposure.

First of all, Chinese socialism is based on production, hard work, self-sacrifice through labour, and the most thorough-going, totally compelling work-ethic imaginable. Perhaps the Gang of Four represented some indulgent anarchist tendencies among the work-force and the new bourgeoisie, but in the context of the general situation it is – read was – such a minor phenomenon to be insignificant. And I suspect relatively insignificant even if they had succeeded in hanging onto power. The heroes of China are the hard workers – Norman Bethune, the foolish old man who moved mountains, and now Li Fong, the ass –busting PLA man who just couldn't stop. It seems to me the main crime of the Gang was to elevate politics to a place of equal importance with work, as something that could permissibly disrupt work. The Gang are repudiated with the slogan: Grasp Production, Promote Revolution. In other words, buddy, get your priorities straight. I am persuaded that our impression of the cultural revolution as primarily a political event is mistaken. On numerous occasions the factory we visited presented as one of the products of the cultural revolution. It seems that a lot of that energy went into start-from-scratch factories. Ask a young person in China what is their chosen career and you will be told 'whatever the party instructs'. In my experience there was no hint of regret in that reply. Another feature of the cultural revolution was the movement to send the youth to the countryside to work with the peasants, and the parallel campaign to re-educate the cadre (i.e. the unproductive portion of the work force) by the same method. It seems that intellectuals in China have had an even more ferocious tradition against manual labour than our own. No doubt this campaign is not entirely successful. The relocation of young people to the countryside after graduation from middle school has been modified somewhat so that they are located closer to their home towns. And the cadre schools now run on six-month, rather than two-year terms. This later modification was supposedly because of the great demand among the cadres to come to the countryside. (They all stressed that it was an honour to be selected.)

One of our guides told us about his experiences in the countryside in 1968. He had been an accountant-type in the textile trading office in Shanghai, quite unpolitical, he admitted. He said he didn't like working in the fields and was transferred to the livestock at his own request, considered, according to him, a lower type of job. The point is that he was most proud of his expertise in the field. Whatever his private political opinions then, or now, there was no doubt that his real farmyard skills were a fundamental part of his self-justification. Anyhow the Chinese love real work, not just as a necessity, but for its own sake. Skeptics may find tidbits of evidence to the contrary, but, I am sure, nothing of major import.

It is important to realize that a significant portion of public enthusiasm in China is for socialist construction. The lesson for western leftists is that China cannot be a model for their own political efforts. Perhaps after a depression, and a hundred years of arbitrary oppression and chaos, our populous would be in the same boot-straps frame of mind, and eager for massive public initiative, but in the meantime, we must look to ourselves. In other words, we can't say "Socialism works, look at China". Socialism works there because the people started with nothing, and are building. In our situation, we have something, and we want to share it. This is a very different political problem. The sacrifices justified in each situation are quite different.

I don't want this distinction to be overdone. I am not saying there is nothing to learn from China. Far from it. I am saying as a model of socialist motivation and revolution, China is largely irrelevant to us.

For the record, let me record the obvious. The pleasure of observing a society motivated by service to the community – serve the people – and sharing in it just a little, was inspiring. That such motivation can be so wide and deep is an important source of hope. But I didn't need to travel to China to discover this.

Also for the record, I think we could incorporate cadre schools into our system without great difficulty, and with beneficial effect. Necessity will soon give manual labour a new respectability among our middle class. It wouldn't surprise me to see our ruling elite trying out some similar scheme and moral message as a way of busting the exaggerated and dangerous expectations of our over-educated citizens.

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One negative aspect of this I-love-work philosophy is a refusal to recognize the problems of the workplace in their own right. Victory in the revolution did not eliminate all forms of alienation, just the financial variety. I deduced that such support as the Gang of Four did have in the industrial arena came from political militants who were agitating against authoritarian labour policies. At this low level, it is not persuasive to blame the Gang's influence on KMT plots and arch-reactionary motivation. There is a material base to this discontent, probably boredom, speed-ups, and authoritarian discipline. But the Chinese would not admit this. Even in the most simplified form, they would not accept the possibility that bad "working conditions" caused, or were the fertile soil for, the "pernicious influence of the Gang of Four". The party pays close attention to work conditions and is making every possible effort to improve them, so they say.

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We had two sessions on law in China, one at Peking University with two law professors, and one in Shanghai with two judges of the High Court of that district. I was profoundly impressed with these discussions because they confirmed for me what was previously just a hope – that justice can be democratic. In China, they say that the Courts follow the mass line, as provided in the Constitution. The two Shanghai judges explained to us in great detail the various steps followed in a typical criminal matter. I will outline them another time. Suffice to say that there was a most careful and deliberate effort to involve the citizens most immediately concerned with the crime and the alleged criminal in the investigation and decision making at every step of the way. The appropriate disposition was discussed at public meetings, meetings with the judges and those most familiar with the accused, and by the judges privately. The judges act more as shepherds of the proceedings than anything else. I was deeply impressed by the two judges who spoke to us. They were not lawyers by training, but had that attention to thoroughness and precision that is the best feature of our morbid training. They also had total respect for the opinions of the people, not the ill-disguised contempt so characteristic of our bench. I was persuaded that with such gentle and intelligent guidance, trial by mass meeting could be consistently good. They provided what I have always believed was the missing element in our experiments with mass democracy that are procedural guidance and ethical assistance that was above suspicion.

All was not perfect by any means. The judges admitted (while the professors denied) that some had been jailed unfairly through the pernicious influence of the Gang of Four. They advised that these cases were being reviewed. The chosen method of correcting this admitted fault in the system was more and better mass education so that aberrations would not recur. I argued firmly and at length with our chief guide about the adequacy of this. He was a shrewd fellow, a party- member, and caught my point immediately. The party should not give leadership and control of any institutions in society. The risks were greater if the party lost control. Besides, he argued, the separation of state and judicial power had not served to advance “justice” (I’ve forgotten the exact word he used) in our society. I, for one, cannot make out a persuasive case that the much hallowed doctrine is worth much more than a pinch. History is clear enough that few important struggles take place in Court.

I had in mind when I went to China a doubt about the viability of a system of justice without extensive written rules, and without precedent. One has to be careful on this point, coming from a situation where the measure of success is being more of a stickler than the opposition. WE quickly came to agree with our hosts that the idea of precedent was an anathema to their scheme of things. More to the point, nobody cared whether similar cases were treated in the same fashion. Why should they? Reform and re-education were the object not punishment. But I was won over not by the logic of the mass line in the courts, but rather

by the judges who persuaded me that a clear and steady mind was vigilant and influential at all times. In the last analysis, what more is possible?

One point eluded me. What happens when the judges and the mass meeting disagree? The answer given was that the judges would analyze the opinions of the masses to see which was correct. They might attempt to educate the masses if they felt their opinion was wrong. They said the case might go back and forth between the mass meeting and the judges several times before the matter would be resolved. But they didn't say in such situations who had the final authority. I will assume that it lay with the judges (and the party). In other words, things were not decided by a vote. But after that much consultation in such skilled hands, I am content. I am not an ultra-democrat.

The key element in understanding this system is the ultimate importance of rehabilitation. All is forgiven if you repent, and whole-heartedly want to serve the people. Sound religious? More on that later.

Because of the importance of the offender's attitude, the legal proceedings intimately involve his or her friends, family and work colleagues. An apparent exercise of collective will, discipline, and responsibility. It harkens back to feudal days when trial by your peers meant trial by your friends and neighbours.

One notable area of disagreement with the Chinese system is the power of the party to imprison and punish people outside the Court structure. Discipline and reprimand are one thing but the more severe sanctions ought to be handled publicly. However, this criticism is not a fault in the basic system, rather an improvement in it.

The difficulty in projecting this scheme into our world is the extraordinary vigilance required to prevent the erosion of powers in the mass meeting, while we live in a pre-revolutionary situation. And it would be necessary to protect the powers of the mass meeting because we have no truly benevolent judges to guide, and in the last analysis, decide for us. However, the whole scheme is definitely an inspiration about how a democracy can work.

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The People's Republic of China appeals to the rebellious and secular-minded Christian. I wondered about the Canada-China Society, dominated as it is by ex-China missionaries and their families. James Endicott is the leading, but certainly not the only example. David Hibbert on our delegation was raised in China by parents who worked as teachers and administrators for the mission community. Teletha Gerlock of the YWCA is another example. Endicott, Gerlock and the like were the rebels of their day, representatives of that strand of radical Methodists, Quakers, etc., most dearly devoted to earthly justice rather than postponed

variety. WE look on such people still fighting those battles within the church as confused to say the very least. Ultimately Ray Whitehead falls into this category, though he's five rungs up the ladder in intelligence and political savvy.

The reason these people like the current regime in China is clearer to me after my visit. It embodies more closely than any society in contemporary history the principles and methodology of Christian socialists. The Chinese of course reject the spiritualism of Christianity, but have their own substitute. And they resent the missionary tradition, which offends some of the ex-mission community who would like to think that their high-minded Christian values contributed just a little to the strength of contemporary morality in China today. At the other end of the spectrum are people like Ray Whitehead and K.H. Ding, Christians who seem to believe that they can or could carry on their faith in Communist China, support the current regime as the best possible alternative available, and live with a complete separation of church and state because the state for its own separate reasons carries on almost in accord with Christian principles.

Two ideas basic to communism in China are the obvious stars that attract Christian admiration. The first is the fundamental rule – Serve the People; the second is the prominence of forgiveness, re-education and rehabilitation. The communist doctrine acknowledges that obedience to the first is a struggle. Just as was the implementation of the Golden Rule. And, it seems, there is an earthly equivalent of salvation for a transgressor who wanders into a life of personal ambition, greed and self-serving. If she or she “wholeheartedly” (their word, not mine) puts all that aside and decides to serve the people then EVERYTHING is different. This is a conversion in our language. It appears to have little to do with the logic of dialectical materialism, or any socialist version of utilitarianism. When you hear it, there is little doubt that it sounds religious, not political. It is deeply emotional and fundamental. And it is treated as something that comes to with the help of friends. Just like a conversion. It is nurtured in the countless “study groups” to which everyone belongs. Read prayer cells. You could never persuade a convert that any amount of coercion was involved, nor probably is there any.

This is an envied quality because it relieves the Chinese of the moral ambiguity that troubles Westerners who always seem to be choosing between conflicting principles. It seems to me that the fact of the pervasiveness of this philosophy is the cornerstone of modern China. In the context of such moral climate, it is safe to be public-spirited, secure in the knowledge that self-satisfaction will not be the only reward. In a sense it relieves the need for defence mechanisms, social and personal, and ultimately makes the need for the private personality to strangle and seem redundant. In this way, China is re-moulding what we believed to be human nature. But it is important to note that his end is not being accomplished by individuals' conversations, but rather by the weight of many.

Western leftists have struggled through the mechanism in study groups to achieve the same high degree of moral commitment. The point is that nothing succeeds like success. It is not for want of technique that so many fall by the wayside. We would do well to openly acknowledge the moralistic nature of our objective. And equally important we must work to create our own community of values that will sponsor and inspire such high standards.

In day-to-day discussion, another aspect of this single-mindedness is prominent. Ask about some particular problem and you will get as an answer not a summary of the relevant facts with the pros and the cons, but rather the correct political line that resolve the issue. You really have to be insistent to get at the facts, not because they are being hidden, but because they don't see them as important. Asking for "concrete examples" seemed the best method of getting what we wanted. And asking what the incorrect line in some particular past dispute happened to be was almost an impossible task, particularly with reference to the Gang of Four. On occasion, I thought this was reflection of a dialectic way of thinking. That's probably wrong. A dialectician wouldn't be so forgetful of what went before.

Perhaps it could be summarized this way: the Chinese seem to have no sense of contrary-mindedness; when something is resolved, it is over, forgotten, or maybe the correct analogy is forgiven.

The ever present contrary-mindedness of Western intellectuals is one of the essential notions of "freedom". In other words, to be ever cognizant of the alternatives, to carry as necessary extra baggage at all times the things we have, or could, reject. In this respect, China fails miserably as a "free" country. The question though should be what curse is it that we have to carry so much dead weight? And the answer is that we need it, in an environment of perpetual social, intellectual and material warfare.

I couldn't figure out at first why Mao's essay on the Ten Major Relationships was such hot stuff. The reason appears to me that Mao was focusing on unresolved contradictions in their unresolved state. What he actually said was obvious and trite.

I think this entire frame of reference is a piece of luck for the Chinese for the present, and will be a hindrance in the future. It will make it difficult to learn from past struggles. The resolution of the struggles seems to alter the very perception of what they were about. Further, this mindset cannot help Western leftists. We have too many enemies to fight to allow ourselves the luxuries of single-mindedness. Though we should be ever mindful of the strength of simplicity.

One secret that eluded me was the inner meaning of the word democracy to the Chinese. I thought it was important to figure this out before my departure. In retrospect, it is probably significant that it now seems of only minor importance. I know the theory of

democratic centralism. But I did not understand how people could feel that such a system is "democratic" when effective decision-making has been taken away from them. And the Chinese certainly feel that they have a democracy. I sensed no resentment about party control, only a kind of shame that they weren't quite up to the high standards of party membership. "I like to go to the movies and read novels", confessed one of our guides. I realize part of the answer lies with our fixation about voting as the *sine qua non* of democracy. Somehow the questions about when do you vote, and how, would get lost in a general answer about how the masses supported the party, and the party followed the mass line. My conclusion is that they have a highly elaborate system of consultation, close to, but not quite, consensus democracy. When it breaks down, the party believes it has power, and the masses usually go along. They didn't during the Cultural Revolution, and that's a long story. One of the main reasons it all works is that they seem to vest their leaders with such high moral authority based on their supposedly exemplary lives that you don't really want any more than the opportunity to let your reviews be known. Nevertheless, it seems there are lots of votes taken at various meetings of one sort or another, and God, they have a lot of meetings. I still don't know how they work.

It is hard to believe this style of leadership will survive long after the passing of Mao's generation of revolutionary comrades who held the esteem of the masses by virtue of real moral and heroic example. But once the golden crown is tarnished, will the masses be such willing followers? Do they have the patience to deal with continuous, principled debate in the public forum? I think not.

I suspect that this mode of leadership will break down in China and cause immense dislocation. But it would be impolitic to suggest to the Chinese that they steal a procedural leaf or two from the democratic rule book. Western leftists have nothing to learn here. This manner of thinking is not easily adaptable for our purposes. At this primitive stage, even democratic centralism is probably too heavy a device for most potential followers, and certainly the Chinese model of democracy does not recommend itself to a populous already deeply committed to contrary-mindedness.

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We have an image of China as a more pure socialist country, one that will withstand the ravages of bureaucratic decay that have reduced the Soviet Union to its current degenerate condition. We have read, and believe, of the Stalinist massacres, the cynicism and the materialism of modern day Russia, and of the new elite. Will it happen to China?

There are some signs. In Peking, our visit coincided with a major state conference on industrial development. The limos were flying all over the place. Downstairs in our hotel, they had a banquet for the delegates. If we felt like royalty with our political tour, it is inconceivable

how we would have accommodated ourselves to a spread the likes of which I observed there. I also noted the very un-communist method of treating other more important foreign guests than ourselves. It was all rationalized in terms of keeping up appearance in the world. I noted that next to what I thought was our exclusive first class coach on the train to Shanghai was a locked upper first class cabin with sofas, armchairs and the like. When we were in Shanghai, we discovered more or less by accident that ordinary Chinese were not allowed into the tourist hotels. (Hopefully they would occupy them if they could see what was being served!) I also believe, though it has nothing to do with my observations in China, that they have backed off from support of revolutionaries around the world. They'll back anybody who will oppose the Soviet Union. It probably means an alliance with the U.S. Sooner rather than later. An the message will out to China's friends – ally with our allies against our enemy. My discussion with various people about the Gang of Four convinced me that the Chinese are blind to the problems of industrialization. They would not admit for one moment the possibility of a rational materialist basis for grassroots support for ultra-democracy on the shop floor, in spite of Mao's rather clear perceptions of the need for continuous vigilance and acknowledgment that new classes can develop during the period of socialism before communism is achieved. One of the guides admitted to me that about one third of the time in his study group was taken up discussing office business and organization. Another described their process of studying Mao's essay on the Ten Major Relationships. He, along with the others, wrote a paper on one portion, the relationship between coastal and inland industry – and how it was sabotaged by the Gang of Four. At the end of the presentation, there was a n opportunity for criticism. None was offered; none was needed, he explained. Sounds a little *pro forma* to me. The cadre schools are not the pioneering experience they once were. Six months in the country feature all of two weeks actually living with the peasants and sharing in their work. The rest of the time was spent at the cadre classes and on the cadre farm, though certainly with lots of manual labour. There is allegedly competition for spots at the cadre schools frankly, I could handle six months in the country toiling in the field under close supervisions with three hours of study a day, all meals prepared, and a guaranteed welcome when I returned to my job.

On the other hand, there was little sign of individual cynicism among the people we met, and every evidence of continued determination to work for the collective good. The selection of students for university training still features a significant say for the working population who nominate those who the universities may select. I had no sense of impatience with postponed consumption. Nor of any significant corruption. The worst sins of the Gang of Four by way of personal indulgences were matters of public contempt and ridicule, though the sum total of their corruption was by larger measure a trifle. The tolerance of the process of re-education and rehabilitation seemed intact.



So who am I to judge on the basis of a three week sojourn whether socialism in China is in decay, or even on the road thereto. In one sense, who cares? China is a model for us only in certain particular ways. Their problems need not concern us who are busy with a quite different task. Yet in another sense, we do care. China is our only yardstick whether revolutionary goodwill and self-sacrifice can be carried on after the revolution is over. Which is not to say if they fail, we cannot do better.

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And the Gang of Four. What to say about the Gang of Four?

Every factory and school gave us a spiel about the "pernicious influence" of the Gang. And the happiness consequent upon their "smashing". And the "excellent situation" ensuing. The crimes, plots, extravagances and vanities of the Four. Without a doubt, it was a favourite topic of conversation.

Most members of our group tired of it after a while. Denounced it all as "party line". I didn't, and pursued my interest in many conversations with our various guides on the bus to and from our tour destinations. They never tired on the subject, and, if seems, neither did I. As a result, I returned more, and more profoundly, confused than the others. And therefore wiser.

Let me start by referring you to the Guardian articles by Pat and Roger Howard, May 2, 9 & 16. They are representative of the Chinese position as we heard it. More important, they are coherent, organized and intelligible, which is more than I can say for my own observations which follow.

First, I want to impress upon you that the "smashing of Gang", as they refer to it, was not simply a popular topic of conversation, but also a passionate one. One incident that deeply impressed me occurred when we were returning to the hotel after seeing the revolutionary dance-drama, The Small sword Society. This was a terrific action-packed piece, of theatre, mostly dance, and certainly the most colourful stage show I have ever seen. Suffice it to say that the good guys and bad guys were easily distinguished. We rode through the streets of Shanghai suffused with righteous pride in the people's triumph. But our guides were more than that, they were more than I had ever seen before on our three-week trip, they were visibly happy, bubbling, ecstatic, and, I am tempted to believe, out of control. They really loved it. Which is okay. They loved the evident fact that we loved it. Which is flattering. And what did they talk about in this flushed state of revolutionary ardor? What did they tell their busload of confused, decadent social democrats? Hurrah for the smashing of the Gang! Or words to that effect. The Gang had previously banned this show. And it was now freed. The people could

see it, and be happy. We could see it and be happy. The wise leadership of Chairman Hua made happiness possible once again. The Gang were against happiness! Smash the Gang!

I also believe that it is significant that the campaign against the Gang found its way into the schools within months after their overthrow. All the schools we visited put on a little show for us, and each featured a vicious – no other word will do – anti-Gang skit, as well as some sweet peon of praise and thanksgiving to Chairman Hua convincingly performed by a cherubic toddler. All this but seven months after the smashing. One would expect the vagaries of musical chairs within the Forbidden City to be quite remote from four-year olds and their teachers. Either the educational bureaucracy is totally cynical, and fickle, or they supported the smashing with considerable enthusiasm, and moved quickly to support the new regime. I happen to believe the latter, because the former doesn't jive with the rest of our observations. Or with the accounts of massive public celebrations as soon as the smashing was announced.

But to say there was genuine support for the change implies that the people understood the two positions. If so, I wish just one of them had me clearly what they were!

The general reaction of even sympathetic westerners is profound skepticism at such a violent about-face in official legitimacy. How can any population keep the faith when the most esteemed leaders are dogs and scoundrels the next day? Part of the answer lies in the fact that the words we read in English don't seem to have quite the same inflamed effect in Chinese. Second, I have the unsubstantiated feeling that the Chinese have a sense of the political struggle upstairs from the subtlety of the language and the polemics that is lost on us. Or appears unfailingly ridiculous. In any event, I want to believe that the smashing of the gang did not come as a total surprise, and had considerable public support for more or less intelligent reasons.

Ah, but do you support the smashing, or don't you? No further evasions intellectual dog! And which is the good side?

Our hosts went to great lengths to impress upon us that the gang were not engineers and heirs of the cultural revolution. That they were in fact its saboteurs. Quite the contrary impression to our press! They would carefully point out that the "new born things" of the cultural revolution ere "alive and well". Barefoot doctors. Cadre schools. Open-door classes.

Indeed the Gang their followers were blamed for the thirty percent that chairman Mao labelled "bad" about the cultural revolution. That was the factional fighting that disrupted the Revolutionary Committee.

My impression is that the Gang would properly be called the extremists of the Cultural Revolution. For example, the Chinese still boast that the CR sent students to the countryside to

labour, and put workers in the universities. The intellectuals were put in their place by a nation of manual labourers, and from what I hear about the history of the mandarin class in china, it was none too soon. But the Gang are now denounced for going a step beyond. They allegedly denounce all intellectuals as "bourgeois", and attack all academic programmers that don't concentrate exclusively on political studies. At Wuhan University, were were told that the student didn't swallow the Gang's line, and carried on their scientific work in secret. In other words, the Gang said, "Better red than Expert": when the correct line is "Both Red and Expert". To me, the Gang seem like the extremists of the CR – the "radicals".

No, no, no, says our guides. They are not "radicals" at al. (Radicals could undergo self-criticism and correction!) They are "revolutionary double-dealers". They deliberately and cynically create confusion and dissent for their own ends. For example, they disrupted rail transport and created chaos in the economy so that they could boast how well they were managing the Shanghai economy by comparison. The "creation of confusion" was never dignified by anything that might resemble political policy. It was allegedly nothing but a plot to seize state power.

Chiang Ching claimed to be the originator of revolutionary opera and ballet. Not so, they say. The Peking Review was full of stories of how she suppressed or twisted certain works. The film *Pioneers*, for example, about the superhuman efforts of the works of Tachii was suppressed, I think because it did not stress sufficiently the political as opposed to the brute force wellspring of motivation. Chaing Ching had suppressed the dance-drama, "Small Sword Society", because, and again I'm guessing, it detracted revolutionary ardour from the two line struggle to something of apparently remote interest. The article I read detailed an attempt by Chaing Ching to alter the plot of the drama, "The Long March", to delete references to struggles within the communist camp and to focus on the theme us-against-the-enemy. This was interpreted as her attempt to dr4um Chou En Lai out of history. The play, as written, dealt with the two-line struggle within the communist camp. Presumably it suited Chiang's insurrectionary ideology that the theme of culture be more black-and-white. None of this subtle bullshit about alliances within the party. This general are of dispute is probably the bet documented, with opposing viewpoints in high profile. But the fights here hardly seem to justify the downfall of a government.

As we were arriving in China, the Chinese were just completing the first phase of their research and indictment of the Gang. They alleged, among other things, that three of the four had hidden bourgeois origins. Two were allegedly KMT agents during the early period of the Revolution, and they had faked part of Chairman's last will and testament to favour their own succession. They plotted the overthrow of the government and the seizure of state power.

And they were corrupt. There need be no doubt on this last point. Chiang Ching told Roxane Witke enough to put Richard Nixon back in office as chief choirboy.

The foreign policy area is a little tricky. Unclear. Important. A load of laughs. The Gang are construed as irrationally xenophobic about any relations with foreign countries. At the Number Nine Machine Tool Factory in Shanghai, they showed us indignantly some giant polished fancy-looking green machine that did some sort of super-fast screwing. Anyhow they made it – at great expense and disruption to the factory – on the orders of the Gang then in control in Shanghai. They gave the order, allegedly, to show up the boys in Peking who had ordered a similar thing imported. And now the second one was sitting idle. There was a similar fight over cargo ships. On the other hand, we never heard directly what the Gang had to say about foreign policy. We have learned that, we think, indirectly, from the Albanians, allies of the Gang, in their recent denunciation of the Chinese line. They say, to paraphrase, that the Chinese are xenophobic about the Russians, and wrong to ally themselves with anybody, repeat anybody, who opposes anybody who opposes the Russians. Social imperialism, i.e. the Ruskies, is not the greatest threat. The Yanks are still in there sluggin'. Is this a way of sidling to the Russian, or an ultra-militant we'll-take-on-all-comers attitude?

But most mysterious of all is the industrial relations policy – if any – of the Gang. Everywhere we went they were blamed for falling production. Statistics cited showed production down slightly, often for periods after the smashing. Many times when we asked whether the Gang of Four influenced a factory, we would be told absolutely not. So how did they make production fall? Answer: disrupted distribution of supplies. The factories where they admitted the Gang had an influence were few and far between. The cotton mill in Sian was one, a plant of some six thousand workers. The "influence" amounted to two to three misguided souls now undergoing self-criticism at the direction of the masses on the shop floor. What was their effect? Absenteeism. Lateness. Opposition to discipline. And just not working while on the job, being "professional revolutionaries" instead. At the Number Four Loading Dock in Shanghai, the leading cadre described to us a somewhat more substantive dispute. It seems the longshoremen presented organizational efforts to improve productivity. A famous wall poster appeared at a neighbouring dock in the midst of this struggle, "We want to be masters of the dock rather than slaves of tonnage". Similar kinds of fights were reported over discipline. Gang followers accused the cadre of supporting "the theory of productive forces", and Lui Shao Chi Line. But when we visited, all had been solved, and everyone was labouring happily, quickly and unafraid.

We never got anywhere in the factories trying to pin down the type of people who might have been Gang supporters. No common denominators. Indeed, when I pressed my theory that the Gang represented a burgeoning new class interest in china, I drew only puzzled

looks. This astonished me because I thought I was borrowing the concept of the new bourgeoisie from the Cultural Revolution. But somehow it didn't seem to gel in that context.

So what for to the Gang. They were obviously corrupt and traitorous, and hence eminently dispensable. But what was the all the rest about?