

Eight days not nearly enough to plumb minds of the Chinese

SHANGHAI, China — The last glimpse of China for all the American voyageurs was through weary eyes. They felt the excitement of Marco Polo, but they had only days where he had years. To be precise, they had eight days to fill a hunger of decades—one day for every 100 million Chinese, most of whom were babies when Americans last strolled these streets.

The streets leave a drab memory—clean drabness, to be sure, and blue drabness when the people are milling in the streets in their fluffy ultra marine suits, which is almost always. But how can you call anything drab that has so much life and so many lives and so many unknown ambitions and misfortunes and adventures and dreams?

The Census Bureau in Washington has now put the number of dreams in China at 850 million (give or take 50 million) and the life expectancy at 55 or 60 (give or take five years.)

CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG is defying all the figures, living now in his 79th year and insisting that the dream shall be only one: Self sufficiency or self respect or constant revolution and equality, a pure and innocent collective spirit triumphant over ego, individualism and all the recorded experience of societies—a dream called Mao.

The people leave a disturbing memory, of repeating the slogans of Mao and retreating behind the mask of political conformity. But the same mask makes them inordinately civil and hospitable and self assured. They seem to believe that everything except political power and individual liberty is indeed their business and they express themselves vigorously and cheerfully across the lines of class or rank whether the issue is how best to wrap up a package or how to carve a peacock from a radish at a banquet.

Kissinger insisted that the American delegation did not look upon the relationship here with a scoreboard mentality, registering points for or against one side or the other on various issues. But the articulate presidential aide, who has been the impresario for the entire exercise, was unusually tense in addressing the news conference.

In part this was probably due to the inhibitions imposed by the need to ad-

dress sensitive subjects on Chinese soil. But the nervousness appeared also to derive from a sense in the American delegation that some of its concessions might not be favorably received at home or in Allied capitals.

AS ONE DIPLOMATIC reporter observed, the negotiating side that feels it is coming out ahead does not usually disdain a look at the scoreboard.

Also appearing at the news conference was Marshall Green, the assistant secretary of state for East Asia, who will now fly to Tokyo, Taipei and other Allied capitals in Asia to report on the discussions here, and to seek to avoid resentments or charges of diplomatic betrayal.

Inevitably, the memory drifts in China to Moscow. Peking took the worst from the Soviet capital architecturally even more than politically. It has rebelled against Soviet revisionism, against the incentive system there, against consumerism and against individualism. But not against the overbearing stateism that makes the individual fearful of his neighbor and his government and makes him feel helpless against the sanctioned opinions of the majority.

THE RUSSIANS live a vastly more comfortable life and that concern for comfort is precisely one source of the resentment of them in China. Chinese travelers to Moscow a decade ago recall young Soviet men seeking illegal dollars in Moscow streets and Soviet children begging any kind of money out in the provinces.

But the coats and dresses in Shanghai are much more decisively those in Peking and the people in Peking are said to admire the coats and dresses in Shanghai. And the best Communist's idea of luxury is more color and more individuality in the dress of his daughter. Poverty does not easily admit to individuality and China is a very poor country. And a crowded country. Whether Maoism can survive a new generation that does not remember what came before is the leading question now. Whether it can survive abundance will be the question after that, if the idea is still around to be questioned.

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