

Chicago Centrum

B.S.
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I am a businessman, who has, I guess, been a Guardian since the first meeting. I spent the last year in Washington as a White House Fellow. About 16-18 White House Fellows are selected each year and assigned to a cabinet member. I happened to be assigned to the Secretary of Defense, so I had several bosses this year: Melvin Laird, Elliot Richardson, and Bill Schlesinger. I became an expert in executive turnover this past year.

From this appointment, however, I had an opportunity to talk with a number of government and economic leaders in Washington. Then as a wrap-up to that year, the White House Fellows group received an invitation from the People's Republic of China to visit China for twenty days. If we could get over there, they agreed to pay all our in-country expenses. They asked us to spend five weeks, but the consensus was we could not spend that much time. By the time you go around the world and back, it is a six or seven week trip.

I bring you greetings from the people of the People's Republic of China. Everywhere we went, everyone we saw said to please carry greetings from the people of China to the people of the United States and convey to them our hope for increasing and lasting friendship.

You are aware China is on the other side of the world from here, in relatively the same place we are. It has about the same climate, latitude, and size as the United States. But it has eight or nine hundred million people. The Chinese are not sure of the numbers, and we aren't either, so everybody's guess is as good as the next.

Eighty-five percent of those people are employed on farms today. Although China has some of the world's largest cities, only fifteen percent of its people live in cities. As opposed to the United States, eighty-five percent of its land is not suitable for growing crops, so they have to take those eighty-five percent of their people and fifteen percent of their land and do as much as they can with that land to get food and clothing for that many people.

Among other paraphernalia, I took the Social Processes Triangle with me on this trip. I walked through China checking off which corner of the little triangles I was in. Every now and then one of the Chinese would walk over, peer over my shoulder, and ask what the triangles were and what I was doing. The triangles started some interesting conversations. The Chinese did not quite know how to deal with them.

I want to talk very briefly about the way I see China, in light of the Social Process Triangle. I would like to talk on the economic process in China and its major contradictions, and the political, and cultural processes. Then I want to draw a few parallels between the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese revolution, and the Movement and suggest some lessons and penetration issues that may be there for us.

The Economic Process

The Chinese economy is agricultural as opposed to our heavily industrialized society. China is almost totally a manual labor, agricultural society. Its primary focus is to provide the necessities for everyone. Nobody cares if everybody gets a radio or a television set. The objective is to ensure everyone has adequate food, clothing and shelter. We saw no one sleeping in the streets, no one appeared to lack shelter, and no one was without adequate clothing. The average diet in China is about 2000 calories a day. This is probably a lot more effective than the 4000 calories we think a person requires. Their objective is to provide those fundamental necessities. If there is a little left over after necessities are cared for and someone wants to save a little bit of his salary to get it, that is fine, but there is no obligation to provide such excess.

The other thing I would say that is important about the economic dimension is that the leadership is entirely corporate. All entities are run by groups, not individuals. Leadership, at least as they talk about it, is generally selected out of the group to run the group. The factory foremen come out of the work groups and the factory managers come out of the factory foremen and other staff.

The overarching principle which holds all this is one we have heard over and over again. All the wealth belongs to everyone. It should not be allocated in such a way that it goes to a privileged few, but each person should share equally in the obligations of Production and in the distribution of wealth.

A commune outside of the city called Kan Shang illustrates this principle. A work group of about 250 people from the commune had a little valley as their assignment. You could stand in the bottom of the valley and look at mountains all the way around. It was all lush and green. At the time of the Liberation in 1949 (they do not call it the Revolution) these people had been essentially starving peasants. The valley was simply rocks on the ground: a rock floor with powder dust on it. They scratched out a living from whatever would grow in the dirt.

The leader of the village, with his leadership group, decided that they needed some more land. Chairman Mao had said that the society could not stand back and wait for someone to bring them economy; they had to proceed with "self-reliance and hard struggle" to create what they needed. (That is a Chairman Mao phrase you hear over and over: "with self-reliance and hard struggle".) They set about the task of making that land tillable. These 250 people took hand tools and carved shelves in the mountain, breaking up the rock with hoes and picks. Then they took those poles they use to carry buckets on and carried dirt about six miles until they had the shelves covered with dirt. They planted it and carried water about three and a half miles, jogging under their poles. Then the rain came and washed it all away. That happened for four years.

As we talked to the village leader he said there were some class enemies each year who said it was impossible, but the will of the masses prevailed and they went ahead. When we were there they had dug a well by hand straight down about a hundred feet through solid granite. That helped with the water problem. They dug a tunnel, by hand, right through a mountain, which cut the walk down for dirt from three and a half miles to two. They were still digging shelves in the mountain, a little higher now. They had a beautiful orchard and crops. They also had their first mechanical tractor. They felt they were really prospering.

We saw a lot more modern places, which may not be typical of the condition of every person in China, but I think typical of the intent of the economic system.

I would say the main contradiction in the economic system is that China has essentially cut itself off from foreign ideas. They have been isolated for so long and they are trying to build up the pride of the Chinese people. They do not take foreign periodicals or draw on foreign technology, in particular, so they have lost some of the advantages the globe could bring them. The people have lost some of their vision of China in the world. Economically this means that a lot of technological and financial resources are not available to them because they have decided to move along in self-reliance.

The other main issue is in development. They have to find a way to move into some kind of industrial development without completely displacing the people who are doing the work. If someone miraculously produced a million tractors tomorrow, when eighty-five percent of the people are on farms, they would have nothing to do with them because they would have nothing for the people to do if they used the tractors. Also, the people, each tilling a little square yard, would get as high a productivity out of that land as we get in the United States. To bring a tractor in might lower the yield. They are faced with a major contradiction as to how to apply technical resources and machines to their problems.

The Political Process

In the political realm, the thing one is struck with is that everyone is in some kind of study and planning structure. There is a weekly, or bi-weekly meeting at every work location by work teams in which team members study the thoughts of Chairman Mao and attempt to apply them to their current problems and work situations. In the community, those people who do not work meet weekly in other kinds of study and planning structures within the governmental and social process of the party and the planning systems. Everywhere you look those people are tied into the decision-making, policy-making process. There is a continuing communication of concerns upwards and downwards.

The other main thing you see, is what the Chinese understand as the "revolution", is the thrust of their political system to create a classless, unprivileged bureaucracy. The Cultural Revolution is one of the evidences of

this thrust. Mao has seen that as you create the bureaucracy that runs a society, the bureaucrat tends to start driving limousines. Mao is not especially interested in a bureaucracy that drives limousines and has better living quarters. They have a good analogy to look at, because such a bureaucracy is where the Soviet Union is. One of the bitter differences between the Soviet Union and China is that the Soviet Union has allowed the development of a privileged bureaucracy.

The Chinese are struggling to smash such a bureaucracy through the Cultural Revolution and before that, the "Great Move Forward" in order to bring the bureaucrats to see themselves as servants of society and not as people out for benefit from their role in society. They talk about their bureaucracy as the "proletarian dictatorship", which is a Marxist term. What they are really talking about is a core leadership group acting out of and on behalf of all the people, by assuming control of the society to protect it from domination by minorities or by outside forces.

This comes out of their history. They suffered under two hundred years of economic imperialism, so the way they most directly talk about the end of this domination is that a dictatorship of the people took over the country. In China, twenty or thirty years ago, five percent of the people lived like kings and the rest of them starved in little cardboard huts. The dictatorship of the people corrected the imbalances of their society, rebuilding the political in the face of the economic domination.

At the grassroots level, you see the operation of the proletarian dictatorship in the government of the community. The lowest formal level of government, encompassing about fifty thousand people, is the street committee. The committee is something like a city council. Under it is a series of four or five voluntary neighborhood committees taking in ten to twelve thousand people. This number might be something like we think of as a parish. Within it are some more informal subgroups and some specialty committees. Each street committee has a hospital or a major medical clinic; each neighborhood committee has a medical outlet which is staffed by paramedics and visited by doctors.

These groups take responsibility for the entire administration of that community. They handle all street crime, divorces, marriages, wills and non-judicial disputes. These matters are decided within the community. For example, in the case of a divorce the neighborhood committee meets with the couple, and counsels with them about the needs of the society. Then the divorce action is decided by that neighborhood committee, on the basis of the needs of the society, that community, the family, and finally the preference of the couple. We were told that they did not have too many divorces. Marriage is seen as a life-time decision supported by that political structure.

All the public health and sanitation is done voluntarily. Structures are organized to take care of the children after school, to do the shopping of parents who have to work, to deliver children to day-care centers in the morning so that their parents can go to work before the day-care centers open. Another group of people take responsibility for health: contraceptives are distributed, inoculations given, and the sick visited.

Such care is going on all the time. Local concerns are interchanging upwards in the society with the needs of the whole society, which are coming down from the higher levels. There is a continuing flow of activity and information about the needs and the concerns of the country and a continuing flow of activity. It seems incredible, but the place was spotless. The system powerfully effected a sense of community belonging and engagement in one's own destiny. Each person giving shots in the community or cleaning up streets seemed to see himself as a part of the work of the total society.

The Cultural Process

In the cultural area, a couple of phenomena are immediately apparent. One is that everyone has a role: all phases and all people. The youth are in the preparation phase. They are the group being trained. At the same time, however, they are participating in whatever work is going on, in clean-up campaigns in their schools and so forth. The fifteen to sixty age group is the productive force. Whether the workers are in the government, or factories or farms, they are the productive source of the society's wealth. The Elders have an especially significant role, very different than what you see in North America. When the Chinese elders stop working, they really begin to get busy. They are the backbone of those community structures. They are the caretakers of the home because it is considered an absolute privilege to have your elders living with you. No one would think of having them live anywhere else

but in their homes. They are the people who take responsibility for raising the small children of the community and for their training. They run after-school activities for the children. Everywhere you look, you see Elders engaged.

In the symbolic area, art is used to tell the story of the history of China, to relate what the society has been and is going to be, to highlight the gifts of the people and their cultural heritage. There are study sessions in which they focus on Mao's wisdom. The opera, the symphony, the ballet, are all used to tell the story of what China has been and where it is going.

The story they tell is that the society of China is struggling in a continuous revolution to create a situation where every man's contribution to society is seen as equal. Though the factory manager and the janitor have different assignments, they are seen as assignments. Each of these people is contributing equally to the growth and the development of the people of China.

The second major value spoken of over and over is that each person in that society is seeking the good of the group. That is, they are after the community welfare. It is considered almost a cardinal sin to be caught in a situation in which you appear to be seeking your own personal enhancement: adding to your wealth, your prestige, or your status. In the day-care centers is perhaps where you find that most vividly. Every factory, economic institution, and governmental institution has a twenty-four hour day-care center, costing about \$1.50 a week. The kids are fed meals at night and they are allowed to sleep. Our group was taken aback by hearing the children singing, "Long Live Chairman Mao" and "I'm a happy little commune worker". They thought it terrible that children should be indoctrinated with ideas like that. In the day-care centers, we heard again and again what the dream of the society is. With pictures, the children told stories about how they need to be responsible for their neighbor, good Samaritan-type stories where someone goes down the street, sees someone hurt and helps; or the kind of boy-scout stories about how important it is for children to help Elders across the street. They rehearse over and over their caring for the community and the neighborhood.

The other aspect of all of the schools is that everyone is expected to participate in the productive process going on. Perhaps the best way to highlight that was a day-care center we saw in Shanghai. The Street Committee had as part of its responsibility a flash-light bulb factory as one of their major industries. As one of their free-plays, the children instead of sitting around a table putting pegs in holes, packed the flash-light bulbs. They could live out of the story that they were participating with their parents in the productive process of that society. Those three and four year olds were learning at that age that they had a responsibility to be a part of their society. It was one of the healthiest things we saw there, and one of the most unique. That was true in every school.

Contradictions

In the political arena, the main issue today is how to create a leadership succession to Chairman Mao that is flexible, changing, and mobile, which does not become completely institutionalized in a frozen vision of the future.

In the cultural arena, the question is how structures are set up in which the future can continually be re-envisioned. And as a result of a kind of locked-in-ness, a kind of Messiahism is now creeping into the society. The man of the street seems convinced that the classless culture will really come in just a few years. The leadership level is not all that clear they will finally "arrive," but that is probably a continuing battle. I did see some tension in whether the future was going to continue to be redefined.

Relationship To The Movement

There are tremendous commonalities with the Movement. There are stories about Iron Men and The Long March. There are enormous similarities with the Movement. The Communist Party certainly understands the Cadre dynamic. Five percent of the population makes up the core leadership. It has a unique language which is used in the same way we use our jargon. In China, they understand discipline and assignment; all work roles and social responsibilities are by assignment. They have accountability. Without really being conscious of it, I think they also have a kind of absolution. If accountability is held, and someone has failed, they talk about counseling him, asking him to renew the struggle, to make a new decision to participate in the society. The care structures and

the focus on the symbolic are common ground. They are clearly building on the stories and the history of the past into the future.

Questions Of The Future

I also saw questions raised that were parallel to the Movement. One was in the area of leadership. I don't think there is an answer, but they are clearly working very hard to figure out how they would replace Chairman Mao as a symbolic leader with a new political and equally symbolic leadership. How do you keep the death of Chairman Mao from just freezing in the path at that moment in history? How do you project a new symbolic leader, continuing the visioning process, and making whatever social turns are necessary?

Another one they struggle with continuously (which I suspect is one we have to look at in terms of the New Social Vehicle, and conceivably in terms of the Order) is how do you continue" to remind and rehearse the leadership in the servant role? Right now it is done by turning the people back out to the farms to work for six weeks of manual labor every year (or longer if they get a little corrupted). That is a way of re-enforcing the fact the goal of that bureaucracy is to uplift or improve the conditions of the people; to remind them that they are not there for their personal comfort.

I think China is also going to have to struggle with how to remain comprehensive and global. How is it that they keep from isolating themselves, but see themselves as great people who have to share in the concerns of the world along with their struggles for China.

And finally, what kind of mechanisms do they have in that highly directive society for continually re-establishing consensus? What structure do they have in the midst of the ongoing work and visioning which allows them to stand back and evaluate their stance, operating image, and effectiveness?

Implications For The Movement

The penetration of China is going to have to be totally secular. Their view of the Church comes out of the economic imperialism. The Church is seen as a tool for enslaving people. I suspect you would have to completely re-context the Church out of secular contact. The initial approaches would have to be on the basis of a seeker or a cooperater, not as someone bringing tools or messages. The subtle language differences in Chinese which enable more helpful communication may require a need for using foreign-born Chinese in future work with China. The Chinese are very receptive to foreign-born Chinese, and are delighted to let them into the country. Because China encourages them to visit, I think that may be one key that would unlock it for us.

The crucial thing is to identify the main spirit problem in China or the kind of key contradictions we would be dealing with as we penetrated or made contact. What is the spirit issue which would just unlock China for the Spirit Movement if we push that button? We must try to find that?

To me, China is a living example of history by decision. It is a living example of the decision that a new world had to be created, and, in twenty years, taking an economy from absolute poverty to at least adequate subsistence. It is the moving from fifteen percent literacy to ninety-five percent literacy in a little over twenty years. Some people decided to move, and a whole country radically changed.

China could be a powerfully potential ally, philosophically, It seems to me that the key to that is to build with China the kind of a unifying vision of the world which would permit us to unite to form that global village; in which all of the world does in fact belong to all; and in which each man can engage equally without that sort of overpowering over-dominance of outside structures.

Closing Questions And Discussion

C. We talk a lot in this country about increasing the production of land in other parts of the world. Has China tried to do anything to improve the production of that eighty-five percent of now unusable land?

A: Yes, they have. Part of the problem China presently has is that a significant portion of its land is desert and mountains, in which there are both geological and climatic extremes. The people have done an enormous amount of building of irrigation ditches to bring in water, which is a major contradiction in agriculture. They are also exploring new ways of productivity, such as better wheat grains with better yields. Their edge focus is that of making a radical leap into claiming the desert. This is almost beyond their economy at this point in time, but I think they will do it. In some ways they shut themselves out from possibility of solution because they exclude foreign technology and foreign aid. Conceivably, they could harness the technological power of the U.S. to reclaim that desert, as an example, but they shut that out.

Q: How would you talk about China's image of its role in terms of a global society?

A: They talk about the need of each society to define the kind of a world it wants. They also talk about their belief that every society will ultimately have a revolt of the proletariat to create the government of the people which can eliminate economic domination. They see themselves as a major factor in the Third World, countervailing the U.S. and Russian tendencies to economically and politically dominate everything else in the world. They only talk about themselves as committed to the support of those revolutions as they come. They say they do not go out and create a revolution but pick up on Resurgence. They believe that ultimately the world will come to their view of society and that they will have a primary role in the creation of that new world.

Q: What roles do the individual and neighborhood health people have relative to the decision of taking care of each other?

A: The care structure is tremendous. They have paramedics who move through the community and create a referral network. The result of that is that they decided first of all, the place has to be clean. They have educational structures which teach people all the fundamentals of hygiene. They then build a structure and bring someone in. They are immediately available. In Peking there are fifty major hospitals, and sub-hospitals at more local levels. It is taken for granted that you have a responsibility to care for yourselves and for your neighbors, because that is key to the production and the on-going of the society. It is not interfering with somebody else's business, but your responsibility to carry out that which enables the entire society.

One of the structures formed in the community is the Elders group. When it rains, they run around taking in all the laundry and closing the windows of those who work elsewhere. That is comprehensive care.

Q: Your illustrations of care come from the city community. What about the 85% who live on farms?

A: The street committee is comparable to the structure of the communes. In one commune there are five paramedics and a clinic. Several communes had a major hospital together. They also have hygiene committees.

Q: If a young man were thinking about going into business what would be his options?

A: It is by assignment. One of the things the Chinese simply cannot understand is choice. After graduation from secondary school, the children are assigned to work whether they are nuclear physicists or whatever. The farm children are generally assigned to the farm, and about eighty-five percent of the other children are assigned to the farm because they do not have any place to put them in industrial work. They spend a year or two there, and then are reviewed for further education. Their function from then on is determined by their work. If one is assigned to a commune, that commune takes a look annually at what kind of education it needs, the capabilities of the up-to-25 year-olds in the group, and selects those whom it feels should be assigned for further education. In general, those people come back to that group, except for exceptional cases where they go on to other educational training. Even there, they are assigned on the basis of the priorities of the society.

Q: Do you personally think that such a care structure as you defined is feasible outside of the political power now backing it up?

A: I think it probably is. What has changed there is the view of the people towards their responsibility for their community. The only incentive we could find to cooperation (there was no monetary incentive) was that the Street Committee had the authority to assign housing. However, the housing has only marginal differences. There are no "mansion" homes. It is a question of the context of the culture rather than the political force. Now, it may be

that it takes that political force to set it in being. But I believe once it is created, and once people have caught a vision of it, the power of it, and their way to engage in it, that it would be self-sustaining.

Q: What relationship does China now have with Hong Kong? Would they see persons born in Hong Kong as foreign born?

A: Hong Kong is Chinese. As far as China is concerned Hong Kong and Taiwan are China. They happen to allow certain of their economic and political affairs to be delegated to the English or to Chiang Kai Shek. That is China. The English maintain that they have exchange with China. China allows the British to exist there because they get an enormous foreign exchange.

Q: What roles did you see women playing?

A: Economically, politically, and to some extent culturally, there is little difference. There are women who produce equally within the economic system. I could see women officials in the highest levels of the Chinese government. Though, historically women have had a slightly different role, and in the cultural dimension this gets expressed; throughout the political and economic structures I saw no discrimination.

--Bill Schrempf