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REPORT ON CHINA

I was in Toronto on development in the spring and had the opportunity to see the Shanghai ballet. Two things impressed me about that night: one was the ballet that we saw was called "The White Haired Girl", and, as most of their artistic creations at the moment anyway, it had to do with the horrible injustice and suffering in China before Liberation contrasted with life in China after Liberation and the various intricacies that went along with that very familiar story. But the thing is that this one woman, the white-haired girl, goes off into the woods by herself for quite a number of years and her hair begins to turn whiter and whiter as she gets more passionate over the situation that she has both run away from and is considering going back to, to fight as a revolutionary. Now, the trick is how you get one person on the stage to have their hair turn whiter while they're on stage. The way they handled this problem was to have four people playing the leading role of the white haired girl, but you never knew it was four people, except in that her hair kept getting whiter while she was still on stage. It was really rather remarkable. I mean one person would kind of go close to the edge of the stage, and then there she'd be back again and her hair would be whiter. I was impressed that there was no main star to this show, no one needed individual regognition, for the success of the show depended on everyone, and even at the end of the ballet, finally, when everybody in the whole audience stood up for standing ovations and clapped and cheered, the whole ballet stood on the stage and clapped and cheered for the audience. This was their awareness that total participation was what made that event come off, not any one person, or not just them, but the audience as well. If it had not been for the audience this event would not have come off. That was the first thing that I was impressed by.

The second thing was at the reception at the City Hall in Toronto for the performers. They all came in in grey uniform; Mao-type tunics. There must have been 150 people, men and women, all looked the same and all paraded in in these tunics, and it was a strange feeling. I mean, I'm used to seeing everybody in blue, but this was a strange feeling. It reinforced to me the "other planet-ness" that China has seemed. I don't know why it has seemed that way, but it has. As you may or may not know, I've grown up with China as a part of my history. My brothers and sisters were born there, my parents lived there six years, I've heard about it all my life. But somehow it still had that "other planet" image for me. I was young during McCarthy, but maybe that was why. And the questions that people have asked me about China make me realize that's true not only of me, but of most people that I've encountered. It seems like another place. And one more thing that reinforced that for me was the number of people that mentioned to me before I actually went how scared I looked. That wasn't something I was really aware of until I was on an airplane and some man I'd never met before came up and said, "I noticed you in the waiting room and you really look scared. Don't worry, planes aren't that bad." Now I'm here to report to you that it took about one second of being in China, maybe as far as being in the airport, to begin to feel at home, to begin to see that it was a real country and had real people in it, like here. And maybe for me and for anyone of us in this outfit who would go and visit China, maybe it would be even a little more at home, because there you sense a whole nation is doing something that we daily talk about and envision as what we want to have happen in the world.

I wanted to do four things tonight. The first one is to give a montage of impressions that I had over the 28 days that we spent there. Secondly, I wanted to spend a bit of time on both the national and the local organization. Thirdly, a bit on life-style and motivation, because that's one of the things that many people asked me to look for, as well as one of my major interests; and then fourthly, a little bit about the post-Mao era, or the current political situation, and then any questions that you might have.

This montage of impressions is based on 28 days of rather intensive travel, work and visiting. In 28 days we were able to visit 10 cities and countless numbers of factories and communes and we drove 8,000 miles through many streets and villages. I want to show you first quickly where we went. We came in from Japan to Peking, which is the capital city, spent a few days there, and then took an overnight train up to Taching, which is the demonstration industrial city in the whole country. Everywhere you go, you hear the phrase, "In industry, be like Taching." Taching operates as a demonstration, and I'll say more about that later. Then we came down to Harbin, went down to Shenyang, which is where my brother and sister were born, back to Peking for a few days, then down to Nan King, through Soochow, Shanghai, Kwailin, Canton and Hong Kong. In terms of climate, geography, what they grow, etc., it would be very much like going from the bottom tip of Hudson's Bay, Ontario, to Montreal to Philadelphia, to Washington, D.C. to Savannah, Florida, to Miami and to Havana, Cuba. If you wonder what the geography and the climate of China were like, then you just need to know what the geography and climate of the United States are like. It is very similar.

This has been a difficult report for me to organize, because there's so much data. I did a lot of writing every day in order to catch and hold for my own memory what was there. What this represents is a list of impressions that I had; either something I saw, something I read, something about which I thought, "Well that illuminates something." I didn't make any attempt to organize them rationally. I wrote them down as they came to me. I'll try to go over these rather quickly and maybe you'll experience a bit of what I experienced.

First, there are no privately owned cars in China. There are cars, but the cars are owned by the teams or the working units.

- There is no Coca Cola in China. There is orange pop made in China and the name for that is "geishwei". That's one of the Chinese words that I learned; the other one is beer, "pijio".
- Everywhere you go there are free cigarettes, in your hotel room, every time you go for a meal, every time you go for a briefing in the factory, everybody gives you tea and cigarettes, but not many women smoke. In fact, I only remember men smoking. They were going to do a discrimination thing on smoking, like we do here, when Mao died, except that Chairman Hua likes to smoke as much as Mao did, so they all still smoke, at least the men do.
- I never saw a child being spanked. That doesn't mean to say they don't spank children, but in 8000 miles I never saw a child being spanked, or a kid crying, for that matter.
- They start pre-school at 8 weeks old. I told them we start at 6 weeks old.

- In everybody's room there are pictures of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua. In the offices there are world maps, maps of China, pictures of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua and posters that the workers have made, either about what they intend to do as people in that office or what they believe in.
- There were many visitors in China. This surprised me. We met people from Winnipeg, Montreal, Australia, North Korea, Tanzania, etc. I was amazed at the number of people who were visiting there. One travel guide from Australia was setting up a trip for 700 people from Australia to come and visit next year.
- The average salary is $35 to $50 a month. The standard of living is very low. China by and large looks pretty crumby, not every neighbourhood, but it does not have an especially nice bright and shiny appearance.
- The earthquake doesn't seem to have had much effect on them, or at least they have overcome whatever problems the earthquake caused, just a year ago. There are still earthquake shelters all over Peking that were built within a matter of days, an indication of the rather tremendous survival instinct and ability that they have.
- There are no bars in China.
- Many of the diseases have been wiped out. Cholera, VD, smallpox, bubonic plague and others just don't exist anymore, and immunization has been required of everybody to wipe out anything else that may still remain.
- There's no advertising.
- People retire at 55.
- You wouldn't believe the number of bicycles that you see on the street, and you wouldn't believe the honking that you hear. Here are these few cars, thousands and thousands of bicycles, millions and millions of people crossing the street. No one slows down for anybody. I must have had a nervous breakdown seven times a day, driving in these cars with bicycles, people and cars all converging, but I never saw an accident. I couldn't get my mind around it. I still don't understand how it happened. It was just absolute chaos, but somehow each person took responsibility for making sure he didn't die in the chaos.
- Women marry at about 25, men at about 29, and people are expected to have one or two children. They don't wear wedding rings. The man and woman go to town and get a civil permit to be married, and then they all have a big party, and that's what a marriage is.
- I have never seen anywhere besides our outfit where people can nap like they do in China. Driving down the street you see people asleep on piles of cabbages, you see them asleep on limbs of trees, you see them stretched out everywhere. I told our host that I wanted to do a photographic essay of napping, but I probably wouldn't get out of the country with it, because everyone would think I was going to use it to show how lazy they are in China.
- There is one rest day a week in China for everybody. Usually it's Sunday, although it's staggered so that work can continue. The Chinese word for this day still means "worship day", which is interesting.
- They work from about 7:00 in the morning until about 6:00 at night, and everybody has a nap at noon.
- They have written into their constitution freedom to believe in religion or freedom not to believe in religion. There are Christians and Muslims and other believers, but this is a personal matter and does not interfere with the one thrust of the country.

- Generally speaking, it seemed to me that people were happy, and although they operate totally under assignment as a whole country, they seemed basically suited to the work that they were assigned to. In other words, there was care taken for 900 million people in terms of their assignment.
- "The key link of class struggle" is a phrase that I heard every single day. Class struggle is probably the main underlying contradiction that the Chinese are out to address. That is, how you avoid the natural propensity toward privelege and a little bit more wealth and a little bit more comfort, so that all of the people have equal opportunity and equal access to all the goods.
- Building is happening very rapidly, even though the standard of living is very low, you get the impression that it's an issue of priority, and that as the money becomes available they build rapidly. I read a chapter in Edgar Snow's book called Red China Today where he was in Shanghai and asked his guide to show him the best and the worst. His guide took him to a place called Minhong Workers' Residential Neighbourhood and a place called Pumpkin Lane. It was the exact same itinerary that we had one day, but 10 years later the Pumpkin Lane that we saw was entirely different from the Pumpkin Lane that he described. That is, all the houses that were made of clay and tin cans that he wrote about had been torn down and built into high rises. And this kind of building is happening very quickly.
- There is an unabashed curiosity of foreigners. It was rare that I would walk out of a hotel without a parade of people staring at strange things like blond hair. You would go to take a picture of something in a square and you couldn't get it because all these people were in front of you staring. Some of them would crouch down and stare at my feet, of all things. It was really a treat to get back to Peking on the way south, because it's really a global city compared with the rest of China, and people don't notice you much at all. That was the only place.
- Men and women were in virtually every job.
- The clothers are beginning to be very colourful. They don't all wear grey. There are a lot more pink blouses and that kind of thing. Our guide said he predicted far more colour, but not anything more fancy, finally.
- Mao Tse Tung's mausoleum, which opened September 9, the anniversary of his death, was built in 6 months. It's a rather amazing structure that fits into all the various forms of architecture of the Peoples' Square in Peking. They called in a special task force from around the country to build it, plus 700,000 people volunteered various amounts of their time to help.
- If you ask the question, "Is it safe to walk on the streets here?", people don't understand what you mean. That question does not compute. It is a very relaxed atmosphere. It's a pleasure to be there. You don't have to close your doors in your hotel. No one goes in except to give you more toilet paper.
- Everyone is working and creatively engaged in what they are doing.
- I experienced the culture shock of leaving China into Hong Kong far greater than the culture shock of going into China.

That's just a montage of things that came to me over the time I was there.

Let me fill in a bit on organization, which is someting that people were interested in. One key to the national organization, and maybe you knew this, but I didn't, is the difference between the Communist Party and the government. The Communist Party is made up of 35 million people, which is about 3% of the whole country's population. It's not the government per se, although it is the most powerful organization in the country. And there are Communist Party members in every single unit of the country, down to the smallest neighbourhood, down to the smallest team in a factory, there are Communist Party members, who operate very much like our understanding of auxiliary in a project. They are the ones that see that the vision of the party and of the country is spread to all the people and is to its best ability carried out. They are very much a model for the people. You cannot become a Communist Party member until you are 25, except as part of the youth league. Our guide, for instance, was a Communist Party member. He said his wife was not. She had applied several times, but hadn't been able to get in yet. He said he didn't know why. Maybe she doesn't study hard enough. Maybe she doesn't relate to the masses well enough, but to be a member you have to be recommended by your fellow workers. You have to prove that you are always willing to put the collective good before your own personal interest. You have to be on top of Marxist, Leninist and Mao Tse Tung's thought. You have to study well. You have to be able to work well with the masses of the people, etc. Well, that was helpful to me, to see how a whole country can hang together in the way it seemed like it did. The government on the other hand is something different. You can be in the government and not be a party member or you can be in the government and be a party member. They do the administrative work. They operate like a government. The meeting that they had a few weeks ago was a communist party central committee meeting. Then in October they should have the National Peoples' Congress, which is the government meeting.

Local organization is about the hardest thing to describe. I tried day after day to get on top of the local organization. My guide kept saying, "If you understand one unit in China, you understand them all", which is true, except that it isn't that easy. I'm going to say something about communes, but any preconceived idea you have of what a commune is you have to wipe out of your mind. It will only confuse you as it did me. I thought the whole country was divided into communes. Well, that's not true. Communes are only agricultural based. There are communes and there are factories. There are city neighbourhoods and various forms of organization like that. A commune may be made up of, say, 20,000 people. That means it could include quite a large number of villagers. Their assignment is to help in the task of making China self-sufficient in agriculture. A commune, as you may know, is divided into production brigades. A commune of 20,000 people would usually be divided into 20 production brigades of 1,000 people each. I'm going to go into detail on the production brigade that we visited in a minute, but a production brigade is then divided into about 10 or 20 production teams, and the teams are made up of about 10 or 20 families. We visited a number of brigades - one of them was called the Korean brigade. It was outside of Shenyang, and it was made up largely of Korean people. In the brigade there were 458 households. There was a population of 2400 people. They owned and operated something like 5000 mou of land. A mou is a little less than an acre. They owned as a brigade some 200 machines, 3 trucks, a

pig farm, a chicken farm, a fish pond, and orchards. Their main responsibility was the rice fields. For side occupation, they had a straw bag industry, a sewing plant where they made all the clothes for that brigade, and a machine repair factory. They had schools for all ages, a store, a clinic, sports teams and any other structures necessary for the ongoing livelihood of any self-sufficient village. And it was very much like a village. The ownership, the gains and the losses were accounted for at this level, at the production brigade level. And yet what they were told in terms of how much they had to produce and that kind of thing came from a decision at the level of the commune, which is made up of some ten or twenty of these brigades. This was a model brigade. It looked tremendous, for one thing, and as I said they did their basic accounting at the brigade level. That would be the goal of all of China's communes, that it would happen at this level, although in many cases it still happens at the team level.

Another sociological unit is the factory. They are divided into workshops. Let me talk about one that we say, the Foreign Language Press. It was divided into workshops and there were six of them. There were 2000 staff total. There were six workshops and they were functional - typesetting workshop, printing workshop, binding workshop, the Peking Review workshop, the maintenance workshop and the administrative workshop. And in each of those workshops they divided into about 20 work teams, and via those teams people would do their study and group discussion, in addition to their usual work. A factory provides living quarters. It provides clinics, schools, corporate meals if you want them, barber shops, stores, child care, etc.

One of the critical things to know about China is that in a commune one gift of the people is their understanding of "the simple life". One problem still in the communes is that these are people who believe that they need to own something. They all have small plots of land, less than an acre, but something of their own, whereas people who work in a factory own almost nothing - a few pieces of furniture, a bicycle, maybe, but that's all, and this would be the goal of the country for everyone. The problem with people in the factories is the tendency toward the sophisticated life style, the move toward privelege, and so they do a lot of interchange between the two. Everybody works in the countryside for three months out of the year, and also they are building factories at a county level, whereby the peasants from a commune can work in the factory when the season is not busy and get a different sense after immediate responsibility. If you make a mistake on a farm it shows up a year later. If you make a mistake in a factory you know it immediately. And so that kind of interchange happens with everybody in the country.

The other place I wanted to tell about very quickly was this town of Taching that I mentioned. It is a model and a demonstration village for the whole country. It began 17 years ago, when China was trying to become self-sufficient in everything so that they would not have to depend on foreign countries for anything at all. Someone said that of course they couldn't be self-sufficient in oil because there wasn't any oil in China, but then people worked for years and years after one oil well was discovered in the north and built a whole oil field out of it, which became Taching. The point is that they built out of a wilderness and in the face of the impossible a

situation which changed the whole course of the country. Then the second important thing about Taching is when they began to discover all of this oil and built a huge oil field they had all the possibilities of becoming another urban complex with all of its problems. They very intentionally worked out how you would organize this whole community so that it would not be a city. They built something like 60 central villages and 164 living areas with each central village being sufficient unto itself and providing enough for the surrounding living areas. There is now a population of 500,000 people and in all of China it is suggested rather strongly that any industrial venture model itself after Taching. There are 1-3,000 Chinese visitors there a day. It serves its demonstration function. This book comes from Taching. Its title is An Introduction to the Heroic Deeds of Iron Man, Wang Chiu-hsi, Vanguard Fighter of the Chinese Working Class, and it's true. Across the whole country he is known as the iron man, and part of the life style of China is that of emulation. You're out to emulate model individuals, model villages, model workshops, which are built up so that everybody knows about them, everybody visits them, everybody internalizes the stories about them. This whole folder is a story about the iron man, who is one of the main people who allowed Taching to happen, because he was willing at every moment to give up his own personal interests to bring the impossible into being. That's one of the things of life style and motivation that I noticed while I was there. You go out and visit a workshop or a factory and you see a red banner or a red flag and you see a chart with individuals' names on it and some months they have a red flag beside them and some months they don't. That has to do with whether they are being a model worker, whether they are serving their neighbour, whether they are helping fulfill the targets that the factory or commune or workshop was assigned for the month.

There's a rather tremendous moral base (that sounds terrible doesn't it). I'm not sure how to say that, but I believe it's based on the example of the Peoples' Liberation Army during the war of Liberation. You ask yourself how on earth this thing could have spread to 900 million people. I never could get my mind around that figure, I mean how on earth could that many people become conscious, and it's only been less than thirty years since the time of Liberation. One force was the example of the Liberation Army. They lived under, as their basic code as an army, a set of rules that goes something like this (very mundane): "Obey orders; do not take a single needle or thread from a peasant; replace all the doors (they slept on doors at night and put them back in the morning); return and roll up your straw mat; be courteous and polite; be honest in all transactions; pay for all articles purchased; treat prisoners well." This was the main code of ethics for the entire army for a period from 1927 to 1949. But during that period of time they covered virtually the whole country, and they understood themselves as not just a fighting force, but a social force that educated everybody they saw in basic skills like literacy, more imaginal skills, like the kinds of shifts the nation had to take, and practical skills like how to farm. They helped them with farming and that sort of thing, and then they did fighting when they had to , but a large number of the population got exposed to the vision the country was moving toward at that time. Edgar Snow wrote that China is a "veritable sinkhole of morality." It's just the way it is there.

I was looking at the middle of our chart on human development. The Identity Systems in China are red hot. There's not anybody there who isn't absolutely aware of what life was like in the old China and what life is like in the new China and the difference. Everything is geared towards people knowing that. In that one neighbourhood that we visited, Pumpkin Lane, there's another whole section that is walled off where the old straw mat hovels where people lived have been maintained, and whole classrooms of children come and visit those little hovels. A 70-year-old lady tells them, "This is my old hovel, before Liberation in the time of oppression and suffering." And she tells about the children she had on the streets and in the sewers and that kind of thing. You see they take every opportunity as an opportunity of education for the total population. There was not one historical site that we visited that was not absolutely packed with Chinese people from all over the country. For example going down into a tomb of an emperor with 3 foot thick marble doors and filled with his riches, you'd see a sign on the wall saying, "For the amount of money it took to build this tomb, a million people could have been fed rice for 6½ years." These are the classrooms of China.

We went to an industrial exhibition hall and it was towards the end of the visit. It was in Shanghai, and neither my Father nor I like museums or expositions or that sort of thing. We wanted to visit neighbourhoods, but they had it all planned, so we went. And we'd stop at every machine, and someone would tell us all about this machine and how 30 years ago this type of machine had been imported, but now China was building it, etc. We were saying, "Can't we move faster?" One of the ladies said, "You know it's difficult to move through these things quickly, because people in China are so proud of the fact that now we're becoming a self-sufficient nation that they want to let it be known to everybody." And it's true, they are proud of their self-reliance.

They have something called the meal of bitter rememberances. I don't know how often or how regularly they do it, but it's a time where you sit down with a group of people from the nieghbourhood and eat corn husks and barley soup and go through a time of story telling of the suffering of the old China, where people were beaten and killed or starved to death because of the landlords. That is followed by a rejoicing for the new China that now exists, where everyone has an equal opportunity and where oppression and suffering are virtually non-existent in comparison to before. We visited Chou En Lai's home, and in the middle of the dining room table there was a bowl full of stones, which were stones picked up from the Martyr's Park. They served as a reminder of those who had shed their blood for the revolution. That kind of thing you see wherever you go.

Corporate patterns is another one that is red hot. As I said, people live under assignment. They live a disciplined life style and you get a sense of fellowhood. It's the fellowhood that we talk about. It's not based on friendship or liking somebody, it's based on a common vision of where the country wants to go. Everyone is in one way or another involved in a team. I don't think there's anyone who's not on a team in China.

Living environment leaves something to be desired, but you get the sense that maybe it has a little bit more to do with being bracketed at the moment, because money is going to other priorities, and that as the money comes, living environment will improve. One of the visions they have is that as the economy

becomes more stable, people will have more time, not only to work in the factory, but also to develop their particular bent of being a poet or a painter, or whatever. The way our guide put it was, "more spiritual activity". Those were some of the things I noticed about motivation.

Finally, on the post-Mao era. I was wondering before I went what the political situation was now that Mao was dead. With our press it is very difficult to know exactly what things are really like. We were lucky enough to be there at the end of this National Congress. There were three full days of celebration. Three days of people filling the streets with fire crackers and songs and costumes and bands and pictures of Mao and Hua. They represented their factories and their schools and their neighbourhoods. You couldn't move in the streets. Every picture you've seen in Time magazine about a rally in Peking, that's just the way it was. I've never seen so many people. But the sort of joy you experience going on there had to do, I think, with finally articulating that the country was moving in a stable direction. "Holding high the red banner of Mao Tse Tung" is the phrase you heard again and again coming out about the Congress. But he didn't have to be there for that to happen.

People ask me when we can be in China. My response has been that for now, at least, we don't need to worry about that. Things there are in such good shape that we can be very grateful and put our energy elsewhere where it is needed.

中國北京飯店

PEKING HOTEL · CHINA

AUG 13

DEAR NEIL,

I GUESS YOU HEARD THAT WE DIDN'T MAKE IT OUT BEFORE THE STRIKE STARTED. WHAT A HASTLE THAT CAUSED. FIRST WE HAD TO SIT AROUND VANCOUVER ALL DAY SUNDAY (RITZY HOTEL AT JAL'S EXPENSE) THEN GET BUSSED DOWN TO SEATTLE AND SIT AROUND SEATTLE AIRPORT ON THE FLOOR FOR 5 HOURS. THE WHOLE TRIP FROM VANCOUVER TO JAPAN WAS 28 HRS. After A 12 hr delay MET A WORLD BANK GUY from WASHINGTON DURING ALL THIS A MR. CARGILL. HAVE YOU RUN INTO HIM? I DIDN'T TELL HIM ANY THING ABOUT OUR WORK. You would like CHINA - THEY ALL SMOKE AND EVERY WHERE YOU GO THERE ARE Complimentary PACKS OF CIGARETTS - its part of the hospitality along WITH A CUP OF TEA. THEN WHENEVER YOU SIT DOWN TO A MEAL THE 1ST THING THEY SERVE YOU IS A glass of BEER AND IT GETS REFILLED ALL THRU THE MEAL! (OH, I forgot, FREE MOVIE & DRINKS ALL ACROSS THE OCEAN ON JAL WERE ONE MINOR ADVANTAGE TO ALL THE HASTLE) IT REALLY IS SOMETHING HERE My FIRST 2 DAYS IMPRESSION OF JUST PEKING IS THAT THE GOOD THINGS I'VE HEARD ABOUT CHINA ARE TRUE. I BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE FROM OUR OUTFIT IS ONE STEP AHEAD (OR SEVERAL STEPS) AT BEING ABLE TO