SE Post 11/16/63

The Great Wall of China, for 22 centuries a barrier against the world, winds across a country sealed into itself.

AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT
FROM A VETERAN BRITISH DIPLOMAT.

BY SIR FITZROY HEW MACLEAN

INSIDE RED CHINA

What are the chances for a popular revolt against the Communist regime? Almost nil, says the author, who recently revisited the land where no American is allowed. He found conditions there harsh, but slowly improving.

There is a great deal to be said for approaching China by way of Siberia and Outer Mongolia. It gets clearly into your head the relative positions on the geographical and political map of two very important political entities—China and the Soviet Union. You are conscious of the 3,600 miles separating Moscow from Peking; of the vast empty expanse of Siberia with its barely tapped resources; of Mongolia, also largely empty, also with great untapped resources, forming a buffer between two giants (but a buffer which Mao Tse-tung has declared will someday become part of China).

The Peking Express, having left Moscow a week or so earlier, arrives at Ulan Bator railway station at six o'clock in the morning, shunts about for an hour or so, and then heads gently off on the last stage of its journey. First it chugs across Outer Mongolia; then, after a day spent crossing the dreary expanses of the Gobi Desert, over the Chinese frontier into Inner Mongolia and, on the evening of the second day, through a gap in the Great Wall of China and on to Peking.

The train was built and manned by Chinese. My sleeping compartment, elegantly upholstered in blue Chinese damask, was as comfortable as it could be, and an attentive conductor in a spotless white tunic brought me scented tea in fine blue-patterned porcelain mugs whenever I rang for it.

At the Chinese frontier post in the middle of the Gobi, civil but painstaking officials examined us and our luggage, leaving nothing to chance, and the train was held up for a couple of hours while I fought off an attempt to remove from me all the film I had shot in Mongolia.

The food in the dining car was cheap, varied and surprisingly good—in fact, by far the best I had on the whole trip. The service was provided by neat, friendly, patient girls who did not speak a word of any foreign language. Everything was scrupulously clean. Indeed, the whole train was scrubbed and dusted and washed down inside and out at every opportunity.

The dining-car menu included a wide choice of well-cooked Chinese and European dishes, including quite the best *Boeuf Stroganoff*, Chinese style, that I have ever eaten. Having bought at what seemed an appropriate price a bottle of mineral water, I was intrigued to find, on pouring out a glass, that it was straight white alcohol, almost tasteless but with a considerable kick to it. The wine list turned out to include Chinese gin and whiskey, to my mind better kept clear of, especially after the mineral water.

Apart from a couple of foreign diplomats on their way to Peking, the other passengers were nearly all Chinese officials or technicians with their wives and families, the young women well dressed and attractive, some in blouses and slacks, and some in quite pretty summer dresses, all laughing and joking among themselves, enjoying their food and drink and showing their children off to each other, like any bourgeois parents.

Meanwhile from the inevitable loudspeakers poured a steady flood of anti-Soviet and anti-Tito propaganda, only occasionally interrupted to give time for a short, sharp sideswipe at the Western imperialists, and fitfully interspersed with jolly jingling tunes. In the dining car I noticed with pleasure that a solid-looking pamphlet entitled *The Answer to Signor Togliatti* was offered for sale in Esperanto for light reading.

It has been said that the typical revolution is not so much won by the winners as lost by the losers. Certainly the impression I took away with me from Kuomintang China 17 years ago was one of confusion, corruption and impending

collapse. My mind at that time, after two years in wartime Yugoslavia, was still influenced by my time there and in particular by having seen Tito's Partisans march to power. The Chinese Communists looked ready to do the same. But China had something which Yugoslavia did not have: a population of 500 million, more than three times that of the Soviet Union—a quarter of all the people in the world. "I will lift my little finger," Stalin once said, "and there will be no more Tito." Even he cannot have believed that China, if things went wrong there, would be so easily disposed of.

In the late '30's I had spent a couple of years in Moscow, observing Stalin and Stalinism at the time of the great purges when hundreds of thousands of alleged deviationists were put to death. In those days, for Communists the world over, the Soviet Union was the Communist fatherland, the country where Communism had triumphed, the source of unquestioned authority. As I traveled among the Chinese in 1946, I wondered how things would look if China turned Communist. And if she did, what sort of Communism would China have?

I had to wait until this year to get my answer. In the years since 1946 I had watched the changes in Soviet Communism, and on recent visits to the Soviet Union I had found a degree of liberalization inconceivable in Stalin's day. There are no signs of such liberalism in present-day China. Her leaders have achieved a degree of authoritarian control that would have made Stalin envious, and that makes present-day Moscow seem like Monte Carlo.

China, to me, has a different feel from the other Communist countries I have been in. The Chinese have taken Communism to themselves and are making something very much their own out of it, something un-European, something particularly relevant to Asia. Chinese Communism does not seem to be an alien political system imposed from outside, but a system that the Chinese have evolved for themselves and are adapting, by a process of trial and error, to their own requirements and (and this is significant) to those of their Asiatic neighbors.

Nor can there by now be much doubt that, as far as the bulk of the population of China is concerned, Communism is meeting their main needs at least as well as, if not better than, anything that came before. It would be a mistake to believe that the present regime in China is particularly unpopular.

After what I had read about the new China, I had half expected to see the countryside dotted with spectacularly modern communes in the style of 1984: great agricultural factories and barracks with a new rural proletariat swarming in and out, men segregated from women. On my excursions into the countryside I saw enough to tell that such a concept bears little relation to reality. In fact, the face of rural China—of 99 percent of it at any rate—has changed very little.

Wherever you go, you see hardworking men, women and children in faded blue denim and straw coolie hats toiling away in the fields from dawn to dusk as they have always toiled. You see their modest houses singly or clustered together in a hamlet or village, and occasionally you see some public building: a factory, a canteen or an administration center.

Although outwardly little has changed, socially and economically there has been a complete revolution. The landlords, the rent collectors and the moneylenders have disappeared. The land, which after 1949 was originally distributed among the peasants, is now owned collectively or by the state, and produce is marketed either by the state or by the collective, the peasants drawing either a wage or a share of the profits.

It is true that they still have, by European standards, a miserably low standard of living. It is true that they work appallingly hard. It is true that they are regimented and made to toe the line. But they do not, as they used to, have the fear of actual starvation always hanging over their heads. Nor are they perpetually harassed by the rent collector and the moneylender or by the marauding warlords and bandits who caused such havoc in the '20's and '30's. Whatever else they have done—and they have often behaved with utter ruthlessness—the Communists have at least brought peace and law and order to the countryside and put an end to corruption. Moreover, the peasants' health is better looked after, and their children's education—including, needless to say, ideological education—provided for. Finally, under collectivization, agriculture is now on a more rational and less wasteful basis, with the result that food supplies are increasing. At the same time, food storage and distribution are now better organized, which means that in a bad year there is far less likelihood of famine.

In the first flush of enthusiasm for the communes, those responsible undoubtedly went too far too fast, and the whole project has since been considerably toned down. Conditions today vary from one commune to another, but for the most part they now amount to little more than groups of farms and villages under an overall central administration and sometimes including one or more minor industrial projects. Stories of the deliberate disruption of family life seem to have been exaggerated, though under Communism, in China as elsewhere, labor is certainly liable to greater direction than would be supportable in a democracy. As for the much-talked-of communal-eating arrangements, there does not seem to be anything particularly shocking about them. Where they exist, either in industry or agriculture, they correspond roughly to workers' canteens. Apart from furnishing welcome free meals, they represent a considerable convenience to everyone, especially the housewife.

There could thus be no greater mistake than to see China's 600 million peasants as seething with discontent and waiting for the first opportunity to overthrow a hated regime. On the contrary, having never known democracy and having always been principally concerned with keeping alive, they are reasonably well satisfied with their present lot, while some of the younger generation undoubtedly feel genuine enthusiasm for the new China that they believe they are building.

HAZEL, STARRING SHIRLEY BOOTH, MAY BE SEEN ON NBC-TV THURSDAY EVENINGS.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

In China's national economy, industry and agriculture are closely linked. For the further development of industry, more capital equipment is needed. Whether China can afford this equipment depends on the level of her agricultural production. When she had to buy grain from Canada and Australia in recent years, she had very little to spend on machine tools. On the other hand, until her industry can produce the agricultural machinery she needs, her agricultural production will not increase as fast as it should.

The question is sometimes asked: Can China go it alone? The answer is that China is to a very great extent already going it alone. In view of the embargo now imposed on them by both the United States and Soviet Russia, the Chinese have very little choice in the matter, and are now determined to show the world that they need no one to lean on.

There can be no doubt of the ability of the Chinese to develop industrially. It is simply a question of time. With 700 million skillful and industrious people, with immense untapped natural resources and with a government that is already showing itself capable of exploiting these assets to the full, China is bound in time to become a great industrial power. In a dozen years the Communists have taken over such industry as there was and, with Russian technical, material and financial help, have greatly extended its scope. Between 1950 and 1959 the Russians sent over 10,000 experts to China. By 1957 at least half her coal and steel production was coming from Russian-equipped mines and Russian-built mills. The sudden withdrawal of Russian help, coinciding as it did with a succession of bad harvests and with the failure of the Great Leap Forward, has forced the Chinese to learn the hard way. China's iron-and-steel industry is developing, and many new projects are being realized at the Anshan and Chungking steel complexes. In the first three months of 1963, tractor production increased by 50 percent. Finally, in 1962, Chinese refineries produced six million tons of oil products and, though still importing one third of the petroleum she needs from the Soviet bloc, China is no longer at its mercy.

While the face of rural China has largely remained unchanged, Peking is certainly a very different place from the ghost town I saw in 1946. It is again the capital of China and has a population of six million. Though it lacks the intimacy and bustle of our own Western cities, it is already well on the way to becoming a great modern metropolis.

When one looks out over the city from the top of Coal Hill, one realizes the changes there have been and the amount of new building that is going on. Most of the gray-tiled roofs of the old Chinese houses that once lined the alleyways have gone, and their place has been taken by great Soviet-style blocks of flats, vast new hotels, and by the enormous new stadiums which seem to be the mark of any totalitarian regime. All are built in the rather ponderous official Communist manner, though enlivened here and there by the addition of a fancy pagoda-style roof or some similar architectural flourish.

Chagan Avenue, the great new thoroughfare which runs right across Peking from East to West, petering out at either end into an ordinary country road, is 240 feet wide. An occasional shiny black official car hurtles by, usually Russian-made. There are a certain number of heavily loaded trucks and a few crowded buses. But for the most part, the traffic consists of pedestrians, pushcarts, pedicabs and bicycles.

The new building to end all new buildings is the Great Hall of the People—the equivalent, very roughly, of Parliament. It was built in 10 months, by 14,000 workmen, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the revolution. Its facade, fronted by 10 columns, is 1,100 feet long. The Great Hall accommodates an audience of 10,000. The banqueting hall seats 5,000. There is a score of vast drawing rooms, each rather agreeably decorated in the style of a different province. The

DESPITE EMBARGOES BY BOTH THE SOVIETS AND THE UNITED STATES, CHINA'S STRENGTH IS GROWING.

A Peking "school bus" driver halts his pedicab to collect three more passengers on their way to learn about China's destiny.

CHINA

Hall is lavishly supplied with such things as chandeliers, candelabras, overstuffed armchairs, deep-pile carpets, pictures of battles, framed reproductions of exquisitely calligraphic poems by Mao Tse-tung, grand pianos and potted palms. The square on which this remarkable building stands is 100 acres in extent, five times the size of St. Peter's in Rome. Size means a lot in present-day China.

Peking's great State Department Store has a surprising range and variety of Chinese-made consumer goods, though prices are high. In addition to everyday requisites, such as combs, pocketknives, pens, pencils, soap, toothpaste and so on, all of reasonable quality, there are such things as cameras, gramophones, tape recorders, bicycles, television sets and, for those with plenty of money, grand pianos—all made in China.

Cameras cost the equivalent of about $70 or $80, which comes to roughly three month's earnings for the average worker. A bicycle costs rather more than a camera, and a watch or radio rather less. The prices of furniture, kitchen equipment and crockery are much the same as in the United States or Great Britain, and the price of clothes about twice as much, cloth being rationed at the rate of six yards a year per person.

Nor have the Chinese ceased to produce *objets d'art*. In the Street of Beautiful Objects or in the Street of Silks, you may still buy carved jade and fine silks of modern or ancient manufacture. Though you will be buying from the state or from some cooperative or guild, the shopkeepers are in many cases the same as before the revolution and still offer their wares with the same knowing air.

In recent months the food position has become easier. In the cities the staple foods are still rationed, the rice ration, for example, varying according to a man's job. An office worker will get 30 pounds a month—an industrial worker 50. The meat ration is just over one pound a month. Fish, poultry, eggs and vegetables are now off the ration on the free market and are reasonably plentiful. In terms of average earnings, however, prices are high: 10 hours' work for a chicken, two for a pound of fish and two days' work for a pound of ordinary tea.

In China, as elsewhere, how you live and what you buy depends on how much money you have. As in the Soviet Union, money is found among the privileged classes: officials, high-ranking officers, scientists, technicians and skilled workers. But to these must be added a small and peculiarly Chinese category: the Communist capitalists. These, surprisingly enough, are the former owners of factories taken over by the state, who receive annually a percentage of the capital value of the enterprise. As they are also often employed as managers of the factory, some are extremely well-off and able to spend their money on such things as Peking duck, silk shirts, television sets and, in one case, a Bentley automobile.

The impact of China's progress on backward countries facing similar problems is bound to be considerable. China's leaders, needless to say, are conscious of this impact, just as they are conscious of their own growing military, economic and political strength, and are resolved to exploit both to the utmost. It is this that has led them to challenge Soviet leadership of the Communist movement and to make a determined bid for hegemony in Asia. This, and their certainty that doctrinally they are right and the Russians are wrong.

Short of war, it is hard to see what could bring the two former allies together again, though fresh attempts may be made to paper over the cracks. Khrushchev, it is true, has, after 15 years, come to terms with Tito—on Tito's terms. But that is quite a different thing from coming to terms with Mao on Mao's terms. For Mao is not only seeking to be independent of Russia and to evolve his own brand of Communism, but to dictate to Russia and to usurp her place as the Country of the Revolution—at any rate, where Asia and Africa are concerned.

What, under these conditions, should be the attitude of the Western powers toward China? One thing is abundantly clear: Communist China must be reckoned with. It is no good thinking it will just disappear. The Communist government of China is as firmly established as any in the world. The rulers of China are dedicated to world revolution, and are therefore hostile to the Western alliance and in particular to the United States, in their eyes the stronghold of capitalism and imperialism. Indeed, the alleged half-heartedness of Russian support for this cause is their chief bone of contention with the Soviet Union.

Should we end boycott?

In these circumstances is the U.S. policy of completely boycotting China—politically, economically and even journalistically—the right one? After Korea, such an attitude on the part of the United States Government is perfectly understandable. Nor can the devotion of the Chinese to the cause of world revolution, when carried to a pitch which shocks even the Russians, be expected to endear them to those against whom it is principally directed. But the question is: Does the present policy correspond to Western and to United States interests today? And I think the answer is: almost certainly not.

In the first place, however repugnant the Communist government of China may be to American opinion, it is unrealistic for the United States Government to maintain no relations and no contact with it. Recognition of a government does not, after all, imply approval of it. America has had relations with Soviet Russia for 30 years. At the present juncture in history, the absence of direct contact between two world powers is clearly fraught with danger.

Again, the recent intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict is a factor to be taken into account. A united Communist bloc including both Russia and China, and comprising more than a third of the world's population, was and is a most disagreeable prospect for the West. If China's breach with Russia causes her to seek economic or other contacts with the West, it would be an error to reject any moves in this direction and thus push her back into Russia's arms.

The example of Russia has shown that even the most austere Communist regime is apt in the long run to make certain limited contacts with the outside world. Nor can there be any doubt about the long-term mellowing effect of these contacts on the regime itself. Most people agree that, at the moment, humanity's best chance of survival lies in the gradual evolution of the Soviet regime into something a little less difficult to live with. If, as seems possible, Russia's place as chief menace to world peace is in due course to be taken by the Chinese, the sooner an equivalent mellowing process starts in China, the better for everybody.

The outlook is not, it must be admitted, very promising. But the fact remains that few revolutionary movements keep their impetus forever, and history has shown that human nature, given the chance, can make hay of the most formidable political and ideological systems—especially those, like Communism, which take least account of it. Meanwhile, one thing is certain. For the West to stand aloof, deliberately to leave the Chinese to stew in their own juice or do anything to make them more self-contained, more out of touch, and more inward-looking than they are already, would be, both tactically and strategically, a grave mistake.

(For another China report, see next page.)

By Stanley Karnow

THE GI WHO CHOSE COMMUNISM

Albert Belhomme, who defected in Korea, found the promised land was a prison.

Newly arrived in China in 1954, Belhomme (first row, extreme right) poses with other prisoners who had refused repatriation.

After almost 10 years in China, Belhomme enters free Hong Kong, accompanied by his Chinese wife and their three children.

On a scorching day last August a slight, wiry young man walked awkwardly across the border bridge from Communist China into the British colony of Hong Kong. With him came all he possessed—his Chinese wife and three small sons, two shoddy suitcases and the cheap clothes on his back. Deep within himself, Albert Constant Belhomme also bore the weight of disillusionment.

One of 21 U.S. Army turncoats who refused repatriation after the Korean war, Belhomme defected to Communism in hope of finding "peace and social justice." Instead, during nearly a decade in China, he found hunger, poverty and servitude. "All those years," he reflects, "I might just as well have been in prison. I made a terrible mistake and paid a tremendous price for it."

The chain of events that led Corporal Belhomme into China began at dusk of a frosty November day in 1950, on a bleak hill in central Korea.

"Suddenly all hell broke loose," recalls Belhomme. "Hordes of Chinese charged right up the hill, blazing away with everything they had. We knew we were surrounded. The lieutenant suggested surrender. Nobody objected. What else could we do?"

In the days that followed, the Chinese assembled about 1,000 captive GI's, and the march north began. Moving by night, in freezing cold, their ranks thinned as men died of wounds or hunger or sheer weariness. On Christmas Eve—six weeks after their capture—they paused for a month at a former mining area that the GI's called "death valley."

"We were packed into flimsy shacks and fed only a handful of corn a day," Belhomme recalls. "Everyone was covered with lice. We all had dysentery, and there was excrement everywhere. Sometimes thirty or forty men died in a day. Guys went out to sit in the afternoon sun, and when the sun went down they'd keep sitting there and die. The ground was too rocky or frozen to dig graves, so we laid the corpses in the deep snow."

When they finally reached a Yalu River backwater called Camp No. 3, Belhomme was subjected to a new kind of pressure. Discovering that he was born in Belgium, the Chinese exploited the fact. Sometimes they harassed him as a "reactionary"; sometimes they appointed him the leader in political discussions. Both tactics were designed to separate Belhomme from his fellow GI's.

Belhomme was an easy subject for their tactics, for he had been a misfit since childhood. His parents separated before he was three, and he was reared by his father. He was 12 years old when the

Holding his youngest son while his wife feeds the child, Belhomme hopes for a new life. "I made a terrible mistake and I paid a tremendous price."

Germans invaded Belgium. Soon afterward his father died. Learning that his mother was doing forced labor in Germany, Belhomme set out to find her. He crossed war-torn Europe alone, traced his mother to Berlin, and stayed with her until the war ended. Then they fled from the Russians back to Belgium in 1945.

A year later, Belhomme was uprooted again. His mother married an American GI, and they moved to Ashland, Pa. As much as he liked his new stepfather—a railroad worker named Theodore L. Siefert—young Belhomme was uncomfortable. He had been through only a few grades of grammar school, though he later scored 128 on an Army IQ test. His English was poor, but he felt too old to attend high school, and with no education he couldn't find work. "I wasn't a kid anymore, and I had to stop mooching off my stepfather," he says. "I figured the first thing to do was to become a citizen. The quickest way was to join the Army."

Leaving a girl friend behind—her name is still tattooed on his forearm—Belhomme enlisted and was sent to Germany. But he was given a loyalty test, and as Belhomme now tells it, he was judged suspect for entering Germany during the war. "They shipped me back to the States with my records stamped ZONE OF THE INTERIOR ONLY. Then they broke their own rule and sent me to Korea. I guess I was kind of bitter."

Belhomme's bitterness grew more abrasive during his 38 months as a POW. He was fed Communist literature that inflated such American problems as racial discrimination and portrayed Russia as a center of progress. "I also felt adventurous," he says. "Hell, I didn't know I was doing anything illegal."

Outfitted in bulky civilian clothes, Belhomme and 20 other American defectors entrained for China in February, 1954. They traveled out of Korea, through industrial Manchuria, until they reached the small, dusty town of Taiyuan.

After six months of indoctrination, some of the Americans were sent to school in Peking, a few to farms. Belhomme and five others were assigned to a paper mill in Tsinan, the capital of Shantung province. "Nobody consulted me beforehand," Belhomme says. "I had no idea what I'd do in a paper mill, and anyway, where the hell was Tsinan?"

Belhomme and his fellow turncoats arrived in Tsinan in August of 1954. They were guided directly to the Shantung Paper Mill, a compound of brick and wood buildings, some dating back 50 years. One, who had worked in a brewery back home, went to the laboratory; others took lathes. Belhomme chose to be an electrician and was made an apprentice in the repair shop. He was given a small room in a factory office building.

Belhomme slowly acquainted himself with Tsinan, a drab, sprawling city of 900,000, with only a few paved streets. He began to explore its back alleys, and later he wandered into the surrounding countryside. To the north lay the Yellow River, which sometimes flooded the area for miles around. The land was sandy and poor beyond the river, but to the east and west of Tsinan the soil was fertile and prosperous. "You take even a tiny part of China, and the differences within it are enormous," explains Belhomme. "In one place the people seem happy, and just a few miles away they're poor, and those in one place haven't the slightest notion of how the others live."

The few Chinese Belhomme met—mostly workers in his factory—were curious about life outside China, and their ignorance was abysmal. They wanted to know how Americans dressed, what they ate, how knives and forks were used. "Do American women beat their laundry at the river?" one of them asked. He couldn't believe it when Belhomme told him about washing machines.

For Belhomme and the other turncoats, life in Tsinan was lonely. As they walked the streets, inquisitive Chinese stopped to stare at them. Children often jeered them with cries of "big nose" or "American devil."

The Americans' isolation and discomfort in Tsinan were aggravated by a lack of girls. Belhomme solved his problem by marriage. Through a worker in the factory he was introduced to Hsiu Ying, the pretty 18-year-old daughter of a local coolie. In March, 1956, they went to the town registry office, signed some documents, and summarily became man and wife. "I was able to live within my little family now," Belhomme says.

Belhomme and his wife were given a factory-owned dwelling. It was a bare room with a brick floor. Water came from a public spigot 100 yards away, and the toilet was a hole in the ground shared by several families. A few years later Belhomme graduated to an apartment of two

Belhomme and a South Korean defector display comradeship in their prison camp.

At the height of the terror, Belhomme says, dozens committed suicide for fear of arrest.

tiny rooms, which could barely accommodate more than one bed. Belhomme's wife and children slept in the bed; he slept on boards laid across sawhorses.

Primitive as they were, conditions were improving in China back in 1955 and 1956, Belhomme recalls. People who had been eating rough grains like sorghum and millet began to use wheat flour for bread. Workers' salaries were raised, and there was money for luxuries like wristwatches and bicycles. A few women dared to wear colorful skirts instead of baggy slacks, and Belhomme remembers a factory hand who created a sensation by getting a permanent wave.

In those days the pace at the paper mill ran smoothly. Most of the factory's 1,200 workers reported at 6:45 A.M. They interrupted their jobs a couple of times to do calisthenics and have lunch. They finished by four P.M. After dinner there were often political sessions or technical classes. When he could avoid them, Belhomme went home and spent evenings reading Communist papers and Soviet novels, the only literature available.

Recalling those early years, Belhomme remembers mainly that he was bored. He asked to be sent to school, but his request was refused. He asked to be transferred, but the authorities claimed that they could not find a replacement for him.

Belhomme's acceptance of his fate resembled the passivity of the Chinese around him. "It's wrong to think that the Communists rule only by fear and terror," he explains. "They're far more clever. They deal with the Chinese people the way you feed a baby who won't eat a big bowl of cereal. You say, 'Just take one spoonful.' After that you give him another and another, and soon he's eaten it all. That's the way the Communists function—spoonful by spoonful."

For example, grain rationing was initiated in the mid-1950's in a seemingly reasonable, step-by-step manner. It was never called rationing but "planning." To dramatize waste, officials rummaged through workers' rooms and found crusts of stale bread. At factory meetings the old bread crusts were displayed on a table, and officials deplored squandering.

"A Party activist would stand up and declare that he required only a pound and a half of bread a day," Belhomme says. "Then everyone present would be asked to state his needs. There'd be some discussion, and finally an official would set a ration figure. You couldn't oppose it without losing face. Besides, there was always a comrade who could claim that he watched you in the canteen, and you ate too much anyway.

"So you went along with the ration. Then a few months later, at another meeting, the 'plan' would be reviewed. Officials would show some more crusts of bread and complain of waste, and you'd agree to reduce your ration. Everything in China is 'voluntary.'"

Early in 1958 the Chinese leaders began their "Great Leap Forward," a wild effort to transform China into a modern industrial state. Every day special meetings were held, and Communist officials exhorted workers to produce "more, faster, better and more economically."

A movement began to eliminate sparrows, mice, flies and other pests. Workers had to report every Sunday morning with matchboxes full of dead flies, which were solemnly counted. When they weren't swatting flies, people had to kill sparrows by keeping them flying until they dropped of exhaustion. Gongs and cymbals were beaten to frighten the birds, and some citizens were assigned to sit on rooftops to prevent the sparrows from perching. "We tied ropes to the tops of trees and shook the branches whenever the birds approached," recalls Belhomme. "In our factory compound alone, thousands of sparrows were killed. But the whole program backfired. With the sparrows gone, millions of strange little caterpillars appeared in the trees. Damn, they dropped into your hair and down your neck, and if you carried your soup from the kitchen to the canteen, you'd find a few caterpillars in the bowl."

Along with the campaign to wipe out pests was a movement "to weed out doubtful elements." The slightest suspicion was cause for arrest. In Belhomme's department, three men were taken away, accused of belonging to questionable organizations 10 years earlier.

The Communists went to elaborate lengths to organize trials in the factory auditorium. The defendant appeared with his elbows tied behind his back, and the only witnesses were those for the prosecution. They accused the defendant of "laziness" or "sabotaging production," and often spectators in the audience added nasty comments. "There was never any doubt about the outcome," says Belhomme, "because the paddy wagon was always waiting outside before the trial started."

Not even the Americans were immune to the drummed-up "wrath of the masses." Lowell Skinner, another former GI who returned to the U.S. last August, was accused of several "crimes." For instance, he was a proficient lathe operator who could break production records. But when the Chinese refused to reward him for extra output, Skinner slowed down. Communist officials called him a "capitalist-minded scoundrel." They also said he had associated with several "un-Chinese" Chinese, consorted with women and committed assorted other felonies.

About 100 workers assembled in the factory carpenters' shop, and they held an "accusation meeting." Skinner tried in vain to refute the charges. Without ever being convicted, he was hauled off to jail. Belhomme, who witnessed this kangaroo court, points out that Skinner made a serious mistake in trying to defend himself. "When the Communists accuse you, keep your mouth shut or plead guilty," he explains. "To them, denying the charges means you're not only guilty but you won't admit it, and that's even worse than the crime itself."

For political "criminals," conviction meant prison or labor camps, and in the early months of 1958 dozens of people in Tsinan committed suicide rather than face the Communist inquisition. At a railroad bridge that Belhomme crossed every morning on his way to work, "three people leaped in front of oncoming trains in one week alone."

As the hysteria of the Great Leap Forward gained momentum, the tempo of work was increased. For lack of wood pulp and old clothes, the machines were fed fiber roots, reeds and rice or wheat straw. Equipment that normally turned out 80 yards of paper per minute was speeded up to 150 yards per minute. "Then someone would suggest 200 or 220, and the machines would go faster," Belhomme recalls. "Soon the machines were vibrating so badly that even the factory buildings were shaking."

The waste was fantastic. Bearings burned out, and the expensive woolen belts that carried the paper got tangled and torn. An experienced technician who dared to complain was reduced to common labor. "The Communist Party hacks were in command," says Belhomme, "and they couldn't be contradicted."

The great steel craze

The production excitement was nothing compared to the steel-making campaign launched in September of 1958. "We were told that China could get rich quick if everyone concentrated on iron and steel," Belhomme says. "So we dropped everything else and built brick chimneys in the factory yard."

To provide raw materials for the amateur steel furnaces, radiators were ripped out of the factory buildings and melted down. Throughout Tsinan, Communist officials coerced citizens into contributing their pots and pans to the ovens.

To provide labor for the wild steel-making movement, peasants were promised high wages, and thousands of them abandoned their crops and poured in from the countryside. Women, Belhomme's wife among them, were put to work cracking chunks of ore and coal.

"The whole place was raving mad. Furnaces were burning everywhere, and at night the city glowed red. The streetlights had gone off to save electricity, and the bulbs in houses were a kind of dim yellow. People, machines, everything was being strained to the limit and cracking up. Workers who had to tend furnaces at night and go to the factory by day were having all sorts of accidents, smashing their hands or breaking their arms.

"But the drums and gongs went on beating, and at first people were really carried away. They felt proud that they could make iron. Besides, there were meals of dumplings and holiday dishes, and I guess the Chinese will do almost anything for good food. The trouble was, nothing human or mechanical could stand that terrible pace."

Ultimately the gigantic iron-and-steel campaign failed. Much of the metal produced was too hard and brittle to be turned into tools. The shock of the chaotic Great Leap was more than the primitive economy could stand. Factories had been disrupted, communications dislocated, crops neglected. On top of these man-made catastrophes came drought, floods and other natural calamities. A plague of shortages set in.

"When the production tempo slowed down," Belhomme says, "officials said we weren't working so hard and didn't need so much to eat. Food rations were cut. Soon all sorts of other things became scarce. Cloth, toothpaste, soap, pots and pans—nothing was available."

By early 1960, food rations were down to a subsistence level. An average worker received about a pound of rough millet, sorghum or sweet-potato flour a day, and little else. There was no meat, few vegetables, and just a bit of fish.

Inevitably a black market emerged. With produce stolen from their state-run "peoples' communes," peasants cautiously came into Tsinan at night to sell grain and vegetables. And as the food shortages grew more severe, profiteering middlemen took over, and prices soared. "I paid a whole day's wage to buy some apples for the kids," Belhomme recalls.

The "spontaneous tendency toward capitalism," as the Communists call it, hit Tsinan in a wave of utter economic confusion. Streets were crowded with enterprising middlemen or peasants peddling their products at outrageous prices. It was all illegal, but the police were helpless. The profiteers accumulated secondhand bicycles, clothes and wristwatches, and sold them to peasants who had reaped huge profits by selling food. Farmers splurged on lighter flints though they had no lighters and bought radios though their native villages lacked electricity. "I once glanced into a restaurant," Belhomme recalls, "and saw a peasant in old, patched clothes reach into his pocket and pull out a wad of dough that would've choked a horse."

The average citizens of Tsinan, however, were desperately hungry by the winter of 1960–61. They flocked to the countryside in search of wild edible greens, shrubs and reeds, and militia were posted in many areas to shoot at mobs raiding vegetable fields. Famine diseases like edema were widespread, Belhomme recalls, and at least half the workers in his factory were suffering from swollen wrists and ankles.

The crime rate increased radically. Tsinan abounded with thieves. In some rural areas, hungry peasants turned to banditry, robbing travelers and ambushing trucks. Hunger even led to cannibalism. "It was never mentioned in the newspapers," Belhomme relates, "but one morning in 1960, when things were really bad, posters were pasted up around town describing how a man had killed six children and ate or sold their flesh. Later that day we saw the man. With his hands tied behind him, he was driven through the streets on a truck. A loudspeaker announced his crime. Crowds followed behind to a hillside outside Tsinan. They made the man kneel down and shot him in the back of the head."

Throughout this period, Belhomme and the other turncoats received extra rations and bonus salaries. But they were depressed and disgusted. On January 13, 1961, as he tells it, he announced to the Communist officials in his factory: "I want to go home. I'm sick and tired of China—I'm through."

With that, Belhomme walked out. At the beginning he sat idly at home, living on the subsidy he received from the Chinese Red Cross. But he grew bored. Having observed fishermen on the nearby river, he bought a net and imitated them. Soon he could handle the net so well that he caught 20 or 25 pounds of fish a day, selling them on the black market for more than he ever earned in the factory.

Belhomme stayed on strike for nine months. In September, 1961, he was taken to Peking to discuss his grievances with higher officials. He repeated that he wanted to leave China, but his request was still not granted.

By early 1962, conditions in Tsinan had clearly improved. Peasants had been given small private plots of land, and the supply of vegetables increased enough to drive prices down. At the same time, good grain harvests made more wheat available. There are still shortages of cloth, soap and other goods. "But the main thing these days," says Belhomme, "is that people aren't hungry."

Before the Chinese release an inmate from a concentration camp, they customarily give him a month of relaxation and good food to make him forget the rigors of incarceration. Last May, when they agreed to permit Belhomme and two other American turncoats to leave China, the Communists organized an extravagant two-month tour of the country.

The trip was impressive. The group visited a dozen cities and saw sights ranging from steel mills and model farms to Taoist temples. They went back to Taiyuan, where they had first landed in China nine years before, and Belhomme does not conceal his amazement. "It had been a dirty little place with narrow streets," he says. "Now it's a new city—wide boulevards, big buildings and a perimeter of factories apparently working well. I can't deny the progress."

But the final flourish of forced friendship and goodwill did little to heal the scars on Belhomme's memory. And now that he's hoping to start a new life in Belgium, he questions whether progress is worth the price that the Chinese people have been made to pay.

"I think Marx was sincere," he says, "but Communism in practice is all wrong. The kind of dictatorship and bureaucracy I saw in China is oppressive. Anywhere else you can blow your stack and tell the boss what you think, and the worst he can do is fire you. In China when I squawked, they called me names."

Belhomme left the Chinese themselves with no doubts about his feelings. At a farewell banquet in his honor, he was asked by Communist officials to summarize his experience. "When I came here I was pink," Belhomme said. "In nine years, the only thing you've accomplished is to bleach me." THE END

Now unable to enter U.S., Belhomme plans to take his family to his native Belgium.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S SUMMING-UP

"On January 21, 1953, shortly after 7:30 A.M., I entered the Oval Room of the . . . White House, destined to be my office for the next eight years. . . . There had been dramatic events in my life before—but none surpassed, emotionally, crossing the threshold of an office of such awesome responsibility." Thus the 34th President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, assumed the burden of the world's greatest elective office.

In recent years many top officials of the Eisenhower Administration have published their memoirs. Vice President Richard Nixon; Adm. Lewis Strauss, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission; Sherman Adams, assistant to the President; Frederic Morrow, administrative officer for special projects; Robert Gray, secretary to the Cabinet; speech writer Emmet J. Hughes and even a housekeeper at the White House have committed their recollections of the Eisenhower years to print. With the publication of *The White House Years: Mandate for Change 1953-1956*, President Eisenhower himself has his say.

The publication of the memoirs of a former President is an important event. "No individual," General Eisenhower says, "can be completely, fully prepared for undertaking the responsibilities of the presidency; possibly no one can even be fully aware of their weight and difficulty, except one who has borne them."

The first volume of General Eisenhower's memoirs covers the first term, from the inauguration to the decision after the heart attack to run again. (The second volume will appear in the fall of 1964.) These were momentous years, packed with events of crucial importance at home and abroad: the mission to Korea and the end of that frustrating war; crises in Suez, Iran, Indochina; the Rosenberg affair; President Eisenhower's "atoms for peace" speech at the U.N.; the Army-McCarthy imbroglio; the Dixon-Yates controversy; the Communist shelling of Quemoy and Matsu; the Geneva summit conference and President Eisenhower's "open skies" proposal; the heart attack and the decision to run again. General Eisenhower treats these subjects thoughtfully and carefully, compiling a complete record by which his Administration may be judged.

The narrative contains many fascinating nuggets. Among them: The first time it was suggested to General Eisenhower that he should become the presidential candidate was in North Africa as far back as 1943. A war correspondent, Virgil Pinkley, made the suggestion. General Eisenhower's response: "Virgil, you've been standing out in the sun too long." . . . After he was nominated for the presidency in 1952, General Eisenhower was asked by Republican leaders for his preference for the vice-presidential nomination. In his wallet General Eisenhower carried a list of acceptable Republicans. The first man on the list, Sen. Richard Nixon of California, was accepted. Now, for the first time General Eisenhower reveals the other names: Congressman Charles Halleck of Indiana, Congressman Walter Judd of Minnesota, Gov. Dan Thornton of Colorado and Gov. Arthur Langlie of Washington. . . . After his nomination, General Eisenhower watched his Democratic opponent, Adlai Stevenson, make his acceptance speech on TV. George Allen, a longtime friend, listened with General Eisenhower and remarked when the speech was done, "He's too accomplished an orator; he will be easy to beat."

After watching Richard Nixon's celebrated Checkers performance on TV, General Eisenhower turned to Chairman Arthur Summerfield, whose Republican National Committee had paid for the telecast, and said, "Well, Arthur, you sure got your money's worth." . . . When Supreme Court Justice Fred Vinson died, President Eisenhower seriously considered appointing John Foster Dulles to take his place, but Mr. Dulles preferred the State Department, and Gov. Earl Warren was appointed. . . . The Kennedys are not the first to bring culture to the White House. Risë Stevens, Gregor Piatigorsky, Artur Rubinstein and Marian Anderson were among those who entertained there in President Eisenhower's time. . . . Ike has always regretted his inability to master a foreign language. "I am of the opinion that those people who cannot carry a tune or readily remember one have difficulty in languages; it is rare that I can distinguish or identify even the simplest words spoken in another language," he says. . . . General Eisenhower's first impression of Nikita Khrushchev from the Geneva summit conference: "Rotund and amiable, but with a will of iron only slightly concealed."

Some of these events, which seemed so crucial only a few years back, have now receded far into history. The effort to end the Korean War, the solution of the Trieste dispute, the Bricker amendment—so much has happened in recent years that it seems a lifetime since these were vital concerns. But many of the problems of President Eisenhower's time are still very much with us. His analysis of the disastrous French defeat in Indochina makes one wonder whether history has moved as much in that part of the world. "I am convinced," General Eisenhower says of the situation in 1954, "that the French could not win the war because the internal political situation in Vietnam, weak and confused, badly weakened their military position." It sounds all too much like 1963.

General Eisenhower's account of the disarmament discussions with the Russians at the Geneva summit conference has a broken-record quality. The Russians proposed the establishment of fixed inspection points at railway junctions, on main highways and airfields to prevent surprise attack.

"I wasted little time in tearing down this house of cards," General Eisenhower says. He reminded the Russians that the same scheme had been tried in Korea. "The United Nations inspection team in Korea, tied down to fixed locations, was freely bypassed by the Communist air and ground forces; the Communists thus were able to dispose their units with impunity and strengthen their forces as well," he says.

For anyone who is interested in the great events of his time, this is a valuable book. It should be a revelation to those who like to think that President Eisenhower spent most of his time playing golf at Burning Tree Club.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.