



In celebration of our fiftieth year in operation, CCS presents a small sampling of photographs and essays from our faculty associates. We focus here on the 1970s, an incredibly important decade for US-China relations and for Sino-American educational exchange. This decade was also a period of opening and engagement for CCS faculty, as they served various roles – at the university, at the head of academic associations, and in the government – as the relationship between China and the United States grew closer.

– Mary Gallagher, *Associate Professor of Political Science; Director, Center for Chinese Studies; University of Michigan*

CCS 50th Anniversary 1961–2011

HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE CCS FALL 2011 NEWSLETTER



Chinese students rally in front of the Michigan Union in this undated photo. Photo courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan, from the U-M News and Information Services collection.

Things of Note – In Search of a Home

Harriet Mills

Professor Emerita Harriet Mills, Asian Languages and Cultures, reflected on her experience and memories of China in this undated University of Michigan article

Professor Mills is a truly unique individual in the American community of China scholars. Raised in China as a missionary child, she absorbed the sights, sounds, and struggles of a society in turmoil, confronted with invasion and revolution. Then after a decade in the U.S. when she acquired her B.A. from Wellesley, got her M.A. and began her Ph.D. at Columbia, she returned to China in 1947 as a Fulbright Scholar. Staying on after the Communists established the People's Republic in 1949, Professor Mills watched the total transformation of China's politics, culture, and economic wellbeing. Personally, however, she was arbitrarily arrested as a "spy" and incarcerated for four years. Yet the experience went beyond the obvious pain and anguish. It provided unique insights into the Chinese Communist assumptions about human development and their methods for improving it, a bitter but better way of fathoming their social goals as compared with scholarly study from a distance. Thus, Professor Mills can address contemporary China at many levels through her intensely personal and professional involvement. — Allen S. Whiting

It was odd and yet familiar. At the ten o'clock evening stopover in Shanghai, between Tokyo and Peking, we were ushered into a cavernous, empty reception hall and up a broad flight of red carpeted stairs to a dining terrace which flanked both sides of the staircase. The Westerners, in our case largely French and American, were directed to cakes and pop on white covered tables to the left, the Chinese to formica tables and bowls of hot noodles and tea on the right. A clear separation. I had grown up in the era of extraterritoriality. I was used to being apart, waited on and my tastes catered to, not as a matter of right-in fact, my father had throughout his career been a strong opponent of the privileged and a leader in the movement to return the churches to Chinese leadership and in the drive to get the mission schools to register with the new Nationalist government after 1927. No, it was not a matter of right-that I had always seemed to understand-but as a matter of practicality. In a land with no gas, no electricity and only charcoal or coal for cooking, in a land with no modern stores and only in later years anything that approximated refrigeration, in a land with no telephones, no steam heat, with coal stoves which had to be serviced several times a day in winter-in such an environment, to function at all one needed servants.

In a time of civil unrest and quixotic legal jurisdiction, prudence advised evacuation from time to time aboard U.S. warships. And so the way of life-rooted, I always understood, in practical necessity, not in the divine right of kings-had become a familiar and comfortable convenience. As I grew older, this way of life centered on my compound, my American friends, my schoolmates at Hillcrest or the Shanghai American School, my summer resort. The Chinese I knew were largely servants or associates of my father who came asking for something. For he was a man whom many circles respected and his white calling card-like those of most Westerners-was an open sesame in the areas I knew as a child. Westerners could always go where they wished, to the monasteries, temples, etc. And so I grew up conscious

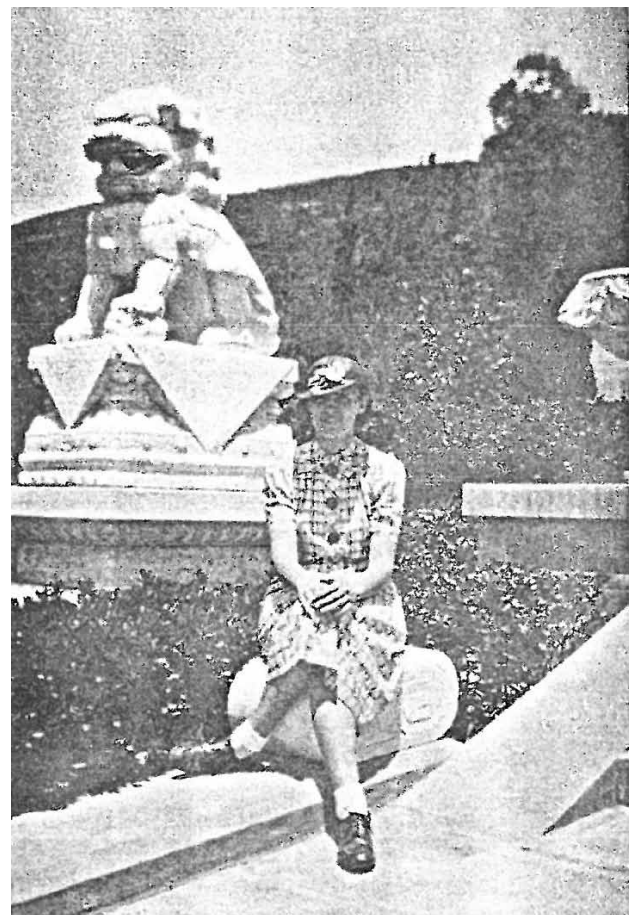
of a separation from the people in the land where I lived, constantly escorted and accounted for by servants or rickshaw men. Until I went to college, I had known no other life. No wonder that I sometimes played princess.

Ten years later I went back to China, by now firmly convinced of my own position as underdog in American society. I had returned, I came to realize, in search of a comfortable and familiar style, a style I found and one which persisted - albeit with increasing military and political constraints - until I was arrested in July, 1951.

Ironically, it was in prison that I first learned to identify with the Chinese, to understand what my position had been. The Chinese as masters now in their own country had turned things upside down; they were calling the shots. I was a nothing, but I came to love and respect them. They made it clear that extraterritoriality was a thing of the past, as it should be. The era of Western privilege was gone. Fine.

Gone, maybe, but not dead. The careful isolation of the Westerners that night in Shanghai from their Chinese fellow passengers, the provision of escorts like aides-de-camp, the extraordinary

Professor Mills on the steps of Sun Yat-sen's tomb in Nanking.





Harriet Mills, now Professor Emerita of Chinese, in an undated photo.

us from China. Inside it was still very comfortable, very convenient, very easy on the ego and very safe.... and to me, at least, profoundly unsettling. I went through China very high. I could see out, I was home but disembodied like a shadow passing by a reality I could no longer touch.

And so, though more isolated and cut off than before, I was home, overwhelmed at first by familiar things I only then realized I had forgotten that I had forgotten. In the city there were the whitewashed trunks of trees lining a road; the green and yellow pedestal post boxes; the window boards going up on stores at night; the traffic cops with long white sleeve cuffs on round podia or in towers semi-directing traffic; the candied crab-apple peddlers of Peking; the coal brickets piled up and drying or burned now to pink-grey dust; the open rectangular grey wooden garbage boxes, in use and tidy now; the winged black headbands of the very old ladies bent slightly forward as they tottered on their tiny bound feet; old people sunning out of the wind on a winter day—well-dressed now and sunning for pleasure, not necessity; rags drying on boards soon to become shoe bottoms; the round wicker trays for food displays; the little coal or charcoal stoves with stove pipes and the familiar dust pan and broom nearby; the face masks of surgical gauze worn against the wind; the layout of the traditional stores—the high counter, the shallow space at the front open to the street; the same thin lined notebooks I grew up on; the same curious use of English and English letters to mark canned goods, bicycles, radios, etc. Why “Phoenix” brand bicycles in Peking? The gloves that cover the fingers to the last joint but leave the tips exposed; the spittoons and, of course, the marvelous smell of cooking.

In the countryside, the sunning of quilts in the winter sun to puff them up; the meat and vegetables hanging out to dry, strung from bamboo poles; the bright green of paddy fields and early spring rice; the same clustered villages, the earthbordered fields, the water buffaloes, the water or manure carrier, his two buckets slung from the pole over his shoulder and the shallow wide-mouthed cone ladle with which to ladle the night soil out; the women squatting on a stoop at the edge of a dirty pond washing vegetables, honey-buckets and clothes; the houses—mud with thatched roofs in the south, brick or stone in the northern countryside. In the cities, the high grey walls and tile roofs, the patterned inserts of decorative tile, the high threshold and the big gates with a small entrance like the eye of the needle and the rounded stone guard posts.

In Peking, the tailor, the bookshop, the market were where they had always been; so, too, the Peking Union Medical College looming dark and grey in the cold black dawn of February, the grace somehow

accommodations in hotels from Peking to Canton, the marshaling of special transport, the opening of museums, the access—albeit ceremonial—to top levels of governmental cultural leaders, the management of assorted special requests from interviews to banquets, the parting of shopping lines at counters like the waters of the Red Sea, all these spoke to special privilege. But this time it was different. We were to exist in a clear glass booth shrewdly designed to protect China from us, not

gone from the flowing lines of its Rockefeller-bestowed buildings and the green drained from its curving tiled roofs. But for all its grime and bustle, it seemed now more than ever the medical center for the people of Peking. In Nanking, on the residential street behind the University of Nanking which I knew as a child, the cobblestones are still there, the house where Jimmy Thomson, now curator of Nieman fellowships at Harvard, grew up, still stands next to the house where Pearl Buck lived, across the street from where the Loves, the Stewards, the Fenns and all the others had lived. The trees, the high walls, and the gates are still there. What do they now protect? The first beauty parlor I ever saw still stands where it stood over forty years ago, offering more haircuts than permanent waves these days. And in Peking the same hutongs, now tidier, run past the houses where I lived.

All this produced a reassuring sense of visual continuity that helped anchor one as high and disembodied as I.

There were other echoes of a past familiar life: the easy comfort of cordial reception and entertainment by resident Americans (diplomats now)—one isolated group seeking out another, the almost oppressive presence of pre-war life in Shanghai where the white-coated, English-speaking staff, the elegance of the old French hotel where the bathroom faucets still bear their European markings, and the size of rooms, the closets, the two sets of doors with the slits top and bottom for air circulation in the torrid summers—all bespeak an origin that even the buffing away of the Western company name from the elevators cannot deny. You could shut your eyes and almost convince yourself you had to get ready to go to tea on Rue Roi Albert or Avenue Edward the VII and that was pretty awful.

I was grateful for what I did not see.

No beggars, no children in tatters combing through garbage and slag heaps. No maimed rickshaw coolies, no bullying or jeering soldiers, no evidence of hunger, no hawkers selling a few peanuts or cigarettes or what-not under a street lamp or miserable bean oil lamp past midnight.

No rickshaws and so no rickshaw coolies being beaten up by a policeman, the rickshaw cushion confiscated and with it the livelihood of the day; no bullying of the weak by the strong, no fighting to get on a bus or train, no cartons of chickens or pigs to share a seat with you, no suffering animals, stray dogs or cats. Indeed my total count of dogs in China was sixteen (of which nine were in a show) and three cats; no rawboned draft animals being struck by angry carters out of hunger and frustration. No smell of stale garbage. No one without shoes—only one without stockings.

There were surprises, too, even in the familiar.

I had thought the battle against superstition had been blunter but burial mounds are still prevalent, taking up valuable land in central China. Incense is still being burned and stones still being thrown on the back of the elephants at the Ming Tombs in Nanking in prayers for sons. The red door slogans for New Year's seemed from the few characters I could catch to be less political in the countryside near the Great Wall than they were in Peking.

There were political surprises, too. At Sun Yat-sen's tomb in Nanking his slogans still grace the arches going up the mountain to the mausoleum; his will still graces the interior of that structure and his body still lies in the round vault at the back—all without benefit of “correction” or interpretation. But the statue of Sun that used to dominate the major traffic circle inside the city has been moved out here and now stands at the foot of the approach to the tomb.

In the country the land looked the same and yet different, for there

has been and there is continuing an incredible re-making of old fields into larger ones and the reclaiming of land for new uses. There were crowds of people working a field instead of the solitary tillers of old and, now, a row of bicycles drawn up at the edge of the field like a new parking lot. There was little in the way of work clothes; you seemed to farm in your Sunday best. I found this striking.

Surprising, too, was the change of language - or rather the spread of the national language over China so that I, who speak only Mandarin, could function with ease from Peking to Canton between which, even in my lifetime, natives have needed interpreters to understand each other.

Then there is the matter of public toilets and honey-buckets. Instead of the free-wheeling practices of the past, China is now plastered with simple beside-the-street in-and-out public toilets. In the south, at least, this is apparently bolstered by a drive to collect the wastes of night in honey-buckets which are then collected in honey-carts and taken to a central honeystation - which in Shanghai, at least, looked much like a gas station with a big truck like a gas truck being filled up. The honey-buckets are washed and left out to dry and air all day for use again at night.

Oddly, there was an apparent deterioration in the superficial standard of living from north to south. I saw one patch on the dusk jacket of one child in a village near the Great Wall but lots of patched clothing from Nanking south. In the south, in Nanking, there were

Forbidden City or across the Bund in Shanghai, old ladies up from the country for a look at the wonders that Mao had wrought.

-The new tourism; flocks of Chinese pouring through the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace or the Ming Tombs, even in winter. These are ordinary people who would never have gone inside before; theirs is an almost embarrassed pride that this is theirs and they are there. Everywhere there are family units - mother, father and child - all snapping pictures with Chinese-made cameras and Chinese film. Incredible!

-There is delight in the feeling that the country now belongs to the people who live in it. Not only are people travelling and touring, they are also in theaters being entertained for tickets which cost virtually nothing even by their standards. They are in stores, buying everything (clothes, household goods, toys, medicine) is available for their wants - locally manufactured, garish, but it works and it is cheap. Even bicycles and television sets which are priced at about our level are not expensive in a society that knows no inflation, no panic on medical care or retirement and banks about a quarter of its monthly pay check.

There is a feeling of purpose in the air. Everyone has his role to perform and, more important, he knows where it fits in the scheme of things. He doesn't have to ask if this is important-the basic assumption of society is that we are all inter-related and everything is connected with the next. You are a shopkeeper not on your own but as a member

Everywhere there are family units – mother, father and child – all snapping pictures with Chinese-made cameras and Chinese film. Incredible!

many pedicabs which have vanished from the north. The flat-bed carts with heavy loads which are pulled mostly by beasts or motors in the north are here pulled, disconcertingly often, by human beings. Bicyclists with small loads of vegetables on their backs suggest forced marketing or produce from the private lots. Or is this imagination? The thatched roof and mud-hut houses are more prevalent here than in the north, albeit now spruced-up. The difference is traditional but the pace of replacement by brick and glass is slower than I had anticipated or hoped. Overall, the maintenance of buildings is more depressing in the south than in the north and, oddly, seems worse than before. Simply put, there is none.

For the first time I could understand-not just explain-how people could function under the austere conditions of living and schooling which they face-tight quarters, no heat, poor light, hard benches, etc. Prison had taught me that. I myself had existed in a cell just above freezing, wearing padded clothing, with no inside toilet and a poor coarse diet. I know people can exist; with slightly better food, they can think. What is the optimal balance of comfort and efficiency? China will not have to face the problem for a long time. America has made her choice.

I almost found the puritanical ethic to which I was born, and had refined for me in prison, surprisingly easy to take. I can live with the logic of centralized planning, the ability to decide that we shall have a health scheme or we shall take this or that as a national priority and make the national good stick above personal advantage. I can accept the "person-in-the-role," not the "person-for-himself" approach, which has always determined Chinese society but which my colleagues found repugnant and somehow frightening.

For me there are new delights on the human scale.

-Soldiers and sailors escorting their old mothers through the

of a collective or cooperative of shopkeepers. The service you are performing is therefore necessary and socially acceptable. And with this comes the great sense of identity and thus a new dignity.

There is a palpable feeling of literacy in the air. This is hard to put your finger on, but it is there. We know that kids are getting an elementary school education and we can feel it. There are no letter writers sitting around. People read the price signs in 10 stores, the sign boards on movie theaters, the bus maps, the menus. They are reading newspapers; the bookstores run little in-house sit-down-and-read lending libraries and they are full.

Women, whom all the studies tell us do not yet have their fair share, are doing much better. There are women drivers, barefoot doctors, guides; how they are paid I do not know but they are in new roles, leading new lives.

There is the overwhelming sense of cleanliness and health that may strike the returnee more than the initial visitor. The streets are clean, the side alleys are clean with garbage neatly stacked boxes near proper signs. It was winter and there were no flies, but also no piles of excrement or slop on which they could feast in warmer weather. The gross environment of the cities at least has been cleaned up but there seems little concern for other aspects of environmental protection.

The health of the people is obvious. Like our population they are well-fed, but I suspect many more conditions go undetected or untreated there than here-particularly eyes, teeth, TB, and cancer.

The three-tier health delivery system is a delightful model rational if rudimentary. What the paramedic barefoot doctor cannot handle goes to the commune or local clinic and from there, if need be; to the district or municipal full-service hospital. The system is stronger on public health and emergency services than on preventive or corrective maintenance.

On a real, if minor, personal level, there is justice in this design.

My last home in Nanking is now a district health station. That would have pleased my father, who, from the time he went to China in the first year of the Republic until he left in the first year of the People's Republic, devoted the intervening thirty-eight years to improving the life of the people about him in China. He was never comfortable behind the big grey wall, the servants' quarters across the back court from the main house. The well-baby clinics, public health and sanitation classes, the vaccination campaigns which my mother and he and others in the mission supported have now taken root in the very setting he left to return home, a sick man to die a few years later of cancer.

Gradually it hits me—the wonder of the transformation that is proceeding ahead on all fronts at once—in city and town, in industry as well as in society. The dispossessed from the pits of the mines are not only being fed, they are also learning English at the universities or becoming athletes and acrobats, some to go on world tour. There is transformation in all forms of art (if you can call it that), both Western and Chinese; Western and new types of Chinese musical instruments are being manufactured. Geological exploration proceeds apace; defense and research are pushed. Resources are thin but they are being spread and used. There is no drain in spirit or substance of a non-participatory negative force on welfare.

And this leads to rumination on what a fragile thing an "age" is despite the comforting visual and behavioral continuity, China is a categorically different society re-made in short order from the bottom up. What does this tell us about the shifts of history—and what promises could it prod us to fulfill?

There were contradictions, oh so many contradictions!

-The emphasis on productive labor but the wasteful intensiveness of carving thirty-seven concentric ivory balls for display, since no one has the necessary U.S. \$20,000 to buy them.

-The emphasis on health but the lack of interest in the smoking-cancer link. -The emphasis on improving the conditions of the population but the lack of safety measures in factories.

-The emphasis on construction but the disinterest in maintenance.

Deep inside of me all is not well; there is strain and resentment. I resent in a very personal way the hypocrisy—or is it stupidity—of certain policies I know they will surely regret. I feel betrayed; this revolution is too good for that. What is the arrogant nonsense that tore down the centuries-old Peking city wall and is even now beginning to dismantle large sections of the even more impressive Nanking wall?

The antique shop is upsetting. My sympathy is with the owners of these items confiscated, no doubt, during the Cultural Revolution. I am angered by the stupidity of allowing irreplaceable artifacts of the past out of the country, even for foreign exchange, but my anger is tempered by my wish that I had money enough to buy sixty-dollar plates, one-hundred-dollar bowls, two-hundred-dollar robes, and even more expensive Chinese furniture. Money, I know, would have subverted principle; how deep does my resentment go? I settle for some silver chains with charms to lock children to the earth but which can do little for me other than to give me a tangible possession from my old home town. But not too painfully tangible, for suddenly I see on a tray of small silver objects a tea strainer like one I remember as a child with a cut-out bamboo pattern border around a silver mesh basket with the letter "M" on it. Could it be? We had, after all, been looted twice. It is too much to face; I leave it there.

I resent the shows put on for us, the libraries with suspiciously stocked shelves where books have not been removed for more than

ten years and where novels are housed near economics and history. I resent not getting straightforward answers to straightforward questions. Why are so many shops along the streets of Nanking boarded up in such a crazy pattern? How are the universities really run? Do you honestly enjoy the revolutionary ballets? Oh, how I would like to suggest that we take off our shoes and sit down and talk, but it is useless. I can give the speech, too.

I do not like feeling like a conspirator seeking out my old haunts in Peking, or wheedling a taxi out of the authorities in Nanking to go by my old homes. I resent not being able to go inside the schools and universities I used to frequent. I go past Ginling College but cannot enter. I cannot even find the site of Hillcrest.

The lack of maintenance appalls. The colonial Williamsburg buildings of the Shanghai American School and the lovely open quadrangle and playing fields now hide behind an eightfoot grey wall over which only the unpainted cupola still is visible. The gate where the bicycle house used to be is still on a slant at the corner but there is no sign on it. I have been warned not to take pictures. It is clearly an army installation.

Across the street the Community Church still stands, American suburbia, vine-covered and the same but inside I hear it is a basketball court. Behind, the manse is still there—a substantial brick residence—for whom or what?

I am startled and apprehensive as the friendliness of the old lady who spontaneously shares her umbrella during a sudden downpour, shrivels into furtive panic when she learns I am a missionary's daughter come home. But no one has heard. She is a retired nurse, she says, whose whole career was spent at — she points to the old mission-run Drum Tower Hospital. The years make it plain she trained under those I knew there as a child but she does not answer. I, too, have known this fear and I am a little sick.

I feel constrained at not being able to engage in conversation with professors and staff at the universities about people and problems on which we once would have shared a common approach. I want to ask more of the English teacher at Tsinghua who was educated at Pembroke and has a sister in Nebraska. I want to reminisce about friends and the past with the old professor in Nanking. Let's be honest. This is my old imperialist self reasserting itself, wanting through contact with these people to re-establish myself in a now-strange environment.

Indeed, I am irritated with myself for trying to get some feeling of identity through establishing myself with the guides. I am surprised at how easily the line comes back — I had had four years of good training, remember? How I wish they would cut the nonsense. I long for an acceptance that can never come.

I resent thinking about what would be appropriate to discuss with Dr. Wu Yi-fang, a friend of my childhood and distinguished Michigan alumna. She clearly felt no restraint. And I did not like it that the next day the guide expressed surprise that I had really known Dr. Wu as well as I had said. He remarked, somewhat incredulously, "She said she was delighted to see you. She knows your mother very well, too."

Finally I remember, not necessarily to my credit, the thought that flashed through my mind at the beautiful aristocratic face of an older woman I saw on Wang Fu Ching in Peking. Even the grey proletarian garb could not hide the breeding and assurance behind that handsome countenance. Perhaps, I thought, perhaps we could talk. Perhaps you could tell me what this is all about.

I know I can't go home again. But I am glad I tried.

Research on Ding Ling: March–August 1981

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My purpose in going to China was to collect material for a critical biography of Ding Ling. When I began my study of modern China's most famous and controversial woman writer some years ago, no one in the outside world, including myself, had any idea of whether she was dead or alive. She had been expelled from the Chinese Communist Party in 1958 after the anti-rightist campaign and henceforth became a non-person, her writings banned wholesale, her name never mentioned in public.

In June 1979, the very same month that I was completing a manuscript on the development of her fiction, Ding Ling was rehabilitated. Suddenly it became possible to visit the writer herself, to find out perhaps what had happened during those 20 years of silence, and to attempt a biography, not just for its intrinsic dramatic interest; great as that was, but for the ways it would exemplify the relationship between literature and politics in modern China. Ding Ling was then 77, her problems of ill-health and old age exacerbated by the hardships suffered in exile and solitary imprisonment. If this research was to be carried out at all, it seemed important to begin soon. I applied for a grant from the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China and, as a research scholar in its National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China, went to China for six months. My research was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) agreed to be my sponsoring unit. While collecting data for a longer substantive critical biography, I also had more immediate objectives. One was to bring up-to-date the brief biographical sketch with which I had introduced my analytical study of Ding Ling's fiction and the other to compile as an appendix a chronological list giving the first publication date of all her novels and short stories.

What I planned to do during my six-month stay in China was, of course, to talk to Ding Ling herself and interview others who had known or worked with her. One goal was to read everything she had ever written, including short pieces in ephemeral periodicals or local newspapers that were not available in this country. I also hoped to meet with other literary scholars and researchers who might be working on the same subject to exchange information and compare methods of approach. It was my good fortune not only to have many conversations with Ding Ling but also to be able to watch her perform and interact with others in a variety of situations. I had



the rare experience of spending nine days as another "inmate" in the Gulangyu Convalescent Home in Fujian where she was spending the winter months. Most rewarding of all, I traveled with her to the state farms of northeastern Heilongjiang, where she had spent her 12 years in exile doing labor reform. These frontier areas are closed to outsiders, and not surprisingly, my request for a travel permit was flatly rejected. I went to talk to the people in the Foreign Affairs Bureau of CASS, and at their suggestion but without much encouragement, I submitted a long letter outlining my research objectives for them to forward to the proper authorities. Although one hardly knows to what to attribute the change in decision, a little over a week before Ding Ling's group was to depart for the Northeast, I learned I was to be granted a travel permit after all.

Apart from Ding Ling and her husband Chen Ming, the group of ten consisted of writers, editors, and an occasional reporter. All of us in her entourage were anxious to learn something about Ding Ling's experiences while she had been in the Great Northern Wilderness (*beidahuang*), to get a visual impression of this unique place in China, and to talk to those who had known her and what it was like during that unimaginable time of 1958 to 1970. I was the only "foreign guest" there. During the 20 days that we traveled and intimately lived together, I gained some insight into the dynamics of small group relationships in contemporary Chinese society.

The remainder of my stay in China was roughly divided half and half between Shanghai and Beijing. The Institute of Literature arranged for me to interview writers and publishers and introduced me to the various libraries.

My sponsoring institution, the Institute of Literature of CASS, or more specifically the Modern Literature Section, took its responsibilities toward me seriously and tried to meet all my requests to the best of its ability. They were, however, apparently operating under some official guidelines for the treatment of foreign scholars, and this put certain constraints on our relationship.

Since I had lived in China some 33 years ago, I was not provided



Left:
Ding Ling, 1981

Right:
Yi-tsi Feuerwerker
is introduced
to Zhou Enlai,
Beijing 1973.
Photo courtesy
of Albert and
Yi-tsi Feuerwerker.

with a guide. The Foreign Affairs Bureau of CASS made arrangements for living and travel. One contact person at the Modern Literature Section was responsible for setting up interviews with writers at my request and for accompanying me to them. She was the one who secured the letters of introduction required for each library, made the preliminary visits in each case, and conducted the additional negotiations necessary for me to use the newspaper section or the rare book room. One recent graduate, a young "rookie" who had just joined the institute, was designated to run errands for me, to hunt up books from the institute's collection and deliver them to my room. Two other members of the group were additionally charged with perhaps the more social side of my life: we went to plays and toured museums together.

I did not really learn who in the group might be working in areas of research close to mine. One does not enjoy the free and easy associations typical of similar situations in the US: talking shop over lunch, casual visits at homes, etc. It is quite possible that if I had stayed longer than the two and half months I did in Beijing, some of the constraints would have been overcome. These relationships did become more open over time. People eventually talked feelingly about their work, their plans and hopes for the future.

A dramatic revelation of the limits of public and formal contacts in contrast to the possibilities of academically meaningful exchange on a more personal level was provided

scholars, many of them young, earnest, and hard-working, were also the source of much information; they guided me to library collections and revealed the whereabouts of obscure journals.

Most things in China depend on building a relationship. One must give the other side time to perceive and formulate an opinion about who one is, not just walk in and expect service. Library staffs turned ever more cooperative as I became a continuing presence. The fact that I was only able to see some writers once was a severe handicap. Thus time and repeated contact are of the utmost importance. This contact includes exchange and travel between the two countries. When Ma Liangchun, the head of the Modern Literature Section, came to this country on the Distinguished Scholar Exchange Program from January 20 to March 6 this year, he stopped over at the University of Michigan. He brought with him some materials that I had despaired of getting in Beijing. My acquaintances in Beijing had gone through extraordinary efforts to procure them for me because our relationship, with Ma Liangchun's visit, seemed now to be an ongoing one. When Ding Ling, who had been at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa last fall, came with her husband Chen Ming to Michigan, we felt all the pleasure of a reunion. In building relationships, while patience is a requisite virtue, so also are faith and a certain expectation that things will work out.

For someone in my field of interest — modern Chinese literature — research in China is, of course, indispensable. That is simply where

The many hours spent with them discussing the fine points of Ding Ling's fiction and leading on to larger issues were among the most exhilarating of my life.

by my experience in Shanghai. There my unit was the Institute of Literature in the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. After my two-hour talk there, which did not take place until two days before I was due to leave China, one member of the institute who had apparently not been told anything about my work before, came to see me the next day with some articles on Ding Ling and an invitation to his house that evening to see his private collection of 1930s Shanghai periodicals. Thus it was that literally on the eve of my departure I was treated to a few tantalizing glimpses of a fantastic collection containing several thousand items, many not available elsewhere, piled floor to ceiling in a tiny bed-study room. My flight was only hours away.

It was usually the contacts beyond the public and rather confining arrangements of the sponsoring unit that turned out to be the most useful and exciting. Through Ding Ling I was able to meet other scholars and researchers who were also working on her or other areas of modern Chinese literature. The many hours spent with them discussing the fine points of Ding Ling's fiction and leading on to larger issues were among the most exhilarating of my life. Our critical approaches were dissimilar, although I was astonished at some new insights that were beginning to be articulated while staying within the broad Marxist framework; certainly they were anxious to know more about other methods and interpretations. Here it was that I began to perceive, fatuously perhaps, that I was acquiring a mission in China. I burned to introduce Western methods of literary analysis to those I met, so concerned to widen their intellectual horizons of literary study. They sensed the need to approach and evaluate literature as more than ideological documents or sociological textbooks. We shared the pleasure of looking at literature together and discovered that deeper insights could be yielded as we exchanged alternative analytical methods. These

the material is. But it is also important to acquire some sense of that literature in its social and human context, of the role that literature plays in people's lives. In post-Mao China, because of the new relative liberation, the opening up of "forbidden zones" to writing, and the legacy of the martyrdom of writers, literature is seen as a source of truth and attains a moral authority inconceivable in this country.

While collecting materials only available there and learning about the reality of China, we need to remember that a research stay is a two-way process, that we also have something to offer. No one knows how long the present situation will last. The isolation and cultural deprivation of the recent past in China have created a tremendous eagerness for ideas and information from the outside world, which each of us in his own way represents. To our Chinese colleagues in the humanities and the social sciences who are unlikely to have any opportunity to study abroad, we are an important channel to the alternative theories and methodologies of our common discipline. The most rewarding discovery for me during my stay in China was that we are all of us participants in an international intellectual community within which there can be genuine communication.

Upon arriving in China I had been initially overwhelmed by the massive evidence of the destructiveness of the Cultural Revolution. I could not but marvel at the capacity of these seemingly diehard scholars to carry on with their work after such devastation. In the end I came away with a renewed respect for the universal commitment to intellectual endeavors, reassured and moved by the recognition of those bonds that linked us in spite of the yawning gulfs created by political restraints and history.

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An Interview with Robert Dernberger: A Career in Chinese Studies

Interviewed by Siobahn LaPiana

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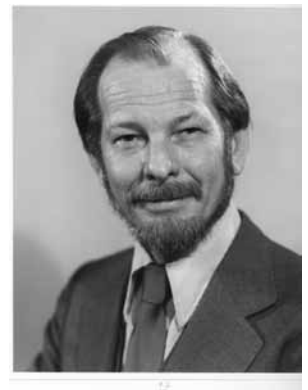
Dernberger: I was born and raised in a factory town where my grandfather, father, aunts and uncles all worked for General Motors. I worked there, too and then got a fellowship from General Motors to go to engineering school and become an engineer. I didn't like engineering school that much. I had talked to someone who had successfully gone through this engineering program—he was an engineer in an engine plant—and I asked him to comment on some of the exciting things in his job. And his response was that he had moved the carburetor on the engine block and I thought—this is not very exciting. But it was a set way of life—country club living, everybody had a sailboat, everybody played golf. It was an upper class set in Pontiac, Michigan with no knowledge of the outside world at all. This was just after high school. But then, in 1949, the Korean War came along. I was drafted into the Army in early 1950. There, I was given a series of exams. Because I had had a lot of math and engineering courses they decided to send me to cryptography school in Camp Gordon, Georgia. But the class for cryptographers didn't open for several months, so in the meantime I was doing guard duty and other miscellaneous jobs. Because the thought of spending time in courses at Camp Gordon didn't appeal to me, I would keep looking at the bulletin board. There was this wonderful school of languages in Monterey, California, that really caught my eye. When I saw that, I knew that was for me. I had to take a language aptitude test which was based on a fake language. I did very well on it because I had studied Latin in high school. I never knew what Latin was going to do for me, but it sure helped me on that exam. I passed that with a high score and was told I had my choice of languages. I chose German because I knew I'd be going back to college and I knew I needed to study a foreign language there. When I arrived at the school in Monterey, they gave me a big pile of books on China and Chinese. I ran over to the Sergeant and said: "Wait a minute, you've made a mistake, I'm supposed to be studying German!" He said, "Everybody's taking Persian or Chinese, no German." Mosaddegh had just seized the oil wells in Iran, so people were being given intensive courses in Persian, and the Chinese troops had just crossed the Yalu River and we were being given hurry up training in Chinese. It was an excellent school. You would have really had to fight it not to learn the language.

LaPiana: Did you have the sense that you were nevertheless being prepared to go to war?

Dernberger: I was not sure. These were not military people. This was just language. The school was run by professional language people, although it was administered by the military. You were assigned fifty words per day to memorize, and every two weeks there were exams. They would take you in a room and you'd overhear a conversation between two people and then you'd have to write it down. You would

be taken to the airport, and the person with you would speak only Chinese and you were to be the interpreter. It was a very intensive program. Five days a week, six courses a day, four people in a class. Some people failed out because they were tone deaf, so very quickly we lost a third of our class. But the rest of us stayed until the end. I found it fascinating and I enjoyed the immersion experience. After fourteen

months in the school they sent us to Washington, D.C.. The United States was fighting the Korean War with maps of Korea made by the Japanese and which thus had Japanese place names all over them. At the bottom of these maps it said "Thanks to the University of Michigan," It was the University of Michigan Japan Center which had acquired these hand-drawn maps of Korea from the Japanese after the Second World War. We had to translate the place names into Chinese because the Chinese were communicating in Chinese, not in Japanese or Korean, They would say they were moving troops up to such and such a place and no one had any idea where it was because we had no Chinese maps. So we were put through a crash course in putting Chinese names onto these maps. After that we were trained to learn telegraphic Chinese. By telegraph the Chinese communicated with numbers, not characters. There was a four-digit number for every Chinese character. But the Chinese were also mixing up the numbers by putting them into code. So each of us was assigned a special code to work on. Mine was called "Canoe," I believe. That may be a security matter still, I don't know! These were basic codes that they used over and over again. I was able to translate about 50% of the messages I received. It was rather boring work. For each message you had to say whether your translation was possible, probable or certain. We learned very quickly to always use possible, because if you said it was probable then you became responsible for the army's actions in response to the message! It was sort of a game. The trouble was that the Chinese were very security conscious and they would often make up a new code for each message. The only time we made headway was when the Chinese would slip and someone would ask for a correction. If the correction was given in regular Chinese we'd pick up on it. Naturally, most of those people who made this mistake would never be heard on the radio again. After that they were off the air. So when we worked with our Chinese in Korea it was all telegraphic code and most of us never saw a Chinese character or heard a Chinese word. Luckily, I was an



exception. I succeeded in getting myself transferred to interrogating Chinese prisoners.

LaPiana: So your main duties during the Korean War were intercepting these telegraph messages and interrogating prisoners?

Dernberger: Yes. As an interrogator I was given a jeep and a driver and we would drive around to places on the front where Chinese prisoners of war were held and I would interrogate them. This way I got out to see a little bit of Korea. Many times the prisoners did not know very much. They were very eager to tell us anything, because they thought we would treat them well if they talked, but actually we treated them all the same.

LaPiana: Was that in fact your first contact with Asian people?

Dernberger: Actually, no. Before the work in Korea we had spent 6 months in Japan for further training. But the interrogation of prisoners was very interesting.

LaPiana: Did you feel at all limited by your role as a U.S. Army interrogator?

Dernberger: Well, of course I was assigned to find out things. Things I myself was not too interested in, like the size of the gun that they were firing. But in the course of it, I was given permission to warm up to the person, to ask them about their family and where they were from. The Korean guards were not too kind to the Chinese prisoners and this made it difficult to be friendly with them sometimes. In general the prisoners did not know very much. They didn't know a lot about their unit or about the technology being used. They were willing, though. Some of them had stolen documents from their company to bring to you, but usually it was things like the instructions on how to inflate the tire on the truck or something like that.

LaPiana: So the soldiers would steal these things before they were captured?

Dernberger: Yes. Most of them wanted to be captured, actually. Life was pretty tough for them. And they were expendable. There were a lot of indications that they were willing to be captured.

LaPiana: And what became of the prisoners after the war?

Dernberger: Well, the settlement of the war was that each individual prisoner would be asked, by both sides, if they wanted to return home or to stay. I think about 23 Americans stayed in Korea with the Chinese. As opposed to 13,000 Chinese who did not opt to go back to China.

LaPiana: How long were you in China and Korea?

Dernberger: Two years. After the war was over I entered the University of Michigan with the GI Bill. The University tuition was \$90 then! I came to the University of Michigan with the intention of studying political science and going to Law School. The age of everyone becoming an engineer was over, and the age of everyone wanting to become a doctor or lawyer was coming in. So I had my eye set on that. I was not going to pursue my study of China or of the Chinese language because, to tell you the truth, I didn't know that was a field of study. Studying Asia didn't seem like a possibility. But the University notified the Japan Center that I had all this background in Chinese language. And the Japan Center asked to talk with me. I met with Jim Crump, who just recently retired from the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures. Jim said that if I wanted to get to Law School, the quickest way was to get a B.A. in Chinese Studies because I already had the equivalent of four years of language. So I took my B.A. in Far Eastern Studies, so as to get through the degree quicker. After my B.A., I enrolled in graduate school in Political Science here at

the University of Michigan, as well. I was still intending to go to Law School. But then I met Professor C.F. Remer, who was working in the Economics Department. He was a grand old China hand. He had taught in Shanghai at Saint John's for several years, and had taken the first Chinese commercial air flight, which set down in the mud banks of the Woosung River. He also gave the eulogy at Sheng Hsuan-Huai's funeral. He was recognized as the first Western-style capitalist in China. He knew Madame Zhou En Lai and protected her in his house when the Nationalist police came to arrest her. He knew Madame Sun Yat Sen, and he was an office mate of Alger Hiss.

LaPiana: What was the background of Professor Remer?

Dernberger: He had graduated from Harvard and had passed the exam to have a government job, but he was too young so he decided to spend a year going off to Asia looking around. But once he got there it was too late, he was hooked! He spent a lot of his life in Asia. At the University of Michigan he was working on a project on China's foreign trade. In 1953, when I first came to the University as a student, he asked if I would be a Research Assistant for him. He is the person who made the strongest impression on me of anyone in my life. He lived and breathed China. His house was filled with art and artifacts. He had brought relief carts filled with grain into famine areas in China and the villagers had given him vases and tribute silk and all this was hung on his walls and stored in glass cases. He had a thousand stories to tell about his life in China and his love for the Chinese. He had a personal affinity for the Chinese people.

LaPiana: What was his main area of study?

Dernberger: International Trade and Chinese economics. He wrote two books that still stand up as standards in their field: China's Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment in China. Those two books are used by the Chinese themselves and by the Japanese as references for China's foreign trade and investment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

LaPiana: How did his framing of the field influence your own work?

Dernberger: Well he was a professor who personalized his relation with me. He took me into his house and would often invite me and my wife over for dinner. He talked about China constantly, and would pose questions like: "How are they going to feed the Chinese? How are the Communists going to do it?" He was involved, he cared about the subject. When he took trips to the World Bank in Washington he would take me with him, and introduce me to people. This was very impressive stuff. It gave me, for the first time, something that wasn't just a novelty but was something I could really do, really work on. At that point, though, I was still intending to go on to law school. But then Professor Remer went to work on me and said that from his point of view, it would be more meaningful to work in economics, especially on the question of how the Chinese could escape famine.

LaPiana: So through him you took on this concern for the Chinese people yourself?

Dernberger: No, I can't say that. He lived with them, ate with them, and loved them. I never did that. By this time you couldn't go to China. It was isolated. In fact we were told not even to talk about our work as students in Chinese studies. The University of Michigan was a state school, and there was some concern that the state legislature would be upset if they knew we were using state resources to study the enemy, so to speak, sympathetically.

LaPiana: So what was it like to be engaged in that kind of work at the height of the Cold War?

Dernberger: Well just before that time, a representative of the House McCarren Un-American Activities Committee had come through Ann Arbor and had really raised hell by questioning some math professors and a couple of economics professors about their communist activities and ties. I don't know whether they were or were not Communists; they might well have been communist sympathizers. But certainly I don't think they were a threat to the United States. Larry Klein, who was later to win the Nobel Prize, was an Assistant Professor here at the University of Michigan and he left because of this. But overall the campus was pretty dead on this issue. Along with Archie Singham, who later came back to lead the Black Action Strike and who was studying Political Science then, I started a Marxist study group down in the basement of South Quad. We would meet in the evening to discuss various books. I remember the first one was Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*. But this was in the early to mid 1950s, and there was just no interest. We also tried to get a group together called the Robin Hoods, to complain about McCarthyism. I can remember going across the diag with a green feather in my hat, to show I belonged to the group. But there was just no support for this. It was the height of the Cold War and there was a lot of apathy. Attacking people as Communists just didn't make large numbers of people upset.

LaPiana: What about Professor Remer? Was he ever suspected of having Communist sympathies?

Dernberger: Well, I talked to him a lot about this. He was not a Communist but he had supported people like Wittfogel, helping him to get out of Germany. He also supported Owen Lattimore and Alger Hiss. He never believed Alger Hiss could have been guilty. Remer was a member of the Council on Pacific Relations, a group that was later accused of being socialist. As I said, he didn't have any feeling that these were bad people or evil people. They were worried about the same thing he was-how are you going to feed all these people? In our discussions he never viewed these people as a threat to the United States, whereas he did view McCarthy and these people as a threat. But I didn't notice that he was that active politically. Mostly Professor Remer, myself, and three native Chinese worked on research projects on China's foreign trade and domestic economy. Across the hall from us, Wolf Stolper and some of his students were working on East Germany. So you might say we were really a hot-bed of socialism over in the old Economics building. In this process I finally became convinced to drop my attempts to continue on in political science and go on to law school. So I eventually got an M.A. in economics. Then Professor Remer retired. But before he went off he helped me to get a fellowship with the Ford Foundation so that I could finish graduate school. I was one of the first recipients of the Ford Foundation foreign-area doctoral program fellowships. They were a little worried about my age, because I was about 30 at the time, but there weren't too many people around with my background. So with minimal effort I got the grant to go to Harvard. Alexander Eckstein had been an expert on Eastern Europe in the State Department and then had gone on to work on China, and was given a grant from Harvard to teach and to research there. I had met him and felt that he would be a reasonable person to study under.

LaPiana: Would you say that the ties between the government and area studies were stronger then?

Dernberger: Area studies was dominated by government concerns. Professors had worked for the government, done research for the government, received funds from the government. And in fact in the early to late 1960s, Ford funds for research were administered by a committee set up like a government operation. I attended a

meeting where I refused to go along with them, because their vision of scholarship was completely mechanical. They didn't value analysis or asking important questions, but had a narrow focus and limited objectives in a list of assignments: what is the gross domestic product, textile output, coal output, etc. This committee went bankrupt for lack of ideas and gave the money back to the Ford Foundation.

LaPiana: Was it a challenge for you to be someone who was at once focusing on China and on the other hand getting a Ph.D. in economics?

Dernberger: It is very difficult in economics to also be an area person. In fact, I have been told by a colleague in the Economics Department that "You can't be a good area person and a good economist at the same time." The field of economics tries to identify particular things that are not institutionally or culturally-bound, I don't mean to make too much of this, but the field assumes common behavioral traits. Institutions, culture, and other differences are not supposed to matter very much. Basically there is an assumption of "rational man." You look at micro, macro, money and banking, and fiscal policy, not at "China." This split has been a problem all my life. I'm very glad I did what I did. It has sustained me up to this point, in spite of the difficulties.

LaPiana: Do you think the gap between area studies and economics is the same as it was throughout your career? Is it more pronounced or less pronounced?

Dernberger: I'd say the gap is becoming more pronounced. There have been tremendous advances in economics and in knowledge itself. Economics has become something like a professional school, with a very specialized language. This wasn't true when I started out. Also there is now a terrible competitiveness to be number one as a department. Before, Oberlin was Oberlin, Stanford was Stanford, Michigan was Michigan—each school had its own special characteristics—but now because they've gotten into this ratings game, MIT defines what economics is. MIT is the model. My argument has always been that we can live together. I can see the merit of looking at things the way my colleagues do, but I hold that there are other ways of looking at things or other questions to raise, as well, and that you shouldn't throw out the baby with the bathwater. There are people who want to study China and it does take something in addition to just the normal theories and analyses to figure it out. If you go in thinking this is just another market economy and rational man is the same throughout the world, you'll go wrong. I don't want to destroy the economics department—good luck to them! But where is the place for people like myself? I've had to fight that fight all my life. My first job was at the University of Chicago. They were looking for someone to work in their Center for Economic Development and Cultural Change, run by Burt Hoselitz. He studied problems of development with emphasis on such aspects as anthropology and culture, so he didn't fit very well with the rest of the economics department at Chicago. I was invited to go to that center because they wanted some work on China. When they gave me the offer, they sent it on Economics Department letterhead, so I thought I was getting an offer from the Economics Department, but when I got there I found it was from Hoselitz's research center instead. I took over editing their journal and teaching three courses per term. It was quite clear that I was not a theorist, but there was room for me anyway. So it didn't come to a head. So long as I played my role I was allowed to stay. Although I was a second class citizen in some sense, because I wasn't teaching graduate theory courses, they treated me well anyway. But the big attraction to me was the famous scholars - Saul Tax had his office down the hall, Saul

Bellow was upstairs, Harry Johnson was next door. There was a cluster of very interesting people. In Chicago most of us were in one or two buildings. For a young man coming out with his Ph.D. to be going to seminars and luncheons with these people was very exciting. I spent a sabbatical here [at the University of Michigan] because of the China Center and China library. There was quite a collection of well-known people here working on the Chinese economy. The Economics Department offered me a job and I decided to come here, but not in development because all the work in development was being done on French-speaking Africa. One of the key professors in development here thought that the Chinese were crazy and irrational people and thus that there was no reason to try to study them. He used to give my students a hard time. So my place here was in Comparative Systems. I was hired to teach the comparative course with Professor Eckstein. Eventually I became president of the American Association of Comparative Economics

LaPiana: It seems like the study of comparative economics would involve some consideration of cultural difference, wouldn't it?

Dernberger: Yes. It was easy here on many grounds. We had four people in this field in the 1970s, and the Ford Foundation gave the Comparative Systems Program here two or three grants. So we had money to hold major research conferences in this field. In my experience in the Economics Department at the University of Michigan over the past three decades, I can recognize the process of certain broad changes in the department. We were well-known for our work in applied fields, but I remember a department meeting in the old building where we discussed a need to train our students better in economic theory, or in what we call the "core." So we decided to beef up our "core." That opened a Pandora's box. We started hiring people in the theory core and it's been built up over the years, while applied areas have shrunk. You can readily see what's happening now - development is dying, comparative systems is dying - not because anyone is killing them, but just because they are being allowed to die out. Attention is being directed toward theory because that's where the competition is and that's where the fame is.

LaPiana: Can you talk a little bit about your visits to China in the 70s and 80s?

Dernberger: In 1975, I was a member of one of the first official American research delegations to enter China in decades. That was with the Rural Small-Scale Industry Delegation. When the Americans and the Chinese signed the Shanghai communique in 1972, Zhou Enlai had the smarts to start with trade and academic and scientific exchange. So the U.S. government, through the Committee on Exchanges with the People's Republic of China, created a delegation to investigate small-scale industry in China. They decided we had to write a book in exchange for getting to go to China. We had an anthropologist, a sociologist, a cement man, a chemical fertilizer man, and some experts on China's economy-Dwight Perkins, myself, and Tom Rawski-and off we went, first to Tokyo for three days, where we outlined the book. But when we got to China they had their own plans for us. I'm sure the guide assigned to us didn't like the job. He just wanted to get us in there and out of there as quickly as possible with no trouble. The Gang of Four was still active at that time and China was quite divided, one area might be moderate, another quite radical. They made us go see Dazhai, the site of the "Agricultural Miracle," and the Red Flag canal where they showed us movies of men hanging on ropes to dig this canal in the face of a cliff. It was supposedly built to bring water to this area which had had only one well before a well owned by an "evil landlord," of course.

LaPiana: So you basically had to give up control over what you could see and do.

Dernberger: We had no control over it at all. They briefed us on rural small-scale industry in Beijing and then sent us out to Dazhai and other model areas to see cornfields, i.e. agriculture, and we fought this, saying we had come to see rural small-scale industry. There was a lot of antagonism. There were other Americans who came to Dazhai, but they were mostly believers in leftwing causes. They wanted to get out there and help harvest the crops. We were a bunch of academics who wanted to see small-scale rural industry. At one time, the guide simply said to us "Why don't you just shut up and listen." So this kept on and he finally took us to a cement plant. One of the problems was that our guide ran the brigade at Dazhai and 2,500 Chinese came through there every day to see this miracle. The story was that they had built these farms from hilly, clay soil with their bare hands, without asking for help from the government, like true socialists. That was the story they wanted to tell, and we didn't care to hear it, we could read the story back in the States. (After Mao's death, the Communists admitted that the Dazhai story was a hoax). We did get to the cement plant. The cement expert got into a long discussion with the Chinese cement plant manager and the latter agreed to give the American specialist a sample of cement from this plant. That didn't make our guide happy. The guide accused us of stealing the cement! Luckily we had enough sense to apologize and act humbled and humiliated and so the next day the guide was very agreeable, even asking us where we wanted to go. But on the way there he took us to a lovely spot where we sat and listened to another fellow lecture us on how evil America was. A beautiful site with waterfalls and flowers where we sat sipping tea and listening to the horrors of America.

LaPiana: Did you get the feeling that they were telling these stories because they had been instructed to, or because they honestly wanted you to know how great their system was?

Dernberger: I don't know, but by the time we got there they had told their stories so many times to visitors, it was just part of their itinerary. Eventually they agreed to take us to small scale factories. But there they realized we meant business and changed their method of showing us the factories, so that we couldn't learn as much. After that we went down to Shanghai, which was a hotbed of the Gang of Four. Our host tried to make a deal with us: "If you fellows behave yourselves here, when we get to the South I'll take you wherever you want to go, but please control yourselves here." But we, of course, being typical Americans, couldn't control ourselves, and we did various things that here would be considered having fun, but there were seen as deadly serious. Arthur Stinchcombe, a sociologist from the University of Chicago, had a great sense of humor and he would write little essays during the trip, in particular one on China as "the country where the second coming had already occurred," the Chinese didn't like it very much. He'd stay up all night trying to discover the perfect drink in China, and writing these humorous essays. One of the worst things we did was at a banquet where some very powerful people were present. It wouldn't have cost us anything to be nice to the nasty guys, but we had to get even with them. We made a point of toasting the people we'd met who had been moderate and nice to us, and not mentioning the radicals who hadn't. And we ended with a toast to the person who had impressed us the most - the cook. We took a bottle of liquor out to him in the kitchen. There was our return banquet after this one with the same powerful people. They made a point of standing out in the hall until an hour after the banquet was supposed to begin, a gesture which is the height of insult in China. From that time on I think we improved a bit. We were given a lecture

by our host, and we saw that it really just hadn't been nice. We were young Americans. But we did write that book and it went through two printings and I believe is still available in bookstores. It's called *Rural Small-Scale Industry in China*.

LaPiana: I want to ask you one more question about your paper "Capitalism in Bloom." I know you are still revising it but I just thought you might expand on a few points. You write: "The adoption of a capitalist system does not explain China's success," and "a major systemic explanation for the past record of growth of the East Asian capitalist economies is authoritarian governments getting the policies right." In relation to these statements, can you talk a bit about where your thinking in economic theory is going?

Dernberger: There are elements that have become identified with capitalism that it's possible to have without having capitalism, such as markets and prices, for example. There are various elements of capitalism that are part of the explanation for China's success. There's no doubt about it. But what I'm objecting to is just calling these elements "capitalism" and attributing the success of East Asian economies to capitalism alone. Their success is due in large part to using those elements of capitalism along with a, well, authoritarian government, although it's not really an authoritarian government in the way we use this term. It's a government with the unity and the effectiveness to implement policies it wants to implement. A government that doesn't have to take these policies to the voters. That doesn't have to get a consensus solution. I'm talking about a form of government that doesn't have to look over its shoulder. Of course, it might have to worry about people revolting, but it's got a lot of leeway before it gets to that point. Unions aren't very powerful, and challenges to the government aren't very powerful, so it can effectively mobilize efforts to stimulate economic development. Now that's a very important aspect, along with the elements of capitalism. But the crucial thing is getting the policies right. The Chinese certainly mobilized and certainly implemented policies, but in the past they have really screwed things up over some of the things.

LaPiana: In other words, the Chinese mobilized, they implemented, but they didn't always get the policies right.

Dernberger: They got them backward, half the time. With the "Great Leap Forward," for example, they nearly ruined things. But since the early 1970s, they've been doing much better job, although they are far from problem-free.

LaPiana: It almost sounds like you're saying that an authoritarian government getting the policies right is likely to have more success than a democratic one, because of the authoritarian government's ability to implement and mobilize.

Dernberger: Yes, but you see the World Bank objects to this very much. For them it's really the basic principles of markets that matter, and all this attention to governments and their policies is really dangerous. It's true, they will admit, that Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, did happen to pursue very good policies, and therefore their economies worked very well. But the probability, in the view of the World Bank, is that the government won't adopt a good policy. You look around the world and governments don't have good policy. So in their eyes it's best to have capitalism and let the government stay out. But I think the miracle in Asia is not that it's just a normal capitalist development, but that the government was very active and the government intervened. In Japan the government has no qualms about intervening. We'd have to have 500 hearings, and many votes, before we could adopt and implement a simple policy solution to our problems, i.e., say, deficit reduction.

LaPiana: The inefficiency of democracy.

Dernberger: Yes, and it's true that the Japanese got many things right. They also got some things wrong. The Japanese government at one time thought there would be just one automobile on the street. They thought they couldn't beat the Americans and there was no sense in putting a lot of resources into building automobiles. Well, you still had the markets out there, so the businessmen went out and built automobiles anyway, and proved the Japanese government wrong.

LaPiana: So Japan is an example of how government involvement and interference in industry can actually improve its chances for success. But the World Bank would claim otherwise.

Dernberger: Yes, I think so. However, the World Bank has come to recognize that the Asians are different. It has finally admitted that. All along it has been saying that there's just one success story. And now it's accepting, for the first time, that there is an Asian success story that isn't an exact replica of marketization, privatization and all that stuff. But it loads that admission with so many warnings, saying, "don't ever forget that there are many basic elements of capitalism already in place, and that it's unlikely that other governments will be able to follow the Asian model because they are likely to mess it up." So the question is how did these people get it right? And my guess would be that they don't have the hang up that we do about government involvement in business.

At the end of this academic year, Robert Dernberger will retire as Professor of Economics. Beginning his career in the years when China was an avowed enemy of the U.S., the Cold War was at its height, and purges of Communists were not uncommon in American universities, Dernberger combined research on China with scholarship in economics. During the Korean War, when Dernberger was in his twenties, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and worked as a decoder of Chinese radio messages and an interpreter for Chinese prisoners of war. The exposure to Asian culture led to his decision, upon returning to the U.S., to enroll in Far Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan. He went on to receive an M.A. in Far Eastern Studies, an M.A. in Economics, and a Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard University. Dernberger is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Chinese: Adapting the Past, Facing the Future* (1991), which he co-authored and co-edited with Kenneth Dewoskin, Steven Goldstein, Rhoads Murphey and Martin Whyte; *Financing Asian Development: China and India* (1988) (with Richard S. Eckaus); and the articles "The Drive for Economic Modernization and Growth: Performance and Trend," in *China in the Era of Deng Xiaoping* (1993), and "The Chinese Economy in the New Era: Continuity and Change," in *Chinese Economic Policy: Economic Reform at Midstream* (1989).

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