Some Essays by David Crook

- gleaned from student magazines like *English Study*

Part One: On English

1. Let's Modernize Our English - David Crook

"You speak the sort of English my grandpa speaks," a foreign visitor recently said to his Chinese interpreter. Well, perhaps it's not so bad if a Chinese interpreter's English is as good as that of a native English speaker, even one who's old and a bit out of date. But language, like everything else, does change - especially vocabulary. And during a recent visit to Britain, the United States and Canada (the last time I had been to those countries was in 1974) I made a note of some words and terms which were new to me. That does not necessarily mean they were new to the language. After all, I'm a grandfather myself. And it doesn't mean either that they are all equally useful. They include a few items which were not especially new either to the language or to me, but which are useful or common modern terms which I have seldom heard used in China.

First a Chinese term: *gungho* (to rhyme with the English words lung and low), an Americanized version of the Chinese words *gong he,* meaning "work together". This was the slogan of the United States Marine units led by the progressive American Colonel Evans Carlson in World War II. He was in China during the anti-Japanese war and learnt this slogan of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. In present-day American usage *gungho* means enthusiastic or zealous.

Another current term which I immediately associated with Chinese is *no way* - not because it is derived from Chinese but because it struck me as an ideal translation (in some contexts) of the Chinese *meiyou banfa,* for which I had long found it hard to find an English equivalent.

Another commonly used negative expression is *counter-productive.* This means: attaining a result opposite to what was intended.

Here are some more current colloquialisms:

to get somebody off the hook - to release somebody from a difficult or awkward situation. This brings to mind the adjective *supportive*, which means giving moral support or encouragement.

to defuse a situation - to make a dangerous or tense situation safe or relaxed.

to jump or crash a queue- to push one's way to the head of a queue instead of lining up and waiting one's turn. Such behaviour, incidentally, is not tolerated in

English-speaking countries and anyone who tries to jump a queue, out of either egoism or ignorance, is soon put in his place by the people lining up.

cut-off point- the end or limit of a stage or process. *Ongoing,* on the other hand, used as an attributive adjective, refers to an incomplete or continuing process ; that is, one that is still going on.

to turn off- to cause somebody to lose interest or a combination of to discourage, bore and disgust. *To turn on* means the opposite: to interest, excite, arouse.

A word commonly used to-day, especially among young progressives and intellectuals, is *gay* and its derivative *gay liberation.* The previous meaning of *gay* was lighthearted, cheerful, lively. But old words take on new meanings and to-day *gay* also means homosexual (that is, attracted by persons of the same sex rather than of the opposite sex). *Gay liberation* is a fairly widespread movement in the West to-day, being part of the general movement of struggle for more freedom of the individual.

An interesting phrase which might be classed under the heading “Greetings” is *take care*. This is commonly used by young Americans when leaving each other, instead of *goodbye*. I think it reflects the danger and insecurity of life in the United States. But then perhaps the old-fashioned *goodbye* had something of the same sort about it, for originally it meant: god be with you (or ye, the old English form of you).

Cool. This word, like *gay*, has taken on a new meaning. Previously it meant *calm*, *unruffled*, *reserved* or *detached*. Nowadays it can mean interesting, thrilling, exciting, satisfying ; or, applied to a person, expert. This word, like many other current colloquialisms, comes from jazz (a type of highly rhythmical music originated by the American Negroes). Another word associated with music and common to-day among young people is *disco,* which is short for *discotheque*. Literally it means a record-playing library; actually it is a small, intimate club where people go to dance to the music of gramophone records or discs.

Next, from music to housing. The word *project*, often misused to mean undertaking, construction etc., actually means a *planned* undertaking, a plan or scheme. But in the USA to-day it also means a block or group of blocks of *high-rise* (tall) apartments (or flats), generally of inferior quality. When I first saw these in Chicago and New York I was quite impressed and thought they must be occupied by well-to-do people. But I was told that they were not only jerrybuilt (i. e. cheaply, flimsily and hastily put together) but also dangerous. For people may be raped or robbed if they go up in the elevator alone late at night.

Another housing term I heard used was *condominium*. Originally this meant rule of a land or territory by two or more powers ; or it might mean such land or territory itself. Nowadays, in USA, it is used to mean a block of flats or a housing estate with the flats or other housing units owned outright by the occupants or families living in them. In Los Angeles, California, I visited friends living in a condominium of *mobile homes*. These are not, as one might imagine, homes that actually move around. (There are such moveable homes, but they are *campers* or *trailers*, which are towed by cars driven by people on holiday, who stop overnight at campsites by lakes or rivers or up in the mountains.) Mobile homes are quite large - as large as many ordinary flats. They are constructed in two separate long sections. each as long as a bus, or even as long as the ordinary Peking bus and its trailer put together. These immense vehicles are driven to their destination and set up on cement piles or stilts (like the Dai peoples" homes in Yunnan). Two such housing sections are placed side by side and riveted together, so that the finished product, no longer mobile, makes a spacious dwelling.

Mentioning these mobile housing sections reminds me of another type of immensely long vehicle: the *contailer*, a tremendous metal box, which is loaded with goods at a factory and which can be towed by a truck or on rails by a locomotive and then loaded on board ship if the goods are to be exported. When these containers are driven along the highways they are often referred to as *Juggernauts*. Juggernaut is the name of a Hindu god, the idol of which was dragged through the streets of the Indian town of Puri. There religious fanatics would throw themselves in its path and be crushed to death. What has all this to do with modern transport? Well, these great container vehicles are several times the size and weight of an ordinary truck and are very hard to drive. Furthermore the drivers are often called on to drive long distances and keep to a strict time schedule, so that they get tired and sometimes fall asleep at the wheel. That is the time when accidents occur. And woe betide any other vehicle - to say nothing of a human being - who happens to be in their path. They are smashed to smithereens. In Britain, especially, people complain about these monsters not only because of the danger of road accidents but because as they clatter and rumble along at all hours of the day and night they disturb the peace and quiet of the country villages and shake picturesque old buildings to their foundations.

From transport it is only a short step to science and science fiction, *sci-fi*, in its shortened form. This is not new. The French author Jules Verne wrote "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" and "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" and the Englishman H. G. Wells wrote "The Time Machine" and " The Invisible Man" back in the 19th century. But they didn't call it *sci-fi*. This term, incidentally, rhymes with *hi-fi* (another not so new

word); but there the *fi* stands for fidelity, not fiction. The *hi*, of course, is an abbreviation of *high* and *hi-fi* is used to describe good quality sound-reproduction in record players, tape-recorders, etc.

Another scientific term I encountered (or perhaps it might be more accurately described as a *sci-fi* term) is U. F. O. This is an *acronym* - a word coined from the initial letters of other words - for *Unidentified Flying Object*. The Western press or *media* (which include radio and television) quite often carry stories about UFO's reported to have been sighted. They may turn out to have been aircraft or meteorites or some other natural phenomenon. Or they may be products of the imagination - hence, in a sence, scientific fiction.

A genuinely scientific term, however, is *programmed*, together with its negative form *de-programmed. Programme* may be used, as a noun or verb, in connection with computers. It means "series of coded instructions to control operation of computer" (C. O. D.). *Deprogram*, a verb, is not actually the negative of program. It means to straighten out the ideas of a prisoner released by the enemy, through interrogation by intelligence personnel of his own country. People caught spying and imprisoned in socialist countries, on release are generally considered to have been "brainwashed". So *deprogramming* such a person might be described as "*debrainwashing*". This is not to be confused with *de-briefing*, which means interrogating one's own agent, or spaceman, on his return from a mission.

Another term derived from electronics but now used in ordinary conversation is *feedback*, used in the sense of reaction or response to a speech or lecture one has delivered or an article one has written - in other words, what people say about it afterwards.

Now we come to the fascinating subject of slang. Slang, because of its wit and humour has a strong appeal for the foreign language student. But it must be used with care, for it comes and goes; and the use of out-of-date slang sounds rather ridiculous. It dates one ; makes one sound more like grandpa than ever. With this word of warning I shall list some examples of what were, for me at least, more or less new slang terms.

when the chips are down. This term comes from gambling, chips meaning stakes or counters representing an amount of money. This phrase is perhaps more slangy than colloquial. (Here let me emphasize that the noun slang is uncountable and cannot be used in the plural form; *slangs is not correct English*.) Many colloquial or slang expressions are derived from gambling and sport. This one, according to the *Dictionary of American Slang* (compiled by Wentworth & Flexner, published by Thomas Y. Crowell

Company, New York) means: “a situation of urgency or ultimacy, sometimes portending failure or disaster;... in which the consequences of any action will be irrevocable. “ Well, that’s a bit of a mouthful, especially for a dictionary of lang. To put it more simply one might say: when you’ve started out on a dangerous course from which you can’t turn back. There are a couple of other phrases, commonly used but not so very new, which mean something similar but not exactly the same. These are *when it comes to the crunch* ; and *when push comes to shove*. They mean: when the critical moment arrives ; or when there is a crisis that puts people or things to the test.

to make a bomb - to make a lot (or a mint) of money.

a can of worm - in utter confusion ; a hell of a mess.

con - to swindle, deceive, cheat, fool ; derived no doubt from the term confidence game, that is, playing on the innocence and generosity of a person in order to get money from him; (noun *con man*).

feisty - lively, fun of spirit, enthusiastic.

flaky - undependable; probably derived from the idea of something crumbling, which disintegrates or peels off into flakes.

grotty - unpleasant, dirty, ugly.

hotshot - an important, active, successful, skilful person; cf big shot.

kicking and screaming - against one’s will; obviously derived from the behaviour of children forced to do something they don’t want to.

Sport has been a source of enrichment for the English language for hundreds of years. A frequently used sporting term these days, I noticed, in U. S. A. and Canada is: in the same *ballpark*. *We’re in the same ballpark* means we’re on common ground, we see eye to eye, we speak the same language (in the figurative sense).

Another age-old source of new vocabulary is the special slang, coined by criminals, called thieves” cant. *Rip off* has been used for some years as a synonym for rob or robbery. While abroad this last time I found English people using the word *nick* for steal or pinch. Another common word nowadays is *stash*, meaning to hide away - which sounds as if it might have evolved from *cache*. This has long been current in English but it was originally French and was used by French-Canadian trappers to mean a place where one hid supplies while hunting in the wilds.

In dictionaries words are often described as being vulgar, obscene or taboo; that is, not to be used in polite society and especially not in the presence of women. To-day,

perhaps as an offshoot of the movement for women's liberation, many of these words are now used in respectable society and mixed company. Only sixty-odd years ago Bernard Shaw created a stir by having the main character in his play "Pygmalion", the cockney, Eliza Doolittle, pronounce the word "bloody". (This is derived from the centuries-old oath "By Our Lady", the lady in question being Mary, mother of Jesus in the Bible). In 1911 the use of *bloody* on the stage was considered shocking. (Shocking the bourgeoisie was, of course, Bernard Shaw's favourite sport.) Nowadays nobody bats an eyelid when that word is used and even such words as *shit*, *fuck*, *piss* and other "four-letter words" are used by many quite respectable people, on and off the stage. However, I do not recommend their use to interpreters. I mention them only because they are now quite commonly used in English-speaking countries and may well be used by visitors to China. So if they are, there is no need to be shocked by them, even though we ourselves had better not use them.

Finally we come to loan words - words imported into English from other languages. (the term "loan word" is illogical, for as far as I know these loans are not paid back!) Loan words are especially common in U. S. A., which ever since its foundation has been a land of immigrants. American English, therefore, is constantly enriched with new words introduced by its new citizens. One of these is the Yiddish word *schmaltz*. (Yiddish, the international language of Jews living in many western countries, is based on medieval German). Schmaltz means literally chicken fat as used in cooking. That is, it is something greasy and oily. In present day American English it means extreme sentimentality; or in its adjectival form, (schmaltzy) sickly, sloppy or excessively simple. It is similar to, though not identical with *corn* or *corny*, which presumably acquired its meaning from association with the simple feelings of country folk who grow corn.

I am afraid these scrappy notes amount to little more than a string of words; they hardly constitute a *structured* (that is, a well-constructed or systematic) article. But perhaps they will give some slight idea of a few of the ongoing changes in the language to-day - and help us in a small way to bring our English up-to-date.

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2. Words, Words, Words - Heard on the V. O. A. in 1979 (by David Crook)

"Every morning at seven o'clock, there's twenty terriers drilling on the rock" - so starts the old song about the Irish labourers, who with the Chinese, built the U. S. coast-to-coast railway in the mid-19th century. But in our family it's different. Every morning at seven o'clock Isabel and I sit down to breakfast and listen to the Voice of America newscast. And whenever I hear a word or phrase which I find interesting-because it's new (either to the English language or to me personally), or one which I seldom hear used by Chinese comrades, I jot it down. I do not recommend that the reader use all of these words. Some of them I dislike. But all of them, I think, need to be understood if we are not to stay back with the English of before World War II or even of the 19th century - which some of us are in danger of doing. So all of these words and phrases should, I think, be part of our receptive though not necessarily of our reproductive vocabulary.

Here's an imaginary dialogue about going to a party, using some of them:

A. I don't *go for* this *socializing* with these *top-drawer*, *jet set* types. I'm afraid *they'll get in my hair*. I prefer hanging around with *Hispanics*, *Native Americans*, Blacks and ordinary *Joe Blows.*

B. No need to get *uptight* about it. They "re not *abrasive* characters. In fact they're quite *low key*. We'll probably just sit around *swapping* the latest *scuttlebutt;* or maybe we'll just watch *the tube.*

A. Watch the tube ! I'm no *box freak.*

B. O. K. If you want to cop out any time just give me the word. I'll get the message.

Well, maybe you find that a bit *far out* (marked by a considerable departure from the conventional or traditional). Certainly I'm not suggesting that Chinese interpreters should talk like that. But they are quite likely to hear such language used by foreign visitors - especially young Americans- when they are speaking to each other or when they want to play a joke on an interpreter whose language they find too bookish.

Let's have a second look at some of the racier words or phrases:

to go for: to like, be fond of, be interested in an activity.

to socialize: to participate actively in social gatherings, going to parties and social events.

top drawer: upper class, first rate, very important.

jet set: an international social group of wealthy individuals.

to get into one's hair: to annoy or irritate one.

Hispanics: Spanish-speaking people, e. g. Mexicans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans.

Native Americans: Americans of American Indian descent.

Joe Blows: an ordinary, average man.

uptight: tense, uneasy, apprehensive, worried, anxious.

abrasive: tending to hurt one's feelings; harsh; rough.

low key: mild, unassuming, not pushy.

swapping: exchanging

scuttlebutt: gossip

the tube: television; TV

the box: television; TV

a freak: a fan; a devotee; an enthusiast; a fanatic

to cop out: to back out of or withdraw from a distasteful activity.

give me the word: tell me, let me know.

get the message: take a hint, understand what is meant.

Now, assuming that you have survived the above imaginary dialogue, here's another. Or perhaps it should be described as a linguistic nightmare:

A. Well, tourism seems to have *surfaced* in China at last. What do you think *triggered* it?

B. Maybe it's a *spin-off* of Nixon's 1972 visit.

A. That's ancient history now. What about *updating* the story.

B. O. K. You see China had a *shortfall* in her balance of payments after her first heavy imports of machinery for her modernization. So I think the big increase in tourism is a foreign trade *ploy.*

A. What do you think especially brings people to China instead of other countries?

B. All sorts of things. Some of them want to see how socialism works. That's *a nuts and bolts question.* Some just want to get away from their own *auto-culture* and their whole *gas-oriented* economy.

A. Oh, you mean *ecology buffs?*

B. You might put it that way.

A. But a trip to China means *picking up* heavy *price tags,* doesn't it?

B. Yes, that's a problem China has to face. There's always the danger of *pricing yourself out of the market* - especially with the current *wage freeze* in some western countries.

A. Still, China *has plenty of options open.* She doesn't *bank* solely on tourists from the West.

B. That's true. But with government-imposed *wage ceilings* visitors from quite a few countries do have a pretty low spending *threshold*. Still with the way prices are *skyrocketing* in their own countries they still find a trip to China within their financial *parameters.*

A. What would you prescribe as *ground rules* for China's tourism ?

B. That's a question I can't go into now. When I get a *time slot* let's get together again and talk it over.

Now that is my idea of really bad English. Such a semantic *syndrome* calls for more than merely *cosmetic* treatment to make it readable. Writers of such stuff (may their tribe decrease) should, as the song says: "Be taken out and hung, for the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue". But unfortunately such linguistic crimes are on the increase. So I have knocked together this devilish dialogue to provide a context for the vile vocabulary, which will make it easier to explain.

Here goes:

to surface: to appear, emerge

to trigger: to touch off, launch, start

spin-off: by-product, side-effect

to update: to bring up-to-date

shortfall: deficit

ploy: tactic, maneuver

nuts and bolts: the practical workings of an undertaking as distinct from its theory.

auto-culture: a society largely dependent on the automobile

gas-oriented: a society or industrial system relying mainly on gasoline for its source of power.

ecology: the science of the relationship between organisms and their environment.

buff: a fan, enthusiast, addict, devotee

pick up the price tag: pay for

to price oneself out of the market: to charge so much that people will not buy your product

wage freeze: government restriction on wage increases

to have plenty of options open: to have plenty of choices or alternatives available

to bank on: depend on, count on

wage ceilings: upper limits set on wages

threshold: the point, line or limit beyond which a process becomes painful or intolerable

to skyrocket: to rise rapidly or abruptly

parameters: boundaries, limits

ground rules: unwritten rules of what to do or how to act

time slot: an interval, space or gap between activities leaving one free to do something

cosmetic: superfacial, not getting to the heart of a matter

syndrome: symptoms of a disease; characteristics of an abnormality, pattern, constellation

Of course not all the words listed above should be considered taboo. We should allow some “freedom of speech “. Besides, language is a living thing. It changes and we should keep up with the times. But language is also, to some extent, a matter of taste. The main thing is to understand and to make oneself understood, preferably, without being too far out. Get the message?

From English language Learning No. 5/1980

3. If George Washington Could Listen to the V. O. A. (by David Crook)

If George Washington could return to the USA to-day he'd have a hard time understanding the language of the land of which he was the first president. Imagine him listening to the VOA or trying to read a newspaper report of a presidential press conference given by his current successor, Jimmy Carter. It might read something like this. (I say *might,* for the whole thing is imaginary.) Don't worry if you can't make head or tail of it. It is followed by a translation into English which even George Washington could understand, to say nothing of readers of this article.

"At an *open-ended* press conference the President undertook to make *cutbacks* in auto imports the *primary focus* of his work as soon as he could find *a time slot*, which would probably be during his *upcoming* vacation. he has in fact already set *guidelines* for *mandatory* restrictions on such imports, though some of them are only *marginal*. Actually there are few *options* open to him.

Mr Carter also *addressed himself to* the question of America's *nuclear capability* in the Middle East, where this country has been *keeping a low profile*. Critics on the right of the political *spectrum*, adopting a strong anti-Soviet *posture*, have dismissed his proposals as merely *cosmetic*. "They'll never *get off the ground*", one newsman declared *abrasively*. Liberal critics, on the other hand, maintain that the President has *over-reacted* to Soviet naval *presence* in the area, which, they say, is *minimal*.

Nevertheless Mr Carter's keeping such a low profile has *eroded* support for him and his *image* has suffered. "

What would Washington make of that - especially the words in italics, which are so popular these days? Not that they are popular with me. But being widely used, for better or for worse, they need to be understood. The passage might be translated, for Washington's benefit, as follows:

" At a meeting with gentlemen of the press, touching on any number of matters, the President promised to make a reduction in the number of imported cars the main object of his attention as soon as he could find time, which would probably be during his approaching vacation. In fact the President has already established principles for compulsory restrictions on such imports, though some of them are limited. Actually he has little choice in the matter.

"The President also turned his attention to the question of the effectiveness of America's nuclear weapons in the Middle East, where this country has been maintaining a non-aggressive attitude. Conservative critics taking a strongly anti-Soviet

position rejected his proposed measures as being simply for the sake of appearances. “They will never go into effect “, one journalist declared aggressively. Liberal critics, on the other hand, maintained that the President was showing unnecessary alarm at (or exaggerating the importance of) the presence of Soviet ships in the area, of which there are very few.

“Nevertheless Mr Carter’s conciliatory (or un-aggressive) attitude has diminished support for him and harmed his reputation. “

That, hopefully, makes the passage clearer.

Another characteristic of present-day English- especially in USA - is the use of old words in new parts of speech. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Chinese students often make mistakes in dealing with the rather rigidly fixed parts of speech of English. And the sooner English gets rid of them the fewer mistakes will be made. Linguistic conservatives will disagree. “A noun is a noun and a verb is a verb” is their motto. But that doesn’t hold good these days. Have a look at this passage, concocted with the (unconscious) aid of the VOA.

“The spokesman *tailored* his remarks to *cushion* the effect of a recent announcement that a project *funded* by the government had *idled* 10,000 workers. This is not the first time the government has been *faulted* on such an issue. Last month, when the number of unemployed *peaked*, it was charged that the figures had been *processed* with *a mix* of fact and fiction. As a result, the Statistics Bureau further *distanced* itself from the trade unions. One trade union leader complained: “ We don’t want a lot of hogwash (insincere talk). We want an administration that *levels* with us. From now on we’re going to *monitor* the situation more strictly. “ No wonder the bureau chiefs feel they are being *pressured*. “

In that short passage there are nine examples of nouns used as verbs, two of adjectives used as verbs, one of a verb used as a noun. Can you find them all? If not, look at the footnote.

Not only do words change their parts of speech these days; they link up with the aid of a hyphen to form new compound adjectives. Recently I have heard in conversation with American friends (especially young ones) or over that invaluable source of verbal wisdom, the VOA, the following compounds: academically-oriented, culture-looked, fuel-efficient, military-related, petroleum-dependent. So who knows? Some day, soon, we may run into sentences like this: “In our increasingly petroleum-dependent society more and more academically-oriented technical experts are doing research for the designing of fuel-efficient automobiles. While in a sense their work is

necessarily culture-locked, this research is directed towards the foreign as well as the domestic market “

Let us leave aside changes in parts of speech for changes in meaning. For example: “Presently” used to mean “ soon” or “in a little while”, and we would say; “ The patient is going to receive medical treatment presently (soon etc.). “ But now we run across this sort of thing: “The patient is presently receiving medical treatment in hospital” - meaning he is receiving treatment *now*. “I look forward to my operation hopefully. “ That is how I would express the idea “I am optimistic about the results of my operation. “ But nowadays many people would say: ”Hopefully my operation will be successful “ - meaning exactly the same thing. I myself would use the word “hopefully“ this way: “When the doctor came to report on the result of the operation I looked at him hopefully” - suggesting that I hoped to hear a favourable report. Again, “In discussing modernization, such matters are *irrelevant*” - meaning they have nothing to do with the case. Nowadays one might hear: “If our country does not modernize, she will become *irrelevant*,” - meaning “of no consequence in the world”. “They had a love affair lasting several years.“ No need to explain that. But recently I heard over the VOA references to “America’s long-standing love affair with the automobile” and “America’s love affair with the gun” - meaning the Americans’ fondness of or passion for cars and firearms.

Carrying changes of meaning a step further, we get to figurative meanings and metaphors. Here is a passage containing some relatively recent examples: “The talks about *runaway* inflation are *back on track* and are *occupying* the story-of-the-week-*spot*. But to say that an effective remedy for the ailment is already *in the pipeline* would be going *far down the road*. One might say, however, that they have *crossed a new threshold*. Each of the candidates is claiming credit for this in the hope that the popularity of the advance will *rub off* on him “

Well, what do you make of that? Just in case it’s not crystal clear, here’s a translation:

“The talks about *rapid*, *uncontrollable*” (derived from a runaway horse)“ inflation are once more *proceeding in an orderly way and in the right direction*” (from the idea of a formerly de-railed railway train)“ and *are the most prominent* news of the week. But to say that an effective remedy for the ailment is already *on the way* would be to exaggerate or overstate the case. One might say, however, that they have overcome an important obstacle and *entered a new stage*. Each of the candidates is claiming credit for this in the hope that some of the popularity will pass over to him. “

Finally, I suppose no article on modern English usage will be satisfying without a few examples of contemporary colloquialisms and slang (n. b. *slang* in the singular; the noun is uncountable). So here's an imaginary sign outside an imaginary roadside cafe " *Fast food eatery. Sports buffs* welcome. " Meaning? "Dishes that do not take long to cook or serve; or, meals served quickly, without any waiting, to sports enthusiasts. " And here's an imaginary description of an exchange between a man speaking rudely to a woman and getting what he deserves, or more specifically, being put in his place:

"That's a lot of hogwash," he shouted. She told him to *cool it, laid it right on the line* and with a few *swift cracks cut him down to size*. "

Glossary:

hogwash-insincere talk, misleading arguments, lies, exaggerations.

cool it - relax, calm down; stop annoying, insulting, threatening people.

lay it right on the line - speak very frankly, produce evidence or facts.

swift cracks - quick-witted humorous comments.

cut down to size - give an accurate, in place of an exaggerated, estimate of a person's importance; make somebody feel small.

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Now comes the *sixty-four dollar question* (the crucial question). Should Chinese students of English use the sort of language dealt with above ? On the whole I would say "no" - especially with regard to the slang. (Slang is fascinating, but it comes and goes; it's soon out of date.) But to use these words is one thing, to understand them another. I would say that they are commonly on the lips of native speakers of English - especially Americans. But as for Chinese students, perhaps they had better remain in the ears.

From English language Learning Nos. 10-11/1980

4. Long Words for short (by David Crook)

American English at its best is lively; at its worst it is wordy. (the same applies to English English.)

Worst things first. Here is an imaginary dialogue including some of the long words and roundabout usage I've heard on the Voice during the past few weeks. (I must say that on the whole I find the program most interesting. Breakfast would not be complete without it.)

Perhaps I'd better give the translation into plain English first, otherwise you may stop reading this article and move on to the next one!

Q. Do you think it might be possible to keep the cost of building material steady?

A. That may be possible. (or: It might be done.) But to avoid raising the cost of such a complex project it will have to be built faster and placed closer to the capital.

Q. But wouldn't that be against the anti-pollution regulations?

A. Oh, the problem of pollution can be solved if we use the most up-to-date equipment.

Q. Well, we'll certainly support you if you comply with the regulations...

Now, get ready for the Voice's version:

Q. Can you visualize the possibility eventuating of keeping the market for construction material in a state of quietude?

A. I consider that the problem may be capable of solution. However, to avoid raising the current level of expenditure on a project of this degree of complexity calls for an accelerated time-frame and a location of greater geographical proximity to the capital.

Q. But wouldn't that *be in violation of* anti-pollution regulation?

A. Oh, the problem of pollution is capable of solution by employment of equipment of a higher level of sophistication.

Q. Well, we'll certainly *be supportive of* you if you are in compliance with the regulations.

Exaggerated? Not a bit. Every one of the words and phrases in italics was used by speakers on the VOA (not necessarily by announcers or reporters. Some of them are masters of the art of plain, lively language).

Which version do you prefer? The first or the second? Personally I do not often find myself agreeing with Winston Churchill, but I do admire his use of the English language. So let me quote him in answering the question: " Personally I prefer short words... "

As an exercise in plain English I suggest that you take each of the phrases in italics and find the one which matches it in the first dialogue. Then compare the two. That, I hope, will convince you that we should write and speak as simply and directly as we can ; not strive for long words and roundabout expressions. That will not only make our language easier to understand, it will save time and paper. Plain English will hope to conserve China's forests! I am not suggesting that we limit ourselves to baby talk or strings of simple sentences. We should strive for clarity and liveliness. That means, first and foremost, thinking clearly what we want to say. It does not mean trying to work in all the newest and showiest expressions we have learnt. Look after the ideas and the words will look after themselves.

But it wouldn't be fair to the VOA to leave it at that. When I have time I'll give some good examples of American speech culled from the Voice. There's plenty to learn from it and I would urge students to listen to it to improve their comprehension of Spoken English. (That's a terrible phrase, but I can't think of a better.) Start with the Special English newscasts and move on to the Standard English ones when you're ready. But a word of warning: Radio is always, in every country, a form of propaganda. So you need not only to keep your ears open but to ask the whys and wherefores of what news is chosen and how it's presented.

From English language Learning No. 6 /1981

5. Random Thoughts On the Teaching and Studying of English (by David Crook)

What is language for? Some people seem to think it's for practicing grammar rules and learning lists of words - the longer the words the better. That's wrong. Language is for the exchange of ideas, for communication. It's no good knowing all about a language if you can't use it. Many students I have taught know hundreds of grammar rules but they can't speak correctly or fluently. They're afraid of making mistakes. One shouldn't be afraid of making mistakes. We native speakers make mistakes too. And we break rules. Bernard Shaw wrote:" Foreigners often speak English too correctly. " But the mistakes that native speakers make are different from those that Chinese students make. They're English mistakes in the English language. And if enough native speakers break a rule, it's no longer a rule. What used to be wrong becomes right. The people not only make history; they make language. But they can only make their own language. They can't make another people's language. So Chinese students of English should pay attention to grammar, but they shouldn't overdo it. they should put communication first.

Grammar, after all, is theory. It comes from practice and should guide practice. It should be our servant, not our master. We should learn what grammar we need to make our ideas clear. But we shouldn't worship it. Winston Churchill was an imperialist - but he was a master of the English language. Some of the official reports he had to read were written by people who worshipped old-fashioned grammar books. These include the rule: "Do not use a preposition with which to end a sentence. " This is very awkward English. It's better to say:" Do not use a preposition to end a sentence with. " Well, when old Churchill came across a report full of such awkward sentences - made awkward just in order to avoid ending sentences with prepositions, he wrote sarcastically in the margin:" This is the sort of English up with which I will not put. " He meant, of course: "This is the sort of English I will not put up with. " About a hundred years ago there lived a famous English linguist called Henry Sweet. He wrote: "Foreigners" English often (is) constructed on strict grammatical principles, but (with) hardly a single genuinely English sentence in it. "

What I've been saying is not meant as an attack on grammar. It's an attack on worshipping grammar. It's an attack on using language just to practice grammar. What we should do is to use grammar to convey ideas, to communicate.

II

Language is first and foremost oral, spoken language. Man could speak 3 or 4 million years ago. Writing started only about 8,000 years ago. And there are still many

people in the world today who can speak expressively, even poetically, but they can't write. Perhaps some of you will now start thinking: "Just now he attacked grammar, now he"s going to attack writing. Soon we'll have no language left!" No. I merely mean this: To have an all-round command of a language one must be able to speak and to understand the spoken language as well as to read and write. There are exceptions to this rule of course. Some Chinese scientists and technicians need only to be able to read English scientific and technical material for their work. But these days more and more foreigners are coming to China and more and more Chinese are going abroad on delegations or to study. So the spoken language is becoming more important than ever. When they were sent into exile in Siberia by the czarist government, Lenin and his wife Krupskaya translated a long English book into Russian. After that they thought they knew English. But they hadn't paid enough attention to the spoken language and their pronunciation was terrible. So when they went to England in 1903 English people couldn't understand a word they said and they couldn't understand what was said to them.

In China, before liberation, foreign language teaching stressed reading and writing, not speaking. Since liberation much progress has been made in teaching and studying the spoken language. Much, but not enough. These days we've got to open our mouths and speak - inside the classroom and out of it. A few years ago we used to launch "English-speaking movements". Nowadays movements of many sorts are not so fashionable; and English speaking movements seem almost to have disappeared. In class, students hold discussions in English on history, on American society, on English literature. Then the bell rings, English stops and Chinese starts. That's no good. Work it out. How many class hours does a student have a week in which he has a chance to speak English? And how many students are there in a class? And then there's the teacher, and some of us teachers talk too much. If you divide up the time between all those people, each student gets only a few minutes a week. Native speakers take years to learn to speak their own language. How can we learn to speak a foreign language by speaking it only a few minutes a week? We must use English in the classroom and out of the classroom. (It wouldn't be at all bad if we even talked English in our sleep.) I don't mean using it to practice grammar and vocabulary, but to communicate. We should live our lives as far as possible in English. There's no need to be afraid of making mistakes. As our English inside the classroom improves, so will our English outside the classroom, in daily life.

Speaking, of course, can't be separated from listening. If you want to pronounce a word correctly, first you must hear it correctly. The sounds of the Chinese and English

languages are not exactly the same. Some English sounds do exist in Chinese; some are similar to Chinese sounds; some simply don't exist in Chinese at all. And the other way round. So listening is not so easy. One has to concentrate and listen attentively, nothing the similarities and the differences. (Some people, by the way, talk about "listening ability". That's not English, it's Chinglish - Chinese-English. After all, one can listen without understanding. I can listen to Japanese but I can't understand it - though I do find it very charming and musical.) If you don't listen carefully you won't pronounce accurately. And if you don't pronounce correctly, native speakers will find it difficult or even impossible to understand you. I know, because sometimes when I speak Chinese, people think I'm speaking English and they say: " Sorry, I don't understand English. "

III

Well, so much for spoken English. What about writing? Like speaking, it's to exchange ideas. It's for communication. It is not simply for practising constructions, for using idioms, or showing off long words. The general trend of modern English writing is to bring it closer and closer to the spoken language. That means using shorter words and shorter sentences. Of course one can go too far in this direction. It sounds ugly to have a long string of simple sentences following each other, without any variety. And complex thoughts may demand complex sentences. But the main thing is to make your idea clear in your own head and then to write it in clear, lively language. It's the content that counts. The 19th century English scientist Thomas Huxley said:".... strive after the clear and forcible expression of definite conceptions. " He also said one should:"... erase anything that strikes one as particularly smart when writing it. " In other words, try to be clear, not clever.

What about composition courses - especially up to the third year? They are useful and necessary. but they should not take up too much of the time of students or teachers. Sometimes students will spend a dozen hours on one composition. This takes away too much time from other courses and upsets the whole timetable. And it upsets the teacher, too. His or her head is buried under a pile of composition papers. What's the solution? To have compositions written in class within a limited time - say two class periods - with the teacher keeping the topic a secret until the class begins and refusing to correct papers not handed in when the bell rings. A hundred minutes is long enough for students up to the third year to make an outline, write on it and go over what he has written to correct his mistakes. My experience is that about half the mistakes can be corrected by the student himself, provided he leaves enough time to go over his writing carefully. Some students won't do that. They think, the more they

write the better. That's not true. It's quality that counts, not quantity. Even a short composition will bring out plenty of problems of language and logic for the teacher to correct and sum up. After all, teachers, whatever some people may think, as well as students are human. They too need a bit of fresh air and exercise and sleep. And they need time to study, read books, see films and plays, broaden their minds. True, reading studens" compositions can broaden teachers" minds, can teach them a lot - provided the topics that the teachers set are interesting and the students" writing on them is concrete, has content.

IV

This bring me to my last point. If we agree that language, oral or written, is for communication, it must carry content. It's no good knowing even a dozen languages - if you have nothing to say in any of them. One doesn't speak for the sake of hearing the sound of one's own voice - though some people do seem to think that their own talk is the most beautiful music in the world. They talk much but say little. The same applies to writing. We should write something solid, not just cover pages with words. So content calls for general knowedge. But students of a foreign language need particular knowledge, too- knowledge of the society, history, geography and literature of the people whose language they are studying. And as soon as they are ready to do so- say after a couple of years of language study - they should study these subjects in the foreign language, not merely in translation. In this way one can kill two birds with one stone: learn a foreign language and get a general education at the same time. Of course one must know one's own language, one's own society, history, geography and literature too. Many foreign visitors to China these days tell me that their young interpreters are very nice people and speak quite good English, but they know too little about their own country, their own people. So they can't satisfy the foreigners" needs and they can't satisfy China's needs either. Today there is an upsurge of patriotism in China. That's fine. But what is patriotism? First and foremost, I think, it is serving the people. And to serve one's people one must know one's people and the land they live in. (There, you see, I've used a preposition to end a sentence with. Some people would have said: the land in which they live. Which sounds better?)

Just now I spoke of the study of literature. Ceitainly we should study it. But what literature? And what for ? Now I'm going to say something shocking. I think Chinese students should study English and American literature, mainly, not to learn new words and grammar or even to appreciate fine writing. They should study literature to learn about the life and times of English-speaking peoples. Especially about modern times.

Shakespeare lived 400 years ago and, sadly enough, we have no Shakespeares these days. But taken all in all Shakespeare's English is not so useful for Chinese students as that of modern writers. I don't necessarily mean the most up- to-date writers. But on the whole I'd say 20th century writers are more useful.

Still, I must say a word or two in favour of Shakespeare. We native speakers of English quote him every day of our lives - without knowing it or without meaning to. Phrases first used by Shakespeare hundreds of years ago have become part of everyday English vocabulary. There's a story about an old man who went to see "Hamlet " for the first time and was asked what he thought of the play. "Not much," he said. "It "s just a lot of quotations strung together. " Actually it was Shakespeare himself who created those "quotations" and made them part of everyday English speech. Here are just a few: "There's something rotten in the state of Denmark", "Brevity is the soul of wit", "to be or not to be", "suit the action to the word", " the insolence of office ". One could go on and on. No wonder the old man thought the play was not original, but just a string of quotations! One more point on Shakespeare. It's a mistake to think of him simply as a great poet, a genius in the use of words. He was that - and much more. He was a deep thinker, concerned about history, society, geography (the voyages of discovery which enlarged his world); above all he was concerned with affairs of state, the problems of succession, bureaucracy and corruption. When he said there was something rotten in the state of Denmark, he meant the state of England. "The insolence of office" meant British bureaucracy. "Suit the action to the word" meant fine talk is not enough; we need fine deeds.

Yes, Shakespeare's works are great, but they are not urgently needed by most of China's students of English today. In my opinion, well-chosen articles from current British and American newspapers and magazines are more useful. They include some of the best of present-day English writing. If I had to choose between a course in classical literature and one in newspaper and magazine reading, I'd vote for the latter. And I'd go further. The articles chosen should include a fair number on science. We live in a world of atomic energy, of computers and spaceships. China has to mechanize her agriculture and, as William Hinton recently said, she won't do it by having her 800 million peasants using hoes and donkeys. Industry has to be automated. So we must be able to read foreign scientific and technical journals. "So many things cry out to be done. 10,000 years is too long ". Time is of the essence (Shakespeare again!). We can't cram everything into the curriculum. So let's cut down on the classics and focus on the future.

Well, brevity is the soul of wit but my talk has been neither brief nor witty. It has been neither deep nor scientific. Just random thoughts. Some of you may agree with a little of it. Others will certainly disagree with much of it. I welcome your criticism.

From English language Learning Nos. 9-10/1981

6. A Major Problem in China's Foreign Language Teaching (by David Crook)

An American professor who has achieved outstanding results in teaching English at Beijing University stated in a lecture last summer:

"The greatest harm done to students of English in China is Intensive Reading. I. R. is not really reading at all ; it is deciphering, analyzing. It teaches students not to read but to use dictionaries and grammar books. It teaches very bad study habits, which are very hard to break. It does more harm than good.

Chinese students read far too slowly. The students of my class at Beida (who are actually teachers of English) could read only about l50 words a minute at the beginning of my course. But the minimum requirement for an undergraduate college student - not a teacher - is to be able to read 300 words a minute. At the end of my course all my students reached this minimum reading speed; one of them could read 800 words a minute.

You may know every single word in a passage of English, but not grasp the general meaning of the passage as a whole. If you read fast, you understand better. If you read too slowly, by the time you have reached the end of a page you have forgotten what the beginning is about. Fast reading forces you to concentrate on *ideas*. Intensive Reading makes you see the trees but not the wood.

Through I. R. you *may* learn a little vocabulary well. Through extensive reading you can learn a lot of vocabulary well and gain a lot of information.

What if you come across new words? Don't look them up in the dictionary. Guess their meaning from the context. You may not guess quite correctly the first time, but as new words come up again and again in different contexts, their meaning will become clearer and clearer. If they don't come up often, you need be in no hurry to learn them. They're probably not important. You must cultivate the habit of guessing boldly, getting help from your knowledge of grammar, but above all from the context. This is the way to increase your vocabulary, not poring over dictionaries or making lists of words and mechanically memorising them out of context. If you look up every new word, you'll never finish a book. You must learn to depend on your brains, not your dictionaries," (End of quotation)

I have held essentially the same ideas as those quoted above for many years. I have made written and spoken statements to this effect to the leadership at various levels, saying that I. R., in and out of class, takes up far too much of our students" and teachers" time. For years it has dominated our English language curriculum, thrown it

off balance and left little or no time for a number of essential courses. The result is that though our teachers and students work hard, their results are in many, if not most cases, not commensurate with their efforts. I believe that this matter now needs careful attention and that changes in curriculum and method should be made without delay.

From English Language Learning No. 1 / 1982

7. More Thoughts on Learning English (by David Crook)

On the whole I agree with the American woman professor who said that Intensive Reading does more harm than good, (See *Yingyu Xuexi* No. 1, 1982) - though I think she may have been exaggerating a little when she said throw your dictionaries into the waste-paper-basket just to make her listeners sit up and take notice.

Perhaps in China to-day a little I. R. may be unavoidable. Why? Because for the moment we haven't enough Extensive Reading books. Also because many of the books we have are hidden away on library shelves, gathering dust, instead of being brought out into the light of day where the students can get at them. Almost 300 years ago Swift, the author of "Gulliver's Travels", wrote a work called "The Battle of the Books". What we need to-day is a Liberation War of the Books", to liberate the books we have. We also need more simplified books and more un-simplified books originally written in simple language. That doesn't mean that the content should be childish. It's no good giving children's books to grown-up students. So our schools and educational departments need to assign a large staff to editing, writing and simplifying books for Extensive Reading suited to different age levels and language levels. It might be best to have native speakers of English take part in this work and to rule out translations from Chinese -otherwise it will be hard to avoid Chinese-English. Meanwhile, if I. R. is allowed to exist, it should be cut down to size, put in its place, kept under control. It should not take up much of the students" or the teachers" time. It certainly should not be allowed such an unfair share of the timetable as it has now.

Why *is* so much time spent on I. R. ? One reason is that the passages assigned for analysis are far too long and far too difficult. And on top of this, many teachers try to take up too many points at too great length. Some teachers assign pages and pages for intensive reading. This is illogical. Intensive reading passages should be short. If they are long and many points are taken up, either I. R. takes up most of the timetable and squeezes other courses out ; or there is no time to take up the grammar and vocabulary properly. What you are left with, then, is not intensive reading at all. But it is not extensive reading either. It is "semi-intensive" reading. The language points are not dealt with efficiently, nor is the content. You see neither the wood nor the trees, only a blurred and fuzzy forest - like looking at the Western Hills on a dull day through a dirty window.

What is the result of all this so-called intensive reading? Both students and teachers are overburdened, especially when review and exam time comes round. This is very harmful. Review is the lifeblood of the educational process. What's the use of

just getting a first impression of a subject? To deepen one's knowledge and consolidate one's gains in study, one must have ample time for review. Review is, in some ways, more important than the exam itself. For without summing-up, consolidating and analysing what one has studied, there is no real learning. The efforts of both teachers and students are largely wasted.

Besides, long assignments of intensive reading generally make the teacher too active and the students too passive. The teacher does all, or nearly all of the talking in class, explaining this, that and the other. The students haven't a chance to get a word in, not even to ask questions.

Much talk by the teacher and little practice by the students is no way to teach language. It only teaches *about* language. And that is dangerous; for merely learning *about* language gives the student a false impression. It gives one the feeling that one knows the language when one doesn't - because one can't use it correctly. Knowing without using is not knowing it all. It's deceiving oneself (but it doesn't deceive others). I'm not saying that it's bad to know about language. In fact it's very good to be able to appreciate good style. In fact this appreciation of other people's style helps one to achieve good style oneself - but only after one has experience of using the language - not just hearing a teacher explain it. In other words what is needed, and I am referring to the first 2 years of language study, is not hours of so-called intensive reading, but hours and hours of something else: Oral and Written Practice. The more of that, the better. Intensive Reading as it is generally taught is not a practice course, it is a lecture course. And nobody ever learnt a foreign language by listening to lectures on grammar and vocabulary.

In fact just lecturing is a backward, inefficient method of teaching almost anything; even literature, history, geography, social studies or politics. Lecturing should be only one step in a process, consisting of reading, listening, discussing, writing papers, doing experiments and so on. And when they are given, lectures should be lively. Many lectures are deadly dull and far too long. I know. I've given plenty of long, dull lectures myself.

Some time ago I asked a group of visiting American professors: "What part should lectures play in education?" One of them answered: "A lecture should make the subject dance. " As a matter of fact, being an American, he said: "Dance. " Anyway, he meant that the lecture should bring the subject to life. It should keep the students awake, not make them fall asleep. I agree with what Comrade Mao Zedong once said: "If a lecture is boring, the students have the right to fall asleep. "

Perhaps the worst result of I. R. lectures is: They make education teacher-centred and don't cultivate the habit of analysis.

What is the meaning of teacher-centred? Well, take a look at the ordinary classroom. At the front, up on a platform, is the teacher's desk. There sits or stands the teacher, reminding one of the lines of the 18th century English poet, Cowper, who wrote about the original Robinson Crusoe:

"I am monarch of all I survey,

My right there is none to dispute.... "

Down below, row upon row, sit the students. That may not be bad for lectures, but it is bad for discussions. You can hardly have a lively discussion if you're sitting in rows. All you can see is the teacher and the back of the head of the student in front of you. For a free exchange of ideas, the students should sit in a circle or round a table. (Six or eight desks can be placed together to form a table.) And the teacher should not stay up on his stage but form part of the circle. This is a more democratic way of teaching and learning, more suited to socialist society than having the teacher sit up on a throne, laying down the law like a king or queen. For not only can students learn from teachers and from each other, teachers can learn from students. But some people - teachers and students alike - think that the job of the teacher is to be *telling* the students all the time, to be stuffing them with knowledge as Peking ducks are stuffed with rice. Stuffed ducks are delicious, but stuffed students are sluggish. They lack initiative and creativity. The teacher's job is to get students to think and to help them find knowledge through their own efforts, not to encourage mechanical memorizing. Chinese students do have marvelous memories. They can learn all sorts of things by heart. But what is learnt that way is often soon forgotten. Easy come, easy go, as the saying is.

Of course one cannot learn a language without some memorizing. But a foreign language is a tool, like one's own language, for exchanging ideas. And for exchanging ideas you must *have* ideas. And to have ideas you must have facts- and be able to analyze them. Memorizing without analyzing may have been good enough for the feudal minded students of Confucius. They needed only to repeat: "The teacher says.... " and that settled all argument. That was teacher-centred education. Socialist-minded students need something better.

Well, I started off by quoting the American professor's words:" I. R. does more harm than good. " Then I went on to modify that alarming statement. But I do believe that too much time and stress on I. R., too much digging into too many words and rules,

leaves too little time and energy for other essential courses. It will encourage students to learn more and more about less and less, instead of adding to their general knowledge and understanding. It may help them to analyze language but not to analyze society.

Nowadays more and more foreigners are coming to China for trade and tourism. This can contribute to China's modernisation provided we understand them and get along with them. For this we need translators and interpreters who know not only the grammar and vocabulary of foreign languages. They must also know about foreign people, foreign society, foreign culture, foreign history and geography. (This is nothing to be afraid of. After all, Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin were all foreigners.) And it goes without saying that they must know the people, society, culture, history and geography of their own country, China. For all this, interpreters and translators must have a well-balanced timetable and curriculum. They must have time to study a wide range of subjects. And they must be able to read fast, in both Chinese and foreign languages - for content, for information. So my advice is, even though you have rescued your dictionary from the wastepaper basket, don't pore over it too much. Use the dictionary and the grammar book less, and the encyclopedia more. With much reading, your grammar and vocabulary will improve as well as your general knowledge.

From English Language Learning No. 5 /1982

8. On Dictionaries and Wastepaper-baskets (by David Crook)

"Throw your dictionary into the wastepaper-basket". Some readers or listeners seem to have taken that advice too seriously. (It was given -jokingly - by an American professor to her students at a famous Chinese university, and I quoted it in a broadcast some months ago). It was really just a bit of shock treatment to break students of the habit of using their dictionaries "not wisely but too much". There are actually 3 dictionaries on my desk now and more on the bookshelf nearby. I even worked on a Chinese-English dictionary for 6 years (with a few dozen Chinese comrades) and found it fascinating. So, you see, I'm no enemy of dictionaries and would never dream of throwing them into the wastepaper-basket. They're far too precious.

But like all precious things they must not be used too much. You can have too much of a good thing, and that turns it into a bad thing. A dictionary properly used is a blessing. A dictionary overused is a curse. If you look up every new word, you'll never finish a book. And these days we need to read many books. China's modernization cries out for well-read people, who've read books Chinese and foreign. (Not that book-learning alone is enough. But it's one way of gaining knowledge.)

In Intensive Reading (I. R.) the students should use their dictionaries. Looking up new words rather than asking the teacher - which means turning her/him into a "walking dictionary" - is a form of independent work and should be encouraged. But students shouldn't rush to their dictionaries the first time they meet a new word. First they should try to guess the meaning from the context. And the context should be quite lengthy just as I. R. passages should be quite short. Some teachers assign such long passages that the students can't study them intensively; there's not enough time. So the lesson ends not with the students studying the reading intensively but with the teacher lecturing the students extensively. Lecturing is the I. R. "Super-power's nuclear weapon, which destroys the students" independent work.

I once taught I. R. of a sort, myself, though we called it A. R. (Analytical Reading) ; but it was really oral and written practice. I used to record a short passage and require the students to *listen* to it right through from beginning to end *at least twice* before reading the text; then to read it while listening - eyes on the book, ears on the tape-recorder. All this helped them to grasp the rhythm, stress and intonation, which in turn helped them to grasp the meaning. Then and not until then, was the time to consult dictionaries. And by then, if the preparation had been done well, there was usually little to look up. (This depended, too, on having material which was not too difficult for the students.) The meaning of most of the new words had been made clear by intelligent

guessing from the context and grasping the meaning of the passage as a whole. That was preparation. In class the first thing I did was to ask questions - or to have the students ask each other questions - not on the language but the content. Only after the general meaning and content of the passage as a whole were more or less clear, did we go on to language points - vocabulary, grammar, style and so on.

I'm not so immodest as to say That's the way to teach A. R. or. I. R. But it's one way, and it worked fairly well.

What about E. R.? That's where the guessing game really gets going. And a very satisfying game it is. Do you remember when you finished reading your first whole book in English? I still remember when I finished my first whole book in French, well over 50 years ago. I had a great sense of accomplishment. (It was a life of the English poet Shelley, written by the French writer Andre Maurois. I doubt if I'd approve of Maurois' views on Shelley to-day.) I'd actually finished a whole book in French. That gave me great satisfaction and encouraged me to read more - and more - and more.

Should we *never* use a dictionary in E. R. then? I wouldn't say that. Suppose a certain word comes up again and again. You feel it's important to understand but somehow you can't guess it. All right. Look it up. But That's not likely to happen often. After all, how do we learn new words in our own language? Generally by seeing or hearing them often. The first time we may have a slightly inaccurate understanding. But gradually, as the word crops up again and again (and if it doesn't , don't bother with it) our understanding becomes more and more accurate. So does our grasp of its different meanings and uses in different contexts. That, I think, is the way we should read extensively in a foreign language, too.

Of course there are cases in which one cannot be satisfied with guessing. In translation, for instance; in scientific or political - especially in diplomatic - material. There one can't afford to take risks.

Which dictionaries should we use, then, and how should we use them? I'd say, as soon as possible stop using a Chinese-English or English-Chinese dictionary and start using an English-English one. Sometimes I see students using very small English-Chinese or Chinese-English dictionaries. They belong in the pocket of the traveller in a foreign land, not on the desk of the student. They're often, if not always, oversimplified and hard on the eyes. (Don't ill-treat your eyes. You'll need them, I hope, for a good half century after you leave college.)

Some people, I've heard, look down on the Advanced Learner's Dictionary (ALD). I think it's excellent, rich in examples of living usage, with hints on style and a valuable

table of verb patterns. The word “Learner”s” shouldn’t put us off. We should be learners all our life. I, as a not so young native speaker of English find that I have plenty to learn from the ALD. True, a dictionary, like any tool or weapon, may be either useful or dangerous. It depends how you handle it. Above all, don’t try to compose English phrases and structures by putting together a collection of words, each looked up separately. The result will be not English but Chinglish. Deal with whole phrases, even whole ideas. And take English phrases from English sources. Don’t build your language in the old-fashioned way, brick by brick; use the modern method of large pre-fabricated parts. Then your language building will not only go up fast; it will be fluent and idiomatic.

Well, at the start, I was talking about dictionaries in wastepaper baskets. Since then I’ve rambled on and on about dictionaries out of wastepaper baskets. So am I for or against dictionaries? Neither. Or both. Pick them up and put them down at the right time. Use them, but use them wisely, not too much.

From English Language Learning No. 4 / 1983

9. Still More Random Thoughts on Teaching and Studying English (David Crook)

"In our school Intensive Reading (IR) is known as the Super-power Course". That's what a Chinese teacher from Central China said to me not long ago.

"Why?", I asked.

He gave many reasons:

"First, college entrance exams are based largely on the I. R. approach. So unless or until this is changed, middle school teachers and students will be forced to memorize long lists of rules and words and to analyze passages, without learning how to read, write, speak or understand living English at a reasonable speed. Then if the teachers have stuffed them enough, and the students have swallowed enough undigested vocabulary and grammar, they'll pass the English entrance exam. "

"After that, will they be liberated from the "I. R. Superpower"? " I asked.

"Far from it," said my friend. "In college the process goes on; because the leaders and older teachers generally stress I. R., giving it so many class and homework hours that it dominates the timetable. If they are too busy to do all their preparation and review, the last thing the students are willing to give up is I. R. Even if they are unwell and get written permission from the doctor for a few days rest, they'll cut other courses but still stagger into the I. R. class.

"This is not hard to understand. The older teachers may have excellent English and they say I. R. is most important. So the students think:" if we do as they say, we'll have excellent English, too. And some teacher, it seems, think: "I learnt my English mainly through I. R. Why shouldn't the students do the same?" "

The question is, did these teachers learn their English *because of* I. R. or *in spite of* I. R. ? If they had used another method might they not have learnt twice as much in half the time ? The saying goes: "No pains, no gains". There is something in that. But if you can learn something easily instead of painfully, why learn it the hard way? The Chinese slogan *duo kuai hao sheng* may not be fashionable now and it's hard to translate into English as pithy as the Chinese. "Much, fast, good " - what next? Economically. The word is too long. Anyway, if one can learn much, fast and well, why learn a little, slowly, and at great cost? After all, there has been a revolution in the science of language teaching and studying in recent years. China is stressing modernization in other respects, why not in this one too?

Another obstacle my teacher friend spoke of was this. After you get into college, you have to get out again and go to work. And when schools, government

organizations and offices have jobs to offer, they offer them to graduates with, among other things, good study records. what counts most in your English study record? Why, the marks you got in I. R. That's another thing that makes students, teachers and school leaders so keen on it and makes it a superpower.

Well, one divides into two. That law applies to everything. So perhaps there is some good in I. R. ? Yes, perhaps there is. In a previous article (*Yingyu Xuexi* Number 5, 1982) I wrote: "Perhaps in China today a little I. R. maybe unavoidable... Because for the moment we haven't enough Extensive Reading (E. R.) books. " Since then I have sought advice not only from the teacher quoted above, but from some twenty others teaching in many parts of China. Most of them think that a small amount of I. R. is not only unavoidable but necessary at certain stages and within certain limits, after students enter college. This may help them to pay attention to set phrases (such as "pay attention to"), verb patterns and grammatical structures and to solve problems independently using reference books. It can also ensure that students coming from different middle schools gain the same language skills and have the same foundation and approach. But I. R. must not be allowed to become a superpower taking up so much time that it dominates the curriculum and timetable. It must be used as a means to the end of accurate communication in reading, writing, speaking and understanding the spoken language and of ensuring accuracy in translation. But it must not be allowed to run riot. We must make sure that I. R. does not become an unbreakable habit, which is carried over into reading which is called extensive but actually is not. By the start of the third year at college, students should be able to read much and fast - and should use their training in I. R. mainly as an aid to appreciate good writing, to distinguish good writing from bad and to have an elementary grasp of style and different types or levels of language. This will make I. R. not a superpower but a respectable member of the family of language courses.

From English Language Learning No. 6 /1983

10. Radio Language Notes of 1983 (by David Crook)

I listen regularly to the Voice of America news and find it well worth listening to - taking it, of course, with an occasional grain of salt. Most of the language is lively. It reminds one that language is a living thing, constantly being enriched with new uses of old words and new figures of speech. When I hear these I prick up my ears. Some of them, I confess, make my ears ache.

Here's *a wrap up* of my language notes. That use of *wrap up* comes from the radio announcers" phrase: "Here's a wrap up of the day's news". "To wrap up " literally means to make a package and is normally used as a verb. Here it is used as a noun and means a summary. Another common metaphor nowadays is *down the road*, meaning *ahead, looking ahead* or *in future,* time being expressed in terms of space. Here's another current metaphor: "To *unwind* after a hard day's work". *Unwind* literally means to reduce mechanical tension or strain. Here it means to reduce emotional or nervous tension; that is, to relax. "*You name it*" means anything you can think of or mention. It comes, I think, from advertising. For example a shop might boast: "We sell everything you can think of. You name it, we've got it. "

These, to me at least, are fairly new figures of speech. Of course, I'm often behind the times; so to younger and more up-to-date people they may not be new at all.

Using old words in new parts of speech, of course, has been going on for ages. Here are a few examples which have struck me recently. (I use the word *struck* intentionally. It was like receiving a blow to hear them. They made my ears ache.) "We are *headquartered* in Madison, Wisconsin" - using the noun *headquarters* as a verb. Similarly: "Economists believe that the recession has at last *bottomed out*" - meaning that it has reached its lowest point. And: "These scientific developments will be *showcased* next month. " A show-case is where something is put on show or displayed, generally in a shop, museum or exhibition. Finally: "The rebels have *positioned* big guns close to the city" - in other words, they have put big guns in positions or, more simply, have placed big guns, close to the city. These are uses of nouns as verbs which I do *not* recommend. In fact one might call them "ear-achers".

Here are some more "ear-achers", which are examples of redundance or are in other ways illogical.

"We were one of the original founders of the United Nations". To be a founder means to be an originator. You can't be an *un*original founder. So the adjective should be left out. The same applies to: "*to reach a definite conclusion*". You can't reach an

*in*definite conclusion. If it's not definite, it's not a conclusion. And: "The President considers this *too premature*". Just how premature would be satisfactory?

It's nearly always best to express ideas in as few words as possible- unless, I suppose, one is a journalist paid by the word. That makes a virtue of verbosity !

Perhaps that method of payment is responsible for the tendency to use many words where few would suffice. For example: "The ambassador *is doubtful* that the government will fall" means "The ambassador *doubts* that... " Then there's the habit of using long words where short ones would be better: "He is *currently* considering... " means "He is *now* considering... " And here's a prize negative example: "*It is perceptual that* this is changing", meaning, in plain English: "One (or you) can see that this is changing".

Well, as the newscasters would say, that is *a scan* of some language points noted in 1983.

To use or not to use, that is the question. I'd say, redundance, wordiness and pomposity should be avoided at all times. As to using nouns as verbs and generally taking liberties with parts of speech, don't be in a hurry. Leave it to native speakers to change their language. Once they've firmly established new usages, then is the time to take them up. And as for new metaphors or figures of speech, don't make a special effort to work them into your speech or writing. Just think what you want to say and say it, simply, clearly and forcefully. Then, if the figure of speech comes naturally to mind and strikes you as apt, put it in. Otherwise, leave it out.

So much for 1983. What has 1984 in store for us? Listen to VOA- but don't forget that grain of salt.

From English Language Learning No. 6 /1984

11. On Eggs and Exams (by David Crook)

I've been acting like an egg striking a rock. What is this egg? It's the campaign against the old-fashioned way of teaching Intensive Reading. And what's the rock? It's the old-fashioned way of setting exams. So long as the old type of I. R. examination remains in force, the campaign against the old method of teaching I. R. can't win. It's like an egg striking a rock.

Many people agree: Yes, this old-fashioned I. R. (OFIR) is certainly intensive; it calls for most intensive work by the students. But it doesn't teach them how to read. The more intensively the students study, the fewer books they read.

And OFIR doesn't teach them language well either. Learning a language means learning to *use* it. OFIR doesn't do that. It teaches mainly *about* the language.

Well, if so many teachers and students agree that OFIR doesn't teach people how to read, why aren't they willing to give it up? Because of that rock - the rock of the old examination system. If that rock is not smashed, the egg is smashed. The campaign against OFIR can't be won.

Many I. R. exams, until now, have actually included reading material studied during the term. Does that examine how well the students have learnt to read? No. It examines how well they have learnt by heart the reading texts and the explanations the teacher has given them. A student might get high marks on such a test without having learnt to read much better than before she took the course. A true test would consist of unseen passages. That would show how well a student could read and how much she had learnt.

Is that so important? Yes. A college student should know how to read and should learn to read much and fast. She should, on graduation, have read hundreds and hundreds of pages, dozens and dozens of books.

How else can our students inherit the knowledge that mankind has gained through the ages? For that is what China must do in order to modernize.

Of course, reading in itself is not enough. We must think - think about what we read and analyze its content, ideas and approach. "Cultivate the habit of analysis. " That is the aim of education. But we must have something solid to analyze. We must have some knowledge of the world, of nature, of society, past and present, Chinese and foreign. So we must read much. Therefore we must learn to read fast.

Naturally, we do need to know something *about* the language. We do need to know some grammar. But grammar is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. For

grammar, after all, is theory. And “what is theory for and where does it come from? It comes from practice and serves practice. “ The same applies to grammar. So we need to do some intensive reading for the sake of extensive reading, for the sake of reading whole articles, whole books. A little theory goes a long way. The final test is practice.

True, reading is far from the only source of knowledge. Reading without observing life and taking part in life, without experimenting, will produce bookworms, not modernizers.

This does not show that all kinds of I. R. are absolutely useless and should be scrapped. Some I. R. should be kept - but it should be kept within limits. It should not be “the super-power course”, riding roughshod over the language curriculum and taking over most of the timetable. And what I. R. we keep and teach should not be so long and so hard that the teacher is forced to use the duck-stuffing, lecturing method. And it should not just focus on “words, words, words”. It should focus on meaning, on ideas, on understanding, on communication - on forests as well as on trees.

But as long as students are forced to get good marks in order to get good jobs; and as long as teachers want their students to get good marks so that they themselves can gain fame as good teachers, then everything depends on examinations. It depends on what sort of exams we teachers set and the educational authorities demand. Until we reform our exams we can hardly reform our teaching methods.

So let’s launch a new campaign, to discuss and reform the exam system; and at the same time continue the campaign against OFIR, the super-power. We need to fight on two fronts at once. Otherwise we’ll be eggs striking rocks.

From English Language Learning No. 1 / 1985

12. Change Language for a Change World (by David Crook)

Hi! I've been lucky enough, recently, to travel round a large part of the English-speaking world, visiting England, Canada and the United States. And as usual I noted some interesting changes in language. Some - like that word "Hi!" - are on the slangy side, so they should be treated with care. For slang often become respectable - and sometimes it fades away. (Let me warn you once more, do *not* use slang with an s at the end. The s at the beginning is quite enough!)

Hi! of course is not new. But it's now far more widely used than ever, even in fairly formal situations. For instance a shop assistant (or salesclerk) in quite an elegant shop on New York"s 5th Avenue or a civil servant in a government office or a fashionably dressed young lady in a travel agency may greet you with a "Hi", instead of the old-fashioned "What can I do for you?" or "Can I help you?"

(That reminds me of another form of greeting often *mis*used. Ever since I returned from abroad I've been running into old friends who greet me with the words "Pleased to meet you," Actually they are not pleased to meet me, though they may be pleased to see me. For we say "Pleased to meet you" when we"re introduced to somebody ; that is, when we see them for the first time, not when we chance to see somebody whom we first met years ago and now see once more, after a long or short interval. In such cases we say: "Nice to see you again" or something of that sort.)

"Wow" (rhyming with how, now, cow). That's another word which I heard all the time, mostly from youngish people, but quite often, too, from intellectuals in their thirties. A formal definition of "Wow" might be "an exclamation of astonishment or delight". "She's 90 years old and still goes swimming". "Wow". Or "The film lasts 4 hours". "Wow". Or "She's just had twins". "Wow". When I was young people said: "Fancy that " or "Good gracious" or "That's amazing". Now it's wow.

"There you go". This phrase used to be followed by "again" and it meant: "You're still making that same old mistake" (such as mixing up he and she) or "You're falling back into your old bad habit" (such as spitting). But these days "There you go" is used by somebody who has solved a problem for you (e. g. untying a knot on a parcel) or making some arrangement for you (such as providing you with a train ticket). It means "There. That's done" or "Now it's alright" or "Now you can go ahead".

Nowadays, I noticed, the word "like" is often used to mean "roughly, approximately, more or less, about". For example: "It'll take like 10 minutes" or "He's like 10 years old" or "It's like 50 miles from here". Another new usage is "laid back", meaning relaxed, cool, calm, not excitable. To be laid back is considered rather a good quality in the

tense, highly competitive life of such a city as New York; so it's usually used as a compliment.

The process of words changing their part of speech is, I'm glad to say, continuing. This is bringing English closer to Chinese. For instance, now people say "to critique", meaning, of course, to make a critique of say a book or film or action. A stronger and more colloquial word meaning roughly the same is "to trash", meaning to condemn something so strongly as to compare it with trash or to call it rubbish. Other examples of changes in part of speech are "to craft", meaning to make with care, skill and even art. And "to level with somebody" (derived no doubt from "to be on the level") meaning to be frank and honest with a person.

In this day and age, not surprisingly (or predictably) nuclear energy is bringing new metaphors into the language. For example, "melt down", was used literally with the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl disasters. Now it is used figuratively to mean "weakening, decline, decay, reduction" etc. For example: "There's been a melt-down in the government's law and order policy". Some people might consider that an example of the decline and fall of the English language! But language must, and does, keep pace with all aspects of life, including language.

I myself can't say that I like all these changes. But there's nothing I can do about them - except make them known to you, for better or for worse.

From English Language Learning No. 12 / 1986

13. English on the Air (by David Crook)

Not every student of Eng1ish has the chance to practice the language with native speakers. So on the whole it's a good thing to listen to them on the radio. But to err is human as the poet said, and we native speakers often make mistakes in using our own language; or at least we are often guilty of bad style. When I was a schoolboy we were taught: "Never end a sentence with a preposition". So we quipped: "Never use a preposition to end a sentence with". Sir Ernest Gowers, in his excellent book, *Plain Words*, writes that Winston Churchill, who was a master of the English language, was against the absolute rule "never use a preposition to end a sentence with", because it often makes for clumsy endings. Once when he came across an example of this he wrote: "This is the sort of English up with which I will not put". He meant, of course, "I will not put up with this sort of English". And these days, if we listen to native speakers of English on the radio, we hear plenty of good English but much "up with which we should not put". Here are some examples of, to put it kindly, poor style that I have noted during the last few months:

Verbiage or redundance: that is, using more words than necessary or saying the same thing twice, using many words where few would do, or long words where short ones would be better: "To maintain a presence in excess of... " meaning "to stay longer than... "; "I have no definitive information" meaning "I don't know"; "We "re supportive of " meaning "we support"; "To keep the economy on a steady growth pattern", meaning "to keep the economy growing steadily"; "To have a capability" meaning "to be able" ; "We can't maitain this for a long period of time" meaning "we can't keep this up for long"; "On a daily basis" meaning "every day". This is the sort of English up with which I would not put, if I had power over the language, which of course I have not. On the contrary, the people who used that awful English are the ones who hold high office, up to the level of a certain superpower which shall be nameless.

Redundance and lack of logic: "It's a fairly unique thing.... " *Unique* means that there is only one. So a thing either is unique or it is not "unique; it can't be fairly unique, slightly unique, very unique, etc. The same applies to "more crucial". Crucial means supremely important, most important, so it cannot be more, most important. Either it's crucial or it's not crucial. Then, "complete annihilation". Annihilation means complete destruction. We don't need a second complete. This last example, by the way, comes from the B. B. C. "Even Homer nods", meaning even the greatest authorities sometimes make mistakes. "Return to more normal levels". A thing or process is either normal or not normal; it can't be more normal or less normal. "The two governments

have agreed to discuss jointly". All discussions are joint. You can't discuss jointly; unless, of course, you argue with yourself, which we sometimes do.

Another kind of mistake, similar but not the same, shows that the writer or speaker does not understand the word he is using. For example: "A positive step forward". Is there such a thing as a negative step forward? Obviously not. Mistakes of this sort come from trying, unsuccessfully, to add emphasis. Similarly: "The firm cornerstone of national defence", The idea of cornerstone is precisely something firm. You can't have a wobbly or infirm cornerstone.

So much for verbiage. Now for some new trends in language usage. Language is a living thing, created by living people as a means of communication. So it must change in order to reflect or deal with a changing world. Some of these new trends I welcome, some I dislike; but I have no power to turn them back any more than King Canute could turn back the waves which wetted his royal feet.

One change I welcome is breaking down the boundaries between parts of speech, which in a way brings English closer to Chinese. For example: "Now music U. S. A ". Here "now" is used as an adjective meaning present-day. "The greening of the desert", or making the adjective "green" into a noun. This solves the old problem of translating the Chinese word *lühua*, which I confess I once used to translate with the ugly coinage "greenify". "She'll be anchoring the newscast", meaning she'll be the person who co-ordinates the items of speakers on the program. Anchor is most commonly used as an adjective; e. g. anchor man, anchor woman, anchor person. Here it is used as a verb. "They're readying the exhibits", meaning they're getting the exhibits ready. "They're jetting from Sydney to Perth" meaning they're flying by jet-plane. And so on. I favour these fluid parts of speech. They make life and language simpler.

So do some snappy phrases now becoming common. "A quick fix". Fix here means solution to a problem or satisfaction of a need or desire, and it has come into use by way of the slang of drug addicts, who simply must get a dose of the drug without delay. they must get "a quick fix". A somewhat similar phrase is "fall-out ", meaning after effect usually unexpected or undesired. Then there are "up-beat" and "down-beat", meaning hopeful or optimistic and pessimistic or hopeless. Some hyphenated terms are also short and snappy: "recession-resistant", meaning able to stand up against economic recession or depression; "water-related health hazards", meaning danger of disease from impure water; "strike-related violence" meaning violence arising from or connected with strikes. A quite different new usage is "out there", used metaphorically to mean going around, in society, in the world, prevalent, etc.

I consider such phrases positive. (*Not* positive steps forward; just positive or just steps forward). Not so the following: “What we’ve done is, we’ve changed the system,” instead of “What we’ve done is to change the system”. Or “What I did was, I asked my friends... “ instead of “What I did was to ask my friends... “ And “So far as this sort of thing, all I can say is... “ instead of “So far as this sort of thing is concerned.... “ Or “As far as our military needs” (are concerned) “it would be disastrous”. I don’t like these new usages, but of course it’s a matter of taste. Some people may like them. Certainly some people use them. Maybe it’s just that I’m getting old and find it hard to accept certain changes in the language. But whether I like it or not, the language does change. It must, like the rest of the universe. As Galileo said (albeit under his breath) “The world *does* move round the sun”. And the words must change with the world.

From English Language Learning No. 7 / 1987

14. Language and Culture, Proverbs and Puns (by David Crook)

"Lies, damned lines and statistics". I saw that headline in a local paper. What's that about, I wondered. Somebody cursing the telephone service? I read on and realised that the headline was a misprint or a misquotation from Mark Twain, who said that there were three kinds of lies (not lines): lies, damned lies and statistics. Some sleepy subeditor on night shift, reading the paper before sending it to the printers had not noticed the mistake. Or perhaps he had "polished" the quote, changing lies to lines. If so he was not familiar with Mark Twain's famous statement.

This set me thinking about the need for every student of a foreign language to study the literature and culture (of which language is a part) of the people whose language he or she is studying. Everyday English (like everyday Chinese) is larded with allusions and quotations - especially from the Bible and Shakespeare - which we quote often without knowing that we are quoting. There's a story about a person who went to see Shakespeare's play *Hamlet.* Asked what he thought of it he answered: "Very interesting. But the language is not at all original. Just a lot of quotations strung together. " Actually, of course, Shakespeare's language, in *Hamlet* and other works, is so original, so apt, so expressive, that it has found its way into everyday speech. We use it automatically. Who does not know - and quote - "To be or not to be, that is the question?" And how often do we quote other phrases from that same speech of Hamlet's without realising it? "Shuffle off this mortal coil". "The insolence of office". Well, maybe Shakespeare is a bit high-brow. Mark Twain is not. Take Tom Sawyer"s reply when a friend asked him for the core of the apple he was eating: "There ain"t going to be no core". Or Twain's telegram to a newspaper: "The report of my death was an exaggeration". The Nazi leader Goering said: "Every time I hear the word culture, I reach for my revolver. " But we are (or should be) enemies of Goering and his Nazism and as students or teachers of foreign languages we are concerned with culture. Let me quote a few more headlines to make us reach for our reference books, not our revolvers, to help us put language in its cultural context.

The *China Daily* recently carried an article on the decreasing use of calligraphy brushes. The headline was: "Writing on the Wall for Calligraphy Brushes". Very neat. Not only because it contains the word writing. "The writing on the wall" means "its days are numbered" or "it will soon come to an end". The story of the writing on the wall is in the Bible, in the Book of Daniel, who said to the king who held his (Daniel's) people in captivity: I see the heavenly writing on the wall. It says that your kingdom will come to an end if you do not release my people. So the *China Daily* headline meant that fewer and fewer people are using calligraphy brushes nowadays.

Another recent headline, this time in the British paper The *Guardian*, read: “His Mistress’ Voice”. The “mistress”, in this case, referred to Mrs Thatcher and the “his” to Nicholas Ridley, the minister who had to resign after making insulting, remarks about the German people and the French. The article implied that the words were spoken by Ridley but they echoed the ideas of Mrs Thatcher, his boss or mistress. What’s all this about? Well, years ago, when I was a child, there was an advertisement for gramophone records showing a little dog listening intently to a large old-fashioned gramophone horn from which issued his master’s voice. The advertisement was for a record company His Master’s Voice. The company still exists and the headline “His Mistress’ Voice” will bring an understanding smile to the British reader.

So do puns. *China Now*, a British magazine, recently carried an article on pandas under the headline “The Bear Facts”. This was a play upon words, the phrase “the bare facts” meaning the most simple, basic or essential facts of a matter. Another headline in the *Guardian* (which you may gather is my favourite paper these days) read: “NATO”S Bloc-heads”. Now bloc, spelt with a C means a group of countries or political parties. But blockhead, pronounced the same way, means a person’s head is made of wood, so he is brainless. And a report on a concert in the same paper was headed “Handel with Care”. Handel, of course, is the name of the Anglo-German composer (1685-l759). But “Handle with Care” is printed on a package containing something fragile or breakable. The headline implies that the music at the concert was carefully played.

Puns, proverbs and quotations are not mutually exclusive. They often go together. Take this example: *The Guardian* recently reviewed a film about a widow who, when her husband died, bravely brought up her two children and started life afresh. The headline over the review was: The “Widow”s Might”. That is a biblical pun; for in the New Testament Jesus tells a parable or moral tale of some people giving money to charity. The wealthy gave large sums, for they had plenty of money, but a poor widow gave a very small sum, just a mite. The rich poked fun at her, but Jesus, always the spokesman of the poor, praised her, saying that her mite was more than the large sums that the rich gave, for they had money to spare, she had not - but still she gave her mite. Might as used in the headline, of course, means great strength.

The same issue of *The Guardian* carried a story about penguins - those big birds of the Antarctic which cannot fly but stagger about on their flippers. A certain American admiral has taken a special interest in them. His name is Byrd. So the *Guardian* article on him and his interest in penguins was headed “Byrd of a Different Feather”. This is a pun on the saying “birds of a feather”, meaning people of the same type. Its full form is:

“Birds of a feather flock together”. Well, no matter how interested they may be in each other birds and admirals are very different creatures! Hence: “Byrd of a Different Feather”.

You may gather from these few examples that the British are as fond of puns and proverbs and quotations as the Chinese are. But each people has its own heritage, its own culture. So to learn a language well we must pay attention to the whole culture not just the “words, words, words” - which is another quotation from shakespeare’s *Hamlet.*

From English Language Learning No. 10 /1990

15. Footnotes on Headlines (by David Crook)

ELL Editor's Note: The headlines of the articles in the newspapers or other periodicals in Britain and in the USA are very particular. Allusions and quotations from classical works are used very frequently and they are both humour and attractive. So the Chinese readers who often read the newspapers and the periodicals in Britain and in the USA have to know them. Though the headlines are various, the purpose of them is for attracting the more readers and there "s nothing profound meaning. It is not easy to know it for the Chinese readers for they know few cultural origins of Britain and the USA. ELL carries this article of Professor Crook aiming at helping Chinese readers to know Western culture, to broaden their horizons and to master English language well.

Newspaper headlines are a dialect or code in any language. To save space they use abbreviations and commit the delightful crime of breaking grammar rules. Worst of all they often give little or no idea of what the article is about. So they can be as difficult for Chinese students of English as for English-speaking students of Chinese. But they are often witty or humorous. And they sometimes have hidden meanings or cultural references. This underlines the fact that to know a language well you must know more than its grammar and vocabulary; you must also know something of its history and literature, its whole cultural background. Here are some examples from one of my favourite periodicals, *The Weekly Guardian*, a British publication but with sections (in English) from the French *Le Monde* and the American *Washington Post*.

Issue of July 7, 1991.

1. "Here no evil". - a pun on the saying "Here no evil, speak no evil, do no evil". This is the headline above an article on harmless films containing nothing evil.

2. "Soul in the Iron". This headline refers to expressive sculptures made of iron. It is a play upon the set phrase "iron in the soul", used about people whose philosophy of life is harsh, bitter or cynical.

3. "Stolen art - thieves get the picture". To "get the picture" is a metaphor meaning " understand the situation". Here it is used literally.

Issue of July 14,

4. "The Quality of Mersey is Strained". This is above a story about a poor performance of music by Paul McCartney, one of the Beatles, who was born and grew up by the River Mersey in northwest England. The headline is a pun on Shakespeare's phrase "The quality of mercy is not strained", in the play "The Merchant of Venice".

Issue of August 4,

5. “Staying Ale and hearty”. Derived from the saying “hale and hearty”, which means “healthy”. This is the headline over an article which maintains that drinking wine and beer (including ale) is good for the health.

6. “The Road from Iraq and Ruin” - a pun on “rack and ruin” meaning destruction - used as the headline above an article on Kuwait’s recovery from the ruin brought by war.

7. “The Not So Happy Families of Windsor”. “Happy families” is a card game and Windsor is the surname of the British royal family, which is rent by unhappy marriages.

8. “Something about BCCI that Just Doesn’t Add Up” - over a story about dishonest accounting practices in BCCI (Bank of Commerce & Credit International).

9. “Disneyfication of the planet”. The first word is a coinage from Disneyland, a type of exhibition which is spreading over the Western world.

10. “Son of the Mill Story”, about a mill worker. The headline comes from the phrase “run of the mill”, meaning an ordinary product, nothing special.

11. “Beowulf at the Door”, headline of a story about the teaching of classical English literature in British universities. Beowulf is an 8th century English poem. “Wolf at the door” means the threat of starvation.

Issue of August 11

12. “The Peace Corps. Charity Begins Abroad”. A play on the proverb “Charity begins at home”.

13. “Hearts and Crafts”- a pun on the phrase “Arts and Crafts”.

14. “Winchester”s Craving Grace”- a pun on “ (a) saving grace”, which means “having at least one good quality despite many bad ones”. This article is about Winchester Cathedral collecting money for repairs.

Issue of August 18

15. “Terre Blanche (pen name of a white South African racist) Stands a Round”. To “stand a round” is to pay for other people’s drinks in a pub or tavern. But “a round” also means “a bullet” or “a round of fire” and in this case it refers to shooting Blacks.

Issue of August 25

16. “A Moose on the Loose”. A moose is a large animal; “on the loose “ means not in captivity or running wild. So this headline is a rhyme.

17. “Marriage Whines”, headline above an article about marriage complaints (whines) - a pun on “marriage wines. “

18. “All aboard for abroad”, about foreign travel or tourism. “All aboard” is a phrase used to warn passengers that the ship, train or bus is about to leave and they should get on board.

Issue of September 29

19. “Pain in Spain”. The article is about nationalist splits and terrorism in Spain. This recalls the phrase “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain” - usual pronunciation exercise.

20. “The Boxer in the box”. In this case “the box” means in the witness box, i. e. in the courtroom. The story is about a boxer who is on the verge of death on account of injuries received in a boxing match. As a result many people in the West to-day say that boxing is a barbarous business and should be banned.

Issue of October 6

21. “FDR”s Left-Hand Man”. FDR refers to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States from 1932 to 1945. “Right-hand man” is a phrase meaning “ most reliable helper”. Here it is changed to “left-hand man” and applied to a left-wing trade union leader, who supported Roosevelt.

22. “The Knife and Times of Medical Folk”. The phrase “Life and Times” is commonly applied to biographies. Here it humorously applies to surgeons who use scalpels (surgical knives) to perform operations.

23. “Prose and Cons of English Literature”-a pun on the phrase “pros and cons”, meaning the arguments for (pro) and against (con), or the advantages and disadvantages.

24. “The People’s Wine Is Deepest Red” - about a man of working-class origin who became a connoisseur (expert) on the subject of wine. The headline is derived from the British working-class anthem, the *Red Flag*. Its first lines are: “The workers” flag is deepest red, it’s shrouded oft our martyred dead”.

Issue of October 13

25. “Sax Appeal”, above an article on Miles Davis, the great player of the musical instrument the saxophone (often abbreviated as sax), who died recently. The headline is a play upon the phrase “sex appeal”.

So you see, there's more than meets the eye in headlines, British ones especially; for the British love puns as well as literary, and historical allusions. Thus, to know a language well you must know its culture. That means, a translator or interpreter needs an all-round education.

Oct. 22, 1991

From English Language Learning No. 2 /1992

Part Two: On Chinglish

16. Language Seen and Heard in 1984 -— Grounds for Acclamation and Abomination (by David Crook)

Newish words and phrases (to me): some short, sharp and snappy, some, as the Bible says, “an abomination in the eyes of the Lord”. Decide for your-selves which they are.

1. “A fun thing”: something entertaining or amusing; nothing important, but pleasant and harmless. n. b. “fun” is here an adjective.

2. “Big deal”: something important. (Often used ironically to mean “not important”.) e. g. It’s just a fun thing; no big deal.

3. “A quick fix”: a quick, generally short term and not thorough, solution to a problem or emergency.

4. “Gentrification”: improving a neighbourhood by tearing down ramshackle, slum or working-class housing and building new, fashionable residences- at the expense of the poor people dislodged.

5. “Cost effective”: profitable, economical, able to compete on the market with similar products, operations or enterprises. Not used with simple articles such as oranges, books etc. but generally with undertakings; e. g. housing projects, new methods of making cars etc.

6. “Hyphenated Americans”: meaning “Chinese-Americans, Mexican-Americans etc. “

“Heavyweights” (i. e. long words for short, many words for few.)

1. “Their methods of locomotion”, referring to pre-historic animals. Why

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Footnote on hyphenation (at the end of a line): Hyphens should come at the end, not the middle of a syllable. A bad example of wrong hyphenation which I ran across recently: Bridget-own instead of Bridge-town for the American city Bridgetown.

not say: “How they got about” or simply “how they moved” or “their method of moving”. Some people never use a short word when they can find a long one. On this one point at least I agree with Winston Churchill: “Personally I like short words... “

2. “Some analogous type of phenomenon”. Why not: “The same sort of thing”?

3. “On a domestic level”: at home.

4. “Have to face the choice of alternatives between... “: have to choose between... China has world champion weight-lifters in sport, but I think we should avoid carrying this over into speech and writing.

Redundance

This is often due to not fully understanding the meaning of the words used or to not thinking logically. e. g.

1. “Rural village”. Can one have an urban village ? Village is derived from Latin and Old French words meaning *farm*, and rural from the Latin word for *country*. Chinese, I think, often uses two single-syllable words together so as to avoid confusion by providing a context. But English has fewer one-syllable words (and fewer homonyms); so what is necessary in the one language is unnecessary, undesirable and illogical in the other.

2. “Avoid a repetition in the future”. You can hardly avoid a repetition in the past! Similarly “to ensure their future survival”. Survive means to live on or after, to continue living. You can’t ensure survival in the past.

3. “Music concert”. You can, of course, have an unmusical concert if the performers are poor musicians. But generally speaking *concert* implies music.

4. “When bears go into winter hibernation”: Hibernation can only be in the winter, not in any other season. The first part of the word *hiber* comes from the Latin for winter (cf *hiver* in French).

Slang: Let’s start with a reminder that *Slang* is an uncountable noun and may also be used as an adjective. So it is wrong to say “slangs”: e. g. “He used a lot of slangs in his lecture. “ But it is right to say “He used a lot of slang expressions”.

1. “They’re losing their clout”. Clout means literally a hit or blow. Recently it has been used in the sense “power of persuasion” or “influence”. So here “clout” means influence. Long ago “clout” was also used to mean a garment, i. e. as the singular of *clothes*. Hence the saying, still used: “Cast not a clout till May is out”, *may* meaning either the flower or the month of May.

2. “(The newspapers) *cleaned up their act”. Act* nowadays is increasingly used in such contexts as “Get your act together”, meaning collect your thoughts, organize your ideas or activities, act in a systematic manner etc. So “the newspapers cleaned up their

act" means they organized their ideas and improved their handling of a certain matter or event.

Some of my pet aversions; i. e. things I dislike most (in the field of language). But they are becoming common and I'm afraid their"s nothing I can do about it, except to urge you to avoid them like the plague.

1. "The cars cost up to like $5,000, meaning *about* $5,000.

2. "What you do is, you... " (for instance, think carefully). I prefer the old-fashioned usage "What you do is to think carefully".

Now for our old friend - or enemy - *Chinglish*, or in HYP (*Hanyu Pinyin*). Qinglish.

1. "They congratulated the successful trial production of the aircraft". You congratulate a *person* on something. So the sentence should read: They congratulated them on the trial production etc. You can't congratulate a thing: not even an aircraft!

2. "T. G. (transformational grammar) has been introduced into China for several years". This means it has been introduced for the limited time of several years and after that it will be given up. The sentence should read: "T. G. was introduced into China several years ago".

3. "She has *become* a revolutionary hero ever since that time". Should read: "She has *been* (regarded as) a revolutionary ever since... "

4. " The landlords got mixed up with the merchants". The writer has *mixed up* mix with mix up. The sentence should read: "The landlords mixed with the merchants" or possibly "The landlords had close relations with the merchants".

5. "All my parents": All is used with three or more ; with two, use *both*. Generally speaking, human beings have two parents, not more.

6. "I took part in the exam". It is better to say, "I took the exam". "Take part" arises from translating literally (and always in the same way) the Chinese word *canjia.* Such rigid, literal, word for word translation is bad translation and produces unidiomatic English. That was the problem with "rural village" above - a literal translation of the Chinese *nongcun*.

7. "I was distributed to the Foreign Languages Institute". This is horrifying! (It produces a picture in the native English speaker's mind of a person being cut up into small pieces and offered round like slices of cake!) This also arises from rigid, literal, word for word translation. One Chinese word has to be translated into different English

words in different contexts, and vice versa. Here the correct translation of *fenpei* would be *assigned to*.

8. “From three *pedestrians* there must be one able to teach me something”. Another example of always translating the same Chinese word into the same English word regardless of context. The *ped* in pedestrians comes from the Latin word for *foot* (cf French *pied*). So the word pedestrians is normally used for a person who goes on foot as distinct from those travelling in vehicles (cars, bikes etc.) Confucius certainly did not have cars or bikes in mind! He meant simply “people walking”.

The moral of all this, and of Chinglish in general is: Pay attention to *ideas,* not just to isolated words. Grasp the Chinese idea, then note how the English language expresses it. In a word, as soon and as often as you can, get your English from English. Don’t try to build English structures out of Chinese bricks.

Odds and Ends

1. “Glasslands” instead of “grasslands”. This shows how wrong pronunciation can lead to wrong spelling.

2. “In the 16th century much gold *flew* into Spain from south America”. The past tense of “flow” is “flowed”. Flew is the past tense of fly. Gold does fly these days (or at least it is flown), but not in the 16th century!

3. Recently I’ve run across examples of using *giggle* instead of *chuckle*. *Giggle* means to laugh in a silly, nervous or affected way ; *chuckle* means to laugh inwardly, quietly briefly.

Well, which are you going to do after reading these belated language notes for 1984? Chuckle or giggle? Neither, perhaps. Maybe, as the Bible says, there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth!

From English Language Learning No. 4 /1985

17. Language Lapses Seen and Heard in 1987 (by David Crook)

Chinese English, or Qinglish, might be described as English with Chinese characteristics. It is a hardy perennial and is hard to root out. Jesus said: “The poor ye have always with you. “ And we may say of Chinese-English too, it is always with us.

Qinglish takes as many different forms as Sun Wukong the monkey king and it has many sources. One is word-for-word translation, which is, of course, the worst form. Translation should focus on words in their context, not in isolation. It should be done idea for idea, not word for word.

But many of us have grown so used to Qinglish that we don't notice it. We should. Take such old examples as: "Her hearing ability is good. " That is word for word translation ; it is not English. But English, so far as I know, lacks a satisfactory phrase to match *tingde nengli*, which means "ability to understand the spoken language. " But such a phrase is a bit of a mouthful and would be used only by pedants. Ordinary people would make a clean break "with the word for word translation of *tingde nengli.* They would say: "She understands English well" - it being understood that spoken not written English is referred to. Or take: "Since the 13th Congress the leadership is comparatively younger. " Younger is the comparative form of young; it means young as compared with the former leadership. So we should say: "Since the l3th Congress the leadership is younger. " Congress reminds me of the Congress of Vienna (1814-l5), which was the scene among other things of much dancing. And dancing reminds me of our old Qinglish friend, or enemy, "dancing party. " In English we say "a dance", not a dancing party - unless we are using "party" as it is used in contracts and other legal documents, to mean a person. That would make "a dancing party" a person involved in a contract who dances.

Not all Qinglish comes from word for word translation. Some arises from not knowing the meaning or usage of a word, or from confusing one word with another. For example: "Her English was so good I was shocked. " Now shocked means unpleasantly surprised, disappointed or disgusted. So it might be suitable to say: Her English was so *bad* I was shocked, but not to say so *good*. Here's another example: "Even our enemies were shocked at our achievements. " Well, perhaps they were; but I suspect the writer really meant: "Our enemies were astonished at our achievements. " Misuse of the word "popular" is another common mistake, as in: "Aids is becoming a more popular illness these days. " (There is, of course, a sarcastic saying, "He enjoys very bad health," meaning that a person uses the excuse of illness for shirking responsibility and having others wait on him.) In normal usage no illness is popular and aids, in particular is very unpopular. But it is, unfortunately, becoming more *common.* Popular is something or someone liked or admired. That hardly applies to aids.

Here is a common case of confusing one word with another: "My classmate is going abroad. I admire him. " The speaker really means: "I envy him, " meaning I wish I were going instead of him. We admire a person for some good deed that he does or some good quality that he has. We envy a person for something that we wish we could do or have. So we may envy somebody for going abroad but we may not admire him-especially if he managed it by dishonest means.

Some mistakes commonly made by Chinese students are due not to the influence of their native tongue on their English. But still they seem to be peculiar to Chinese speakers rather than to others. For example: “A door made by glass. A design of a dragon made by sea-shells. Bread made by brown flour. “ The use of “by” suggests that the glass made the door, the sea-shells made the design, the flour made the bread - which of course is impossible. We should say: “A door made *of* glass. Bread made *of* brown flour “ etc. Then we have such mistakes as: “I’m sorry for that” instead of “I’m sorry about that,” But it is correct to say: “I’m sorry for her, she’s got a bad cold. “ And: “What do you think about China’s sports facilities?” The question should be: “What do you think of China’s sports facilities?” This is a subtle point. We generally use “think about” in this way: “What do you think about a game of tennis,” meaning “would you like to play tennis?” But if we are asking a person for her opinion we should say: “What do you think of China’s sports facilities?”

Prepositions and adverbs are hard to use correctly, especially in verb patterns, phrasal verbs etc. I “m sorry about that, but there’s nothing I can do about it.

Recently I’ve run across several mistakes in the use of prepositions. For example: According to a certain newspaper: “Premier said “I do not agree to this view”. “ The correct translation of the premier’s statement is: “I do not agree with this view. “ We agree with something or somebody, but we agree to *do* something. So you might say: “We agree with them, so we agreed to help them. “ Such mistakes in the use of agree are problems of verb patterns. Another common verb pattern problem is in the use of “congratulate. “ I recently came across the headline: “Meeting to congratulate the founding of CCTV”. We can’t congratulate a founding. In fact we can’t congratulate anything or any act or event. We can only congratulate somebody on something, thus: “We congratulate them on the founding of CCTV” but we celebrated, hailed or commemorated etc. the founding of CCTV.

All these are examples of Chinese English. I”v no doubt that when I speak Chinese I make similar mistakes of “English Chinese” or what you might call “Eng-Qing. “ In fact, like other native speakers, I sometimes make mistakes in my own language. All native speakers do. (And if enough native speakers make a certain mistake often enough, it’s no longer a mistake. That’s the democracy of language.) But what I’m going to deal with now are not precisely language mistakes of native speakers; they are examples of sloppy style, which I call “Heavyweights. “ In Chinese you have a saying about using ox knives to kill chickens and the Germans have one about shooting sparrows with heavy artillery. In English, too, some native speakers use many words where few would do

and long words where short ones would do. These are what I call heavyweights. Here are some I've heard recently on the Voice of America:

"At the current time" - meaning now (or then). "In excess of" - meaning more than. "To be dismissive of" - meaning to brush aside. Perhaps the world heavyweight championship should be awarded to: "That would be the most accelerated possibility" - meaning that would be the soonest possible. One is tempted to believe that speakers of such stuff are paid by the word, or the letter. The heavier the artillery, the higher the pay. That would be the capitalism of language.

I don't want to seem nationalistic (which is of course different from patriotic.) So let me record that I also heard the BBC quoting Mrs Thatcher as saying: "A good step forward. " That's not heavy artillery but it lacks logic. Is there such a thing as a bad step forward? Another news item quoted the spokesman of a certain government as saying that an attack on a U. S. ship was "an unintentional accident. " Can there be an intentional accident? Perhaps there can. I remember when I was a schoolboy 70 years ago a classmate who was fond of using the phrase "accidentally on purpose" to describe things done intentionally but made to appear accidental. I dare say that when that chap grew up he became a government spokesman.

Well, all these criticisms may give the impression that I've noted nothing good about the use of the English language in 1987. That is not the case. I've noted a number of interesting new usages, some witty or pithy coinages. But they must wait for another article which, as is all too often said - in Qinglish - I will write "in the recent future. " So goodbye till then. (Footnote: "Recent" refers only to the past, never to the future. So we say "recent past" and "near future. " The Chinese *zui jin*, of course, may qualify either the past or the future.)

From English Language Learning No. 5 /1988

18. Some Hardy Perennials of Chinglish (by David Crook)

Hardy perennials according to my dictionary are plants that last throughout the years. It makes no distinction between beautiful blossoms and poisonous weeds. In touching on a few of my pet hardy perennials I shall deal with weeds, not blossoms.

Some of these h-p weeds flourish in the soil of word for word translation. Some arise from failure to observe carefully differences between the two languages. As Sherlock Holmes liked to say to his old crony, Dr. Watson: “You see but you do not observe. “ Some h-p”s are simply bad style, which is common among both native and non-native speakers. No doubt I’m guilty of it myself at times.

Take dates. Not the kind you eat but those which are a matter of time. I often hear people say: “May 20 the first” or “December 20 the fifth. “ We should say: “ May the twenty-first,” “December the twenty-fifth” and so on. I’ve no idea how the mistake arose or who started it. Anyway it flourishes and should be exterminated.

Many h-p”s of course lie deep in the rich soil of the Chinese language. Their growth is understandable. Learning a foreign language is, for most of us, a long, hard struggle against the influence of our native tongue. That influence is natural and the struggle against it may seem unnatural. But it must be waged.

Take some examples from the English language Chinese media. “We warmly congratulate Namibia’s newly-won independence. “ In translations from Chinese into English “warmly” and “congratulate” seem to be locked in holy matrimony. I think they should be divorced. Generally speaking, in English the verbs and the nouns convey most of the meaning; adverbs and adjectives do not strengthen them, they weaken them by turning one’s attention from the key words. So *congratulate* is happier single than married. But in this case it is wrongly used. We congratulate a person or a country on (or for) something: the sentence should read: “We congratulate Namibia on its newly-won independence. “

Another common media mistake is: “Tianchang county of Anhui Province” or “Anhui Province”s Tianchang county”. Both are wrong. The correct version is: “Tianchang County, Anhui Province”, or “Tianchang County in Anhui Province”.

While on the treatment of countries in the media I advise against: “This action of the government has hurt China’s feelings. “ To hurt feelings is generally applied in a personal way to individuals and to somewhat sensitive people at that. It sounds too weak and trivial to apply it to a country, especially a great country of a billion people. It would be better to say: “We find this statement (action) offensive”.

On the other hand you may hurt a person's feelings by addressing her or him incorrectly. Chinese students occasionally address me simply as Crook. To me it sounds rude, but I'm not offended because I know they do not mean to be rude. They do it because of back-translating my Chinese name "Ke Luke". Those three Chinese syllables are quite polite. They sound like a surname (*xing*) plus a Christian or given name (*mingzi*). But Crook in English is my surname and nothing else, corresponding to the *Ke*. By itself it sounds rather disrespectful, especially coming from a student in China, where students are if anything excessively respectful to teachers. In England among a certain class of people in addressing an equal or subordinate the surname alone may be used.

Another matter of common courtesy crops up on the telephone. Sometimes I pick up the receiver to be greeted with the words: "Who are you?" This sounds rude and I'm inclined to think: "Another bureaucrat. " So I never reply by giving my name. I say: "Whom do you want?" or "What number are you calling?" The correct opening for the caller would be: " May I speak to so-and-so ?" or "Is that number so-and-so?" or "such and such an organisation?" - a necessary precaution when wrong numbers are frequent. (My use of the word "whom" may sound pedantic. People use it less and less nowadays. They say "who" even for the objective case. But I'm old and it's hard to break old habits.')

To return to politeness, take the phrase "Pleased to meet you". This is correct only for the first encounter, when one is introduced to somebody. But if you happen to meet somebody whom you already know, on parting do not say "Pleased to meet you" but "It was nice to see you" or "I'm glad I ran into you" or something of that sort.

These polite terms remind me of another h-p which one often meets on notices inside or outside hotels or restaurants: "Welcome you". That is another example of word for word translation from the Chinese. In English the sign should read simply: "Welcome". The "you" is redundant. It is correct to say "I am happy to welcome you to our country, to Beijing" etc. but that applies to a specific person or persons.

Another piece of excessive politeness arises in this situation. I bump into something and hurt myself; or I upset a cup of tea - and my companion says: "Sorry". That sounds as if she or he is apologising for something she or he has done. Yet he is in no way responsible and should not apologise but may express sympathy by saying: "Oh, I hope you're not hurt" or "That's a pity". The French have a saying: "Toujours la politesse" - "Always be polite" ; but one can have too much of a good thing.

Let me conclude with some grammatical misconceptions, though like many native speakers of English I don't know much grammar, I just use it. We all know that Chinese speakers, even those with an excellent command of English, often mix up he and she, so that we English speakers don't know whether a man or a woman is referred to. This is because the Chinese sound (not the written character) is the same for he and she. So we may get: "He (Mrs. Thatcher) is known as " The Iron Lady" ". But the problem also occurs with the possessive pronoun. So we might get: "His husband's name is Denis". The point is that the possessive pronoun should agree with the subject not the object. The mistake is conspicuous in such phrases as "his husband" or "her wife".

An even more puzzling mistake is: "When he graduates, where will Lao Zhang be distributed?" This mechanical translation of the Chinese word (*fenpei*) conjures up a gruesome picture of poor old Zhang being sliced up and handed round like a plate of ham to different work units. We should say: "Where will he be assigned (or simply go) to work". People (plural) may be distributed to different posts but not one person (singular).

Well, these are a few of my pet h-p's. Like all pets, especially pet hates, they express personal taste. Perhaps some people may regard my poisonous weeds as beautiful blossoms. What do you think of them? Perhaps you can add to the list. In fact *English Monthly* might make Hardy Perennials a regular feature with different gardeners for each issue. And of course I may have made some mistakes. If I have, correct me. As Lenin said: "The man who never made a mistake has yet to be born."

From English Language Learning No. 6 / 1990

19. Hardy Perennials - Once More Unto the Breach (by David Crook)

"Once more unto the breach dear friends. " Every student of English literature will recognise that quotation from Shakespeare, in which Henry V calls on his soldiers to return to the attack. But the attack I have in mind is not against the French. It is once more against hardy perennials. The French were a doughty foe and had to be attacked again and again. The same applies to h. p. s. So here are some more which I have encountered recently.

Let's start, then, with "Come in please." This is word-for-word translation from the Chinese - one of the worst ways of putting a foreign language into idiomatic English. (We should translate idea for idea.) In everyday English we just say "Come in", without the "please". Does that mean that native English speakers are impolite? No more than other people, I'd say. In saying "Come in" we can express politeness - or rudeness, for that matter - in the tone of voice. In fact adding "please" can be rude, as in: "Will you please come in", which suggests: "I've already asked you to come in. What are you waiting for?"

Now let's take something topical - the Asian Games. The last crop of h. p. s included "warmly congratulate", from which the "warmly" should be weeded out. In fact "congratulate" lends itself to a variety of h. p. s, one of the worst examples being "We congratulate the Asian Games". Generally speaking we congratulate a person (or persons) on something. We may congratulate somebody on winning a race, on passing an exams, on getting married, or on having a baby. We may, when the time comes, congratulate China on her achievements in the Asian Games, but we cannot congratulate the Asian Games. We may hail, greet, acclaim them.

That word "achievement" provides soil for another h. p. - "to make achievements". That is not an English, but a Chinese collocation. Just because an idea is expressed in Chinese by a certain collocation, must we use the same collocation in English? No ! Our task in translation is to match content not just form, ideas not just words. The words should be servants of ideas, not masters. In English we do not *make* achievements. We have them, we record them. Or we use achieve, a verb, as in *achieve* success, *achieve* great things *even* miracles !

H. p. s flourish not only in a variety of soils but in families. For instance: "She gave birth to a baby". "What's wrong with that," you may ask. "What else could she give birth to?" Well, figuratively she might give birth to an idea. That's not the point. In daily conversation we would say quite simply "She *had* a baby". "Give birth to" is correct but

it is too heavy for conversational or colloquial English. It conjures up a picture of the painful process of birth giving. It is too clinical.

Another family matter is that of grandparents. I often hear students speak of grandparents-in-law. So far as I know - and I'm a grandpa myself - such creatures do not exist in the English-speaking world. Why do they exist in Chinglish then? From the Chinese careful distinction between the parents of the mother and of the father. English is less detailed and precise in relationship terms than Chinese. In daily conversation we do not take the trouble to distinguish between the parents of the mother and those of the father. Perhaps this has something to do with the different degree of equality or inequality of the sexes in feudal and capitalist society. Where necessary in English we use maternal and paternal grandparents but most of the time we do not. The separate but unequal terms in Chinese seems to imply that the father"s parents are superior to the mother's. But in English a grandma is a grandma and a grandpa a grandpa and That's all. So the ingenious invention of grandparents-in-law is an attempt to foist on English a precision in relationship terms which English lacks or has sloughed off.

Grandmas somehow remind me of washing clothes. A common Chinglish phrase is: "The poor old woman washed clothes for others". In the original Chinese this means she washed clothes to make a living not as a household chore, for her own family. In English we might say "She took in washing" or "She did other people's washing". And while on the subject of household chores a word about cooking and shopping.

I sometimes hear: "A spoon made by wood" or "biscuits made by butter". This produces a picture in my mind"\'s eye of a piece of wood holding a knife and carving a spoon, or a lump of butter baking a biscuit. What we should say is "a spoon made *of* wood and biscuits made *with* butter". In other words *by* indicates the agent, the person who makes or does something, *of* or *with* show the material with which something is made. I saw some biscuits in a shop the other day. The package bore the strange inscription "Fancy Smell Biscuits. " What can that mean, I wondered. I bought a package, opened it and sniffed. The biscuits had no smell at all. Then I tasted one. Delicious ! The manufacturer evidently meant "Fancy Taste", not knowing that we smell things with our noses and taste them with our mouths or, more precisely, our taste buds. But where does the "fancy" come from I wondered. This reminded me of how, when we were very young, we used to pun on Shakespeare's song "Tell me where is fancy bred", turning "bred" into "bread". But that childhood memory did not help with the derivation of "fancy". I suspect that "Fancy Smell" was an attempt to express the idea of "tasty". Another disastrous example of word-for-word translation - or mistranslation.

Those who have had the patience to read this far may have concluded that I have no sympathy for hardy perennials rooted in Chinglish. True, I feel it my duty to dig them up, but I do so with sympathy. Learning a foreign language is an arduous task and mastering its idiom (n. b. not idioms) calls for constant struggle against the influence of one's mother tongue. That influence accounts for h. p. s being both hardy and perennial. So we must, as Voltaire said in the last words of *Candide*: "Go and work in the garden".

From English Language Learning No. 9 / 1990

20. Ying versus Qing- A Dialogue (David Crook)

(Ying and Qing are two students. Ying speaks English, Qing speaks Qinglish)

Q. Are you going out this summer?

Y. I should hope so. I'm not going to stay indoors all the time.

Q. No, I mean are you going to the seaside? Some place like Beidaihe.

Y. Oh, you mean am I going *away.*

.....

(In Beidaihe)

Q. That's a nice, friendly sign. It says "Welcome you".

Y. It may be nice and friendly but it's Qinglish not English. It should read simply "Welcome". Welcome you is a word for word translation from the Chinese. And that "s one of the worst kinds of translation. "Welcome to Beidaihe" or "Welcome to our hotel" would be all right.

Q. What about "you're welcome"?

Y. That's what people say when somebody says "Thank you". It's used mainly by Americans.

Q. Yes, I know. The British say "Not at all" or "Don't mention it".

Y. Yes, but those are rather formal. Nowadays most British people would say "That's all right" or just "O. K "

Q. O. K. Look, here's another sign. It says: "We don't accept tip". That's good.

Y. It's good in a way. But it's not good English. You see, tip is a countable noun, so there should be an "s" at the end of the word. It should be "tips". It would be correct to say "We don't accept luggage". That's uncountable.

(After they "ve put their 4 pieces of luggage in their room)

Q. Let's go for a stroll.

Y. That's a good idea.

Q. Oh, look. Those civilians are having a heated discussion.

Y. Of course they're civilians. This is a seaside resort, not a military base or garrison town. I suppose you're mixing it up with citizens. Civilians is used by way of contrast with soldiers or military personnel. And their discussion doesn't strike me as

heated. It's just lively or animated. Heated is another of your word for word translations from Chinese. *Relie* can mean enthusiastic, too. Heated rather suggests that people are becoming a bit angry. So you see, it's wrong to translate word for word and it's wrong to think that one word has just one translation. It all depends on the idea and the context.

Q. I see. Anyway, let's cross the road and go into that little park. We must cross here on these white lines. If we cross anywhere else we'll be seriously punished.

Y. Seriously punished? you must mean severely punished. Punishment is always serious. It's no joking matter. Of course we may speak of a serious crime.

(In the park)

Q. Oh, look at those little kids playing poker!

Y. Little kids playing poker! That's hardly likely. They're probably playing some childish card game. Poker is a gambling game generally associated with rather tough grown up men, such as journalists.

Q. Let's go over there to the bandstand and enjoy the music.

Y. How can you be sure we'll enjoy it? We can listen to it but we may not enjoy it. *(After listening for a while)*. I must admit that they play very well.

Q. Yes, they do. We should congratulate their playing.

Y. No, we can't do that. We can congratulate *them* on their playing. We can't congratulate their playing.

Q. But the other day I heard on the radio: "Congratulate the conference".

Y. You may have heard it, but still it's wrong. It should have been "Hail the conference" or something like that. You can congratulate people but not things or events.

Q. Oh, dear. I'm always making mistakes. I must raise the level of my English.

Y. That's the spirit. But it would be better to say "I must improve my English". You really speak quite well. The trouble is you seem to translate word for word. What you should do is to translate idea for idea. Grasp an idea in Chinese, then see how native English speakers express it in English; don't translate word for word. That means, wherever possible get your English from native speakers or native writers.

Q. Yes, I suppose they never make mistakes.

Y. Oh, yes, they do. For example, on the radio the other day I heard a prominent American statesman say: “We must work co-operatively together”. To co-operate means to work together. So you can’t co-operate separately.

Q. Well, if even native speakers make mistakes, what shall we do?

Y. We still have to learn from them. Most of the educated ones speak correctly most of the time. Anyway, you don’t want to speak *too* correctly. Bernard Shaw says That’s what some foreigners - and he means non-native speakers of English - do all the time. And That’s what shows that they’re foreigners. Still, you should try to get your English from English sources. Then, in the end, you’ll get rid of your Qinglish.

From English Language Learning No. 10 / 1991

21. “Once More Unto the Breach” of English Idiom Chinglish Yet Again (David Crook)

“The poor always you have with you”. So said Jesus. If he had lived here and now he might have said the same of Chinglish. It is with us even when we go to the W. C., outside of which I often see the sign “Man” and “Woman”. Both should be in the plural, “Men” and “Women”. W. C., incidentally, stands for “Water closet “, closet meaning a small, private room. In one place, I think it was at a temple in the Western Hills, I saw an ingenious variation: “W. C. “ and “M. C. “, the sign writer having taken the W to stand for women, not water. So logically he thought the adjoining closet, being for men, should be M. C. But M. C. actually stands not for Men”s Closet but for Military Cross, an award for bravery on the battlefield. Of course it is good to use one’s head and be logical, but language is not always logical; in fact it is often irrational, as wrote Henry Sweet, the English phonetician on whom Bernard Shaw is said to have modelled Professor Higgins in his play *Pygmalion*. So it is essential to observe what educated native speakers write and say, not just to derive English from Chinese.

But to return to the W. C. one could write a long essay on the subject. But this is not the place for that. I shall simply list a couple of synonyms. “ Loo “ (British) and “ john “ (American). Loo is said to be derived from “l” eau” - the French for water. In olden times buckets of dirty water, including urine, were emptied from upper storey windows into the street below. Before doing this, the considerate house-owner would warn passers-by, by shouting: “Gardez l’eau”- look out for the water. But that is just folk etymology. My dictionary says that loo is dervied from the French phrase “lieux d”aisance” meaning “ place for relieving oneself “. We British are notorious for using euphemisms or under-statements, such as saying, instead of going to the loo, “I want to go somewhere”. Once, when a British visitor said this to her guide, the latter, wishing to assert tourists” freedom of movement, replied: “You can go anywhere you like. “

Well, it’s time to leave the lavatory for more salubrious subjects. For instance, trade marks. “White Elephant” has unfortunately been chosen as the name for a certain electric battery. Why unfortunately ? Because, again according to my dictionary, a white elephant is an idiom for: “a possession unwanted by its owner ; an elaborate venture that proves useless; a rare or valuable possession the upkeep of which is very expensive”. Some batteries, these days, are (electrically) undercharged, but they are hardly white elephants. White elephants might remind us of “sacred cows” - “persons, institutions or customs held to be beyond criticism”. But this alludes to Hindu belief not Chinese-English.

“China on the Spot”, however, is the title of a Chinese TV program ; and on the spot’s idiomatic meaning is, unfortunately, “in an awkward, difficult situation or predicament”. “China here and now” would be better.

So in using idiomatic expressions you have to be careful. Which reminds me: “Watch your step “ is a perfectly good idiom, but step should be used in the singular, not the plural - even at the beginning of a 10,000 *li* long march. As stated above, language is not always logical, it is often irrational.

From English Language Learning No. 6 /1994

Part Three: On Travelling

22. Impressions of USA - One Still Divides into Two (David Crook)

Isabel and I spent a month in USA last summer, travelling the 3,000 miles from the west coast to the east by road, rail and air, giving talks on education in China today. Our tour started in San Francisco and ended in New York.

I

Stanford University and Los Angeles

Driving around San Francisco we discovered how that city acquired its Chinese name - Old Gold Mountain; the grass on the nearby hills, parched in the hot summer sun, had turned bright gold. This was our first glimpse of the natural beauty of USA. We saw more beauty during the weeks to come. And we saw ugliness, too. In these notes I shall touch on both the beauty and the ugliness, the advanced and the backward. How else can one seek truth from facts?

San Francisco, like Los Angeles and other place names in California, is not English but Spanish- a reminder that much of this region was colonized 3 or 4 centuries ago by the Spaniards and was part of Mexico until it was stolen from that country in the 19th century. Today Americans of Mexican origin - Chicanos - are the second largest minority nationality in USA (after the Blacks). But besides those Mexicans who are United States citizens there are others, temporarily in USA, who come to work in the enormous fruit and vegetable farms owned by “agro-business” monopolies. Many of these are illegal immigrants, who have entered the country by wading across the Rio Grande at the border of USA and Mexico for which reason they are often called “wetbacks”. “These Chicanos”, our friends told us, “are the most exploited and worst treated of all the racial groups in the country, because they are here illegally. The authorities, in the interests of “agrobiz”, wink at their illegal entry because they want to maintain a reserve army of labour to keep wages down. If the “wet-backs” organize for better pay or conditions and go on strike, they can immediately be deported. “

The campus of Stanford University is truly beautiful. The grassy lawns around the buildings are green, not gold, being watered by mechanically revolving water-sprinklers. They are dotted with flowering trees and shrubs and much of the architecture is in Spanish colonial style, with its graceful courtyards and colonnades. But amid these beautiful surroundings women dare not walk alone at night for fear of being raped, and men are in danger of being mugged by armed gangs. These hoodlums especially prey

upon old and defenceless people, including cripples in wheelchairs. So people who go out at night, even for a short distance, travel by car. It's safer. The university is richly endowed, charges high fees, and provides excellent facilities for study, including the celebrated Hoover Library with its unrivalled collection of Chinese books and periodicals. Our son Carl has been doing research there on the rectification movement of 1942 and in the Stanford Library he had access to a complete file of the *Liberation Daily* published in Yan"an. "When I was in China and Lin Biao and the Gang of Four were riding high", he said, "I could never have access to such a wealth of Chinese material. A foreigner who wanted to do research in Chinese history had to go abroad. "

From San Francisco we flew to Los Angeles, the second largest city in the US, (with a population of 7 million) 450 miles down the coast. Big planes fly every hour or so between the two cities. Topographically Los Angeles, with its hills and valleys, is a beautiful place. But its beauty cannot always be appreciated even if you stand on the top of hill; for often, down in the valleys, all one can see is an impenetrable smog. This comes mainly not from the smoke of factory chimneys but from the exhaust pipes of cars. L. A. is a widely dispersed city, made up of suburbs and former small towns and villages. Since the public transport service is extremely poor and expensive, many workers have to have a car of some sort to get to work and they drive as much as 80 miles a day. So there are over a million cars in Los Angeles, belching carbon-monoxide every day and at times the radio stations broadcast the warning "It's bad for the health to go out today. "

Still, there *is* sunshine and beauty. One day I went to visit some old friends of ours - and of China - who live in a suburb on the coast. Their home is in a housing estate overlooking the Pacific Ocean, which glistened in the sun. The estate is surrounded by an eight foot high wire fence and as we approached the entrance we had to stop and sign in, strict security precautions being taken to keep out dangerous elements. Once inside we found quite a complex system of well-maintained roads and excellent facilities: a swimming pool (the ocean is extremely cold), steam baths, tennis courts, a clubhouse etc. But one thing was lacking - children. No one under 15 is allowed to live in this retreat of comfortably off professional and retired people. This may add to the peace and quiet, but - perhaps because we came from China - we felt sad that such warmhearted people as Helen and Bob should live in such an unnatural atmosphere.

Bob and Helen's home is no exception in being protected by special security measures. One day we went to have lunch at the home of a university professor. He stopped the car about 15 feet from the garage, the metal door of which was tightly closed. He did not get out of the car to open it, but manipulated an electronic gadget

inside the car. The metal gate slid up, we drove in and down it came again. Safely inside the garage we got out of the car and went up a staircase leading into the house above. “You never know who may be lurcking in the garden, waiting to hold you up, “ said our host. “ There was someone there only a few nights ago and I had to phone for the police. “ Another day, we took some laundry to a laundromat (a combination of the words laundry and automatic). This is a large shop with electric washing and drying machines all round the walls, for the use of which one pays at the cash desk. At the entrance was a notice reading: “Operator cannot open safe. Never more than $50 in store at night. “ This was to inform bandits that it was not worth the risk of trying to rob the place.

In Los Angeles we stayed with two schoolteacher friends, Dorothy and Bill, who have visited China and done valuable work for friendship. Bill teaches in a community college (a non-residential 2-year college) and Dorothy in a high school where all the pupils are black though half the teachers are white. Both Bill and Dorothy are highly qualified and have many years of experience and seniority. So they are well paid. Yet both of them, like other teachers in California had just been compelled to submit their resignations (which will not necessarily be acted upon), because of recent drastic cuts in state funds for education and other social services. Still, for the time being our friends were quite well-off and lived in a beautiful home with wall-to-wall carpets in every room (even in the two bathrooms), a kitchen fitted with a refrigerator, electric cooking-range and all the mechanical gadgets to make housekeeping convenient. Before we went out one evening we noticed our hosts going round switching on all the lights, drawing the thick curtains and turning on the radio full blast, before double-locking the front door. This, they explained, was to give would-be thieves the impression that they were at home.

We were even more surprised when they mentioned: ”This district we live in is a black ghetto; there are only a handful of white families living here. “ We had pictured ghettoes - quarters of a city in which minority nationality groups are forced to live by social, legal or economic pressure - as rundown, ramshackle places, (most of them are) ; whereas Bill and Dorothy’s home, like the others all around was prosperous-looking, even elegant. There is evidently a contrast of wealth and poverty even among ghettoes.

How did our friends, who are white, happen to be living in a black ghetto? Dorothy’s previous husband had been black and she has black children and grandchildren. Actually, before marrying her black husband she had been married to a white man and had some white children, too. When she and her husband were

divorced (the divorce rate in USA is extremely high and Bill is her third husband) she had been granted legal custody of the children. when she married a Black her first husband brought a lawsuit against her, claiming that she was no longer fit to have custody of her white children. The court ruled in favour of the former husband and the children were taken away from their mother. I had observed on the streets, black and white children playing together, a few mixed couples and black girls chatting amicably with golden-haired white ones. Now I asked whether there was still lynching in USA, despite the apparent improvement in race relations during recent years. “Yes”, I was told. “And most of the lynching is done by the police, in the prisons. “

One morning we went to visit Dorothy’s school. The buildings were modern and well-lit, the grounds spacious and the teaching equipment excellent. There was a fine library and a language lab with tape recorders, video machines, slide and film projectors. The curriculum seemed enlightened, the teachers having a fairly free hand in choosing their material. Dorothy, striving to inculcate in the pupils a pride in their own people, taught a course in Black History. We saw her material and sat in on a lively discussion class. Then she took us to a civics lesson in the form of a “Mock Court”, with teachers and students playing the part of magistrates, lawyers, prisoner, witnesses, jury etc. It was directly based on an actual case in which a Black had been framed and its purpose was to teach the students how to stand up for their legal right. (Of all the 25 million Blacks in USA one out of four at some time in life finds him or herself in jail.) We were surprised at and even envious of conditions in the school. “Yes,” Dorothy said, “It’s fine on the surface; but it’s rotten underneath. Every now and then there’s an outburst of vandalism. Every book in the library is fitted with a metal slab and as you leave you have to walk through a photo-electric beam which buzzes loudly if you’re trying to steal a book. Some thieves even rip out the metal to avoid detection. And there’s violence. Teachers have been beaten by their students and women teachers raped. “ (Later, in New York, a doctor told me that the hospital where he works admits 2 or 3 teachers a week who have been beaten up by students and that in 1977, in one school 17 out of a total of 105 teachers were hospitalized on account of student attacks.) Why all this vandalism and violence? It arises from despair, frustration, lack of aim in life and unemployment. Unemployment is higher among Blacks than Whites and highest of all among black youth, 80% of those under 21 being unable to find jobs. This drives young and old alike to drink, drugs, crime and divorce. Many maladjusted youth come from broken families. This situation is by no means limited to Los Angeles.

II

Driving Across USA via Chicago

Still, as we drove across the country we encountered many pleasing phenomena, to say nothing of pleasant people.

We drove from San Francisco through Yosemite National Park with its clear running rivers, towering crags and precipices, dark evergreens on the mountainsides against a background of snow sparkling in the brilliant June sunshine. Later we drove across the salt flats by the Great Salt Lake and then over the Rocky Mountains. Here, to our astonishment, we saw young people riding bicycles. We also saw less familiar vehicles on the roads. It was summer and many people were off on their holidays in campers - large automobiles especially constructed and equipped for living in - which they would park at some scenic spot. Some cars towed camper-trailers or even boats on wheels. Some vehicles were immensely long - as long as the new, articulated Peking buses. These were loaded with pre-fabricated parts of “mobile homes” just narrow enough to be driven along the highways. On reaching their destination two of these components would be set side by side on cement stilts and welded or riveted together to make a wide, spacious home. Our friends Bob and Helen had lived in one of these “mobile homes” near Los Angeles and it was so roomy that one would never have dreamt it had been driven along the road. Less pleasant were the colossal container-trucks, loaded with metal containers as big as a house, which were filled with all sorts of cargo. Container-trucks are a modern, highly efficient type of goods transport, for the containers can be moved straight from the factories, where they are loaded, onto trucks, trains or ships. But they are unwieldy to drive and dangerous. Woe betide any car or even ordinary truck into which they crash. And crash they sometimes do, for the drivers have long hours and tight schedules and sometimes fall asleep at the wheel. We passed the scene of one such accident and the body of the passenger car with which the container truck had collided was just a heap of scrap metal. One can only imagine the state of the bodies of the passengers. These great trucks are aptly referred to as “juggernauts”, after the ancient idol-bearing Hindu chariots which crushed everything and everyone in their path.

We crossed over the Rockies, dropped down to the mountain city of Denver, spoke in the public library there and then pushed on to Chicago, the third largest city in USA. Chicago has long been known as a city of gangsters, just as old Shanghai was. It is also known as the “Windy City”, being situated on the banks of Lake Michigan, which is almost an inland sea. The shores of the lake are landscaped with parks and in the early morning and late afternoon one sees “joggers” running along lakeside paths and lawns, while across the road tower skyscrapers. There are blocks and blocks of 20 and 30 storey apartment buildings which look imposing, but we were told some of them are

simply modern slums occupied by workers. These “housing projects” are hastily erected of shoddy materials and are poorly maintained. Because of the social decay and moral rot which afflicts present-day American society they are dangerous places to live in. Entering them at night you may be set upon by muggers lurking in the vestibule; and women are raped and men robbed in the elevators. Such are the slums of modern American cities, nothing like the ramshackle thatched mud huts of pre-liberation China.

One house we went into was entirely different. It was owned by a wealthy construction engineer who had in his youth been poor and a member of the Communist Party. Despite their wealth he and his wife still retain some progressive ideas and had visited us in Peking a couple of years ago. We sat down to an excellent meal in the dining room which has windows reaching from floor to ceiling. They look out upon Lake Michigan, whose waters lap the edge of the building, giving one the impression of being at the seaside. As we toured the house our host suddenly opened a door; we looked in and saw an indoor swimming pool. The rooms were constructed in the most modern style, some of them separated from each other only by low, partition-like walls; others stretch-up for two storeys. All this gave a sense of space and height. Many of the walls were lined with bookcases and there were open books on the tables- some of them Marxist volumes. As we settled down to our after-dinner coffee in the comfortable lounge I tactlessly enquired: “How do you reconcile those Marxist books with all this luxury?” There was an awkward pause until the wife replied: ”Yes, it worries me. “ The husband, however, maintained that their living more frugally would contribute nothing to changing the social system. Still, one felt that the couple were conscious of the contradiction between their present luxurious life and the communist ideals of their youth.

III

Hinton’s Farm and New York City

After leaving Chicago we headed in the direction of William Hinton’s farm near Philadelphia. Many Chinese comrades have seen on television this apparent miracle, where one man, with the aid of machinery, produces as much as Dazhai Brigade on the same area of land. But the TV pictures do not show the exhaustingly long hours of work the farmer is forced to do for months at a stretch, which undermine his health; nor the mountainous pile of debts which he owes for his machines. “I’ll be well over 80 before I pay off that lot,” said 60-year-old Hinton, “if I ever manage to pay it at all. But the banks I borrow from aren’t worried, so long as I keep up the interest payments. If I ever failed to do that, they”d come and grab my land. “

It was on this farm that our son Carl got married to Marni, Hinton's niece. The wedding was an international gathering of old and young, farmer neighbours and Chinese students, Canadian relatives and American friends of China. In USA marriages are legal only if conducted by either a legal official or a preacher. In this case a preacher officiated. Not that either the bride or groom or their parents belonged to any church. Nor for that matter did the preacher. He had been driven out of his church for his staunch opposition to the American invasion of Viet Nam. At the wedding he spoke of how it takes time and effort, mutual tolerance and understanding, common aims and interests to build a true marriage. Such words are timely in the US of today, where so many married couples are subjected to terrible tensions. Insecurity and unemployment, the "rat race" - the competitiveness of American life - place heavy strains on marriage and the family. It is these tensions which explain the prevalence of drug addiction, alcoholism and crimes of violence, including the battering of wives by their husbands and children by their parents. (Most of the injured children entering American hospitals have been battered by their own parents.) But at this particular wedding the preacher was aware that bride and groom were united by a common cause and while his words were solemn the general atmosphere was festive. The big barn, at this time of the year empty of grain, was the scene of feasting, which was followed by square dancing - the traditional collective folk dancing of American farmers.

Soon after the wedding we headed for nearby Philadelphia, an historic city where over 200 years ago the Declaration of Independence was adopted and the American Constitution framed. In Philadelphia we stayed with two active friends of China, the Ricketts, whose book "Prisoners of Liberation" tells a deeply moving personal story of how in post-liberation China prisoners convicted of crimes were remoulded by the Thought of Mao Zedong - in glaring contrast with the fascist treatment of prisoners by Lin Biao and the gang of four.

The Ricketts and other members of the Philadelphia branch of the US-China Friendship Association (USCPFA) arranged for us to speak at a potluck supper, to which different people contributed home-cooked dishes, to be shared by all. After the meal the small tables were pushed aside, the chairs were arranged, and Isabel and I went to the front to speak and answer questions. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, the ultra-leftists of the "Revolutionary Communist Party" being conspicuous by their absence. These people, as they had shown by their questions at our meetings in Los Angeles and Chicago, follow the gang of four.

Our next meeting, in New York, was very different from the "homey" Philadelphia one. It was a fund-raising dinner, to raise money for *New China* Magazine, published

by the USCPFA. It was held in an elegant Chinese restaurant. The restaurant charged the USCPFA US$7 a head (roughly 11 *yuan*) but the diners had to pay US $16 (almost 26 *Yuan*) each - the extra nine dollars going to the magazine for running expense. Of course most Americans, however friendly to China, would not pay $16 for a meal, so attendance was limited to comfortably off people. Still *New China* hasn't a large circulation and needs financial support from its wealthier friends; this was one way of getting it.

After the meeting our hosts took us for a stroll down the block to the skyscraper United Nations building by the East River. It was an impressive sight, towering towards the moonlit sky; but down on the ground, not far away, we saw "bagmen" and "bagwomen " - homeless people carrying all their worldly possessions in old plastic bags. At richly-endowed Stanford University and staying in the homes of comfortably off middle class intellectual friends of China in Los Angeles, Chicago and elsewhere, our vision was somewhat limited. We knew of the contrasts of wealth and poverty in U. S. society but seldom ran up against them. It was in New York that we saw "bag people" picking over ash-cans for scraps, not only near the U. N. tower but within a stone's throw of luxury shops on Fifth Avenue. And after visiting the magnificent Metropolitan Museum - where among other exhibits we saw a fine jade carving of the Chinese god of wealth, donated fittingly enough by Nelson Rockefeller- we saw musicians playing classical music on the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue, begging for a living.

We had reached the Museum by walking across Central Park. "Never walk in the Park after dark", friends had warned us, "it's dangerous". But this was broad daylight on a bright, sunny day and we saw classes of kindergarten children out with their nurses. About one in five of the nurses were men - an excellent thing, we thought; for nursery school life should be a complement to family life, where children should receive care and affection from fathers as well as mothers. The entry of men into this field of work we considered a healthy sign of the growing trend towards equality of the sexes in the US. Providing a sound educational foundation to children is in some ways even more difficult in USA than in other countries; for American children from 5 to 11 years of age watch television on an average for 26 hours a week. This is more time than they spend in the classroom. And while some of the programs, no doubt, have educational value, on the whole American TV, for all its technical excellence, is full of sex, violence, and glorification of the police. And even the best programs are constantly interrupted by advertising.

This visit to USA, like everyone of my visits over the decades, was a stimulating experience. My first stay there was about 50 years ago and it lasted 7 years; so as a

young man, though I had been born and brought up in England I came to regard America as my second homeland. I grew to love this beautiful land with its generous, outgoing, inventive, energetic people, full of zest for life. These qualities are still alive in them despite the decadence and commercialism of American society and the dominance of what Lu Xun described as a man-eat-man social system. This time, especially in the light of what I have learnt during the last 30 years in China I felt more than ever that USA is a land of extremes and contradictions - of immense material wealth and much spiritual poverty; of abundant production and criminal waste of human and natural resources; of high wages and higher prices; of extreme competitiveness linked to extreme insecurity (many Americans, these days, on taking leave of each other, do not say “goodbye”. They say: “take care” - surely an expression of a sense of insecurity). It is not surprising that such a society should be permeated by violance. But besides the violence there is the kindness and courtesy of the ordinary American people. Comdade Mao Zedong stated the case simply in his letter to Willian Foster: “The American people are good; the American imperialists are bad. “ One still divides into two.

From English language Learning Nos. 6-8 /1979

23. Travel Notes on Tibet (an extract) (by David Crook)

Isabel and I are just back from a trip to Tibet. We travelled hard, by train, via Xining and Golmud, then by bus to Lhasa - two 14-hour days with an overnight stop at a primitive, candle-lit inn at 4,700 metres above sea-level. The highest point en route was the 5,200 metre high Tanggula Pass. It was no de luxe joy-ride but worth doing-once in a lifetime. Besides Lhasa we visited Shigatse, 200 kilometres to the south-west, the home base of the Panchen Lama; and Gyangtse, midway between the two. That is where Younghusband's British-officered troops in 1904 mowed down with machine-guns Tibetan monks armed with slings and muzzle-loading muskets. (Despite this many Tibetans prefer to be addressed in English rather than Chinese.)

Our stay in Tibet was short (3 weeks) but it was long enough to convince us that there is no suppression of religion there, which is alleged by some prejudiced people. They idealize old feudal Tibet as Shangrila, a Himalayan Utopia, which never existed anywhere but in James Hilton's piece of social science fiction *Lost Horizons.*

In the temples and monasteries we visited we witnessed freedom of religion and freedom of superstition, too.

In the Jokung (Da Zhao Si) temple in Lhasa devotees make the rounds replenishing the butter lamps (often from large tins, on sale in the market, marked "Norwegian edible fat"). The odor of sanctity in Tibet is that of rancid butter. At the approaches to the temple people flop down and make full-length prostrations for hundreds of yards at a stretch. Inside they poke their heads into the receptacles beneath the bookcases, so that the teachings of the holy scriptures will pass painlessly into the brains and bodies. The tri-lingual (Tibetan, Han and English) receptionist in our little hotel explained that it was wrong to swat flies. (Who knows, they might be re-incarnations of holy people or close relatives?) Packs of dogs, like holy cows in India, multiply unmolested; they sleep all day and bark all night. Buddhism, of course has something to offer in human relations, being born out of rejection of the Hindu caste system. And religion and philosophy with their attendant superstition are an integral part of culture and ethnicity. In any case, you can't suppress religion, as Mao Zedong stressed. You must educate people and let it run its course. How long will it last, I asked an enlightened Tibetan; a century? Longer, he thought.

Some aspects of Tibetan culture are a delight and their preservation will enrich the culture of China. The architecture of modern dwellings is of classic grace - long blocks of three and four-storey buildings, with large, tapering, deep-set windows decked with window boxes. The interior decorating of the four homes we visited (of well-to-do

farmers, artists and aristocrats) all had carpeted divans placed at right-angles, with a table in the nook, allowing for cosy chats. Each room served as a living room by day and a bedroom by night. The wooden cabinets topped with elegant tea-cups of china or metal were painted with designs in brilliant, clashing colours.

Nature heightens the beauty of it all: the clear, blue, unpolluted skies, the varied landscape, the jagged bare mountains, the green valleys, the rushing rivers. Every prospect pleases. But Man? Let's face it. Tibetan society is materially backward, superstition-ridden, fatalistic. Few Han officials learn the language (but Han traders do; they have a material incentive.) Yet backward societies do have something to teach materially advanced ones. Teachers must learn how to learn from their pupils.

Meanwhile Tibetans are learning to-day to use some of the modern gadgets that the Hans acquired only yesterday. They quote curio prices on pocket calculators in the Barkhor market around the Jokung Temple which we found crowded with worshippers. The Barkhor is a maze of flag-stoned lanes, opening out every now and then into miniature market places. There you can buy hard-boiled eggs, rancid butter, yak meat (and yakburgers!), gaudy strip cloth shoulder-bags, crafted leatherwork, lethal knives, old coins of recent vintage, Tibetan carpets made in Tianjin 1500 miles away on the east coast. Old men twirl prayer wheels as they make the circuit of the temple, mumbling incantations, chatting with cronies and doing the family shopping. "Sturdy beggars" sit in rows of 4 or 5, chanting and collecting cash. Others sidle up to you whispering: "Change money", offering 150 *yuan* of regular currency for 100 of the Foreign Exchange Certificates issued to tourists, which are redeemable in foreign currency and can be used to buy imported durables. Young women in traditional dress, with layers of long skirts, peddle brooches and necklaces of unidentifiable "precious" stones. On the broad new avenues which a few years ago were either mud or dust but are now well-paved the motorized water-sprinkler warns of its approach by blaring a recording of Schiller"s "Ode to Joy" (from Beethoven"s 9th Symphony.) The Tibetan type hotels, such as the one we stayed in for 10 days like Elizabethan inns are built round courtyards, where the backpackers swap transport and communications news about the road to Nepal and hang out their laundry. Our room was a corner one with two windows, through one of which we could see the Potala.

The architecture of the Potala is on a par with that of the Pyramids or European castle and cathedrals. So is that of the monasteries. Despite the efforts, of Zhou Enlai there was destruction after the Dalai"s flight in 1959 and during the cultural revolution. The Han-haters don't mention that the Red Guard vandals included Tibetan ex-serfs who helped destroy these Tibetan symbols of their oppression. Even to-day, we felt,

there are more vestiges of ultra-leftism in Tibet than we have met in our travels in other parts of China. Some of the ex-serfs and slaves and their offspring are now officials suspicious of some the current reforms....

From English Language Learning No. 11 /1987

24. Round the World in 112 Days (by David Crook)

1. England

I've lived half of my 80 odd years in China, but I was born and brought up in England; and as the poet said: "Is there a man with soul so dead, / Who never to himself has said / This is my own, my native land... " So it was a thrill to go back to the land of my birth, as I did last spring.

I found that England, despite the economic crisis, is still, "a green and pleasant land". Or more accurately, these days, a green and yellow land, for they've taken to planting miles mustard-coloured rape in the old country.

An expatriate like myself going home has mixed feelings of returning to his roots and feeling like a tourist. Things have changed since I was young. In the cities at least the population is more mixed. In the last 25 years the combined number of Blacks, Coloured and Asians has doubled from 1. 1 million to 2. 7 million (in a total population of 56 million). This has its good and bad sides. The good side is that humans, like other creatures, when they cross breed or inter-marry, tend to produce better stock: healthier stronger, more intelligent and more beautiful.

That conviction was confirmed in Islington, the north London neighbourhood where Isabel and I stayed with our son Paul. Islington is a lower middle class district in the process of being "gentrified" or changed from a working-class to a middle class area. On the street we saw white and non-white people walking along and chatting amicably together and black and white children playing together. In other poorer districts, however, there is racial tension, with fighting, mostly between gangs of unemployed youths.

For beautiful Britain, which looks prosperous on the surface, is in an economic depression, though the government and the media call it a "Recession" which sounds less serious. And in the centre of London we saw beggars and homeless people sleeping on the streets. But in Islington, where we stayed, people seemed to have money to spend freely in the supermarkets. But at home they protected their property. In our 80-year-old house, which was devided into four flats, there was a safety device at the entrance. After unlocking the front door one had to punch a secret 4-digit number on a contraption inside, otherwise an alarm-bell would ring. Despite such precautions Paul"s top floor flat had been broken into. So had his locked car, after the window had been smashed with a brick by thieves hoping to steal the radio or other portable valuables, or even the car itself. It was an old secondhand one, hardly worth stealing,

but Paul took the precaution of buying a large padlock to prevent the gears from being shifted.

But this were minor matters. On the whole our stay in London and other parts of Britain was a delight, mostly visiting friends and relatives. We visited the old ones first - people in their seventies and eighties, like ourselves, for we could not be sure of having a chance to see them again. But people live longer these days in Britain as in China and we saw many old folk on the streets, shuffling along, pushing or pulling trolleys laden with purchases. Old age is a hard time in Britain as elsewhere, perhaps more so than in China. For in Britain the nuclear family prevails; the grown up offspring leave their parents" home when they get married or even before; sometimes in their late teens. They want to lead their own lives. Or perhaps they must leave home in search of a job in another town. So the old folk are left on their own and often suffer from loneliness.

Still, they receive some special consideration. When they (or anyone else for that matter) cross the road at a pedestrian crossing, the traffic, no matter how heavy, has to stop. And it really does stop.

For British people are generally well-disciplined. They queue up for buses in an orderly way and nobody tries to push ahead out of turn. And in London old folk can traval free on public transport, except during rush hour. Cockney conductors have a word for old folk who try to board a bus before rush hour is over. They call them "twirlies". "Twirl" normally means *to spin* or *turn something round.* In this case it is a pun: "too early" said quickly.

But we did not spend all our time in London. We visited friends in other towns, north, south, east and west. First to Yorkshire in the north, which has some of Britain"s loveliest landscape; perhaps I am prejudiced for my parents once lived there and it brings back memories of my youth. Many of its hills are criss-crossed with stone walls to offer shelter to the sheep that graze on the lush green grass, the historical foundation of Britain"s early woolen textil trade. Yorkshire is also famous for its moors covered with purple heather and yellow gorse bushes beneath which bilberries grow. Large tracts of moorland are owned by wealthy families who keep them not for farming but for shooting grouse, pheasants, partridges and other birds which make delicate eating. Poorer people love to hike and ramble and have to wage constant struggle to maitain their anciant right to cross the moors.

Driving the 200 miles north from London in May we enjoyed the beauty of the flowering trees: pink and white hawthorn or may. (There is an old saying "cast not a

clout till may is out"- meaning "don't leave off a garment until the weather is warm enough for may to bloom. ") Then there were the horse-chestnut trees with their clusters of red or white blossoms and the laburnums with drooping groups of bright yellow flowers and bushes of purple lilac in trim gardens and great stretches of yellow rape which reminded us of China. We travelled back to London too fast for such delights, for we went by National Express Bus which belted along the highway, covering the whole 200 miles in just over 31/2 hours.

On another journey back to London, this time from south-west England, we stopped at Stonehenge. This is a circle of huge stones, some standing upright over 4 metres in height. They are on high ground and command a splendid view of Salisbury Plain. The earliest of these great stones or megaliths were placed there two to three thousand years B. C. in a series of circles in such a way that the sun and moon shine down the different avenues between them at certain times of the year, when the days or nights are shortest or longest or of equal duration. This was evidently done for the holding of religious ceremonies. Some stones are placed horizontally across two upright ones to form a sort of gateway. Each megalith weighs several tons. Some were brought from quarries 250 miles away. How are they transported and how were the horizontals raised and placed on top of the uprights? Intriguing questions which I shall not answer except to say that our ancestors deserve respect for their physical exertions (probably that of skies), their powers of organization and for their scientific observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies.

All that was thousands of years ago. But we also relished the cultural achievements of modern society, seeing some striking plays and films. One play produced at the National theatre, was *The Madness of George III*. The poet Shelley called George a " silly old king" and perhaps he was, for he suffered from a disease which caused ocassional fits of insanity.

The play shows how these were exploited by opposing parties of politicians and how different doctors prescribed different cures. One of them had "advanced ideology" for he believed in the benefit to the nerves of physical labour and he prescribed it for his aristocratic patients and even the king himself. The cure proved effective though it did not prevent George III from pursuing policies which lost England the American colonies. Or perhaps, in Shakespeare's words, there was "method in his madness".

Another play we saw was *The dancing at Lughnasa.* It deals with four sisters in an Irish village, all unmarried and sex-starved. One of them has a child ; but the family"s reputation is saved by the fact that their uncle is in Africa as a missionary - a highly

respected profession. But the respectable uncle is suddenly called home by the church for “going native “ and combining his Catholicism with African religious practices. He loved and respected his African parishioners so that he took part in their religious ceremonies and even after returning home constantly confused them with Christian customs. The would-be converter was converted. That was carrying humanity too far. the play was funny but it had a serious underlying lesson. Tolerance, sympathy and respect for “backward” peoples.

We saw more films than plays, for a decent seat at the theatre cost eighteen pounds (a hundred and eighty *yuan*); a film ticket cost “only” two pounds at the specially reduced rate for us “senior citizens” of sixty years old or more.

One of the best films we saw was *Howard’s End* based on the novel written by E. M. Forster eighty years ago. It tells the story of three families: one very rich, ignorant and concerned mainly with money ; one less rich but well enough off to indulge in intellectural pursuits; one poor, the husband a clerk craving culture, his wife unrefined but affectionate. The lives of these three families become intertwined by love and marriage (the two not always going together); love of property (*Howard’s End* is the name of a lovely old house) and struggle over its ownership, involving intrigue, hypocrisy and even manslaughter. All this in a setting of rich culture and beautiful British homes and landscape. *Howard’s End* is a fine film.

But it is set in the England of 80 years ago, while we are concerned with the Britain of today and its relations with China. Big subjects. Too big to deal with here, except to say that many of the people Isabel and I saw and talked with were friends of China or Chinese friends. These included the Chinese ambassador and members of the Cultural Section of the Chinese Embassy to Britain. They were all former students of our Foreign Studies Uuniversity. Being with them made us feel that we were for a while back “home “ in China. For though in one sense an expatriate has no home, in another he has more than one, which makes life a complex and rich experience.

Oct. 7, “92.

English language Learning No. 1 /1993

2. East Europe (by David Crook)

Our round-the-world air ticket allowed us one side-trip from London, so we went to East Europe, first flying to Frankfurt, Germany. There we had German friends, Renate and Norbert, both long-time activists in the German-Chinese Friendship Association. Our son Paul brought his old car over on the ferry and picked us up in nearby Heidelberg, a picturesque and ancient university town. In the next couple of weeks Paul drove Isabel and me through five countries, Germany, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. Our general impression of the former “socialist” countries, described in the Western press as being in a state of chaos, was: they were actually functioning not too badly. The only beggars we saw were in the capitalist countries of Austria and West Germany.

Prague was a tourist’s paradise. It is a modern city which has preserved its anciant past, full of quaint squares surrounded by attractive old buildings, their charm marred only by many parked cars. We stayed as “paying guests” in the spacious flat of a university professor and his wife, who spoke good English and had been recommended by an American friend. They were most hospitable and cordial - until we mentioned the word “communism”. “Please don’t talk about that,” the lady implored. So political conversation was barred - except on the subject of President Havel, of whom the couple were fervent admirers.

Their flat was situated on the edge of the old ghetto. Jews settled in Prague hundreds of years ago. Their rights were limited but in the ghetto they had their own town hall as well as a synagogue and cemetery. The area was crowded with tourists, mostly Germans. They evidently came not merely to see the sights but also to rid themselves of a sense of shame for the atrocities committed against the Jews by the Nazis during their occupation of Prague during World War II.

Despite our hosts” objections politics was in the Prague air, for at the time we were there debate was raging as to whether the country should split apart. In Wenceslas Square, the heart of the city, petitions were being circulated, for and against the split. There we also saw a crowd gathered at a flower-bed which served as a memorial to revolutionary heroes, including Jan Palach, a young student who had burnt himself to death in protest against the entry of Soviet troops in 1968. Paul and I know a certain amount of German, which we had found useful in Eastern Europe, but here we got talking with a Czech woman doctor who knew not only German but English. I asked her what Czech people thought of Julius Fuchick, Whose book *Notes from the Gallows* was

once widely read and admired in China. “He was a Communist hero,” she answered and then added to my surprise, “and we forgive him for giving names under torture. “

So Prague as a whole was a political city. But it was also a great cultural one, too. In fact one or two hundred years ago it was the cultural centre of Europe. In modern times, too, Mozart is in the air. We went to a piano recital in a house he frequented and to a delightful puppet performance of his opera *Don Giovanni*, humorous yet dramatic. And in the square before the castle on the hill we saw where scenes of the film *Amadeus* had been shot. This and much more. Our three days” stay in Prague was a tourist”s feast.

Our next stop, even shorter, was Vienna. We were disappointed to find that the Danube was hardly blue, but rather a murky brown. But there was beauty none the less in churches and the art gallery, especially in the superb pictures of Bruegel, who in the 16th century painted satirical pictures of peasant life. Later, while admiring the elegant architecture of the 18th century Schonbrunn Palace I pondered on the cost in blood of the people of these monuments to the triumphs of their rulers. Then we were driven through Strauss”s famous Vienna Woods, by Austrian friends. Their father and mother once taught in Beijing. The younger generation are doctors or psychiatrists as befits citizens of the home of Freud.

We left Vienna heading for Budapest, capital of Hungary. The two cities were once closely associated when both belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but that came to an end with World war I in 1918. Now they are the capitals of separate countries with different social systems, though the difference is diminishing as Hungary, like other professedly socialist countries in Eastern Europe, is becoming more and more capitalist.

We ran into a surprising aspect of this as soon as we reached Budapest. Paul parked the car and went to a tourist office for help in finding a place for us to stay. Outside the office he found a group of people offering their own flats for rent (for foreign currency) to visiting tourists like us. Paul found one, a teacher of English, who spoke the language well. His apartment was just what we needed and we took it while the owner went off to stay with relatives. We told him how long we wished to stay and when we planned to leave. “No problem,” he said. “If I’m not back when you go, just slam the front door and slip the keys through the letter box. “ How trusting! This practice turned out to be quite common; we were offered housing several times. It no doubt reflected the demand for foreign currency in the face of inflation.

Next day we toured the city on a sight-seeing bus. It was fitted with earphones over which one could hear explanations in twelve languages. The language of Hungary, with a population of only ten million, is difficult and related only to few - Finnish and perhaps Mongolian. The guide's commentary was patriotic but not narrow-mindedly nationalistic. The city's beauty is different from that of Prague; it is grand and imposing rather than charming and quaint. But it has its quaint contrasts, such as stylishly dressed girls wearing modern mini-skirts tottering along ancient cobble-stoned streets fringed with fragrant flowering trees and lined with magnificent palaces and cathedrals.

Of course there is more to these countries than their capitals, though Budapest contains one fifth of the people of Hungary. But we must push on to Poland. Here to my regret we had no time for the capital, Warsaw, which is said to have been skilfully restored after the destruction of World War II to its original beauty. So we headed instead for Poland's medieval capital, Krakow, which was spared from destruction by the German armies. It boasts the largest medieval market place in the world, a vast space mercifully barred to traffic (except for police cars!). The stalls in the square itself sell only flowers, the shops, mostly for curios and souvenirs, being enclosed along one side. As I was lowering my bulk cautiously for a rest on a low railing outside a church an elderly lady came up offering help. I appreciated her concern, inspired no doubt by religious compassion; for in Poland we found religion flourishing and the churches functioning as places of worship not merely museums as elsewhere. Yet this piety contrasted with the anti-Semitism which is as strong as ever. At one time there were as many as three million Jews in Poland and they played an important part in the Polish economy for centuries. Now there are as few as three thousand, many having emigrated or been killed in concentration camps.

We went on from Krakow to visit one of these at Oswiecim, better known by its German name of Auschwits. There, under the Nazis, four million people, mostly Jews but also Communists, Gypsies and homosexuals were annihilated. I had seen films of the holocaust and read books about it, notably the humane and moving works of a one time inmate of Auschwitz, the Italian-Jewish writer Primo Levi. So I was prepared for its horrors. Actually they are conveyed in greater depth by Levi's works, but the remains or reconstruction of the death camp are horrifying enough, even though the place has been sanitized and turned into a museum. I was touched by the number of Poles, evidently not Jews, who came bearing flowers to commemorate their loved ones who had died there.

The last Polish town we stopped at was Kalisch, one of the oldest in Poland. There we had the good fortune at a cafe to run into someone who spoke good English. She

was a woman in her thirties, a native of the place, who had emigrated to Australia in 1980 and had now come back on holiday. “What differences do you notice between now and then?” we asked. “There is more freedom now,” she answered, “but more dirt and more unemployment. “ “How do the unemployed manage?” we asked. “They receive unemployment relief for a year. “ “And after that?” “They have to depend on their friends and relatives. “ We inferred that in a society still influenced by feudalism the family system and the powerful Catholic Church would for a time somewhat soften the suffering of the unemployed.

From Kalisch we headed for the German border to return to our friends Norbert and Renate in Frankfurt. At the frontier huge trucks were lined up for miles waiting to be inspected by customs officials. This did not apply to passenger cars, so we went across the frontier with little delay. There we saw an equally long line of lorries waiting to enter Poland. These procedures hardly facilitate trade. Our stay in Poland had been short for Paul had to hurry back to work in London. We were grateful for “filial piety “, acquired during his upbringing in China. Besides doing the driving he had done most of the “leg work “ of finding places for us to stay during our five-country tour lasting fifteen days. For the next few days we would be looked after by our friends Norbert and Renate who would take us on a delightful trip from Frankfurt to Thuringia in the former German Democratic Republic.

October 10, “92

From English Language Learning No. 2 /1993

3. Germany East and West (by David Crook)

Our German friends Norbert and Renate lived in Frankfurt, West Germany. They had long worked for Germany-China Friendship and visited China several times. Renate the wife is a lawyer, Norbert the husband is principal of a college. He had been born in Meiningen in Thuringia in East Germany when it was The German Democratic Republic. He had left the GDR at the age of five in the arms first of his mother then of a Soviet soldier. It happened this way:

Norbert's mother had married at the age of 17, gave birth to Norbert at 18 and was a war widow at 19. She became a textile worker and joined the Communist Party. Then, when Norbert was five she was appointed a lay assessor - a sort of non-professional judge in a political case. She was instructed ahead of time to find the accused guilty. She listened to the evidence and said she thought the accused were innocent. She was threatened: "You'd better be careful or you" ll find yourself in the prisoners" box along with those others. " She went home, packed a small bag, picked up her little son and started off for West Germany. At the frontier she started to walk across the fields towards a forest, thinking that she would be safe there. Suddenly from behind a tree stepped a Soviet soldier with a rifle. He demanded to see her papers. She showed them and explained her situation, while her little son started pounding the soldier"s legs and saying "Let my mummy alone. " The soldier was evidently amused by the child and touched by the plight of the attractive 23-year-old woman. He warned her not to walk down the main street of the next village or she would be arrested. Then he picked up Norbert and carried him and showed his mother a safe route to West Germany. She and Norbert have lived there ever since.

After German unification Norbert, now a grown man, went back to visit his birthplace in Meiningen. When Isabel and I arrived in Frankfurt he and Renate were about to go there again for their summer ho1idays. They took us along as their guests for a few days.

On the three-hour drive from Frankfurt we noted after crossing the old border between the formerly separate countries of East and West Germany that on the whole the house were better maintained in the west than those in the east, quite a few of which were dilapidated. But the heads of cattle in the eastern fields were larger. They were formerly collective but had become property of joint stock companies.

Meiningen has a history of a thousand years. It has one fine house which has been lived in by eight generations of the same family ; the eighth still live in it. After visiting it and seeing other sights we went to the market place, which has a lovely old cathedral

on one side. In the centre of the square are stalls selling chinaware and other household utensils and flowers. And, inevitably, hot sausages. Germany is famous for its sausages, but I recall during World War I (1914-18), when I was a child German sausage was renamed " breakfast sausage". Nothing so good must be associated with an enemy country. Now I found they made a delicious lunch. "

After lunch we visited the surrounding villages where Norbert"s family and ancestors had lived for generations. In one village we called on his cousins. They were and still are practicing christians. Under the GDR Christianity was tolerated but not encouraged. Still, when Christmas came round the cousins went to church. The husband and wife, apart from the preacher, formed the whole congregation. I do not share their beliefs but I admire their staunchness of spirit, for in a village everyone knows what everyone else does.

Next day we drove over the mountains to a clearing in the woods made famous by the great German philosopher, scientist, poet and playwright Goethe (1749-1832). It was there, in that forest clearing, that he composed his well-known lines, which roughly translated mean:

Not a leaf stirs in the tree-tops.

On the peaks you sense scarce a breath of breeze.

Do but wait ;

Soon you too will be at rest.

The last line suggests you will soon be dead. (Actually Goethe lived to the age of 83.)

From these sobering thoughts we proceed to a brewery. Germany is famous for its beer, which its people drink in large quantities. This brewery, at the village of Singen, is small but it brews such excellent beer that it is famous. It has always been privately owned by the same family and under the GDR was not taken over by the state but was allowed to continue functioning as a family business. At present one woman member of the family runs it. After viewing its somewhat primitive machinery we adjourned to the nearby pub for a lunch of roasted pig's neck washed down with some excellent Singen beer.

After a few days sightseeing in Thuringen we set out on our return to Frankfurt, driving past green pastures and wooded hills. On the way we stopped at the little town of Schleusingen to see its castle, market place and beautiful old church. There was a raucous rock concert blaring over the market square so we sought sanctuary in the

church, just in time to be invited to a concert of sweet choral music. The mixed choir sang compositions by Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms and other classical composers as well as a few spirituals in English. As we left we saw a poster announcing the church's other activities. One item was a discussion on "How social is Germany" s social program?" We thought this indicated the social program of the church itself was quite progressive.

Our next and last stop before Frankfurt was at a little village with a long name: Steinau an der Strasse. It deserved an impressive name for it had been the home of the Grimm brothers, famous for their scientific study of language and folklore, and above all for their often grim Fairy Tales about children who fall into the clutches of witches and other frightening creatures. There is an exhibition devoted to their life and works in the local castle and in it we discovered that besides these achievements they had something else to their credit. When in l837 the king of Hanover, where the Grimms lived, revoked the liberal constitution the brothers were two of seven university professors who courageously signed a petition calling for restoration of freedom of speech. We also learned that there were not only two Grimm brothers ; a third was a talented artist who painted pictures to illustrate their stories.

At last the time came to leave Thuringia and to enter the city of Frankfurt in West Germany. There our car was halted in a bumper-to-bumper traffic jam. By the side of the road was an elderly gentleman waiting to cross the road. Our driver, Norbert signalled to him to cross in front of our car. But he refused because the traffic light was against pedestrians crossing, saying to Norbert: "It's very nice of you ; but there must be order. " He upheld the old German tradition of discipline.

Once out of the traffic jam we went on Norbert and Renate's flat for our last meal before leaving Germany. It was a delicious curry made by an Indian friend. Our hosts, of course, were not among those few Germans who demonstrate against Asian immigrants. On the contrary they counted several Indians and many Chinese among their closest friends. After lunch, before leaving for the airport we sat and listened to a record of stirring songs of the German Battalion of the International Brigade in the Spanish anti-fascist war of l936- 38. I had fought in that war and the songs brought tears to my eyes - and to my mind thoughts of the complexity of German culture which had produced Goethe, Beethoven, the Grimm brothers and Karl Marx as well as Nazism ; these militant anti-fascist songs and the sweet music of Bach and Mendelssohn and Brahms we had heard in the church at Schleusingen.

Oct. 16, 1992

From English Language Learning No. 3 /1993

4. New York (David Crook)

I first went to New York in February, 1929. I was 18 then and I suffered from many of the illusions common today among Chinese youths. I believed the legend that the streets of New York were paved with gold and expected to make my fortune there. I never made it. The stock market crashed in October and the sidewalks of New York were not coated with gold but spattered with the blood of Wall Street speculators jumping out of skyscraper windows after going bust.

But I still love New York. It is a vibrant metropolis full of life, vigour and activity, rich in culture as well as material wealth - and with poverty. Its inhabitants are a racial mix, of Irish, Jews, Italians, Blacks, Hispanics and, more recently, Asians and Russians. Muggers operate in some areas, after dark, so I sometimes walked apprehensively looking over my shoulder. But most people find time in the course of rushing around to be kindly, courteous and generous.

So I was glad to go back for a two week visit in July and August last year. Isabel and I stayed with our old friend Annette Rubinstein, who has taught in our Foreign Studies University and who keeps open house for her many friends from China. She has a fine apartment procured decades ago when, under a progressive city government, rents were controlled. Otherwise she could not afford it now. It is wonderfully located in mid Manhattan, the heart of New York City. And it is on the tenth floor with a terrace from which one can catch a glimpse of the Hudson River to the west and Central Park to the east.

But the greatest of its wonders is not its location, but its occupant. Annette at 82 is a lovely, lively, learned lady who has compiled anthologies of English and American literature, and she can quote long lines from the classics - not only literary but Marxist. Staying with Annette is a cultural but also, incidentally a gastronomic feast. She can single-handed host a sit-down dinner for a dozen people at short notice and with a minimum of fuss. This is the least of her accomplishments. She is a rapid reader with a retentive memory. She is up to the minute in world trends on which she loves to expatiate over a leisurely breakfast. With such a host we had an exciting stay in New York.

But New York is not all sweetness and light. We saw dramatic evidence of this on the stage of the Public Theatre, in the play *Fires in the Mirror*. This is a one-woman show acted and produced by Anna Deveare Smith, Professor of Drama at Stanford University. She herself performs, word for word, her interviews with real people involved in dramatic events. Here in brief are the events of *Fires in the Mirror,*

EVENTS IN CROWN HEIGHTS

Brooklyn, New York, 1991-1992

August 19, 1991

● 8: 20 PM: an automobile from the motorcade of Lubalvitch (A community of the Hasids, a Jewish fundamentalist sect. Rebbe Menachem Schneerson) hits another car and swerves onto the sidewalk, killing 7-year-old Gavin Cato and seriously injuring his cousin Angela. A crowd quickly gathers. The driver of the car, Yosef Lifsh, is taken from the scene in a private Hasidic ambulance.

● 11: 30 PM: a group of approximately 20 Blacks surrounds and stabs Yankel Rosenbaum, a Hasidic scholar visiting from Australia. 16-year-old Lemerick Nelson, Jr. is arrested in connection with the stabbing. Rosenbaum dies during the night.

August 20

● That evening, approximately 500 Blacks, mostly young people, gather on the corner. Three cars are set on fire, one a police car. Rocks are thrown at houses, and three stores are looted. 14 Blacks are arrested.

August 21

●Riots continue.

●Lemerick Nelson, Jr. is charged with second degree murder for the stabbing death of Yankel Rosenbaum.

August 26

●A grand jury indicts Lemerick Nelson, Jr. for the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum.

April 5

●Outside City Hall, demonstrators rally to mourn Yankel Rosenbaum and demand more arrests in connection with his slaying.

April 8

● A 28-year-old Black man, called one of the key figures in the death of Yankel Rosenbaum, is arrested and charged with inciting riot.

This was the only play we saw during our two weeks in New York. It reflects an important aspect of life in the city - race relations and racial tensions. The example is extreme, not typical.

A different cultural activity we attended was a concert in Central Park by the New York Philharmonic, one of the western world's finest orchestras.

Central park is a green oasis of several square miles in the centre of Manhattan. By day it is a delight, with a zoo, swarming with children, separate roads for cyclists and skate-boarders, lanes for joggers, lakes for swimmers and skaters, benches under shady trees for lovers. But at night it can be dangerous. Muggers, often crazed by drugs, have been known not only to hold up people but to murder them. But the summer concerts seem somehow to subdue the violence. We walked safely across the park at night, over Strawberry Field, dedicated to the assassinated rock musician, John Lennon, to hear symphonies by Tchaikovsky and Beethoven. There was no concert hall, only a sheltered stage. Hundreds of people sat in the open on deck chairs, while latecomers like us sprawled on the grass. The Central Park summer concerts are folk festivals - foodless picnics, here and there bearing out Shakespeare's words that music is the food of love.

As everywhere when one travels it is the people that bring the places to life. In New York we saw old friends, most of whom had been to China, several of them as teachers in our Beijing Foreign Studies University. One of these is Nancy Jervis, who once taught American studies at BFSU and now is director of Chinese studies at the China Institute of America. Nancy lives 20 blocks up Broadway from Annettes. We walked the distance -20 blocks to the mile - more than once. I used to walk a block a minute when I was a student at Columbia University, near to where Nancy lives. Not now. The blocks grow longer as one ages. But a more leisurely pace enables one to savour the city: the restaurants selling ethnic food- Chinese, Jewish, Italian, Hispanic; the fruit and flower shops, mostly Korean; some stalls selling T-shirts emblazoned "I love New York ", with a red heart substituted for the "o " in "love ". Stacks of secondhand books temptingly displayed to slow the walker's progress. And here and there, in gold-paved New York, beggars suffering from AIDS. There are sheltered bus stops, with seats spaced apart and with snap up springs to make it all but impossible for the homeless to lie down on them. A walk along Broadway allows for a social survey of poverty and riches side by side, with never a dull moment day or night.

But Broadway is not New York, just as "New York is not America". Nor is U. S. A. for that matter. And at last came the time to leave New York, U. S. A. for another part of America - Canada.

5. In and Around Toronto (by David Crook)

Our chief destination in Canada was Brown's Corners, a hamlet to be found on few maps. It is a couple of hundred miles west of the big, modern, cosmopolitan city of Toronto. But Brown's Corners consists of a crossroads, a church, a school and a farm. And That's it. So why did we go there?

Isabel's surname was Brown before she married. (English-speaking women, unlike their Chinese sisters, until recently, were subject to the chauvinist custom of taking their husband"s surname on marriage.) And Isabel"s great-great grandfather, Thomas Brown, settled in this place, cleared the land and farmed it early in the 19th century. Hence the name "Brown's Corners". The old family farm has since passed into other hands, but the school and the church still function. The people from farms, small towns and villages nearby send their children to the school and the family go to the church- though attendance is less regular now than in the old days when the church was the heart and social centre of the community. But this year, when we went one Sunday in August, the church was full, most of the congregation being descendants, spouses and offspring of old Thomas Brodwn. Eighty of them had come for a Browns Reunion, some from just down the road, others from distant parts of Canada and even the U. S. A., Britain and Australia to which they had emigrated. The oldest was 90, the youngest a baby of five days. They were all related to old Thomas Brown, who a hundred and fifty years before had killed bears and befriended the local Indians.

His immediate descendants had like himself been farmers. But those of later generations included preachers, lawyers, engineers, inventors, diplomats, teachers. Among these last, one had taught native Canadians - Indians and Esquimaux - in the far north. Another taught in a special school, for the mentally retarded. Hers was a dangerous job, for her adult male students could be violent if upset. But she was dedicated to helping them. One elderly man had been a bomber pilot in World War II and later and Air Attaché in the Canadian embassies in Washington and Moscow. Another had invented a process to revolutionize bricklaying to speed up housing construction. One young woman, an anthropologist, was about to take up work in Poland. And Isabel, of course, came from China. Old Thomas Brown sired far-flung and varied offspring.

The preacher of the sermon on the Sunday of the Browns reunion came from a southern state of U. S. A. His theme was topical. It was based on the Book of Ruth, in the Bible. Ruth, according to the Bible story, was a gentile who married a Hebrew (Jew). The tale teaches the moral of not being narrow-mindedly prejudiced against

people outside of one's own clan or tribe ; and the preacher applied the lesson not only to the Brown clan but to the horror of "ethnic cleansing " running wild today especially in eastern Europe and parts of Asia. So though I am no Christian churchgoer I felt at one with the preacher. And not only with him but with his congregation. During conversation after the service and over the table in the meal in the schoolhouse which followed I felt that these kith and kin of old Thomas Brown were fine, forceful folk who in their various ways serve the people.

They had this in common with Norman Bethune, whose birthplace at Gravenhurst I had visited a few days earlier. Gravenhurst is a small town of 7,000 people a couple of hours drive north of Toronto. But despite its small size it has two famous sons, one of them the writer Stepen Leacock- a British born son by adoption, whose works have recently been translated into Chinese by Xiao Qian.

The other, of course, is Norman Bethune, perhaps even better known in China than in his native Canada, though he has been proclaimed a National Hero there - largely because of his fame in China, enhanced by Chairman Mao"s eulogy of him. Bethune worked as a surgeon with the 8th Route Army in China, where he died in 1939. Recently his fame has increased abroad thanks to the film *Norman Bethune, the Making of a Hero*, shot partly in the Wutai Mountains of Shanxi where Bethune operated.

I was in China at the same time as Bethune but I never knew him here. I did meet him, however, in Madrid, during the anti-Fascist war in Spain (1936-39), where he first formed a blood transfusion unit functioning near the front lines. He continued such work in China during the anti-Japanese War. So for me, one of millions who memorised Chairman Mao"s "In Memory of Norman Bethune " during the cultural revolution, it was a moving experience to visit the house where he was born. Bethune's father was a clergyman and with his office went a comfortable middle-class home in Gravenhurst. This has been kept or restored as nearly as possible to the way it was when Bethune was born there in 1890. This was interesting not only because of its association with Bethune but because it is, in a way, a museum of the household furnishings and gadgets of a century ago. Next door to the house itself is an exhibition of the whole of Bethune's life: his participation in World War I, his successful struggle against the disease of tuberculosis, his fight for socialised medicine in Montreal and his free treatment of the poor and unemployed there during the depression of the early 30s as well as his heroic work in Spain and China. Also on exhibition are some of his paintings - he was a fine artist - and the surgical instruments which he invented and which still

bear his name. Bethune was no ordinary surgeon. He was a man of many talents including the writing of powerful, emotional prose, inspired by his work on the battlefield.

The people of Canada are many-sided, too, perhaps partly because they are few and varied. The native Canadians, “Indians” and Inouits or Esquimaux have become minority nationalities. The early colonialist settlers in the I7th century were French ; a third of the people still speak that language today. Then came the British, including many Scots. Later came Europeans from Russia, Poland, Scandinavia, Hungary and, more recently, the Caribbeans and Asia. Isabel’s nephew, Warren, an engineer-inventor, married the grand-daughter of a European immigrant. He was poor at first and started his business career buying iron and steel scrap. From these humble beginnings he built up a flourishing steel mill. His son, Warren’s father-in-law became a millionaire. But with Canada’s entering into a free trade agreement with the U. S. A. his market contracted and he went bankrupt - or tried to. But to wind up his business he must pay his workers severance pay and he lacks the ready money to do that. So he has to keep his steel mill going, though losing money every day.

Capitalism is a strange system, where a few people can rise from rags to riches and then not afford to go bankrupt. But Canada is a rich country, a little larger than China, yet with only one fortieth of China’s population. So this bankrupt millionaire still manages to lead quite a comfortable life. So did we, in our more modest way, visiting relatives and old friends of ours and of China, such friendships and relationships being precious in a country where land is plentiful and people few.

November, 1992

From English Language Learning No. 5 / 1993

6. Vancouver (David Crook)

From Toronto we flew to Vancouver, Canada's largest seaport and railhead on the Pacific coast. Being on the Pacific Rim, Vancouver is of steadily growing importance for trade with China. So we felt we were nearing home. Only l0,000 kilometres across the ocean to Beijing ! Not so much in these days of fast travel and a shrinking world. All the more so since more and more Chinese- wealthy ones, at least- are going to Vancouver these days. They come, mostly, from Hong Kong, not necessarily to settle down immediately but to buy property so as to have a retreat in case they feel a need of one after Hong Kong returns to the mainland in 1997. The houses they build do not conform to traditional Vancouver tastes ; for, coming from crowded Hong Kong, where land is precious they fill almost every foot of their property with housing. Any ground not built on is covered with concrete. The older inhabitants of Vancouver prefer gardens with green lawns and flowering trees, for the climate is mild and moist, which is one reason why retired Britons like to settle there- if they can afford to. Another reason is the beautiful scenery, with a view of the ocean to the west and snow-capped mountains to the north and east. So on a hot summer day people can swim in the sea and in half an hour drive up to the snow and ski. Vancouver is a fine place for the well-to-do. The poor, as everywhere live in slums, especially the native Canadians, called " Indians ", to whom this land belonged until the 18th century, when it was discovered by the English navigator and explorer, George Vancouver.

We went there, however, to see old friends. First there was Sandra, with whom we stayed for almost a week in her flat, furnished with traditional Chinese furniture and decorated with Chinese scrolls. For Sandra studied and then taught for years in China and now back in her native Canada she does educational administrative work for cultural exchange with China and other Asian countries. She and her family are an important link in our worldwide China chain. That chain is one of our rewards for teaching many years at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Sandra" s sons, too, carry on their mother's years of China-related work. Mark, whose wife is a Canadian Chinese, is a lawyer, specialising in maritime law connected with China and Chinese shipping. Foreigner lawyers are not generally allowed to practise law in China now, in contrast with the time when, according to "extraterritoriality", foreigners accused of crimes in China could not be tried in Chinese courts. So now "the wheel has turned full cycle". But foreign lawyers are now allowed to act as consultants. Mark is qualified for this, having lived in China and studied the language and the law. His main aim is to serve as a bridge between differing Chinese and Western approaches to law, the Chinese side often being primarily concerned with

making the law serve China" s national interests. Mark, though a sincere friend of China, stresses the letter of the law. His brother Philip, is a counsellor and organiser of extra-curricular activities for the many Chinese students at one of Vancouver's universities. All in all they are a China-oriented family.

Two other Canadian friends we saw, who have worked for many years in China, were Paul and Eileen Lin. Paul has often given lectures on world affairs at Beijing Foreign Studies University. The couple are well-informed ; they were often briefed by Premier Zhou En-lai and other Chinese leaders. Paul's lectures were always packed. When we saw him he was soon to give a series of lectures in Hong Kong, but he found time to entertain us and Sandra to lunch at a fashionable Vancouver restaurant, where we had an elegant meal, laced with stimulating conversation by Paul and Eileen. Paul formulated a theory of two Chinese "diasporas", one internal, one external. Diaspora means dispersion or scattering and generally refers to the Jews leaving their original home in Palestine in ancient times. Paul applied it to the spreading of the Chinese, mainly from their homes in Fujian and Guangdong provinces to many parts of C"hina and the whole world. Such substantial talk was a treat. In China, I suppose, it would occur *before* the meal rather than at the table, where it would divert attention from the food generously provided by the host. A trip abroad reminds one of such cultural differences.

Another stimulating talk we had was with Jack Scott. Jack was born in a working class family in Ireland in 1910 but he has spent most of his 80 years in Canada. Yet he still speaks with an Irish lilt. But it is not *how* he talks but what he says that is most impressive. His biography is called *A Communist Life*. Jack himself has written a book about the key role of Chinese workers in building Canada" s railways. He has spent half a century in the Canadian labour movement, in struggle for the unemployed and the trade unions. He talked for a whole morning with us about Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin as well as about Canada and China, which he has visited four times. In fact he was a founder of the China-Canada Friendship Association, and he, like us, is deeply concerned with this country's welfare. A morning's talk with Jack ranges over the revolutionary history of the world. His has indeed been "a communist life", but his is not the ossified thinking of an old man. He is old in years but not in spirit.

Two younger people with whom we spent time in Vancouver were friends of Jack Scott and were equally concerned with China. These were Pat and Roger, who came to China to study the language in the 1970s on the recommendation of Paul Lin. Now they both teach at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, named after a Canadian fur trader and explorer, a contemporary of his fellow explorer George Vancouver. Pat and

Roger are hardly explorers but their work does take them to remote parts of China, in both the northeast and southwest. It is connected with the environment tourism, and co-operatives.

During the anti-Japanese War many patriotic Chinese people, together with some foreigners, such as Edgar Snow and Rewi Alley promoted industrial (producer) co-operatives, in order to provide a living for craftsmen-refugees fleeing from the invading armies. Once organized into co-operatives these craftsmen supplied uniforms, blankets and other necessities to China's armies.

Some co-operatives were set up in Lijiang, in Yunnan Province. They operated successfully for a while but were abandoned around the time of Liberation by some of their leaders who feared communism. Nowadays, with the approval of the People" s Government, they are being revived; and Pat and Roger, backed by Simon Fraser University, are helping to develop them by training technical staff.

Lijiang is the centre of the 250,000 strong Naxi minority nationality and it lies in the heart of exceptionally beautiful wooded and watered mountain country. For these two reasons it is becoming increasingly attractive to tourists. The tourists bring money to the area but they also bring dangers. One of these is pollution, in the form of litter and damage to the natural beauty they come to enjoy. The other is commercialization and undermining of the Naxi people's culture. The Simon Fraser University project, in which Pat and Roger play a leading role, aims to help ensure that tourism is developed by the Naxi people and preserving the best of their traditional culture. The distinctive cultures of China's fifty-odd Minority Nationalities, of course, enrich the culture of China as a whole. Revival of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives contributes to China's economic development. The major role in promoting C. I. C. and preserving Naxi culture is played by the Yunnan Provincial Government, while the S. F. U. project plays a valuable supporting role. So Pat and Roger are enthusiastic about their work and we are always happy to see them in Vancouver or in China.

"Travel broadens the mind, " goes the old saying. It certainly is an enriching experience. Not only because one sees distant places but above all because one sees close friends, exchanges ideas with them about their countries and about China, the land which cements our friendship.

From English Language Learning No. 6 / 1993

7. San Francisco and the Bay Area (David Crook)

San Francisco was our next and last stop. The name conjures up exciting events and visions: the gold rush of 1848, when in two years the population was multiplied by three hundred. The earthquake of 1906, which destroyed almost the whole city. The 4. 5 kilometre-long Golden Gate Bridge linking the Pacific Ocean with San Francisco Bay, where Jack London was once an oyster pirate. The biggest Chinatown in USA, peopled with descendants of Chinese labourers who built half of the trans-continental railway over a hundred years ago.

So much for San Francisco history. But we went there to see friends and relatives. Douglas Goodyear, married to my cousin Debbie, drives giant trucks. But when he picked us up in his battered jalopy he told us had just been laid off. He didn't seem worried and before we left his home a few hours later he'd been taken on again. He was to report for work at midnight, the "graveyard shift". Doug is no ordinary trucker. His Hungarian grandfather had married a Chinese. This helps explain why, whenever he has saved a bit of money, he comes to China to study the language. He already knows enough to do translation. When we saw him he was working with a Chinese scholar to render a piece of classical literature into modern language. His wife, Debbie, is a craftswoman, skilled in repairing valuable old rugs. But with the recession the bottom is falling out of the market; so Debbie is back at school, qualifying to become a teacher. Meanwhile she earns money minding other people's children in her home. San Francisco in Chinese is "Old Gold Mountain", but not everyone there is rolling in wealth. In fact the name comes not from the precious mineral but from the colour of the grass on the hills, which turns golden in the hot dry summer.

Debbie's parents dropped in for supper. Her father was an engineer who built nuclear power towers ; but on the encouragement of his wife he threw up his highly paid job on learning of the hazards of disposing of nuclear waste. Now the elderly couple devote their energies to safeguarding the environment.

Our evening with the Goodyears brought us into contact with some of the reality of life on "Old Gold Mountain"- especially when driving home we saw homeless people sleeping in shop doorways, using old newspapers as bedding.

Our "home" that night was in Palo Alto, where our Foreign Studies University colleague Helen Young and her architect husband Richard have a lovely new home. Palo Alto is a township in the Bay Area. It takes its Spanish name from a thousand-year-old tall tree in the locality. More important, it is the site of Stanford University where Helen once taught. Spanish names and cultural influence are everywhere in

California. The state's name itself is Spanish for "hot furnace", the Spaniards having settled there in 1776. It originally belonged to Mexico and is one of seven American states which were formerly part of that country. The Young's home, with its open spaces, high ceilings and big windows has something Spanish about it. But it has much that is Chinese, too, brought by the people who visit and the work that is done there.

From Palo Alto we went to another part of the Bay Area, to stay with other "China friends", in Berkeley. (The name of this place is pronounced as it is spelt, not as it would be in England-Barclay.) Berkeley is the seat of a branch of the University of California, which played a key role in the 1960s upsurge of the student movement against the U. S. invasion of Viet Nam. In more recent years it has become a haunt of homeless people attracted by the mild climate which allows for sleeping in the open. It is also popular with handicapped people, for the progressive local government provides them with certain facilities. A great attraction for us, however, were the secondhand bookshops. One of these is a four storey building packed with cheap books stacked from floor to ceiling, tempting one to browse and buy.

Even more fascinating than this were visits to our friends: Carolyn, who once taught at our Foreign Studies University in Beijing, is now back at Berkeley, where she has foresaken her old friend Shakespeare for more modern subjects such as contemporary journalism and biography, both with a China angle.

Berkeley though a fair-sized Bay Area township has, like Palo Alto, many leafy avenues which give it quite a rural atmosphere. We stayed in one of these rustic retreats with Marcelia, who taught for many years at Beijing University but has now retired to a life of writing. Her daughter Suzanna lives nearby. She has done socially significant work helping immigrant women; her husband, John, is a lawyer who after years as a "public defender" now sits on a board investigating cases of alleged corruption among judges. We feel privileged to have such friends as these in the Bay Area, so committed to education and other social issues.

Suzanna and John gave a splendid "brunch" for us and our local friends, both to speed us on our way home and to celebrate our Golden Wedding, marking 50 years of married life. Then they drove us to the airport. On the plane which was to take us back to Beijing, I squeezed with some difficulty into the narrow seat into which I would be confined for many hours. I thought to myself: "Travel broadens the mind. It also seems to broaden the body when one is hosted by generous friends and relatives on a hundred and twelve day trip round the world.

November 18, 1992

From English Language Learning No. 7 / 1993

25. Visiting China's Past, Present, and Future (David Crook)

" How stupid to travel from Beijing to Chengdu and Chongqing for a holiday in the sticky sweltering summer heat. "We had our reasons - "we" being an extended family group of ten. My wife Isabel was born in Chengdu; so was her sister Julia who had come to China for the occasion with her husband Patrick O" Brien Baker - "Paddy". The rest of the party were less aged: our son and grandson, a niece and boyfriend, two nephews. We went on our western pilgrimage to the mountain a day's drive northwest of Chengdu, where Isabel and Julia in their youth with their missionary parents and friends had spent their summer holidays six decades ago.

Paddy is a railway buff and especially knowledgeable about that all but extinct species, the steam locomotive. So we left Beijing by train. The city as yet has only one major railway station, designed by Soviet experts in the 1950s. Its outer approach is a crowded, chaotic car park; the inner approach is an anthill, but the ants are humans sitting and sprawling on the broad sidewalk. We stepped over these huddled masses and finally reached our soft berth sleepers. Paddy was impressed, even more so once we got rolling. "Remarkably smooth," he commented. His comments on the leaky washroom taps and toilets were less favourable.

Thirty-three hours later we reached Chengdu- not much of a train trip for this vast country. Having been to Chengdu a few times before and now in my ninth decade, I stayed in our air-conditioned guesthouse room reading travel books, while the rest went on a nostalgic sightseeing tour ; Isabel and Julia visited the house where they were born, the Canadian School they had attended, the church where their father had preached, recently re-decorated and spic and span. They also visited the usual local sights: the park dedicated to Zhuge Liang, strategist, statesman, wise man and selfless public servant and patriot of the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago, who "bent his back to the task until his dying day. "

I emerged from my self-imposed solitude once to plunge into a private Olympic-sized swimming pool kept uncrowded by an admission fee of 10 yuan (just over one dollar US). And to visit the mountain-top Daoist temple on Qingchengshan (Green City Mountain). When I first went there in the 1940s it was a tranquil spot where one could stay overnight and the vegetarian monks would cook the hunk of meat you bought in Guanxian, the town below. Now the quiet and deserted hillside was as crowded and commercialized as Coney Island. Still it was charming and brought back memories of the time I cycled the 34 miles from Chengdu and climbed the mountain on my own two feet. Now I was carried up in a litter borne by a 3-man team taking turns, two at a time.

It was physically comfortable but spiritually painful to hear the heavy breathing and see the sweat pouring off the backs of the carriers.

From Qingchengshan we went down to Dujiangyan-"All Rivers Weir" - the 2,000-year-old irrigation works which waters the whole of the Chengdu plain, China's most abundant ricefield.

All this was merely the preamble to our focal point - Bailuding, "White Deer Peak", one-time missionary summer hill station. First we drove in our hired minibus to Jiufeng, "Nine Peaks", once so wild, remote and inaccessible that we were astonished to find a new, modern hotel at the foot of the mountain, close by picturesque wooded ravines. On the way there we had stopped to cross a narrow, rickety swinging plank bridge, high above a rushing torrent. I felt proud of myself at venturing across clinging to the side rails, until I saw loggers coming in the opposite direction carrying tree trunks on their shoulders. China has entered the atomic age and launches satellites but in these outlying parts she still uses human labour for backbreaking burdens. All part of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

After staying a night at Nine Peaks, we drove to the foot of White Deer Peak. It was pouring and the mountain path was thick with slippery mud. Still all but three elders made the arduous ascent, including Julia, the third oldest of us ten. She recaptured the strength of her youth and came back soaked but beaming. She alone had been able to see - in her mind"s eye- through the rain and mist the mountain peaks she and Isabel had climbed and the pools they had swum in 60 and 70 years ago.

Then back to Chengdu and on to Chongqing by overnight train.

Chongqing is a city of many millions and built on many hills. This presents problems. The railway station lies at the foot of a slope and the parking lot was cluttered with countless vehicles delivering and picking up passengers and goods. This coming and going was complicated by a reluctance of drivers to give way in this crowded, competitive, over-populated country. The scene on our arrival was one of chaos and cacophony. It was the same at the docks a day later when we boarded the downriver steamer. Chongqing"s traffic problem is the inevitable product of its topography combined with its rapid economic growth. It may be solved in the long run by the building of one-way ring roads, but this ongoing solution proceeds along with the insufficiently controlled construction of the current over-heated socialist market economy. Meanwhile crossing a main thoroughfare is a risky and nerve-wracking operation for the aged pedestrian. So in sweltering Chongqing, despite wartime memories of its picturesque riverside stone stairways and less delightful recollections

of Japanese air-raids, I once more stayed in the hotel room and read. The hotel itself was typical of Chongqing: an unprepossessing facade on a busy street, a busy and untidy vestibule, constantly crossed and recrossed by sofa-totting porters. From there we went up flights of stairs and along murky corridors to a charming courtyard and into neat, functionally-furnished, air-conditioned rooms. All in all, Chongqing is a composite of ancient and modern, of a frontier town with a modern metropolis.

But there was nothing ancient about the tourist cruise ship on to which we tottered precariously over shaky gang planks. The air-conditioned cabins were spacious and light with large singlepane windows, with no struts to block the view of the superb river scenery climaxed by the Three Gorges.

How much longer will they last, these gorgeous views lauded by poets and recorded by historians throughout the millenia? The projected dam, some 170 meters high, has been widely debated abroad and in China, where the National People" s Congress vote resulted in an unprecedented one third *not* in favour (against, abstentions and absentees). The present plan, however, is to go ahead and build. I shall not go into this problem here, nor shall I try to describe the dramatic scenery. Others have done this better than I can hope to, Chinese and foreign. These include John Hersey in his moving novel, *A Single Pebble*, about the trackers who hauled junks along the Yangzi; and Lyman Van Slyke in his study of "the Long River" which combines science, history and biography. But I shall touch on some uncommon aspects of our voyage.

Ours was not just a transport operation of getting from Chongqing down the river, but a tour cruise ; so we stopped twice overnight to ensure daylight views, and three times we went ashore or on side trips up tributaries. Most spectacular and intriguing of these was up the Daning River which boasts gorges of its own. These are the "Lesser Three Gorges" and they bear out that "small is beautiful. " Most fascinating and intriguing about the Daning are the vestiges of its riverside plank road and its Hanging Coffins. " The former was constructed 2, 000 years ago and stretches 300 km. Nothing of it remains except the 6-inch square holes which mark the yard long sockets into which were once inserted the protruding props of the plank road above the dangerous rapids. This catwalk once served as a military and trade route. Elsewhere high up in the precipices are natural openings leading to large caves. These were used by the Ba people 2,400 years ago as aerial vaults for coffins lowered from the tops of the cliffs. Such are the subjects on which tourists may speculate as they shoot the rapids of the Daning River.

Returning to the Yangzi- the “Long River”- (the Daning is a mere 600 km in length) and leaving our small sightseeing launch for our big tourist boat, we sailed downstream to Yichang to board the train back to Beijing a 24-hour journey on a now direct line. Before the founding of the Chinese People’s Republic, Yichang was the largest westerly port on the Yangzi, for ocean-going vessels. Now dredging and blasting of obstructive rocks upstream have long rendered that claim out-of-date. The building and the new big projected dam would make our starting point Chongqing accessible to ocean-going ships and realize Mao Zedong”s poetic dream:

A bridge will fly to span the north and south,

Turning a deep chasm into a thoroughfare;

Walls of stone will stand upstream to the west

To hold back Wushan”s clouds and rain

Till a smooth lake rises in the narrow gorges.

The mountain goddess if she is still there

Will marvel at a world so changed.

Our journey had reminded me that there is more to China than the university campus in Beijing on which I have recently spent most of my time. Travel exhausts an aged body but it does indeed broaden and revivify the mind.

August 8,1993

From English language Learning No. 11 /1993

26. A Trip to the Emerald Isle (David Crook)

Ireland is named “the Emerald Isle” because of its lush, green grass. But it was pillaged and plundered for hundreds of years and suffered a man-made famine in the 19th century which killed hundreds of thousands from starvation and forced milllions to emigrate. Yet this “most distressful country that ever you have seen” has produced a galaxy of writers, from Swift to Shaw and of soldiers, including generals from Wellington to Montgomery.

Despite these achievements many, like me, were brought up on colonialist *quips* which portrayed the Irish people as pugnacious fools, which they are not.

Despite this slander I long nursed an ambition to visit this land which at last I realised in my 85th year. I will not go into “the troubles “, the terrorism of Ulster in the north which are now hopefully coming to an end, but the Republic of Ireland comprising two thirds of the island in the south which we - Isabel, my wife, Paul our son and myself - visited this summer.

We drove from London to Pembroke, South Wales, from which we sailed (with the car) for 4 hours to Wexford in the south-east of Ireland, scene of a heroic peasant uprising for independence in l798. It derives its name from weiss (white) and fiord (Norwegian for long, narrow inlet), for the Norsemen occupied Ireland from the 9th to the 11th centuries. Then we drove to a picturesque peninsular in the south-west, jutting into the Atlantic. Here is Dingle, the most westerly city of Europe. In these two places we stayed overnight at B & Bs - “bed and breakfast” where one gets decent but cheap accommodation in private homes with hospitable hosts. In both Wexford and Dingle we watched TV programs, contests for the “Rose of Tralee “ after which the famous song is named. This was not a simple, sexist show of female skin and curves but more of a talent test of personality and deportment, wit and charm. We found it intriguing and were glad when the first prize was won by the young lady who played the harp, a common component of Irish music.

From Dingle we detoured to Tipperary, attracted by memory of the song sung in World War I (1914- 18). Although it is situated in the Golden Vale, one of the most fertile areas of Ireland, we found the town rather rundown, not up to our expectations of the words of the song which raised it above London. After this disappointing diversion we crossed the estuary of the Shannon, the biggest river in the British Isles, yet only 240 miles long, a mere creek by Chinese standards. Then on to Spanish Point, so named because ships of the Armada, which tried unsuccessfully to invade England in 1588, came to grief on the rocks. We spent the night here with a farm family glad to

have paying guests. But we refrained from mentioning that we came from China, as such people are generally Roman Catholics and we feared they might be hostile to this country. We learnt later that we were wrong, RC"s being revolutionary in Ireland, whereas in England they tend to be conservative. The family owned only 10 acres (60 *mu*) of boggy land and two breeding cows. The west of Ireland is poor. But they made a living by selling the veal, a tasty tender meat. They were going out for the evening to play bingo - the Irish love games of chance - and left us, whom they did not know, in charge of the house. That too was a typical Irish gamble. They must have liked the look of us.

In the morning we set off for the Cliffs of Moher, a tourist attraction, where slate, layer upon layer, towers above the Atlantic. Next on to Galway, known for its centuries-long contact with Spain, like Ireland historically a Catholic country. It is famous for its marble ; also for its mayor who in the past executed his own son for a crime, when no one else was willing. In Galway we saw a play, *Single, White Male* brilliantly acted by a cast of only two men, who played all the parts, male and female, young and old, taking in turn whatever role came up. It satirised the oppressive authority of parents, priests and teachers.

A few miles out of Galway, en route for the capital, Dublin on the east coast, we stopped at a tiny village museum, alongside a modernist church. This was remarkable for its exhibits of articles of everyday use - cooking pots, beds, chairs, tables fireplaces and bellows - in use 150 years ago. It had been the home of the village priest and reminded us of the manse at Gravenhurst in Canada, where Norman Bethune was born.

On the way to Dublin we stopped at Tara a hilltop which commands a glorious view in all four directions of Ireland's green pastures. It was the site of a town thousands of years B. C. and Ireland's kings were crowned and buried there. It has been made known by Ireland's national poet, Thomas Moore (1779- 1852) who wrote: "The harp that once thro" Tara"s Halls, the soul of music shed... " Here Saint Patrick in 431 A. D. converted the Irish king to Christianity, when the Romans still occupied England and worshipped their pagan gods. But the most memorable occasion of all was in 1843, when the Irish patriot and orator, Daniel O"Connell spoke to almost a million people, one ninth of the population of Ireland, calling for the Repeal of the Act of Union which joined Ireland to England - an act long since withdrawn.

Leaving Tara we went on to "Dublin's fair city" where according to the song "the girls are so pretty". Be that as it may, we concentrated on one Dubliner, Joyce - James

Joyce (1892 -1941) - the writer. Despite his short stay in Dublin (he left it and became an expatriate in 1904) he wrote about nothing but his native city and influenced writing in the Western world with his stream of consciousness novel *Ulysses* (just translated into Chinese by Xiao Qian).

First we drove past the classically designed General Post Office occupied by armed revolutionaries in l916 and from which was declared the independence of Ireland (consummated some years later), the first lines of which are inscribed above its entrance. Then we drove past letter boxes and buses all painted green, the Emerald Isle's national colour, not red like those of London. At last we got to the Joyce Museum.

We had been warned that this was in a tough area, whose Georgian houses are now being gentrified. So Isabel took care not to leave her handbag containing her passport and other valuables in the car. But when we came out of the charming house with its Joyce memorabilia we found one window of the car shattered and a haversack stolen. After reporting the theft to the police, who were sympathetic but not surprised, we went to the home of our Irish friends, Ann and Gerry, whom we had known In Beijing.

Next morning Gerry took us to the stone tower described in *Ulysses,* also a Joyce Museum. These towers were built in 1804 as a defence against a French invasion to aid the Irish revolutionaries. It never took place but the tower became a private residence visited by Joyce and now displays his manuscripts.

After visiting the tower, which is by the sea, unjustly described by Joyce as "snot green", we adjourned to Davy Byrnes pub, frequented by Joyce and other writers and drinkers. In the crowded oak-panelled dining room we had an Irish lunch washed down with Guiness, Dublin"s famous dark brown frothy beer. From there we went across the road to inspect a famous door which had been installed in another pub. This door is described in *Ulysses* as that of Bloom and we listened to a guide explaining to a group of tourists how it had been salvaged from the house when it was torn down, and ceremoniously installed here. One story the guide related was how Joyce, who was a bit of a toper, came home drunk one night and his wife, Nora threatened "if you do this again I"ll have the children baptised ". This put the fear of god into the atheist Joyce (though educated as a Jesuit) and he mended his ways; but he did not formally marry Nora until she was a grandmother. We asked the guide why Joyce had made Leopold Bloom, which is a Jewish name, a Jew, as one of the central characters of *Ulysses.* He said that Bloom never existed as an actual person, just as a type. But as a Jew he was not altogether welcome in Irish society. In fact, though a humane person, he was a bit

of a social outcast, like the author himself, who criticised the establishment and his fellow writers. There is one dramatic incident in *Ulysses* in which in an argument with a narrow nationalist Bloom is asked his nationality. He answers “I’m Irish”. The nationalist furiously denies this. This throws light upon Joyce’s personal identity problem.

We wound up our brief stay in Ireland with a visit to the theatre, for which the country is famous. Then we headed back for England, via Wales, passing beautiful Mount Snowdon on the way to London. We had a wonderful week in Ireland, no longer “the most distressful country that ever you have seen,” and still the Emerald Isle.

From English Language Learning No. 12 / 1994

Part Four: On Others

27. Memories of the Foreign Languages Institute And Hopes for the Future (David Crook)

In the spring of “49 the whole school walked from a village near Shijiazhuang to the outskirts of Beiping - about 250 kilometres. (The “whole school” then meant 35 students, half a dozen teachers and half a dozen other personnel.) We moved into the barracks attached to the former Japanese embassy, since 1945 in the hands of the Guomindang (GMD). The place had been stripped of furniture, the GMD personnel having taken it home as their “private property” - everything from tables, chairs and beds to pianos. The aged head of the school, Comrade Pu Huaren, Isabel (then expecting our first child) and myself were somehow provided with beds and a few sticks of ramshackle furniture. That was special treatment. The rest slept on the floor. But all of us had camp stools (*mazha*), a legacy from the Liberated Areas.

“Let’s take back the furniture That’s been stolen,” some said. No. That would lend belief to the rumours that Communists were bandits. “Then let’s buy some. “ All in good time. If every school, government office and organization went on a buying spree at once, prices would sky-rocket. First they must be stabilized and they were. Inflation was soon ended under a scheme masterminded by Comrade Chen Yun.

The 35 students quickly grew to 75 and more; but the number of teachers grew less. Some went south with the PLA to newly liberated areas, where reliable, educated personnel were urgently needed. Then others were sent abroad to help staff New China’s new embassies. Their places were taken by patriotic students and overseas Chinese returning from abroad as well as by former members of the GMD consular and diplomatic service. (They worked well, some of them for decades, some until the day they died, some are still with us.)

Classes were conducted indoors and out, everyone squatting on camp-stools and using books as desks - even during examinations. What were we to do for teaching material? We couldn”t use the old stuff available in Beiping, praising Jiang Jieshi and the U. S. imperialists and cursing the Communists. We compiled three “Readers”, Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced, roughly graded from easy to difficult. They were an advance on the material we had used in the Liberated Areas. These were printed on coarse grass paper, thick in some places, thin in others, often with stalks running down the page. If you pulled out a stalk the print came with it and you mangled the text. But the quality of the paper was not what mattered. We needed politically sound, scientifically planned material and scientific teaching methods. After all, we

represented New China and we had to hold our own with the old-established schools of China's ancient cultural centre. Some of their teachers had courteously praised our three new readers, with their extracts from communist and progressive books and periodicals - but we were determined to do better.

"Eventually one of our teachers came back from temporary work in Moscow with a set of two Soviet textbooks, used for teaching English at "Pedagogical Language Institutes". They were well-planned, scientifically-structured and with a good combination of theory and practice in the teaching process. But they dealt with Soviet, not Chinese society and they were aimed at Russian not Chinese speakers. We modified them to meet Chinese needs and they served us well for a while.

Meanwhile, within a year of China's first National Day, in which our school enthusiastically took part, we moved out of our Japanese barracks in the old Legation Quarter (*Yu He Qiao*) to other barrack-buildings. These were at Xi Yuan, near the Summer Palace. They had once housed troops of Yuan Shikai and by now were not only dilapidated but rat-infested. At first students and staff lived together, which made for good, close teacher-student relations. But one can have too much of a good thing and we teachers sometimes found it inconvenient while we were preparing lessons or correcting papers, to receive a stream of student visitors asking us questions. So new, makeshift buildings were put up: lean-to bungalows or *pingfang*, built against the ten foot wall surrounding our compound. They were snug in winter but, being small and low, very hot in summer. I remember sleeping outside, with a mosquito-net to keep off not only insects but the dogs which then prowled in packs.

We took such little inconveniences in our stride and spirits were high-once we had convinced the students, who all wanted to study Russian, that it was wrong to regard English as "an imperialist language". Language was a tool and a weapon, we explained. It could be used to oppose our enemies, the imperialists and to unite with our friends, the English-speaking peoples. When the Korean War broke out and there was a call for volunteers, practically the whole school rushed to sign up. The lucky ones who were accepted served as interpreters for the English-speaking prisoners (mostly Americans) in the POW camps and translators of captured documents.

The rush to volunteer for Korea was not surprising, for whenever a group of students left the school (there was no set period for graduation) they went when and where they were needed singing a song of the times: "Wherever the people want us to go, That's where we will go!"

Today, 35 years later, perhaps we tend to glamourize “the good old days” when we happily ate millet and sweet potatoes. Now our living conditions may be better - though they could and should be better still if the Party”s policy towards intellectuals were more firmly upheld. We have books galore - though they could be better used if the library made them more easily accessible, opened longer hours and was more efficiently run. We have tape-recorders, video films and closed-circuit TV, which in those days we never dreamt of. But it is man - and woman - that is the decisive element, and we have a large, though not large enough, corps of devoted teachers and strongly motivated students. But we have a long way to go and no grounds for complacency - especially in teaching method.

Back in the Liberated Areas when I first asked what and how I should teach, I was told: “Just talk English. The students have never heard a native speaker speak the language. “We’ve progressed since then - but not far and fast enough. We have to get out of old ruts and break new paths. We have to teach our students to read - not just to read “intensively” but to read and understand whole books. We have to help them to master basic skills, to *use* language correctly and fluently, not just to know *about* it. That means realising that teaching language *to beginners* is a science as well as an art; so that first and second year teachers should be accorded the respect they deserve, not just in words but in terms of rank, status and pay. We must make clear that the relationship between basic skills in the first and second years and “knowledge courses” in the third and fourth year is not solely one of contradiction. The social sciences, general knowledge, literature, linguistics, the whole of culture, Chinese and foreign, can be mastered only on a solid foundation of basic skills. With this we can make our due contribution to China’s socialist modernization; with this and the spirit that prevailed when the Chinese People’s Republic was founded 35 years ago.

From English Language Learning No. 10 /1984

28. Thoughts on the Spring Festival (David Crook)

(Part of a broadcast by four foreign friends.

Courtesy of English on Sunday Radio Program)

My first Spring Festival in north China was a bit of a shock. Where was the spring? There was snow on the ground and ice on the Summer Palace lake and a north-west wind was blowing. In England, where I come from, we think of the flowers that bloom in the spring: the crocuses and daffodils and the flowering trees - purple lilac, yellow laburnum, rosy horse-chestnuts, pink and white hawthorn or may. In fact we say “cast not a clout till may is out”. That means don’t leave off any clothes until the may flower is in bloom. By then it’s warm, so you won’t catch cold if you shed a garment.

Then I had another problem. In Beijing, despite the snow and ice it’s often sunny over the Spring Festival. So I liked to go out; to walk in the snow round the Summer Palace lake or to skate on Kunming Lake. Then we’d come home and find that old friends had called on us while we were out. So gradually we learnt the laws of the Spring Festival. The first day (*chu yi*) is for feasting at home with the family and very close friends; the second and third days are for paying and receiving visits. So we changed our holiday life style and stayed at home or called on friends those days. Of course we could still go out on *chu yi.*

These days we don’t always stay in Beijing for the Spring Festival; sometimes we go on a trip to some other part of China. Last year we were lucky enough to go to Hainan Island. Instead of skating we went swimming. That was a treat. The sea-water in February was warmer than it is in the middle of the summer in England. That made up for those snowy, icy, windy Beijing springs.

1983 was another memorable festival for us. A friend of the Naxi national minority invited us to his home, in the mountains in northwest Yunnan, 2,000 metres above sea-level. What a wonderful place and, what wonderful people, how hospitable despite being far from *wan yuan hu*!

They introduced us to their friends and relatives, as well as to their ancient culture. And it goes without saying that they wined and dined us with their fiery hot food. One very special meal was a picnic by the graves of the ancestors. This was no English style picnic with a couple of sandwiches and a bottle of beer. The Mongolian-style hotpot was carried up into the hills and there was a regular feast for all three generations. But the first cup of wine was placed by the grave of the clan ancestor. Why shouldn’t he join in the fun along with his descendants? Of course there was

the usual exchange of gifts. The most precious one I received was a granddaughter - or at least a *god*-granddaughter nearly one year-old. I had nothing of comparable value to offer in return.

In 1981 we went to Jiangxi and Fujian. The high point was walking in the Wu Yi Mountains, on the border of the two provinces. These mountains are not high by Chinese standards, though they are higher than any in Britain. But they are ideal for hiking, even when it snows, as it did when we climbed them. The lower slopes are planted to tea bushes; above them tower spectacular crags, sheer precipices and massive rocks cleft by narrow paths. You can scarcely squeeze through them - especially after the continuous banqueting which is hard to avoid during the Spring Festival.

But the biggest banquets are not always the best. Years ago, I remember, as the festival approached, there would be a dance in the students" dining hall, to which we teachers were invited. Then there was the finest feast of all: great buckets and cauldrons of steaming *laba zhou,* a thick, sweet porridge of glutinous rice full of green beans, candied fruit, peanuts and lotus kernels. It wasn't these ingredients alone which made the *laba zhou* delicious. It was the jolly atmosphere, with students, teachers, cooks and cadres all enjoying themselves together.

In 1980 we spent the Spring Festival in Chengdu and there I got another shock. On the first day of the lunar new year - we visited a famous temple. The street outside the main gate was lined with sellers of incense. People were queuing up by the hundred to buy it and burn the incense and chant and bow, even to kowtow, as they made the rounds of the temple statues. At first I felt sad. Here we were, over 30 years after Liberation, in a socialist country, and people were still doing this! We discussed it and concluded that it had its good side. It takes time to create a scientific world outlook and these ancient practices and beliefs had evidently never been rooted out. They had simply gone underground, especially during the days of the gang of four. Now, four years after the gang's overthrow, the people felt free and unafraid, to do in the open what had been hidden in their hearts and homes. In any case, these incense burners were not a cross-section of the people. They were mostly old ladies with little bound feet, who"d been deprived of education. But then with them were their grandchildren, some wearing red scarves. That seemed terrible. Young Pioneers worshipping idols! In the end I realized that the children didn't believe the idols controlled their fate. They were looking after their grannies, helping them over the temple thresholds and showing them the way. So I thought, That's what they'll do as they grow up. They'll show their grannies the way into a modernized, socialist China.

From English language Learning No. 2 /1985

29. Teachers" Day and Teachers" Pay (David Crook)

Having a special day in honour of teachers is a fine thing. But one day a year is not enough! There should be 365 Teachers' Days.

Where would the world be without teachers? What hope would there be for human progress? Teachers deserve the respect of the whole of society the whole year round. But they haven't got it. What is most remarkable and regrettable is that in this great land of China, with its ancient civilization and traditional respect for learning, teachers are so looked-down upon that it is necessary to set aside a day to show respect for them.

Why is this? I believe that teachers" low social status is inseparable from their low pay, and poor living and working conditions - though these are gradually being improved. But still the state allocation of funds for education is, *per capita,* among the lowest in the world. So teachers are, in general, under-paid and overworked - especialty those in pre-school, primary and secondary education. This despite the fact that Comrade Deng Xiaoping immediately on resuming office pointed out: education is a continuous process and the pay and conditions of teachers from the most elementary level must be improved. This statement was most encouraging, but progress since it was made, some years ago, has been painfully slow.

So to-day, who wants to become a teacher? Who wants to marry a teacher? when far better prospects are offered in other professions? True, "man does not live by bread alone" - but he can't live without it. Of course many fine dedicated people are still willing, even eager to become and remain teachers. Many, but not enough. That's one reason why there are middle school classes of 70 and more pupils, an intolerable situation. The lower the number of students in a class, the higher the quality of education can be.

Of course I am not speaking personally. Looking back on 35 years as a teacher in China I feel grateful. As a teacher here I have had a happy and rewarding life. Being surrounded by young people has helped to keep me young. But my pay and conditions are well above those of my Chinese colleagues. A big and rapid improvement in their social status, together with a similar improvement in their pay, working conditions and housing, will attract more and more fine people to the teaching profession. That is a vital and urgent necessity for China's socialist modernization.

From English language Learning No. 11 /1985

30. A Few Remarks - on the occasion of our birthdays (Isabel Crook)

ELL Editor's Note: Comrade David Crook, who is an adviser at BFSU and, his wife, Comrade Isabel Crook, both are our devoted and faithful friends and they both are Internationalists. On December 15, 1985, it was their 70th and 75th birthdays. That afternoon, the State Educational Committee and other units held a reception for their birthdays in Beijing. Vice-Premier Wan Li and, Huang Hua, who is Vice-Chairman of Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Ma Haide (George Hatem) and, Sol Adler and other over 150 people, Chinese and foreign, attended this reception. The Crooks" speeches on the occasion are as follows.

Respected senior comrades, colleagues and friends,

On our recent trip to Australia and New Zealand, David and I were asked many questions about China - and also about ourselves.

" Why did you choose to live and work in China?" The briefest - though far from adequate answer - was political commitment.

"But why China, and not Canada or Britain?" When we came to the Chinese Liberated areas at the end of 1947, our purpose was oriented to the West. Inspired by Edgar Snow, we wanted to publicize in the English-speaking world the historic developments in the Communist-led areas, ten years after those chronicled by Snow in *Red Star Over China.* David came as a freelance journalist, I, as an aspiring anthropologist. It was beyond our expectations that after observing and writing of the land reform in the Taihang Mountains, we would be asked by leading comrades-specifically Comrade Wang Bingnan, whom we are honoured to have here tonight - to stay and teach English in a newly-established foreign affairs school in a village near Shijiazhuang. This invitation began our 37-year connection with education in New China. We are happy to see here tonight some of the students of those early days.

"But why did you stay so long?" our friends went on to ask. Because, no longer outsiders observing land reform, we had become participants, caught up in a revolutionary movement embracing a whole people who had a rich and ancient heritage, but also a heavy burden of poverty and educational deprivation. Education was crucial. Whole new generations needed to become dedicated to socialism, to gain expertise, and maintain good health. In short, we found our jobs as teachers in New China to be demanding, perplexing and rewarding.

Demanding - because, for example, according to the responsible teacher system which our institute adopted early on, we were expected not just to teach lessons, but to

educate human beings. It's true that the time we teachers spent outside class with students might have been spent in improving our own qualifications, and many of us failed to raise our professional level as we should have done. Drawing a lesson from this, more and more teachers today are undertaking the doubly demanding task of educating people, while at the same time constantly striving for professional excellence. Tonight we have with us here some of these fine middle-aged and younger teachers who have taken up this double burden. We wish you success!

Our task as teachers was perplexing - because we were always faced with contradictions. For example: How to cultivate talented young people without producing an elite. One measure we took was to mobilize the brilliant students in a class to team up with and help those having difficulty. How gratified we all were when everyone in the class passed. But there was a cost. These talented students could have reached greater heights professionally had we urged them, instead, to push ahead with their own studies. Today, China urgently needs people of talent, but she still needs the spirit of "serving the people". And one way of fostering this is having them help their fellows. So the contradiction remains.

Another complex matter was how to handle contact with western culture and ideas. Back in the 1950s and 60s, as a foreign languages institute, we faced this problem. Should teachers sift through all the books and films, carefully removing anything that might be harmful to youth? On one of the thirty-three occasions in the history of our school on which Premier Zhou gave us guidence he told us that we should not bring up our students in a hothouse, otherwise they would not be able to stand up to the onslaughts of the elements when they went out into the world. This placed on us teachers the perplexing task of how to educate our students outside the hothouse, so that they would distinguish things of value to China from the west, without being snared by the lures of acquisitiveness or self-indulgence. With the new policies, this is a matter that faces teachers today still more acutely than in the past.

Teaching was rewarding - because we could see the product of our work in the form of many graduates making their contribution to the building of a new China and a new world. We are happy to have here tonight representatives of these people in whom we take such pride.

Rewarding, also, because our school, which was born in Yan"an back in 1941, has shown vitality and dedication over 45 years, and now has embarked on the crucial task of fitting itself to the new requirements of modernization by becoming a university,

specializing in foreign studies, strengthening its postgraduate work, and diversifying its programs to meet a host of social needs that have arisen today.

David and I would like to extend our greetings to our fellow teachers, and to the administrators and workers of our school without whose support we teachers could have achieved little. And we greet fellow teachers throughout China. Education is a glorious cause: it is demanding, perplexing, and highly rewarding.

Thank you.

From English language Learning No. 2 /1986

31. David Crook"s Speech

On behalf of Isabel and myself I wish to thank Comrades Wan Li and Huang Hua and all those concerned with arranging this celebration of our 70th and 75th birthdays. It is far more than we deserve and we are deeply moved. We accept it not as just a personal tribute, but as recognition of the efforts of all those engaged in educational work in China: teachers, administrators, office workers, drivers, cooks and others Chinese and foreign. Their devotion to education is vital to China's modernization and we feel that this is also their celebration even though it has not been possible to invite them all.

This gathering recalls another which affected us personally: that of March 8, 1973, when Premier Zhou Enlai, on behalf of Chairman Mao, left his hospital bed and spoke passionately on the Marxist principle of internationalism, spurned and abused by the gang of four, and vindicated those the gang had persecuted in their struggle for power. That occasion, like this one, will never be forgotten by ourselves, our comrades, our family and friends.

It is no great feat to live into one's 8th decade when one is treated as we have been treated for so long by the Chinese people and their leaders. 38 years ago, in the Liberated Areas, Comrade Yang Xiufeng, Chairman of a Border Region with a population of over 30 million, received a daily living allowance equivalent to the cost of one kilogram of millet. Isabel and I received 4 kilograms. That figure is a symbol of the generosity with which we have always been treated by the Chinese people (from whom I exclude the gang of four). That continuing kindness is one reason why, coming originally with the intention of staying 18 months we have stayed 38 years and why we will stay - if you will have us - for the rest of our lives. The main reason, of course, is our political commitment.

People often say to us: "You have been here so long, you must have seen great changes. " Yes, we have ; but I will not presume to survey Chinese history since 1947. Others say they are disillusioned by the negative aspects of Chinese society to-day. To both I reply: "I had the privilege on June 30, 1949, of hearing Chairman Mao make his speech on "The People's Democratic Dictatorship" in which he said: "... our past work is only the first step on a long march of 10,000 *li* ". " At that time I naively thought he was merely indulging in a modest and poetic figure of speech. He was not. I thought that once power was in the hands of the people, led by the Chinese Communist Party, the rest would be easy. Over the years I have come to realize that the re-making of a society of hundreds of millions of people, steeped in centuries of feudalism, cannot be

accomplished quickly and easily, without setbacks and mistakes. But I am confident that by the end of this century - which with a bit of luck I may live to see - or within the *next* 38 years - which I probably will not live to see - this China, which Isabel and I love, which has become our second homeland, will be creating a strong socialist society, and in the course of its modernization will strive to avoid the evils, suffering, ugliness and injustice which have beset modernization elsewhere.

Something has been said of our contributions. We are grateful for these encouraging remarks. But we ourselves feel, in all sincerity, that what we have received far and away surpasses what little we may have given. Our lives in China have been happy, purposeful and long. This is a debt we can never repay.

Now, borrowing our hosts" wine, I propose a toast to the health and happiness, long life and success in work and study of all those present and of the many more comrades, friends and relatives who cannot be here.

Gan bei.

From English Language Learning No. 2 /1986

32. Speech at the Prize-Giving Meeting. (David Crook)

First let me congratulate all the winners of the competition! And second let me congratulate all the readers of the magazine *Yingyu Xuexi*! Why should one congratulate the readers? Because, I think, they read the magazine not only for pleasure but for profit. Not financial profit, of course, but for the sake of learning. Actually there should be no contradiction between learning and pleasure. Learning should always be a pleasure. To make it so is the art and science of teaching and studying. But I especially congratulate the readers of *Yingyu Xuexi* because studying English on one's initiative in one's spare time calls for will-power, perseverance and self-discipline. Those who have these qualities deserve praise.

I think that not only the readers of *Yingyu Xuexi* but the magazine itself (which means its editors and staff) deserves praise, because it suits the needs of Chinese students of English. It is interesting and practical; it uses and deals with the living language and the lives of the readers. It addresses the problems of Chinese students, who need English for their present studies and future work as well as for the increasing cultural contact with English-speaking people and English-speaking machines- for English is the language of computers, of aviation, of many aspects of modernization.

Of course *Yingyu Xuexi* alone will not solve all of its readers" language problems. Learning a foreign language is a longer and harder process than some people seem to think; and the older one grows the harder it becomes. (Not that older people cannot learn foreign languages; they can. Engels, who started to study Russian at the age of 40, is a good example.) And many of *Yingyu Xuexi"s* readers are, if not old, at least grown up.

But reading, alone, is not enough. One needs to pay attention to the spoken language, too - by listening to tapes and broadcasts, preferably by native speakers. Study of spoken English is helpful, perhaps essential, for reading and writing. You can't learn English well as *a silent language*. The essence of language is speech. Reading and writing, for all the superb achievements of literature, are only a by-product of speech.

Well, I was asked to say a few words on the awarding of prizes to the competitors, so let me conclude with congratulations to them and to *Yingyu Xuexi.*

From English Language Learning No 5 / 1987

33. On the 50th Anniversary of Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* (David Crook)

I have only a few words to say - really nothing profound enough to merit a place in a scholarly symposium. But I feel I must say them, because I am one of the many foreign friends of China whose initial understanding of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese Communist Party was sparked by Edgar Snow; above all by reading *Red Star Over China*.

Snow's book helped change the course of my life when I was a young man, and it is partly responsible for the fact that I, and my wife Isabel have spent the last 40 years in China and made it our home.

When *Red Star* was first published, in 1937, I was in the International Brigade in Spain and while assigned to duties in the rear I had the opportunity to read it. I was inspired by Snow's account of the Chinese Soviet areas and the five encirclement campaigns; by the story of the Long March -especially the heroic crossing of the Dadu River at Ludingqiao, the grasslands and the snow mountains; by the description of life in the revolutionary cave capital, Yan An; by the life stories of Mao Ze-dong, Zhu De, Zhou En-lai and other Chinese Communist leaders; by the heroism of the Chinese people: workers, peasants and intellectuals of the Border Regions, who were bearing the brunt of the Japanese invasion. To read all this, at the age of 26, in a Spain fighting fascism, made *Red Star* not just another book. It made the two wars being fought at opposite ends of the earth part of the same struggle.

So after the International Brigades were withdrawn from Spain I had hopes of going to Yan An. Those hopes were not realised and I became a teacher, first in Shanghai, then in Chengdu. But Isabel and I did eventually reach the Liberated Areas, in l947, and have spent the last 40 odd years -over half our lives - in China. *Red Star* played a part in that, and over the decades I have urged many students and other friends to read it, in the hope that it may benefit them as it has benefited me.

I first met Edgar Snow early in 1942. I was on my way back to England after my first stay in China. In New York I worked briefly for the Chinese Industrial Co-operative movement, in which Ed, along with the late Rewi Alley and other foreign progressives and Chinese patriots were involved. At that time the American trade union movement was every month donating funds to the trade unions of China, America"s ally in the war against Japan. Indusco leaders, including Edgar Snow, thought it would be more fitting to give the money to the democratic industrial co-operative movement than to the KMT controlled unions in the Guomindang areas. My job was to convince the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations of this. To do this I

had to learn more about the Chinese trade unions and Edgar Snow was my teacher. At that time Ed was about to leave USA and go to the Soviet Union as a war correspondent, and he later wrote the book *People on Our Side.* He was frantically busy making last minute preparations prior to his departure, but he found time to give me tutorials whenever and wherever he could manage; at the lunch table and once in the dentist"s waiting room. He gave unsparingly of his great knowledge.

After Liberation, as soon as the situation permitted, he came to China and on one occasion visited our school, now the Beijing Foreign Studies University, to take pictures for his film about China. We invited him to speak to the teachers and students of our English Department, but he was diffident, saying he was a writer, not a speaker. But in the end he agreed to answer questions. They came thick and fast, for *Red Star Over China* was assigned reading in our courses. The session was instructive and moving; moving because Snow not only knew and wrote about China; he felt about it and loved it.

On one occasion I was with him at a small gathering of foreign journalists in Beijing. Some of them, such as Felix Greene, were committed friends of China; others were professionally competent correspondents for whom China was just another country; others were hard-boiled China watchers. Over drinks after dinner the latter expressed cynical views about New China. Snow was not naively blind to the immense difficulties and bitter struggles facing this country in her endeavours to build socialism in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial land. Still he had faith in her people and their future. He could not stay silent while the cynical China watchers made their snide, cynical comments. I had known him as a warm but calm, genial character. This time he blew his top. He could be a fierce as well as a humane man.

And he was a democrat. So I think he would have been happy about the steps being taken to strengthen democracy and weaken feudalism in China to-day.

Edgar Snow made considerable contributions to the cause of the Chinese revolution. But of course he was not the only non-Chinese writer to do so. At this meeting sponsored by the Three S Society, we naturally think of the other two "s"s ": Anna Louise Strong, whom I had the honour of knowing and Agnes Smedley. I never met Agnes, yet I feel I know her. For besides reading her books I have recently read the biography of her by Jan and Steve Mackinnon. I found this a powerful, scholarly and inspiring book. Above all it brought out for me what a dedicated, talented, courageous, upright and able fighter Agnes was, for the independence of China and India, for the emancipation of women, for the final victory of the wretched of the earth.

But I feel that the scope of the Three S Society is too narrow. It should widen and go through the alphabet, starting with A for Rewi Alley, B for Jack Belden, C for Evans Carlson. I am sure that others present can go on down the alphabet, filling in other names. So that ultimately the three S can become the A to Z Society.

Of course the Chinese people must always rely mainly on their own efforts. But every army needs allies and it is good to remember them to-day as we remember Edgar Snow and *Red Star Over China*.

From English Language Learning No. 9 /1988

34. Recollections of Norman Bethune - Revolutionary Humanitarian (David Crook)

The World of English Editor's Note: Professor Crook, an Englishman, taught for many years at the Foreign Studies University, Beijing, and had been with us through thick and thin in the past scores of years, now retired.

When Chinese friends learn that I was in the International Brigade in the war against Fascism in Spain (1936-1939) they often ask: "Did you know Norman Bethune?" I did, briefly but dramatically. I was in hospital in Madrid and there I saw Bethune give a direct blood transfusion. The blood donor and the recipient lay in adjoining beds, a hollow needle thrust into the arm of each, with the aid of a rubber tube it was possible to draw blood from the body of the donor and pump it into that of the recipient. The donor was a Spanish working woman, the recipient an Italian fascist prisoner of war. This was revolutionary humanitarianism.

That took place in the Spring of 1937, when I was not yet 27 years old, but I have never forgotten it. I recorded the event in my diary at the time, along with my impressions of Bethune. But in the course of the anti-fascist war in Spain and the two subsequent wars (World War Two and the Chinese War of Laberation) my diary was mislaid. I did not recover it until 1973, when I was 63.

By that time I had lived in China for 26 years and had read Mao Zedong"s essay *In Memory of Norman Bethune.* That was Mao"s estimate of Bethune in 1939. What was mine in 1937? I leafed through the pencil-written, tattered pages of the diary now before me, and found words which made me squirm and which I never dared show to Chinese friends. After describing the work of the blood transfusion unit in Madrid I wrote: "Bethune is in charge. He has drive and energy and is apparently highly qualified technically. (But) he is an egotist,.... "

Well, I was 26; and Bethune did have the faults I referred to, as well as the noble qualities Mao Zedong praised him for. Bethune was a very great man, even though he had his weaknesses. The question is, which were predominant, his failings or his virtues? That was the heart of the matter.

In 1966 I was touring Canada speaking for friendship between Canada and China. The chairman of the Bethune Memorial Committee, Hazen Size, invited me to go with him to a meeting on November 11th, the 25th anniversary of Bethune"s death. It was in the Montreal hospital where Bethune had once worked and there was an audience of a couple of hundred French-speaking Canadian doctors, nurses and hospital staff. There was one other English speaker besides Hazen and me, a chap in a rather militaristic raincoat, who sidled up and tried to engage us in conversation. We soon sensed that

he was a plain-clothes member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Several people made speeches in French. Then Hazen said a few words, ending with the remark: “we have with us this evening somebody else who knew Norman Bethune in Spain”. I was called on to speak and started off in the best French I could muster. Then I whipped out of my pocket a small booklet containing Mao Zedong”s essay on Bethune and read it aloud. The audience listened attentively and when we adjourned for coffee doctors and nurses in their Catholic sisters” costumes cordially crowded around me. But not the hospital director. He, I was told later, was furious at my having made “his” hospital a platform for “communist propaganda”.

That was on November 11th, 1966. Less than a year later, back in China, like many Chinese, I was in jail, framed up by followers of the Gang of Four. For the first few months, in a makeshift lockup, I had access to a radio. Two or three times every day there was a broadcast of Mao”s essay on Norman Bethune. I listened each time, following the Chinese text word for word, so as to improve my knowledge of the characters. Soon, like millions of Chinese people, I knew the text by heart. Now I have forgotten it.

During the 20-odd years since then I have come to regard the memorizing as mere ritual. What counts is practice of Bethune’s virtues as recounted in Mao”s essay. Summed up they are “the spirit of Communism”. What is that? Mao defined it as service of the people and the pursuit of excellence in work.

On November 11, 1989, twenty-three years after the gathering at the hospital in Montreal, a far bigger commemoration meeting for Bethune was arranged in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing - on Tian An Men Square. My wife, Isabel, who is a Canadian and I, who had known Bethune, were invited. We went out of respect for Bethune, though we seemed to be the only westerners in the body of the huge hall. But on the presidium, sitting with Chinese government, Party and Friendship Association leaders, was a Canadian delegation.

During the speeches I mulled over the 50-odd years since I had written my diary in Madrid, with its description of the direct transfusion of blood from the veins of a Spanish worker to those of an Italian fascist prisoner, and my critical evaluation of Bethune. The speech of the president of the Canada-China Friendship Association, Molly Phillips, brought me to the present. Referring to Bethune as “a great Canadian, a great humanitarian and a trusted friend of China,” she concluded with the words: “I hope and trust that Dr Bethune’s dedication to the ideal of serving the people... will

prevail; that people everywhere will learn to respect all human life. " Those words, I felt, were the heart of the matter.

From the World of English No. 6 /1990

35. An Anglo-Canadian Couple"s 30 Teaching Years in New China (Isabel and David Crook)

Introduction

These memories of the early years of our school- now BFSU (Beijing Foreign Studies University)-are based on an article for a Hong Kong publication *China Towards Modernization* written in 1977. I might have written it differently to-day, but as Comrade Mao Zedong said: we should not tamper with history. And this piece, written 14 years ago, is in a modest sense a little bit of the history of BFSU. The whole article dealt with the years 1948 to 1977.

We came to China in 1947- two years before the People's Republic was founded - to study land reform in the Liberated Areas. We intended to stay 18 months. We are still here.

In 1948 we were invited to join the staff of a newly set up language school in a village nine miles from Shijiazhuang, then the largest liberated city south of the Great Wall. Strictly speaking the school was not new, for it had forerunners in an English language training class first located in the Chinese Communists" cave capital of Yanan and later in Zhangjiakou (Kalgan). Its re-establishment in the summer of 1948 in the village of Nanhaishan, 160-odd miles southwest of Beiping (then still in Kuomintang hands) was a portent of the Communists" coming victory in the War of Liberation. It was part of their preparations for training a core of translators for the Foreign Ministry of the Chinese People's Government which was set up more than a year later.

There was not much of a Foreign Office atmosphere about the school in Nanhaishan. The three dozen students and half a dozen teachers lived, ate, studied and taught in the spare rooms of better-off peasants or absentee landlords, allocated to us by the new Peasant Union. Establishing close relations with the newly-liberated

peasants was part of our curriculum; so English classes were interrupted to enable us to help gather the corn crop. Our students also helped to set up a branch of the New Democratic Youth League among the young people of the village, which had won the doubtful distinction of “Model Tax Paying Village”- under the Japanese. David personally profited from the close relations built up between the school and the villagers, for when he came down with acute appendicitis members of the Peasant Union willingly carried him on a stretcher ten miles along narrow field paths in pouring rain to the Bethune Peace Hospital in another village.

Head of the school was Pu Huaren, product of a missionary university, who had once been a clergyman. After quitting the Church he had joined the Communist Party in the late 20s; but he had retained his dog-collar, clerical robes and benign expression, which proved an asset when he did underground work in Shanghai before moving on to Yanan. There, nicknamed “the Bishop”, he was given the task by Zhou Enlai of heading the English language training class. In Nanhaishan our half dozen teachers included three native English-speakers: Betty (American), Isabel (Canadian) and David (British). The rest were Chinese. None of us had been trained as language teachers, though David had taught English for a couple of years in missionary universities, first in Shanghai, later in southwest China, until early in World War II.

The students had mostly been active in the patriotic student movement in the Kuomintang areas- until things got too hot for them and, with Communist Party assistance, they made their way to the Liberated Areas. A few had been student-interpreters for the three-way (Communist-Kuomintang-American) truce team talks which followed the Anti-Japanese War. When the talks broke down some of them had stayed with the Communists and gone to “the Bishop’s” training class for further study. Of our three dozen students in Nanhaishan, one is now a delegate to the U. N., another became a star reporter in Africa, others hold senior posts in Chinese embassies and consulates, some are department heads or Party secretaries in today’s Foreign Languages Institute where we’ve been working ever since.

Textbooks were a problem. We could hardly use those of Kuomintang China, which were studded with praise of Chiang Kai-shek and American imperialism. The ones we hastily put together were amateurishly printed on coarse paper made of grass, with occasional stalks running across the page. (Pulling one of these out might extract several letters.) Nor was pedagogy on a high level. On asking about teaching method we were told: “Just say anything to the students in English. They”ve never heard the language spoken by a native speaker. “

On top of this, teaching and studying were subject to interruptions. Once, the location of our school and, more important, of the nearby Military Academy headed by then Chief-of-Staff Ye Jianying (now senior Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party) had been pinpointed by some escaped prisoners who had been put on parole. Air-raids started. We had no anti-air-craft so could do nothing but get up at 3 a. m. and scatter in the fields, where we carried on informal classes until returning to the village after dark. Then, later, Communist intelligence reported that the enemy were planning a commando raid on the Party's Central Committee headquarters in the county next to ours; so our school, as a non-combatant unit, was ordered to evacuate until the danger was over. The books and bedding of staff and students, along with the school's little library and pots and pans were loaded onto three mule carts and we all withdrew to safety in the nearest mountains, walking by night to avoid being spotted by enemy air-craft, and resting under cover by day. After we had been gone ten days word came that the enemy commandos had been wiped out and we walked back.

By the end of 1948 the American-backed Kuomintang armies were on the brink of defeat and the Communist-led War of Liberation was on the verge of victory. As our guerrilla schooldays approached their end we started to walk to Beiping.

Unsettled though it was, the Nanhaishan period of our school"s history provided valuable experience. We had on the whole applied Mao Zedong"s educational principles - of making education serve proletarian politics and combining it with productive labour, living simply, working hard and being self-sufficient, and of intellectuals merging with the working people. Now the time had come to leave the country for the city. Would we prove able to adapt to the new environment, keep pace with the advance of events and at the same time, in Mao Zedong's words, "withstand the sugar-coated bullets fired by the bourgeoisie"? In the city would we be able to solve the educational problems we had run into in Nanhaishan?

One of these had been, should a revolutionary school teach something referred to as "proletarian English"? We discussed this and concluded: workers in Britain and America do have their own way of using the language, but this included mistakes in grammar and pronunciation because working people are often culturally deprived. So we rejected this "proletarian English". But unfortunately we overlooked the fact that, just as the earthiness and imagery of Mao Zedong's Chinese was drawn largely from the lively language of the Chinese peasants, in teaching English we too had a rich store-house of expressions to draw on - the racy language of Western working people.

Then there was the relationship between language learning and politics. How could we comply with the demand to “keep politics in command” without letting it take up so much time as to make mastery of English impossible? For politics included many things: study of Marxism and the Thought of Mao Zedong, relations with the local people, attitude to manual work, to the War of Liberation, to class struggle.

In some respects the problem had been rather mechanically dealt with in Nanhaishan by assigning students to the higher, intermediate and lower classes by averaging out their knowledge of English and their “political consciousness”. The resulting uneven linguistic level of the students in a class made language teaching exceptionally difficult. Besides this, the politically advanced students were given the responsibility of being “student cadres”. Some of these were the poorest linguists to begin with and their duties as cadres took away time and energy from language study. So they fell further and further behind.

New problems arose once we reached Beiping. At first the school was accommodated in the barracks of the former Japanese Embassy. The buildings were innocent of furniture. After the defeat of the Japanese they had been used by some Kuomintang government organization, whose staff, as the People’s Liberation Army approached the city, made off with tables, chairs, desks, beds- everything portable- maintaining it was their “private property” brought from home. So we were forced to sleep on the floor and to conduct classes with students and teachers alike squatting on foot-high folding stools with seats of criss-crossing ropes. (These had been standard issue for Liberated Area students, soldiers and government workers.) Now some students asked: “After all, who’s won this war? The Kuomintang bureaucrats have houses stuffed with furniture, while we’re sleeping on the floor and squatting on camp-stools. We should take the stuff back from them- or at least buy new furniture. “ The school leaders said we should discuss this and we did- until it became clear that taking back the furniture would lend substance to the enemy’s rumours that the Communists were bandits and that a sudden demand for furniture by all the schools and government organizations from the Liberated Areas would send prices skyrocketing. So we continued sleeping on the floor and sitting on our stools, using books on our knees as desks until the time was ripe for better equipment.

More important than furniture was finding human material - new teachers - as our student body rose in a couple of weeks from 35 to 75. We were not allowed to “poach” on the older universities in newly-liberated Beiping. But we were allowed to invite a small handful of “democratic personages”, people of repute in what has come to be termed “the old society”, who from political conviction or social conscience had on the

eve of liberation, left their jobs or been hounded out of them. Fortunately, too, patriotic Chinese were coming back to their country from abroad. The flow increased after April 1949 (we had entered the city some weeks earlier).

That was when the British gunboat, the *Amethyst*, had embroiled itself in the People's Liberation Army"s crossing of the Changjiang (Yangtze) River to liberate Nanjing, Chiang Kai-shek's capital. The *Amethyst* had been detained by the P. L. A. and later, escaping down river had rammed junks, causing loss of Chinese lives. Mao Zedong had denounced British politicians involved in this affair, from Attlee to Churchill, in terms which electrified patriotic Chinese students abroad. Their reaction was: "If this Communist regime stands up to the big powers instead of licking their boots, as Chiang does, it can't be so bad. " Our institute got competent young scholars from Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Yale, who brought with them an erudition which had not been available to us in the village of Nanhaishan.

An unexpected source of new teachers was the Kuomintang diplomatic and consular services. Their personnel could hardly be absorbed into the new, revolutionary foreign service but they could help train interpreters for it. So could former Chinese interpreters of the U. S. armed forces which had bolstered Chiang's armies. Zhou Enlai called on the school to make good use of the new teachers" talents by appealing to their patriotism, uniting with them, criticizing their wrong ideas and re-educating them. Now, 30 years later, some of them are still with the institute, having worked with increasing devotion and made notable contributions to language teaching in the new China.

So we had some new teachers. But the old grass-paper text-books could no longer satisfy our needs and we compiled new ones. Articles on current affairs were selected from progressive periodicals, including the Soviet magazine *New Times* and the British *Daily Worker*. There were also extracts from books on popular science, by J. B. S. Haldane, from the Marxist classics, from progressive foreign writers on China, such as Edgar Snow. We graded the material by rule of thumb, from easy to difficult, arranged it in three volumes - Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced - and had it professionally printed. This was an advance and we were proud of it. But it was no model of philological expertise and the old established universities of China's ancient cultural capital were not impressed - even if our material was more in tune with the times than theirs.

After a year in the old Japanese barracks we moved - to other, older barracks. These had once housed troops of Yuan Shikai, who tried to make himself emperor

after the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen which overthrew the Qing (Ching) Dynasty in 1911. The buildings were ramshackle and rat-infested, but they were close to the Summer Palace, where we could swim in summer and skate in winter.

There we enrolled more students and got more new teachers. Some of the new students had been activists in the student movement against Chiang Kai-shek. In November 1950 some of them joined the Chinese People's Volunteers to serve as interpreters in the camps for the American prisoners captured in Korea. A month later another batch of new students came to our school, most of whom were middle-schoolers. They too, had hoped to join the Volunteers and fight in Korea. But they were considered too young to enlist and were persuaded with some difficulty to study foreign languages instead. Many were reluctant to study English which they regarded as "the language of the imperialists" and would have preferred to study Russian. Finally they were convinced that "a foreign language is both a weapon with which to fight the enemy and a bridge to closer unity with our friends, the working people of all lands, including Britain and the U. S. A. " Some of these new students did eventually join the Volunteers and serve as interpreters in the camps for the American prisoners captured in Korea.

Teaching underwent a change. The new teachers brought with them some scholarship and a more academic approach to language teaching. This drove home the point that we were no longer in a village but in a centre of sophisticated intellectuals, steeped in contemporary Western as well as classical Chinese culture. Not surprisingly the new personnel - and some of the old - responded readily to a new catch-phrase then becoming current in colleges originally in the Liberated Areas: "Overcome guerilla work-style and regularize education. " This demand had some validity. We did need to move with the times and provide modern education for modern society. But the so-called "guerrilla work-style" of the Liberated Areas, with its close "fish and water" relationship between leaders and the mass of the working people, the combining of education with productive labour (as in our helping to bring in the corn crop in Nanhaishan), the cultivation of the collective ideology essential to socialism - all this was a precious heritage. It was not to be thrown over in the name of "overcoming guerrilla work-style and regularizing education". *Socialist* regularization of education was indeed essential, but regularization for its own sake could play into the hands of those who hankered after the old society of which they had been among the more privileged members.

Solution of the problem of regularization was sought from three sources: 1. Experience accumulated in schools in the Liberated Areas, starting in the Chinese

Soviet Area in the southeast in the early 30s and carried forward in Yanan and elsewhere; 2. education in Kuomintang China (which had drawn heavily on Western, especially American, sources); and 3. what was then widely regarded as a model of socialist education, that of the Soviet Union.

At the beginning of the 50s we still managed in our new urban surroundings to maintain something of the Liberated Areas tradition of simple living, collective spirit and mutual aid. Teachers at first lived side by side with students, who dropped in at all hours of the day or night to consult them. Though this had its good side it sometimes made the teachers" preparation of classes and correction of papers difficult. Conversation classes were conducted in groups of six, with all sitting on camp stools in the playground when weather permitted, even after we acquired benches and desks. The students formed mutual aid groups, whose aim was to ensure that every student kept up and made the grade. A number of the new teachers, on the other hand, brought up in what Lu Xun (Lu Hsun) described as a "man eat man" society, were influenced by competitiveness and showing off their learning. This expressed itself in what we called the "duck stuffing" method of teaching (referring to the forced feeding of Beijing ducks). It involved long and learned lectures and hair-splitting expositions of linguistic phenomena which enabled the teacher to display his erudition, but left the students passive. It taught them *about* the language but produced little proficiency in using it. It also tended to stay on a highly academic level divorced from daily life. One teacher from the Liberated Areas complained that his students could discourse in English on the intricacies of dialectical materialism but not offer anyone a cup of tea.

Another problem was whether to stress the spoken or the written language. (What we needed, of course, was command of both.) In old China English had been taught in both government and missionary universities. The former went in for grammar in a big way and concentrated on reading and writing to such an extent that the students could hardly speak intelligibly or understand even simple English spoken by a native speaker. The missionary universities, on the other hand, conducted nearly all courses in English (or French, as the case might be). Their graduates usually had a good, natural command of the foreign language but their knowledge of their own language, literature, history and society left much to be desired. They were victims of what Mao Zedong called "cultural aggression".

To escape from such contradictions we adopted a Soviet textbook of English. This was certainly an advance on the three-volume set of readers we had hastily compiled after entering Beijing in the spring of 1949. It was scientifically planned and comprehensive. The content ranged from Mark Twain to Howard Fast, from Dickens to

Galsworthy, from Shelley"s *Song to the Men of England* to the *Internationale*. Not surprisingly it also included translations from the Russian of Gorky and Stalin. This Russian angle was precisely one of its main shortcomings as far as we were concerned. For the book was geared to students whose native tongue was Russian, not Chinese, and it dwelt at some length on their particular difficulties in studying English - which were often different from those of Chinese students. Besides this, the book was for use at a pedagogical institute training teachers, while our main task was to train translators for the field of foreign affairs. So after using it for a year, as a transitional step towards compiling more or less scientific textbooks of our own, we began to "Sinicize" the Soviet book, substituting exercises suited to the special needs of Chinese students.

In the wake of the Soviet textbooks came the Soviet experts. In those early days of Sino-Soviet cooperation, the Soviet experts coming to China were on the whole competent, hardworking and inspired by a desire to pass on their relatively advanced technique to their Chinese colleagues. They did not hold forth in the classroom but used the "elicitation" method, stressing the combination of theory and practice and getting the students to do the talking rather than the teacher. They were strong on planning, both long and short term, setting well-defined targets not only for the five-year language course and for each academic year and semester, but for each class period, down to the last minute. They also introduced us to the practice of holding "English Evenings" at which students performed plays in English (as well as French and Spanish) or acted out some of their texts. They also initiated "open classes" which a teacher's colleagues would attend and later critically discuss.

Such innovations helped to improve our teaching. But as Mao Zedong was to point out, not all the "advanced experience" which China learned from the Soviet Union was really advanced. Much was made, for instance, of the "advanced" Soviet five-point marking system - until one of our deans went on a study tour of the Soviet Union. There, visiting Lenin's home town, he noticed that Lenin's school books (of the 1880s) on exhibition in the local museum were also marked according to the five-point system. As to open classes, when Chinese teachers suggested that students should take part in the follow-up discussions and put forward their criticisms and suggestions, the Soviet experts objected. Criticism of teachers by students was not encouraged in the Soviet Union, they explained, it would undermine the teachers" prestige and authority. Chinese students did attend the discussions, nonetheless. When political movements came along the Soviet experts pointed out that they interfered with the teaching plan; this was not permitted in the Soviet Union. But Chinese revolutionaries saw these

movements as vital to the socialist transformation of society- an undertaking they were not prepared to subordinate to any school timetable.

The second half of the 50s saw Soviet planning principles applied in another direction: the drawing up by each teacher of a personal plan to upgrade his professional qualifications. This was, in the general sense, necessary. But to the Soviet experts it meant the attainment by each teacher of a Ph. D. degree - something which was considered superfluous by our teachers. There were disagreements, too, in the field of scientific research. The Soviet experts rendered a service in directing our attention to the need for research, and some of the topics investigated under their guidance, especially in teaching method, were extremely useful. Others were less so, such as learned treatises on the different uses of “should” and “would”, “will” and “shall” ; or on John Galsworthy’s favourite stylistic devices.

Most teachers and cadres were interested in learning from Soviet experience - with discrimination. But certain cadres, who distrusted academics educated in old China or abroad and who themselves knew little or nothing of teaching foreign languages, favoured swallowing Soviet experience whole. At the other extreme, some teachers whose capital was their erudition, not their teaching method, resisted change.

A popular slogan in those days was: “Their today is our tomorrow”” - a hope which has not been consummated.

The period of stressing Soviet experience was brought to an end in the summer of 1957, by the anti-rightist movement. We did not take part in this since we had arranged to go on home leave, for the first time in ten years. We arrived back in China in the summer of 1958 in the midst of the Great Leap Forward.

The Great Leap brought with it revolutionary changes in education and in educators. We were met at the Beijing railway station by several Chinese colleagues. One of them who had specialised in Elizabethan drama during his graduate studies abroad before liberation immediately overwhelmed us with grain statistics - a subject we had never heard him touch on during the eight years we had worked together. Within a few weeks he and other professors were digging pits on the slopes of the mountains west of Beijing, planting apricot, peach, walnut and pine trees to “greenify” the countryside along the railway leading to Mongolia and the Soviet Union. During our weeks in a mountain village we got up before dawn and breakfasted on rice porridge and boiled cabbage, standing up in a rocky gully. Then we climbed the hills carrying, besides our picks and hoes, steamed bread, salt pickles and cold water for lunch. In the evening we carried buckets of water from the village wells to fill the vats in the

courtyards of the peasant homes we stayed in. Then, by the light of oil lamps, the students reviewed their English lessons, while we teachers read the *People's Daily* and discussed the newly set up people's communes. After arriving back at the Institute we puddled low-grade steel, night and day, in playing field furnaces.

Meanwhile school work went on. A shock force of teachers worked long hours compiling new teaching material more closely connected with the students" future work as translators than extracts from the Soviet experts" favoured authors - Mark Twain, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, Dickens, Galsworthy. (The Institute kitchen staff contributed to the compilation by putting on a midnight supper for those teachers working late at night.)

But though the new material was more relevant - dealing as it did with current affairs and policy - it was not a leap forward in teaching technique. The new "oral English" textbooks, for instance, was hardly oral, nor was it in the sort of English current in English-speaking countries. Texts headed "Dialogues" introduced imaginary foreign visitors to China, who asked short questions and received long answers extracted from *Peking Review* articles thick with jargon. They were not so much dialogues as monologues punctuated by interrogatory interruptions. Why was this advance in content, which strove to relate language teaching to the students" future work, not matched by an advance in method? One reason was that the outpouring of creativity called forth by the Great Leap Forward was considered by the English Department Party leadership to be the exclusive product and property of the younger teachers. They were regarded as having a monopoly of revolutionary spirit; the older ones were written off as "backward" perhaps as a result of the anti-rightist campaign of the previous year. Yet these older teachers had certain advantages which the younger ones lacked: long experience, some useful techniques and in some cases excellent English. The failure to draw on their talents undermined the positive and practical projects undertaken and so paved the way for a swing to the opposite extreme of over-emphasizing classical literature in the effort to restore quality.

Whatever defects the Great Leap may have had, the extraordinary energy and pride it generated helped to see everyone through the hard years of 1959-1961. Most of the students came from relatively privileged families, for at that time, only ten years after liberation, their sons and daughters alone had the secondary education required of university entrants. Foreign teachers and their families were provided with all the food they needed, but we still had our lunch in the Chinese teachers" dining room. Day after day it was coarse grain (maize and sorghum) and watery cabbage. In the period of serious shortage of grain everyone at the Institute was called on to state how much-

or how little-he or she needed every month. Many understated their requirements and had to be persuaded to increase their self-imposed ration to a less heroic, more realistic figure. In spite of this, many people went down with edema due to the lack of variety in the diet. Yet we never heard any grumbling and it was widely felt that without the people's communes the situation might have been worse. Older people stressed that before liberation, with such floods and droughts millions had died of starvation.

The fortitude with which the hard years were endured showed that much had been accomplished in cultivating a revolutionary spirit among teachers and students, even though they had never gone through the intense suffering the labouring people experienced before liberation. But the changing of "world outlook" is an arduous and complex process. (Mao Zedong was optimistic when he stated in 1942 that it might take about eight years.) And the process has its ups and downs. This was apparent in our Institute as elsewhere. The teaching material and methods born of the Great Leap did need much work on them to overcome their deficiencies. But instead of this work being done, these shortcomings were seized on as a pretext for discarding them. The baby was thrown out with the bathwater.

The new trend was toward literature- the more classical the better, in the minds of some teachers. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. " This opening sentence of Jane Austen"s *Pride and Prejudice* was memorized and frequently quoted by senior students. Such literature, however delightful, squeezed out other material of greater value to graduates interpreting for visiting delegations from Asian and African countries. Nor was the choice of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* - to say nothing of juicy extracts from *The School for Scandal* the most appropriate or useful for teachers" and students" performances at English evenings. In 1963, in preparation for celebration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth the following year, the graduates put on a full-length performance of *Othello*, which some knowledgeable English members of the invited audience said was up to London's West End standards. Not all of the plays studied and acted were centuries old. There was Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest* and some Bernard Shaw. Shaw"s *Pygmalion*, with its focus on phonetics, was perhaps closer to what we needed, Eliza Doolittle"s pronunciation exercise, "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain" being especially useful for Chinese students of English. But most memorable was Clifford Odets' play about striking New York taxi-drivers, *Waiting for Lefty.*

This heightened emphasis on literature from Shakespeare to Shaw was part of an old problem: the relationship of literature to language teaching. The pendulum had

swung back and forth. Now, in 1963, it reached the extreme, perhaps, of the literary position.

1964 brought the pendulum swinging back. Early that year Mao Zedong held his Spring Festival Talks on Education. He pointed out that while the line and orientation of education in China were correct, certain things were wrong: methods were lifeless, facilities for higher education were inadequate, courses lasted too long, syllabuses were too complicated, exams were like attacks on the enemy, education needed to be combined with production. Although the talks were not made public at the time, their substance was evidently passed on to leading personnel in the field of education.

In our Institute a group of competent younger teachers was assigned the task of studying current trends in language teaching in the U. S. A. and Britain and of then putting forward proposals for making our teaching more scientific. They proposed adoption of the oral-aural approach, then considered a fairly advanced method. This was accepted and they were then called on to compile textbooks for the first and second years, with content suited to our needs. These new books appeared in time for the new academic year starting in September. Second year textbooks contained lessons about the model commune brigade of Dazhai (Tachai) and the Daqing (Taching) Oilfield, about the American invasion of Viet Nam and African liberation movements. Vocabulary was controlled and graded and sentence patterns were systematically introduced. There were abridged and simplified books of fiction and non-fiction to go with the texts.

We now questioned whether the English course needed to last five years and considered the possibility of turning out competent translators in three. That autumn there were two large intakes of students into the English Department and one was assigned to a newly designed three-year oral-aural course, the other to the ordinary five-year one. Results were to be compared in the spirit of “socialist emulation”.

The new students, as always up to this time, were admitted after taking entrance examinations but for the first time those from worker and peasant families formed the great majority (In the three-year course the proportion was 80%). Such a high figure had not been possible earlier because of the extremely high rate of illiteracy among working people in the old society. Now, 15 years after liberation, the number of worker and peasant children with the education necessary for college entrance had greatly increased.

In 1965, to help strengthen the collectivist ideology among themselves and among the peasants, our senior students and their teachers went to live and work in the

country, in one of the poorer parts of Shanxi Province. They stayed there for six months, helping the peasants carry out the Socialist Education Movement. When they returned one of them boasted to us, “We changed the direction of the pig manure. “ This meant, he explained, that manure of privately-owned pigs had previously been spread on the peasants” privately-owned allotments, now it was being spread on collectively-owned fields. This linking of intellectuals with the labouring people reminded us of our first days at the school in Nanhaishan, 17 years earlier.

But now there was a difference. The years 1964-1965 combined perhaps for the first time the revolutionary zest of the old Liberated Areas and the Great Leap Forward with serious attention to expertise in language teaching. Those years saw a valiant attempt to achieve the blend of “red and expert” called for by Mao Zedong. But still it fell short of his hopes. The result was the Cultural Revolution.

The events of the ensuing 10 years probed society and human character to such depths in China that many who experienced them (including ourselves) feel they cannot yet be adequately summed up. But in a sense this summing up goes on in the course of the reconstruction and modernization of the devastated economy, the consolidation of public order, the development of socialist democracy and the establishment of a democratic socialist legal system. It will take the Chinese people and their Communist Party time to make a scientific evaluation. When they do, it will be possible to separate the Cultural Revolution from the feudal-fascist crimes with which it is often identified.

Meanwhile in the field of education, one or two interesting experiences of our Institute during those stormy years can be referred to. In 1969 our students and teachers were moved from Beijing to a land reclamation site in Hubei Province, near the Changjiang (Yangtze) River, over a thousand miles to the south. There they set up a work-study school, spending part of their time growing rice and building houses for themselves. And there, in 1971, were enrolled the first new students since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution - our first intake of worker-peasant-soldier students. Some of our teachers and former students still talk nostalgically of those days despite the spartan life and the oppressively hot and humid climate. Students, teachers, cooks, drivers, office workers and administrators lived and laboured side by side to put up dormitories and classrooms. In spite of this work, the students made progress with their English, for their close and constant contact with their teachers enabled them to use the language and receive instruction in it morning, noon and night while carrying logs from the riverside to the building site, while sawing, hammering, road-making, cooking, swatting mosquitoes. Some felt that this “situational method” of language teaching

proved no less effective than using the blackboard and textbook drills. Of course this 24-hour-a-day teacher-student contact was a fine thing, but it was only possible because the teachers" families had been left behind in Beijing. (Their children lived collectively in one of the student dormitories in the care of the less robust teachers and cadres who were not considered up to the rigorous life on the reclamation site.)

This experience in Hubei was followed up when the Institute returned to its home in the capital. In the autumn of 1973 several classes, some studying English, others Russian, went for a month to a commune production brigade on the outskirts of Beijing. They were mentally prepared to have to give up their language study for the time being and to serve simply as a labour force for the rush job of bringing in the grain harvest. But the commune leaders appreciated the importance of language study for China's foreign affairs. They insisted that from 6 to 8 a. m., while the commune members themselves were already working in the fields, the students should carry on with their study of foreign languages and should start harvesting only after breakfast. In the evenings, too, the brigade leaders made arrangements for the students and teachers to conduct social investigation, the importance of which Mao Zedong always stressed. This meant interviewing villagers and compiling a history of the village since before liberation. When completed it was checked for accuracy by the local leaders. Later it was translated by the teachers into English for use as language study material. Even after we returned to school, we kept up our friendship with commune members.

This combination of work in the fields with language study and social investigation was and is regarded by many as a model of successful open-door schooling. But there was a continual struggle over the content and the length of time to be spent outside the school. In many instances the teachers and students were required to spend so much time and energy on physical labour that language study became all but impossible. An investigation showed that one class graduating in 1977 had spent less than 50% of its time studying foreign languages. The rest had gone on political study and open-door schooling. Some students actually spent as much as 42 weeks of their three-and-a-half-year course on open-door schooling - with a corresponding loss of time from systematic language study.

There have been similar struggles over other aspects of education, such as examinations and the recruitment of new students. Up to the Cultural Revolution the main method for increasing the percentage of university students from worker and peasant families had been the strengthening of primary and secondary school education. There were perhaps grounds for thinking that this method was not producing adequate result in the country as a whole. So when the Gang of Four

launched a well-orchestrated attack on college entrance exams in 1974, many felt it was a revolutionary step. For three years the Institute admitted students without exams, with the result that some of the entrants faced the all but impossible task of upgrading their inadequate general education while at the same time learning enough of a foreign language to enable them to serve as interpreters in three and a half years. Inevitably some of them graduated ill-prepared for their work.

This takes us from the realm of recollection into that of speculation. But, in any case, between the 30th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the year 2000, whatever the twists and turns in the struggle to modernize China and build socialism, foreign language teaching has a part to play. This will necessitate advances in the next 20 years greater than those during the 30 years since our Institute was a school with three dozen students and half a dozen teachers in a village in the Liberated Areas.

Postscript

These are only a few recollections of one person. Others may have different memories and stress different points. Whatever the case, I think it is useful to glance backward in order to move forward; to realise that whatever BFSU may have achieved is the result of hard work and long struggle; that we owe it to our forerunners to recall our heritage and draw inspiration from it. This will help us to preserve unity and make greater contributions to building a modern, socialist university on the basis of the training class in the old Liberated Areas.

From English Language Learning Nos. 7-9 /1991 &

David and Isabel Crook in China

36. A Sentimental Journey to the "Paradise of Adventurers" (David Crook)

ELL Editor's Note: On October 19-20, 1992, St. John"s university held the 2th World Reuion of Johnanean alumni at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre. Professor David Crook taught at St. John"s university then. Now he went back to the Reunion and wrote this article for ELL's readers. "Paradise of Adventurers " is from the name of a novel and "Sentimental Journey " is from the name of a film. Professor Crook meant it can recall the past and compare it with the present to use them here.

"The Paradise of Adventurers. " That was what they called Shanghai in the bad old days. There, fortunes could be quickly made or lost by straight or crooked means and passports bought by the stateless refugees of whom there were tens of thousands from Russia and Nazi Germany. Women were bought and sold, too. Gangsters made fortunes from prostitution. Nanjing Road, the busiest street in the British-and-American-run International Settlement, after dark was lined with prostitutes - poor peasant girls sold in times of famine for a pittance by parents who rather than see their daughters starve to death handed them over to contractors promising jobs in the big city. Such was the paradise I knew in the thirties.

I was teaching at St. John"s university then. Recently, 50 years later, I went back, to a World Reunion of 1,700 Johannean alumni. They came from all over mainland China and Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as from foreign countries including U. S. A., Canada, Singapore, Japan and the Philipinnes.

On the old St. John's campus, now used by a new University, which hosted the alumni for a half day visit, one saw scenes of laughter and tears. Men of sixty, seventy and eighty, recognizing each other by the name tags on their lapels, hailed one another like long lost brothers. Elderly women embraced, chattered and giggled like girls. Cameras clicked and flashed as they posed in groups before familiar buildings: their former dormitories, classrooms, dining-halls. Many sought out the vast spreading camphor tree only to learn that it had been destroyed by a typhoon.

The more formal proceedings started with an Opening Ceremony at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre, presided over by Mr Rong Yi-ren, a St. John"s graduate of the class of "37 and now Honorary Chairman of the Alumni Association. With him on the presidium was his contemporary and now close associate Mr. Jing Shu-ping, executive director of CITIC. Another notable contemporary was Bishop K. H. Ding. Now looking benignly clerical the bishop said in his speech that only in his graduating year did St. John"s become co-educational, so during his activities in the Drama Club, in the absence of women students, he often played the part of a woman. Now there was a

woman on the presidium with him, Shanghai's Vice-Mayor Xie, who represented the city government in welcoming the 1,700 alumni and alumnae.

Despite this and the admission of women students in 1936, the proceedings of the two day reunion were male dominated; the only woman to make a speech to the full assembly, apart from Vice-Mayor Xie, did so at the end of the closing ceremony. She was the daughter of the last president of the university.

The focus of speeches and discussion during the meetings was the establishment of a successor school to St. John"s University. Money had to be raised and a site procured. By the end of the two days of speeches and discussion it was tentatively settled that a new, privately run school, a college not a university, should be set up on the campus of St. Mary's, former sister school of St. John's.

Activities were not limited to these speeches and discussions. There were two "cocktail parties" at which only soft drinks such as Coca-Cola were served; so they might well have been called "coketail" parties. The buffet refreshments, however, were lavish and the hotels in which these parties took place were luxurious in the extreme, sparkling with glass and gold and silver ornaments and with escalators from one floor to the next. As I was leaving the festivities I stopped short at an unexpected sight on one landing: an old rickshaw on exhibition. This took me back in a flash, to the rickshaws on the streets of Shanghai half a century ago, with their half naked pullers dashing dangerously across the busy streets to be first to answer passengers" calls and the policemen beating and kicking them and confiscating their cushions which must be redeemed at the police station on payment of a fine for infringement, real or alleged, of traffic regulations. Shanghai was a paradise for adventurers not for rickshaw pullers. Times have changed.

Nowadays new housing is being built in satellite towns and a whole new city is being developed across the Whangpoo River in Pudong. Special buses took us there on the third day of the reunion. The traffic on the way in the centre of the old Shanghai was horrifyingly heavy. But we avoided much of it by going to Pudong through one of the two newly built tunnels under the river. It was an impressive piece of engineering with smooth road surface and good lighting permitting free flow of traffic. The contrast between this and the traffic jams above ground was striking. It suggests that the solution to Shanghai"s traffic problem is to put it underground, but that is made difficult by the height of the water table.

Our sight-seeing bus left Pudong and returned to Shanghai proper by one of the two newly built bridges. This was high above the river, presumably to allow free

passage for ships. The approach to the bridge was by a multi-tiered spiral roadway, a remarkable structure. Pudong itself has a scattering of high tower blocks, but it is still in the initial stage of development, as was Shenzhen only a few years ago, so its future is equally promising.

Back in old Shanghai our bus threaded its way through crowded, crooked streets lined with old, low buildings, shops and dwellings. Why do the people not respond to the government's urgings to move into new blocks of flats in Pudong and new satellite towns? "There's no place like home", however dingy, and it is hard to leave a community of old neighbours. Perhaps the solution would be to move not separate families but whole communities en bloc.

After crossing the bridge and working our way through traffic jams we drove along the newly widened Bund, an embankment beside the Whangpoo River, lined with flower-beds and wharfs for ships from all over the world. Then we turned up famous Nanjing Road, main street of the former Shanghai International Settlement. A buzz of excitement filled our bus as passengers excitedly pointed out to each other familiar landmarks which they had not seen for years or even decades. One St. John"s alumnus pointed to a building site which was his property on which yet another luxury hotel was being built. He must have been rolling in money to build on such a valuable site.

St. John's was an elitist university and many if not most of its students came from wealthy families. Many, but not all. The alumnus sitting at my side told me he had worked his way through. It had taken him six years instead of the usual four to graduate, for he had to divide his time between studying and working as a shop assistant.

A fellow teacher of mine at St. John's in the late "30s had a different history. He was a descendant of Li Hung-zhang and had studied at Oxford University and speaks excellent English. Naturally he was denounced during the Cultural Revolution but was soon set free and sent back to his "native place" in the country-side. There he kept a low profile, reading and gardening. The locals thought he must be a retired 8th Route Army general and left him in peace until the time came when he could return to teaching. He and his wife invited me to an elegant dinner in there present home in a fashionable part of Shanghai.

These were just two of the 1,700 "Johanneans" who came together in their World Reunion. I think that *union* was a significant part of the affair, since so many of the alumni came from Taiwan and Hong Kong. For them the experience was clearly a

moving one. Not merely because of their meeting after decades with friends of their youth. More important, it gave them an opportunity to see difference between the Shanghai of today and that of their schooldays and to note the progress of their native land. From their applause during the speeches no matter where they live today they all feel Chinese at heart.

Postscript

I am afraid I have not done justice to the serious business of the reunion; for two reasons. For one thing I carelessly lost the notebook in which I had jotted down points of interest, and for people like me, in their 80th, one's notebook is more effective than one's memory. For another, nearly all the speeches were spoken in Shanghai dialect, which I do not understand. So I have been forced to make this "a sentimental journey " to the Shanghai I knew 50 years ago rather than a substantial report on a significant reunion.

Learning without thought is labour lost, thought without learning is perilous. (The Analects of Confucius)

From English Language Learning No 12 / 1992.

37. English Romantic Poets Xiang Qian Kan (David Crook)

“The world is too much with us ; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers... “

These lines of an English poem, written some 200 years ago, might apply to China today. But what do they mean? “ We are too busy making money, morning, noon and night, buying and selling instead of learning and serving. “

The poem was written by William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Wordsworth in his youth was inspired by the French Revolution, of which he wrote:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven.

In other words, “ just to be alive in those hopeful times, was to be happy; and to be young was to be happiest of all. “

In old age, however, Wordsworth grew conservative. He accepted the post and the money that went with it, of England’s official poet or Poet Laureate.

Wordsworth’s change of heart and position was criticised by younger poets who had first admired him and learnt from him. Robert Browning wrote bitterly of his former teacher:

Just for a handful of silver he left us,

Just for a riband to stick in his coat...

meaning Wordsworth sold out or betrayed us, for money and medals. Yet despite the sharp criticism of the first lines of his poem, Browning went on, more in sorrow than in anger, to write of the greatness of Wordsworth”s earlier poetry and to hope that in the end he would repent and be forgiven.

From English Language Learning No. 7 /1993

38. Birthday Greetings to YINGYU XUEXI (David Crook)

Congratulations to *Yingyu Xuexi* on its 35th birthday. It was at the age of 35 that the Italian writer Dante (1265-1321) completed his great work *The Divine Comedy* - when he “had reached the mid-stream of his life. “ Expectation of life in China today is already over 70, having doubled under the People’s Republic, so we have good reason to believe that *Yingyu Xuexi* will go on from strength to strength.

During these last 35 years *Yingyu Xuexi* has seen and survived historic events, some good, some bad and some, like the curate”s egg, “good in parts. “ During its lifetime, short in terms of history but long for such a magazine, *Yingyu Xuexi* has helped bring the English language out of the classroom into daily life.

That is all the more important nowadays, for command of living English is becoming ever more necessary and useful for China’s international relations, fast-growing foreign trade and tourism. This makes reading *Yingyu Xuexi* a duty as well as a pleasure.

These days the number of English language magazines in China is growing. But variety is the spice of life and competition calls forth quality. So this magazine”s future is bright.

From English Language Learning No. 10 /1993

39. A Letter to America (David Crook)

(In response to a Letter from America by my old friend C. W.)

You touch on two topics: The Tonya Harding Affair and *Beijingers in New York.* Ladies first. So lets start with Tonya.

I was brought up in England on such sporting slogans as “He” (meaning god) “marks not what you won or lost - but how you played the game” (of life). And “Play up, play up and play the game” (meaning play fair and be brave). This was originally applied to waging imperialist war! When I came to China I learnt Zhou En-lai” s principle: “Friendship first, competition second. “ I once quoted that approvingly in a letter to the *China Daily* ; and was ridiculed in a reply claiming that I was out of touch with modern life. Still I insisted that there are some sides of modern life that it is good to be out of touch with.

Even then we had not reached the stage of sport being big business. Champions now gain millions of dollars with their gold medals. And along with the money comes the buying and selling of players transferring from one team to another, as if they were commodities. Now with the Tonya Harding affair comes the paid violence of the “ hit man “ (hit man in mafia slang meaning killer). It’s a mad world my masters, as the poet said. Yet not quite mad, for there are medals in the madness and medals mean money.

The Harding case occurred in Detroit, America’s motor metropolis, not in New York where, when I was young the streets were said to be paved with gold. Nowadays the gilt is wearing thin. But still I love New York. For as you wrote, there” s culture and courtesy there, as well as mugging and murder. So to *Beijingers in New York.*

I watched some episodes on TV and one of the characters I rather liked is disliked by many of the viewers here in Beijing - especially the men. I refer to the teen-aged daughter. Her father, the cellist-turned-businessman-boozer - an unlikely character, though well acted - neglects his daughter, failing to educate her in Chinese behaviour. So she becomes 110 % American, talks back to her father and addresses him by his given name. A few American children do that, but not many American girls marry their boyfriend’s father ! Yet who is to blame? The daughter, cut off from Chinese customs and uneducated in American morality? Or the father who shirks his paternal responsibility? To condemn the daughter not the dad is to blame the victim.

Well, as a British Beijinger who once lived in New York, that is all I have to say at the moment in response to your belated Spring Festival greetings - except to send you belated best wishes for a happy May Day.

David

From English Language Learning No. 7/ 1994

40. This England - A Sentimental Journey in Time and Space (David Crook)

I was born in London in 1910; now were in 1994. So my life has spanned the better part of a century, during which the old country and I have changed.

My Dad was born in London, too. He loved its old music halls and starting in 1914, when I was 4 years old, he began to teach me some of the songs. One of them went: “We don’t want to fight, but by jingo if we do, we’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, we’ve got the money, too “

England was a great power then, in rivalry with the rising power of Germany. And the madness and slaughter of World War I started soon. With it went jingoism - aggressive patriotism - and the German bakery down the road had its windows smashed and German sausage was re-named “breakfast sausage “. Nothing good was to be called German. Our neighbourhood school moved to Dorking in the country, to escape the air-raids. That was my first experience of England’s lovely countryside, with its flowering horse-chestnut, lilac and laburnum trees and its green fields sprinkled with white daisies and yellow buttercups. When the World War armistice was signed in November, 1918, I was 8. The whole school paraded in the centre of Dorking, waving little paper Union Jacks and singing “God Save the King”. We kids knew nothing of the millions slaughtered on both sides even though on weekends right at the beginning of the war our house in London was crowded with blue-uniformed wounded soldiers, some missing arms and legs. We served them a bang-up high tea after taking them for a drive in the then quiet country, unpolluted by heavy traffic.

To my childish mind the war “was a famous victory”.

I knew nothing of our soldiers mutinies, nor of the economic crisis of 1921 which made my father bankrupt. In 1926 the General Strike - nine days which shook Britain - broke out. I was thrilled by the sight of the college boys trying, with slight success, to run the underground railway. I wanted to join them, to be a strikebreaker but fortunately my mother wouldn’t let me. She unwittingly saved me from being an anti-working-class Juvenile delinquent. After the General Strike I worked as an office boy in the City. I was fascinated by old London, bought a guidebook and during lunch hour roamed the ancient streets named after the products sold there in the middle ages: Milk Street, Wood Street, Bread Street, where Milton was born ; and the Mansion House, seat of the Lord Mayor of London, since discovered to have been the site of a Roman temple 2,000 years ago. Or I would eat my sandwich lunch in a leafy churchyard, away from the hustle and bustle of the noisy traffic, with its red double-decker buses.

A few years later I emigrated to New York, where the streets were said to be paved with gold, to make my fortune. I found not gold but economic depression, unemployment, beggars and flop-houses. I worked my way through college, read Marx and Lenin and joined the Young Communist League, and came to regard my would-be scabbing in the General Strike as a crime. In cosmopolitan New York I became an internationalist. Yet, in the words of Gilbert and Sullivan"s song, I " remained an Englishman ". And studying Shakespeare, too, I was inspired by John of Gaunt"s dying speech in Shakespeare's play *Richard II*: "... this little world / This precious stone set in the silver sea... This blessed plot, this earth, this realm / This England... " / not understanding that the old duke was bewailing the withering away of feudal England and the advance of capitalism.

Under Marxist influence I began to feel that the workers have no land of their own, and the jingoism of which my father sang when I was a child, was wrong. But it was not until I reached New China that I solved these contradictions and learnt that patriotism and internationalism are not mutually exclusive, that one does not rule out the other. In China I learnt to love England better and the truth of Kipling"s line: "what know they of England, who only England know?"

After emigrating to USA and later to China I spent little of my life in England. But during World War II I was in the Royal Air Force, in which I spent three years overseas, in India, Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), Burma (Myanmar), Singapore and Hong Kong. As a member of the British forces in those then British colonies I was, though not in England, in a British community. But I did not go along with the common colonialist attitude of looking down on non-white colonials, which in RAF slang called the non-whites WOGS, (an insulting term derived from golliwog), This while Britain was fighting racist Hitlerism !

After demobilization I spent a year in England, which in the course of World War II had become somewhat more democratic. Then I came to New Democratic China. Here I learnt that true patriotism lies not simply in the love of the hills and valleys of one's country but in serving the people. And the people, of course are in every country. So patriotism and internationalism go together. Now and then I go back to England, the land of my birth, that "Green and pleasant land " as Blake described it and for all its faults I love it still. Just as I love China.

From English Language Learning No. 8 / 1994

41. At the Beijing Art Gallery -Thoughts on Robert Capa's Pictures of Spain (David Crook)

I never knew Robert Capa, though we were in Spain at the same time. But I've been asked, as a veteran of the International Brigade which fought for freedom against fascism in the 30s, to write about Capa's pictures of the Spanish Civil War. [1] I shall write mainly of the memories that the pictures evoke. That is all I can do, for I am no expert on photography. So I hope to be pardoned for being personal and for focusing largely on my own experiences. Capa's work, his life and outlook on life - he was a war photographer against war - have been written of by those who knew him and are portrayed in his pictures.

All Capa's war pictures are of people, especially of people in action. For Capa was a humanist, concerned with the dignity, the courage, the heroism, the suffering of men and women, their kindness and cruelty to each other. There are no pictures of things or scenery, except as background, no posed portraits or carefully composed groups with the most important people in the centre of the front row. Just pictures of life and death by an anti-war photographer.

There is a picture of an American medic dressing the wound of an enemy prisoner in World War II. In my mind's eye I could see a hospital ward in Madrid in March, 1937. Norman Bethune was giving a blood

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[1] The International Brigade was formed of volunteers from over 50 countries. Their total number is estimated to have been between 40,000 and 45,000, about the sixth of them, like Robert Capa, being Jews, who had compelling reasons for being in the forefront of the fight against fascism. How many volunteers died in Spain is hard to estimate, but only 10,000 took part in the official withdrawal from Spain in November 1938.

transfusion - a direct transfusion. The blood donor and the recipient of

her blood were lying in paralleled beds, needles, in their arteries connected by a rubber tube. In the narrow space between the beds stood the white-clad Bethune, delicately drawing the blood out of one arm and pumping it into the other. The donor was a young Spanish workwoman, the recipient an Italian fascist prisoner. The prisoner policy of the Spanish People's Republic was the same as that of the Chinese 8th Route Army. When Bethune soon afterwards, came to China's Liberated Areas he

saw Chairman Mao in Yanan and told him that most of the wounded died while being carried from the front line to the base hospital. The way to save them was to give transfusions and other medical aid at the front close to the firing line. Chairman Mao did not make a fuss about issuing travel permits to dangerous places to a foreign friend. He just said, “Go ahead. Go to the front. “ And uncounted lives were saved. What has all this to do with Capa? His philosophy was like Bethune”s. He said: “If your picture’s not good enough, it’s because you’re not close enough. “ Capa was always close - often at the risk of his life.

Robert Capa covered the Spanish Civil War with his camera. Ernest Hemingway covered it with his pen. The two were great friends, drawn together by a common love of the people and hatred of fascism (Capa, incidentally, was a Jew, born in Hungary). And they both gambled - with their lives. There are pictures of them both in a hotel room in Madrid, laughing, gambling, drinking with friends as the bombs burst nearby. It was, of course, the top floor of the hotel, the most dangerous place to be. I was in that room one night with Hemingway and his pals (I don’t know whether Capa was among them on that occasion). All this may sound like name-dropping: Bethune, Hemingway, Capa. No. It’s no achievement to have met or known great people, just by chance. What is an achievement is to be like them. I make no such claim. I mention this because that picture of the room on the top floor of the hotel in Madrid took me back nearly 50 years in a split second.

There is a picture of the street that hotel was on, the Gran Via. Half a dozen people are shown looking up at the sky, four middle-aged women, two men- one a wounded soldier - and a little girl. The expression on their faces is one of calm curiosity. “Where will that bomb fall?” The stereotype of the Spaniard is one of perpetual excitability, just as that of the Chinese is of impassivity-both equally false. Madrid was in a state of siege, four columns advancing on it from north, east and west, and a fifth column inside the city. Bombardments were a daily affair; but on the Gran Via the people had worked out that because of the angle from which the fascist shells came, one side of the street was safe, the other dangerous. I walked up the safe side many a time, but perhaps not so calmly as these “excitable Spaniards”. One side of Gran Via may have been safe, but Republican Spain was not safe. “*Dead Child in Rubble Barcelona*” is the title of one picture. Rubble in Barcelona- the words brought back an image of a mass of rubble after the bombing of Barcelona around May, 1937. The fascist raids concentrated on the workers” quarters and the docks. I often watched them from a middle class area up on the hill. but one night I was caught in the centre of the city during a raid. After it was over (air raids did great damage in little time) I started for home and passed a gigantic

mass of rubble, where an hour before an apartment house had stood. A human chain stretched from the rubble, people frantically throwing bricks and debris from the bomb crater to roadside, in the hope of unearthing bodies, living or dead. I joined the chain.

Perhaps Capa's most famous picture is that of a Republican soldier at the moment of death, struck by an enemy bullet, falling while charging the enemy, his outstretched arm still touching his rifle but loosening his grip on his gun and his life. It reminded me of the first time I saw one of our men of the British Battalion of the International Brigade killed, the first time in my 26 years that I had seen death. Ray was a big, genial fellow who had given up driving his London bus to come and fight fascism in Spain.

There is a picture of two members of the International Brigade, one, wounded, being helped along through a grove of trees by his mate. It took me back to the Battle of Jarama (so often sung about in China). February 12, 1937, Sam Wild and I were part of a platoon of British Volunteers stationed on the crest of a hill, having been told: "Don't leave that bloody hill till you're told to. " Bloody it was and we obeyed orders until none of our mates were left alive. Then we retreated down the slope into a grove of olive trees. There we took cover behind the mounds of earth banking up the trees. First Sam was hit, then I. His wound was more serious than mine and with the optimism of 26 I said: "Don" t worry, Sam. I"ll give you a hand to get back to our lines when it's dark. " We waited among the olive trees till a wisp of a sickle moon rose. (Every time, now, nearly 50 years later, when I see such a moon I'm back at Jarama.) Now was the time to get back to our lines - and it was the more badly wounded Sam, tough as nails, who got back first to fetch help. At midnight the lightly wounded, like myself, were transported to Madrid and I lost track of Sam.

I was hospitalised in Madrid for 6 weeks and while convalescing (It was then that I visited Hemingway in his hotel room) I helped out with English language broadcasting. I heard that Sam"s wound had turned gangrenous and he'd died. I wrote and broadcast an obituary of this Lancashire lad, who had been brought up in an orphanage and then joined the merchant navy. Months later I ran into him, large as life, in Barcelona. "It takes more than lead to kill a man" (as the old song goes) and Sam lived to be wounded again and again and to become commander of the British Battalion of the I. B. But "death comes to all men alike", and last month I heard that Sam had died.

Two more pictures of Spain. One of part of a ramshackle old train, such as the one our batch of volunteers rode on from the border of France and Spain to Barcelona at the beginning of January, 1937. Uniformed young soldiers of the Republican Army lean out of the windows, their faces smiling, their right arms raised in the clenched fist

popular front salute, above the vow, whitewashed on the wooden sides of the train: “Rather die than submit to tyranny. “ That was the spirit of Republican Spain. The anarchists, who had a great following among the industrial workers of Catalonia, sang in their beautiful song, “Sons of the People”: *“Antes que esclavos, prefiere morir”* - “better to die than be slaves. “ The other picture shows part of the defeated Spanish Republican Army, in 1939, retreating into France - defeated not by Franco and his Spanish fascists, but by massive intervention by Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. This intervention in a rebellion against the legally-elected Republican Government of Spain was connived at by the British and French governments of the time, even though they had diplomatic relations with the Spanish Republic. These governments permitted intervention in the name of “non-intervention”, turning a blind eye to the breach of their policy by the German Nazis and Italian fascists, who poured in hundreds of thousands of soldiers and tried out (in preparation for World War II) their most modern aircraft, tanks and artillery which overwhelmed the poorly armed and underfed forces of the blockaded Spanish Republic. The same material and tactics soon were used against the British and French and other countries.

These are some of my thoughts on seeing some of Capa’s pictures of Spain. But this anti-war war photographer covered other wars, which I shall not try to deal with: the Japanese invasion of China, World War II, the Indo-Chinese War of national liberation in which Capa was killed by a landmine in 1954.

Capa used his camera as a weapon for the people. Sometimes it is said of pictures that paintings grasp the essence, the soul of the subject, that photos are -just photos, soulless products of mere technique, inferior to painting as naturalism is to realism. This is not true of Robert Capa’s photos. Perhaps it is precisely because of occasional situation shortcomings - some of his pictures have been criticised as slightly out of focus, but actually Capa bridges the gap between naturalism and realism, between photography and painting.

From David and Isabel Crook in China

42. Letter from David Crook (David Crook)

ELL Editor's Note: In 1936, when Spain was a republic, Francisco Franco, a fascist general, started a revolt against the democratic republican government. With Hitler"s and Mussolini's large-scale intervention and the so-called nonintervention on the part of France, Britain and the United States, the fascists occupied large areas of the country. Progressive people of many countries volunteered to fight fascism in Spain and the International Brigades were formed. They fought the fascists for about three years before the whole country fell under Franco's control. He ruled Spain as a murderous dictator for over 30 years until he died in 1975.

In December 1996, at the invitation of the present Spanish government, about 300 veterans of the International Brigades from 29 countries returned to Spain for over a week. Among them was David Crook, who has taught at Beijing Foreign Studies University for more than 40 years. He wrote the following letter to his friends, telling them about this memorable event.

The most memorable event of l996 for me was my visit to Spain where I spent eight exhausting but exhilarating days in November. The Spanish parliament had voted unanimously to offer honorary Spanish citizenship to all who had fought fascism in Spain in the International Brigades back in l936 to 38. And to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the IB, those of us still alive were invited to Spain. I think there were about 30 nationalities represented by three hundred or so octogenarians with their minders. Unfortunately there were no Chinese as it was impossible to trace any living Brigaders among the 100 or so who had served.

The British group did creditably thanks largely to good leadership and discipline. (You'd be surprised how 80-year-olds can get out of hand when they are inspired as these were.) Bill Alexander who led our contingent always especially emphasized two things: first, while acknowledging credit to the International Brigaders, he stressed the major importance of the Spanish people and Republican Army; and second, he did not dwell only on the past but urged the need to continue the struggle against racism and fascism today, anywhere and everywhere.

We visited the local assemblies in Madrid, Albacete and Barcelona and were entertained at two tremendous concerts - one in Madrid and one in Barcelona - both greeted with unrestrained applause. That in Madrid was relatively well-organized while the one in Barcelona (traditional home of Catalans and anarchists), while moving, was not a model of orderliness. In Madrid we were surprisingly invited to the British

embassy, a remarkable U-turn from the pro-fascist non-intervention policy of 60 years before.

We also visited the Jarama battlefield where I received a life-saving wound nearly 60 years ago - for British casualties there were extremely high. A handful of us British veterans also paid a visit to Madrigaras the village where we did our training. There I had a heartwarming meeting with Antonia the young daughter in the village family that I came to know best. She says she was 14 when I met her and is now 74.

In a newspaper interview I was asked if I would like to meet the king. I said I thought he was a pretty good king as kings go, but my aim in coming to Spain was to see the people and the land, not royalty. I was not invited.

My “minders “ - first son Paul and then son Michael - were unsurpassed, looking after me - and others - in exemplar fashion. They were excited by the various functions. The many Spanish volunteers who looked after us, their aged guests, were tireless and touching. Whenever we thanked people for things they did for us they invariably replied that it was nothing to what we had done for them. The Spanish people like the Chinese people do not forget their friends and comrades - no matter how small their part in the common cause.

David Crook

From English Language Learning No. 3 / 1997

Appendix

(The material in connection with this book)

Letter from America Wu Qianzhi (David Crook)

January 16-31, 1994

Dear H. K.:

It's the time of the year when we should start saying Happy Chinese New Year to one another. Is everyone saying "Gong Xi Fa Cai! " instead these days?

Now, what did I want to talk to you about? Oh yes, of course - the hottest news about Portland, Oregon, as I'm writing. I'm sure until this latest story broke out, not many people in this country, let alone elsewhere, knew much about Portland or Oregon. Not many people knew, or know, for instance, that Portland has always been high on the list of the most livable cities in America. Not many people knew, or know, that Portland has been rated the most polite city in America by an expert on American etiquette. What did become known about this City of Roses nationally, or even internationally, in the early days of the new year, is, unfortunately something that is not complimentary to its beautiful image. This is what happened so far:

On January 6, Nancy Kerrigan, l988 Olympics Women's Figure Skating gold medalist and defending champion of U. S. Women" s Figure Skating, was practising for the national finals at a rink in Detroit when she was hit by a man just above her right knee with a metal baton. No bone was broken, but the injury was bad enough to keep Kerrigan out of the competition. Her chief rival, Portland's Tonya Harding (pronounced Tania here in Oregon, like the *ta* in Chinese for "he " or "she ") made a strong showing and won the championship, to the standing ovation of the spectators on site and the cheers of her fans back home. But no sooner did Harding return to a welcoming Portland than one of the wiriest sports scandals began to unfold from her hometown. To make a long story short, first Harding's bodyguard and then Harding's ex-husband were arrested for plotting the Kerrigan attack. Two other men were also arrested for actually carrying out the plot, one the hit man and the other the man who drove him to and from the site of crime. There is yet no evidence that Harding herself was involved. As a well-wisher for this young and brilliant athlete who rose from a blue-collar family, I not only hope that there will never be such evidence, but that she has really and honestly never been involved at all. This is how the story stands as of now. I'm sure a lot more will come to light by the time this reaches you and our readers.

So That's how the nation's media attention became riveted on the clean, beautiful, hospitable city of Portland, but alas, for the wrong reason. As a Portlander, I would still insist that whatever happened should in no way tarnish the upbeat image of the Rose City, but from a cynical point of view, one could argue that Portland is no cleaner than the sport, or rather art, of figure skating, which a Portland skating coach describes as "squeaky clean. " Indeed, with greed and violence on the rampage almost everywhere around the world, one cannot help asking, "Is there still a clean place on this earth?"

Well, we don't have to rush to a quick "yes" or "no. "

Rather I'd like to take you from the relatively clean city of Portland to the notoriously unclean city of New York on the other side of the country to see the other side of the picture. I haven't had a chance to see the TV serial *Beijingers in New York,* which I was told has made quite a hit in China. But I have read the novella on which the TV movie is based. As someone who has lived in New York for quite a number of years, I have to say that while there is a lot of truth in the story about the seamy side of New York life, especially about the hardships and risks many of the Chinese students there have had to go through, it is only part of the truth. Since this part of the truth is already quite well known to many people in China, let me tell you a couple of anecdotes that may indicate a different part of the truth.

I remember just a few days after I first arrived in New York from China in the summer of "88, my wife and I went to an open-air concert in Central Park. There were thousands of people there, young lovers, families with children, and elderly couples, all sitting on the lawn relaxed, peaceful, and happy, ready for the cool and music of the evening. Standing on the corners of the roads and footpaths in the park leading to the concert were volunteer workers handing out programs and giving people directions. They were all cheerful and friendly as well as helpful. I thought New York certainly was putting her best foot forward to welcome us newcomers. Incidentally volunteer work is a constant feature in American society. Whether it's church or community service, political campaigning or activism of all kinds, people just put in their own time and money for what they feel is a worthy cause. A few days ago the Portland media just showed a twelve-year-old boy collecting a van-load of donations from his schoolmates for the recent L. A. earthquake. So if I were allowed to editorialize for two seconds, I would say that even in this number one capitalist country not everything is done for money's sake.

I remember another musical event I attended in New York, this time indoors, at the world-famous Lincoln Center, next to the Metropolitan Opera House or the Met. It was

the 40th anniversary of the New York City Opera. To celebrate the occasion, the City Opera led by famous soprano Beverly Sills staged Rossini's *Barber of Seville.* All tickets were sold at $2. 99 (or was it $ 2. 49?) a piece. The normal rate at that time could easily be five times that amount and more. The box-office was not open until 11 a. m., but hundreds of people were already on the line before daybreak. Many went as early as the previous night. My friend Shaoliang went there at six in the morning and found himself at the end of a humorous human snake curling all the way around the square and dragging its tail down the whole block. I joined him at ten and we started inching forward as soon as the box-office opened. Honestly I was quite amazed that in this age of rock so many people were still interested in classical music. I was equally amazed that in spite of the huge crowd and the long wait, everybody was extremely patient and had a good sense of humor. No queue-jumping, no bickering, no complaints, nothing happened that would have spoiled a festive day. Finally well after 2 p. m., we got our tickets for the five of us, including my wife and Shaoliang's relatives. The line that came after us was about as long as that which had disappeared before us, but people were just as good-humored, just as patient. That evening we had a great time. Our seats were right at the center of the front row of the upper balcony. We enjoyed a bird's-eye view of the whole stage and the sonorous voice of Figaro with the added satisfaction that we had earned this bargain with a long day's labor. After the show we went across the street to have dinner at a restaurant, sitting out at one of those pavement tables watching the people passing by as we ate. (I was going to say " watching and being watched, " but of course no one would ever stop outside a restaurant to watch people eat.)

I must have told you how I have missed New York, in spite of all its uncleanliness and hazards. Now you can see why. I don't mean to say that people can ignore all the problems that plague that city and the world at large. we just can't afford to do so any longer if we want to maintain the basic decency of our lives. But it's always encouraging to know that there are still so many good honest people around who are willing to contribute to the basic quality of life and treat their fellow creatures with compassion. We also have reason to be grateful that most people can still live in relative peace in a metropolis ridden with crime. That's what I mean by the other side of the picture.

To come back to the question, "Is there still a clean place on this earth?" Perhaps, to borrow a Buddhist saying, the cleanest place is to be sought in one's own heart. But I'd better not elaborate on that lest I should be caught preachifying.

Now, as you can see from the dates at the top of the page, I've been hatching over this piece for two whole weeks. The main reason is because I've been waiting from day to day to hear the latest about the Portland skater Tonya Harding. Although no final word is yet to come, perhaps for quite a while, what I wrote about her at the beginning of the letter is already becoming out of date. Since I wrote those words about her, she has at least publicly admitted that she knew about the plot "afterwards" and "did not report it immediately " to the police. There are clear indications that there may be more to it than what she has admitted so far. I think we all have a lot of sad lessons to learn from this hard-to-swallow case.

Happy Chinese New Year !

Yours,

C. W.

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