

Rewi Alley answers Questions from Australian and New Zealand Students in 1967

Question and Answer Sessions, given by Rewi Alley and others, to a group of Australian and NZ students, February 1967 in Peking and Canton

Background:

This transcription is of recordings made on audio cassettes by Peter Lyness, a member of the group of students, on the occasion of a tour to China in 1967, organised by the Australian University Students Association who then invited participation from NZ. Peter Lyness, being a student at Otago University was a member of the NZ group According to **Peter Lyness**:



NZ Students: 'Cheers', aboard the ms Tjiwangi, Christmas Day, 1966

"From memory, there were 57 students in all, including 11 from NZ. We left by ship from Brisbane to Tokyo late December 1966, ship to Hong Kong, then by train to the Chinese border around 20 January 1967.

In China, travel was mostly by train from Canton [Guangzhou] via Nanking [Nanjing], Shanghai, Soochow [Suzhou], Hangchow [Hangzhou], to Peking [Beijing]. We returned by "non-stop" train, Peking to Canton, crossing the border about 18 February and, on the short trip by train from the Chinese border to Hong Kong Island, we were swamped by reporters (mainly American TV networks). There were very few if any short-term foreign visitors to China at the time.

The NZ students came from Otago (2), Canterbury Lincoln, Victoria (Wellington) and, maybe, Massey (Palmerston North). There was none from Auckland".

the drama was unfolding! Indeed, in view of the restrictions, both on foreigners entering into the PRC and locals contacting foreigners, which were *de rigueur*, it is amazing that this tour, which had been planned for some time, went ahead!

The group landed in China less than a year after the [Cultural Revolution](#) started (May 1966), when much of



A typical Cultural Revolution poster: "The People's Liberation Army of China is the Mighty School of Mao's Thoughts"

The group were able to witness the Cultural Revolution at first hand [though, fortunately, not experience the negative aspects,]. What is amazing is that they were able to hear the commentary and explanations of the situation in China from several friends of China: in addition to [Rewi Alley](#), the celebrated New Zealander, they talked with [Anna Louise Strong](#) and [Dr George Hatem](#), as well as interviewing their guides and even a Red Guard! Indeed, on one of the tapes (in the meeting with Dr Hatem) one can hear the chanting of Red Guards!

These sound records, in addition to giving an insight into the minds of three friends of China at the time of the Cultural Revolution, are indeed a unique 'window' into that stormy period in Chinese history.

Complete List of Recordings:

Please refer to the **Inventory - Peter Lyness CDs (tapes)**, for a complete list of the CDs and source tapes. This includes notes of the content of each tape and equivalent CDs.

Acknowledgement and advice:

The technicians of Alexander Turnbull Library are to be thanked for copying the data from the audio cassettes, several of which had jammed, thus rendering available the entire recordings much of which had been inaccessible to a normal cassette player.

They produced 2 versions of audio files, one not amplified and one with additional amplification. The CDs were produced from the latter.

Even though improvement has been **gained, it is recommended that the listener turn up the volume on their player**. Note that, at the start of CD 1 and of Extract 1 (see below), the volume level is a bit 'up and down'.



All the group of Australian and New Zealand students aboard the ms Tjiwangi, December 1966

Please note that the following transcript only covers the meeting with Rewi Alley in Beijing. That of the meetings with Anna Louise Strong, Dr George Hatem, the Group's guide and interpreter, as well as with a Red Guard, have yet to be completed.

A number of sound extracts are available (and are linked to by hyperlinks in the list below and in the transcript (see page 5, below)

Extracts of tapes of Rewi Alley speaking to the group of Australian and NZ students, Beijing, Feb 1967

Click on the title below to listen to the extract. Click on the Page No., to go to the appropriate transcript

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The parts of the transcripts covering these extracts are highlighted in
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Tsinghua University Red Guards reading the 'Little Red Book' [Quotations from Chairman Mao]



Revolutionary stage production in Suchow [Suzhou]



Red Guards making notes from 'Big Character Posters' [Dajebao]

Transcript of recording made at Beijing, February 1967:

Introduction by Kent Pearson - leader of the student group:

...?? talk is given by Rewi Alley to a group of 57 Australian and New Zealand students in Peking. Rewi Alley is a New Zealander, who has been in China for over 30 years. He is now in the middle of his seventies and doesn't do much active work though he does quite a lot of writing and some poetry. Lately he has been touring around the back-country provinces and the communes as he has always been intensely interested in the farming in China. He helped set up the co-operatives in the early years.



Rewi Alley with Premier Zhou Enlai at Workers' Stadium, Beijing (1970)

[Beginning of [Extract 1](#)] Rewi Alley:

You have landed in the middle of a revolution in China, rather a new thing for most people. Revolutions are.... the revolutionary way is a Chinese way. The history of China is really a history of revolutions. Change has always come in China through revolutions. The older ones always tried to dig in and always tried to find ways of exploiting the people and it has always been a revolution which has changed the face of things. A hundred years ago when Australia was being colonised, by the people who rebelled in England and Ireland, the Taiping rebels in China were overthrowing the dead hand of feudalism and storming up towards Peking. The Taiping rebellion failed. The Western powers helped the decadent Manchu court and the rebellion went on in various parts of the country until the Boxer Rebellion 60 years ago. The Boxer Rebellion 60 years ago - maybe 2 million Chinese people were killed in this part of China. But the rebellion prevented the partition of China which otherwise would have taken place. Then we came on until the - through various other revolutions - the feudalists, the royalists were overthrown, the empire was overthrown. Then there came the popular movement against Japan - the Japanese imperialism, which rocked the country like a storm in 1937. That's now just 30 years ago. When I came to China in 1927, the heads of young revolutionaries were in wooden boxes hanging from telephone phone poles in Shanghai. They were the people who were fighting against the warlords. Now in '37, the whole revolutionary process swept into action again and there was a popular front against Japanese imperialism. The people wouldn't take anything else. They must resist Japan and the government unwillingly, the Guomintang government unwillingly came into this thing. But the war was carried on practically all the way through by the people's forces under at that time the Eighth Route Army and the Fourth Army. The Guomintang didn't fight very much at all after the first few battles in 1937. The people's war was carried on also as part of the revolutionary process. And 21 Japanese divisions were isolated in North China. 21 Japanese divisions the Japanese were counting on for their southward drive down to Australia and New Zealand, were held in North China by these people who you see around us today. Then the process went on and after the resistance war came the war against the Guomintang and the American imperialism together, which was another people's movement which ended victoriously.

Then there came a whole row of peoples' movements - the movement for land reform against the landlords, the movement against waste and corruption, which cleaned out a great deal - popular movements. Then the movement against rightists, the movement against poor health, the movement against, er, the social education in the countryside, the movement for the Great Leap Forward, all these huge peoples' movements swung into action over this quarter of the world. Then, as time went on, we began to find that the ideas that had come from the Soviet Union - of course up to 1960, the Soviet Union had sent experts and machinery and other things into China.... They had also sent their

administrative system..., their administrative system had come in here, their intelligence? system [coughing], their education system had come in here. Then, it became apparent that, as soon as the Soviet experts were withdrawn, that we had to, we had to er, make machines ourselves. We had to do the experts' work ourselves. Then, the Chinese found that they could do this a great deal better than the Soviet experts. The results were better and the machines they made themselves were better. A great many of the Soviet machines that came in late but still came in, were not used because the Chinese had already made new ones for themselves and they were much better. You can go in the ? Laolan? tractor factory you can see one there which does eight processes – the Soviets didn't send the machine for two years. It does eight processes where the Soviet one does two. The Soviet one is standing in the corner – a huge great heavy thing and the small Chinese one is doing the job very, very well, very efficiently in an automatic way. Well that sort of thing was duplicated all over China. So then, consequently, people began to feel that all this very much advertised these Western ideas that the Soviet Union brought in - Are they as good as the things that we can evolve ourselves?

Then the questioning began to turn on the education system, a very important thing: Is the education system producing the kind of people we want? Is it in line with the kind of thing that China needs all over the country – China is a huge area, enormous. Most of the country is still undeveloped and enormous problems have to be faced. Is this the kind of thing that we need? The er, social half-work, half-studies school was proposed and tried. But the old educationalists fought it tooth and nail. They didn't want it. They went to no end of trouble to say that it wouldn't work: 'You can't do things this way'. The progressives in the.. er, in the inside ..the structure tried to [pause] bring in the country people, the young people, workers' children, artists... people who showed outstanding ability in the arts and crafts, in mathematics and all the rest of it in the country schools, bring them into the cities, put them into the Universities. But the city universities would find all kinds of ways to turf them out. And they, they wanted to keep education in the hands of the sons of upper cadres, in the hands of sons of, er, professors, in the hands of the old intelligentsia. They didn't like the half-work half-study system. They hated it.

[End of Extract 1]

[Beginning of Extract 2]

Then, er, they came to a whole series of other things, which showed that old revolutionaries, who had done wonderful work in their time, who had done.. who had stood out and who helped to give us the revolution that has meant so much to 700 million people, that these had, as they had grown older, had become more conservative, a natural thing, and they looked, each man, at a certain responsibility assigned to him, had become a little king in that, inside that area, whether it was an administrative area or whether it was an organisation or not, and he began to leave the masses and rely on the people who he could nominate to positions around him and who would take his direction. And he didn't, he didn't rely on the people. He got further and further away from the people. And this became a fairly regular thing. And it, of course, leads one way. It leads towards the kind of thing that happened in the Soviet Union where the sons of old cadres, the grandsons of old cadres, er became privileged and where they, er, demanded that they should rule because of the red blood of the revolutionary flows in the veins of the father, it flows in the veins of the son and we are the people who should rule. You have really got a new class, a new kind of class

Now, Chairman Mao, who had been in the revolution since the beginning and he could see this, withdrew from the government, from governmental affairs for some two years. And he could see this thing going on. To him it became more and more evident that he would have to turn again and rely on the masses and a new revolution would have to be made to bring the people of China together and this is the thing that you have walked into now in Peking. On the opposite side of the road from the front of this building which is the Peking Party headquarters – it was a very quiet building and still eight months ago had beautiful lawns in front and sometimes you would see a few big cars going in with curtained windows. And er, but in the last eight months it has become a mass centre for people from all over the municipality of 5 million people of... [break in recording]... and. er, now crowded. It looks

very, er it looks very untidy with all kinds of, er, wall posters everywhere, and people are coming in and making their complaints now, and setting up new organisations and the whole city has been taken over by the people themselves. So, the old administration has to either decide to come in with the people or to oppose the people. And that is the choice in front of them today. Now, I don't want you to think that, er, China because of this – if you listen to the radios as I did this morning, and I hope that some of you did too, you will think that China is in terrific chaos. But this is not the case, China is becoming stronger. This movement will lead China, will leave China incredibly stronger than she was before. And if the Americans who are escalating in Vietnam, [*coughing*] run along with their escalation until they hit China, they are going to find a very tough proposition to deal with. China is not in chaos. She is in revolution, but not chaos.

Now, perhaps, I think I have rambled on far enough and I think it would be better if people asked me what they would like. I don't really know much about it all. I have only lived in China since '27 [*audience amused*] and, er, being a rather stupid New Zealand bush fireman, I don't really know much about the thing. But what I do know, I will try to tell you. It is important. [*applause*]

[End of Extract 2]

[Beginning of [Extract 3](#)]

Questioner [probably Kent Pearson, leader of the student group]:

Mr Alley, I believe you are a personal acquaintance of Mao Zedong. But, I wonder if you can tell us a little bit about this man: how you find him, your interpretation about him, can you let us know a bit about Mao Zedong's character?

Rewi Alley:

I have met the Chairman at various times during the revolution, but I do know this, that he is a country boy from a small village of Shaoshan. He knows what it is, what cold is, what heat is, he has planted out the rice. He has felt the heat of the sun on his back. He has felt the coldness of the spring water on his legs as he stood in the paddy field planting out rice. He knows those things. He knows the peasant in a way that very few people have ever known the peasant in China. He has been through-. He has been through the life of the peasant. He has grown up with the peasants and he knows what it is to produce the wealth that the country lives on. He is very widely-read person, extremely widely read. And er, he used all his time as librarian in Peking reading everything conceivable. He is a man of, er, he is a revolution, he has been a revolutionary all the way along and he won't, he won't give up his revolutionary ideas and he doesn't become ossified as so many older people do. They want to become, they want to have a quiet time and sit down and enjoy it. He is still a revolutionary. And, er, I met him first in 1939 in Yan'an, and several times since. He is a man with very, very clear insight. He knows where he wants to go and where China should be and he assesses very carefully the whole world situation.

[End of Extract 3]

Question:

Er, Mr Alley. Did you have any inkling six months ago, that in fact a great egalitarian cultural.. um, I am asking, Mr Alley... Six months ago was there any indication or did he have any indication that a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution would unfold in China and that the Cultural Revolution would strike to such depths in Chinese society?

I personally did not have, I didn't realise, how deep this thing would go. It started over a year ago at the beginning of summer with the uncovering of a very unpleasant group inside the Peking municipality who were obviously trying to get hold of culture, get hold of the universities and make a base from universities for their own group, a group which was very definitely against the interests of the people. And this group was uncovered. and it went on from there. I don't think anybody much, except Chairman Mao and one or two around him, realised quite the depth of the thing, because everything looked so wonderful from outside. Peking was a orderly beautifully-kept city. The country's economy was booming. Everything was going ahead very well. And very few people realised the need for this in quite the same way as it turned out to be.

But when you set popular forces in motion like this, nobody can really know what the end of it was going to be - except in an objective way, that the people would be stronger. And it works through.

[Beginning of [Extract 4](#)]

Question:

Some of us are a little concerned about the question of the spontaneity of the Cultural Revolution. It seems to me, for example, that two of the most important factors precipitating the cultural revolution were the sixteen points and the review of the Red Guard by Mao Zedong [cough] last year, and it seems that the main goal since those two events, the cultural revolution has really got moving in a much stronger way than it was before...

Rewi Alley:

Each step, I would say, going back to May and June of last year and then the uncovering of the group inside the Peking cultural committee which had control of the education system and the cultural development of Peking and the uncovering of [unclear] the entire group and then that began to swing in all the time. I think each successive wave from that time onwards was a bigger wave than before. Er, the Red Guard thing came out following this Peking University grouping or exposure and these people who had been personally black marked or... You see, the old system, this old administrative system was taken over from the Russians. It's the kind of thing that allows this little king to come up. It allows a man, and makes you party secretary of Peking University. You can black glide? anybody you like. You can put it on his file. You can keep files. You can keep all, er, special agents to go around and inform on this one and that one. You can have a file on a boy and put on it just as counter-revolutionary [unclear] and that file will be held against him all through his life. And always this will come up in front of him. This was the thing that was taken over from the Russians. Now these boys, some of these boys, were exploited, these students, were the best people in the college, they were just rebelling, they weren't getting any outlets [unclear].

Chairman Mao and his works say, says, it's good to rebel. But Chairman Mao's works were originally kept away from people. They didn't print them. They didn't distribute them. People didn't know exactly what Chairman Mao did say, until the Little Red Book finally came out and became a mass thing all over China. They didn't know what he did say. But anyway, to rebel is good and these boys who stood out and were knocked about and were sometimes imprisoned had a pretty tough time. These were the people that formed the Red Guards. And it went on from there.

[End of [Extract 4](#)]

Question:

[Coughing...] that of course is how a revolution should be. But it seems to me that the sixteen points are a blueprint for the people: "This is what you have to do".

That came next. The sixteen points came after the first burst of the [unclear] violence(?). Then came the sixteen points.

[Beginning of [Extract 5](#)]

Question:

One of the messages of the Cultural Revolution is the criticism and denunciation. Could you explain exactly what the denunciation is and the system of self-criticism too, please?

Rewi Alley:

A denunciation...

Kent Pearson explains the question:

[unclear] the process of denunciation and self-criticism – [unclear] can you explain the process?

Rewi Alley:

Well, that's a process, which, er, in all the movements that have been happening in China, all the way through, there has been this system that people..., you say all the things that you feel about a cadre. He is a man that the people haven't liked and he has a good deal of mass criticism. So, they all come here and then he sits there and everybody gets up and says what they think about him. Er, and they just go on saying it. Now, 50%, 60% may not be true. Then he has to answer. When his turn comes to answer, then he answers those things that he - that he thinks are true. If the other things that he thinks are untrue, he can say that it doesn't really bother him, he just he ignores them. He concerns himself with those things that he thinks are true. Er, then the meeting just goes on and everybody might get up and they say that such and such a man is 'this that and another' and he is proud and haughty and he was very bad to so-and-so a while ago and he did this bad thing and that bad thing. If he thinks it's not true he just leaves it. But, if he thinks it's true then he says yes, I have made a mistake. That was so. That's all.

[End of Extract 5]

[Long pause]

Question:

Mr Alley, there has been suggestions that [coughing] the Cultural Revolution has taken a rather irresponsible turn in so far as these young people are able to take, er, individuals from their homes and parade them through the streets with placards round their necks [coughing] and this sort of thing. Would you care to comment on this?

Rewi Alley:

I would say that the people who have been paraded through the streets are people er, people, who have after six or seven months of invest..., eight months of investigation, of criticism meetings, have been shown to have been following, definitely following, er, a road which is counter to the road that the people believe that they should be following: the revolutionary road. And these people are definitely shown up to be following that other road. Er... and every organization has done that. People haven't been taken from their homes like that. It has been a very much, er, very much a planned, a planned business. Er. I think the movement started last May and June, and the meetings have been going on ever since then. And these criticism meetings in the evenings outside work hours, and people.. and sometimes in work hours too, and people have been, er, criticized and, oh, criticized again and back again, and brought back again, when all these points have come up. Er. A man has been abroad and he has, er, done various things - and more evidence comes up. Is this so, or is it not so? And when in the end that they find that this man has been, er, following [cough] [unclear] really a revisionist road or a capitalist road, even, building himself up for a nice little kingdom, then he is held up to, in front of the masses and this sometimes has been paraded around and then probably been sent back to work sweeping the yards and so on for a while until new work is given him.

[Beginning of [Extract 6](#)]

Question:

Do you really believe that these, these public humiliation ceremonies that we have sort of seen of people with heads bowed and people putting their feet up on their heads... do you really think that it really helps the reformation of that particular person's mind? I would imagine that this would reinforce them against the system, if anything, rather than, you know, help them to achieve the new, new thought.

Rewi Alley:

Well, it's a, it's a, it's a method that they've..., it's a method that has been done in China [pause] for some time through the revolution in China. It's what's they have done ever since the beginning when they have found people who have been against the revolution like that. And, it was first done when they - in the old days, in the Red Army areas when these local loafers and so-forth who were such a terror to the people. But, after all, this is a Chinese way. Whether we would react in quite the same way, or not, is a question.

[End of Extract 6]

Question:

Do you think we would?

Rewi Alley:

I don't know. We haven't had such movements in other countries. People haven't been exposed – nobody has exposed Mr Menzies¹ or Mr Casey² or many of those other gentlemen in Australia [*laughter*] and I don't know how [*unclear due to coughing*].

[Beginning of [Extract 7](#)]

Question:

Mr Alley, can you say anything about the possible new education curriculum? Is there likely to be any changes in agriculture in China in particular communes like [*unclear - coughing*] large or small?

Rewi Alley:

I would say that the agricultural curriculum will be very much down to earth, er in future. The half-work half-study school in the commune is an immense success. I went to one little one outside Wuxi, a while ago, in South China. And, er, the buildings were very poor but they had some very good microscopes there. And these kids were learning seed selection and er, and er, all the diseases that affect the silk worms and mulberry trees and all the rest of it and their crops. And they really knew those things, very, very well and they were learning all those things that have to do with their future life as farmers on that farm. And I think that is the important thing. Over a [*unclear - coughing*] to one which [*coughing*] on one particular commune where 8 million walnut trees planted, and they were living off the selling of walnut oil to Burma and so on. And, er, the culture of the walnut... Another one is the culture of the China pine – *Sarso??*, down in South China. I have seen a school studying a particular pine. And I think those are all important things - overall very important aspects of the new education system. People are studying the things that they need to know for their life in the future. And half-work half-study is giving them the chance to develop themselves in a creative way so that they can meet the demands of the new society. Er. The new curriculums, of course, have still got to be worked out because the cultural movement is not yet ended and the new education system will also have to go through a period of trial and error. Er. I myself worked in a half-work half-study school for 10 years in Gansu [*Editor's note: Shandan Bailie School*]. And quite many problems which have to be met...

[End of Extract 7]

[Beginning of [Extract 8](#)]

Question:

Um, I have read very little of some of Chairman Mao's works and writings. And what I have read seems to indicate quite a broad sound philosophy. Do you think that this comes through sufficiently in The Little Red Book, which appears to be predominantly [*cough*] for the guidance? of the young people in the vanguard of the revolution?

Rewi Alley:

I think that the Little Red Book has done a very big job in this last eight months. Er. I have been through many parts of China in the back country, just recently. Last month I was in Hunan for six weeks, going through the back areas there. And everybody was studying the Little Red Book, amongst the Miao people, all the rest of it and was studying and they were doing enormous jobs there with

¹ Prime Minister of Australia April 1939 – August 1941 and 1949 – January 1966. He banned the Australian Communist Party in 1951

² Baron Richard Casey, Governor-General of Australia between 7 May 1965 and 30 April 1969

increased production tremendously as a result of this study with continuous application. And, er, a fascinating trip through all those mountains and amongst all those peoples, the Little Red Book was everywhere and everyone was studying it and wherever you go you will find the same thing. Now, the publication of the total editions of Mao's works is now going on with great velocity. It was very difficult to get them before they could be sold. They were very hard to get. But now they are being published, with 80 million copies in Shanghai, I think, they have set out to do. [*Unclear - coughing*]. There probably will be a good many hundred million [not clear - coughing] copies before very long and people will be able to go over the whole, the whole sequence to see the whole picture. After all it comes out to certain very simple things: serve the people - things are so simple that people wouldn't bother to put them down; it's better to give than to grab; it's better to be thrifty than to waste; waste is a bad thing; thrift is a good thing; and people should live simply and find fun in working together and the task is to, er, to be one with the revolutionary peoples of the world and the international? silo? [30:50]. These things are all very simple, if you say them quickly. But, they are very deep if you start to apply them. If we in our country started to apply the golden rule every day, I imagine that it would be extremely..., we would have a very different society. Er, er. It would be entirely different [*unclear*]...

[End of Extract 8]

Question:

Well, the thing that strikes me is that there is quite a number of quotations in the book which are, er, more specific than basic golden rules such as those. The reason for their being said isn't in the books and the appearance is that people are learning them by rote. And taking them as law, would that be the realising exactly why they have been said?

End of Standard Tape 1, Side 1

Beginning of Standard Tape, Side 2

[Beginning of [Extract 9](#)]

Rewi Alley:

Well, what I think in the first instance is you have to pick out the things that will give people guidance for the problems that they are being... that they have to meet. We do have American escalation right at the front door

We have 400 American bases in South Korea, 400 in Japan, er, a province of China [*Editor's note: Taiwan*] taken over by the Americans and being made into a base to attack China from. We still have huge American bases on Okinawa and, er, in the Philippines and down through the Pacific. We have China being ringed round in every possible way. We have this fantastic escalation in South Korea, in, in South Vietnam, and er, in South Vietnam, where the .., er, a million or so troops are trying to smash the life of a country, defoliating the trees, depopulating the villages, destroying the crops - and er.. all of this, all this in an attempt to do the thing that Dulles said that he was going to do by every means inside American power, they will bring down the government of China. That's what Dulles says and it has been reiterated again and again that American policy with regard to China is the same as it was then. So consequently, these quotations are detectable? These things are also in line that, er, people have to be prepared for American escalations and I think just the other day, [Felix Greene](#)³ was here, and I asked him what he felt about the international situation. He said "Well there are two or three things that stick out. One is that America is escalating all the time and can't stop. Another thing is that America is in a deep hole in Vietnam". It would be a great..., it would be stupid to give in just now"⁴. But these things, er.. are things that are going on and we have to face. We have to face the fact that all this ironmongery has been planted all round China. But the Seventh fleet is there with all the biggest aircraft carriers in the world. Australia and New Zealand troops are being sent up to help the

³ A British-American BBC journalist, who reported on China and North Vietnam in the 1960s.

⁴ *Editor*: It is not clear where the quote of Felix Greene ends.

Americans and these governments are giving up their own sovereignty to let.. give America bases in Australia and so forth and New Zealand has become powerless and all that sort of thing. Americans come and go at will, as they will, and this is being used against the cause of the world because of China and the people must know that. If the people don't know that, they must know that because it will be the people who have to meet this. People have to meet it. China has no troops anywhere in the world. America has two thirds of a vast army spread all over the world.

[End of Extract 9]

Question:

Mr Alley, er.. in ?? [unclear 2:50] and the rest of the countries of the world are finding it necessary to rely more on increased specialisation by individuals and the only way we find increased technology. Do you think in China it is necessarily taking the correct step in putting great faith on the unskilled masses of the country?

Rewi Alley:

I would say that China [coughing] how will China meet the American menace? She will meet it with people. Er, I think if anybody thinks that China is weaker now, as I have said some time ago, because of this Cultural Revolution, they are making a big mistake. Anybody who put a finger into China now would find a whole nest of hornets with the Red Army. And if you have seen the Chinese Army in action, as I have, that is coming right across the West of China like a bar? [unclear]. It is fantastic the strength of that army. The Americans felt it in Korea. They er,.. They ought to know. [coughing] That is a people's army. Specialisation? I think the Chinese keep up pretty well with specialisation. The synthesis of insulin is one of the.. is probably a much greater, er, much, much greater thing than the discovery of the atom bomb. That is one of the greatest scientific discoveries of our age. And...er, that is a fantastically important thing for the whole world. And I think that the Chinese scientists are second to none in the world and they are being, uh... They have many challenges in front of them. And [coughing] specialisations are going on all the time as well as this great mass strong move - this great mass movement.

Question:

Mr Alley, I thought before I came to China that the principal concern of the Chinese people and the government of China would be, er, the American presence and the possibility of [unclear] the real possibility of war. When I got to China and seen the principal concern or revolutionary concern was with domestic matters, with er..er., poisonous elements within the society. It seems in the last few days that this perhaps has got er.. gone a bit too far. The editorial a few days ago in the Red Flag.. sort of saying don't criticise indiscriminately and one, one sign of attempting to [coughing] shut down the Cultural Revolution seems to be the reasonable amount of schools [unclear, coughing] will go back on February 7th. Do you see any slowing down of the Cultural Revolution? You seem to have explained it in terms of steeling the Chinese people for a possible external attack. Could you explain these two elements of internal purge or internal expurgation, and, uh,, the balance with the external threat, and also this, this possible quietening down of the revolutionary fire?

Rewi Alley:

Yes. I don't think anybody, when you start a revolution like this, knows exactly the trends.. the twists and turns it is going to take. Nobody knows exactly.. all you'll do is that when the people's forces are put in motion, the rebels are allowed to rebel and are assisted to rebel and you [coughing] find out when all the mistakes are.... When it stops or when you, when you call this particular side walk [coughing] or you go up that particular side-walk, depends on the progress that has been made. And I think that any old revolutionary.. I am sure Chairman Mao himself, would say that the internal struggle is the always the tough thing. The outside enemies can be easily dealt with, if you have internal, er, internal solidarity. If your people just crumble up and, er, when an attack comes, don't stand, don't themselves stand up and fight against it, then you are really in a fix, then you are really in a fix. But if your whole people stands-up, and, er, without any directives from anywhere, you are all cut-off. Suppose, suppose you have an enemy which destroys your cities and you are thrown out into resistance. Suppose, then in that case, this movement is

very, very important. If the people are solidarity [*coughing*] in front of everybody [*coughing*] the whole strength can be used. I think that's an important point. I think that is the genius of, er, Chairman Mao. In that, he can see that very plainly. To strengthen a country doesn't necessarily lie in its, er, in its administrative apparatus. France in the last World War just crumbled to pieces when the Germans attacked, er, just crumbled to pieces – there wasn't anything there.. The people didn't care. And, er.. I think that is a very important thing.

Question:

Do you think that China is attempting to force the Soviet Union to break off diplomatic relations? [*Not clear*] For example, this incident with the Chinese students, I mean, the Chinese statements are being so, er, so strongly worded, I find it very difficult to believe that the Soviet government will accept this kind of thing for very much longer.

Rewi Alley:

Well if you had been through all these conferences that I have been going to in the last few years in Japan and various other parts of the world and seen the underside of the Soviet, er, the Soviet, the Soviet representatives, er, little inside politics, you will realise that this present grouping in the Soviet Union is deadly opposed to China and by every means possible will set out, just as the Americans do, to bring this government down. And I think the Chinese realise that. That has been very evident [*coughing*] in a dozen conferences I have been to since 19..,19.., er, since 1960. They realise themselves that the Soviet people, they are sitting on the edge of a knife, that the Soviet people are not so easily controlled - that if this idea spreads, if the thing that happens in China spreads, that they, themselves, this particular group [*bad coughing*] are in a very difficult position [*bad coughing*] a very difficult position. [*coughing*] I think that their whole thesis that they can work in with America and that their future lies with America and with Europe, I think is an illusion. I think that they are going to learn that eventually.

Question:

[*Unclear*] ... think that Chinese idea that the, the Soviet ruling clique as such are frightened of the Cultural Revolution [*coughing*] of Mao Zedong is a wonderful example of Chinese national egoism

Rewi Alley:

Well, that is a matter of opinion and you are free to think that if you wish. [*laughter*]

[*Beginning of [Extract 10](#)*]

Question:

[*Unclear*] Sir, over the last 40 years in China, you must have had some remarkable experiences. Could you tell us a couple of the highlights [*unclear – cough*]?

Rewi Alley:

Well, forty years is not a short time. The, er... to come from a period when I think one of my first experiences in the interior of China was in 1928, I think, up in Tsuiran Province in what was then Inner Mongolia where there was a big famine. At that time 8 million people died in China of famine – 8 million! And in the little city where I was 120,000 were thrown into the city moat and buried there and people were dragging pieces of timber in from houses in from the dusty plains. And we were surrounded at one place, where I was working on a canal, by a bunch of bandits. And we could see the chaotic incredibly chaotic, incredibly hopeless picture. The rich were getting richer. The, er, the big mission stations there were buying up the land, taking in girls to bring up. Er, er, they had become the big landlords, the Belgian missionaries there. The warlords were becoming richer. The grain-merchants were becoming richer. But the people were dying by the millions. That, I think, was a very shocking thing.

Then, in 1929, when I was, I think, 29 or maybe 28, I came out of the city of Wuxi, in South China and I had been busy as a factory inspector in Shanghai trying to do something about the child labour in silk villages where these little children used to stand at the table – 8 or 9 year-old children with their hands in boiling water and their eyes full of skin falling down here and their eyes belted and their

fingers pulling out these boiling cocoons for 12 hours a day in a room that you couldn't bear to stand in for 2 minutes yourself, uh, and, er. I took a Frenchman in there once, Baron? Vouturier, a senator, and he just stood there and he wept. All he could say [unclear] was "*C'est terrible, c'est terrible*". He wouldn't... He just walked outside- he couldn't stand it. Well, that's..., that was the old China. I came out to the old city of Wuxi, in that year, and people started to run and they ran to the railway station, round the railway station and out they brought out six youngsters – six boys of about 20, 20-25, stripped naked, hung from poles like pigs. They dumped them down and a Guomintang officer got off a horse with a pistol and shot each one in the back of the head and then in the paper the next morning I read that these were labour organizers, trying to organize silk villages against the, er.. for better, for better conditions – and for bringing in a central boiling system that would eliminate the use of these children. And that was [coughing] one of the turning points in my life and probably that is why I am sitting with you here today. Next question.

[End of Extract 10]

Question:

From what we have seen in China is that, especially in Suzhou, has been an overthrow of the managers in factories by the workers and they are being replaced by, er, leaders of revolutionary organizations such as the Revolutionary Rebels. [coughing] It seems as if these people have got no administrative skills or experience whatsoever. Now, I was wondering what profitability will be in the future because of this, if people with no skills in, er, this way. What will happen?

Rewi Alley:

In some cases, I think, probably in many cases, the, the usual pattern is that the old management is kept on doing its job under the supervise, er, under the supervision of the rebel committee. That is the usual pattern. The old people will go on with their jobs, such as they did before, under the supervision of the rebel committee. But there are also, .. Don't think for a moment that there are not brilliant administrators and good people amongst the rebels. Er, [pause] I have seen that in many of the cases that I know. Some of the young people that are coming forward are much higher calibre than some of the people who have been? fallen out, by the wayside. But all these good ones are- go on with their jobs and if they join in with this thing and if they come in... well that will be all right. There is not much question about that. It is only the ones who are absolutely diehard on holding together their particular little empires by their old methods, which will find it difficult to work in [unclear] [cough]. You.....

Kent Pearson:

The tape jammed at this stage so I've switched on another tape. [15:03 to 18:33 blank]

Agfa Tape 2 Side 1

Question:

This supervision that the rebels have over the managers [coughing], is it early on in the political line? What sort of decisions would they influence?

Rewi Alley:

They would influence – they could influence, they could influence all the decisions.

Questioner:

I am thinking more of a..., um., the day-to-day decisions: something goes a little bit wrong and someone who is experienced of that process, because they do such a.... **Rewi interrupts:**

Rewi Alley:

The manager is going on with his usual job..

Questioner:

Oh, he is going on.. I wonder if you can give an idea of where does the line [unclear] take.

Rewi Alley:

China is so big and I haven't traveled amongst factories in these last few months.. two months. I have been amongst the communes in the last six weeks. So I don't know quite how this particular thing is met. I haven't been to industry for some time.

Leader: Tony

Question:

How is it going to be possible to institutionalise this constant supervision of um, managers of factories – the political [*unclear – background noise*] by the masses in future – when the main wave of proletarian revolution is over?

Rewi Alley:

That again depends on... The thing will change all the time. There won't be anything static in this. The new administrations will come about and go through a period of adjustment. Good people will be taken into the management. Then, of course, there will be change. But nothing is more sure than that there will be change. Because there will be change all the time. The revolution is a flowing thing. It is not a static thing. It, er, everything will change. Nothing is more sure that it will be change. But nothing will be the same in a month's time, quite what it is today. But production will go on and it will be high.

Question:

Mr. Alley, what do you see is China's major problem at this time, at the present time?

Rewi Alley:

I, er, I would suggest that the first problem, the first major problem, is to get good unanimity at home: unanimity on a revolutionary basis and carry forward the teachings of Chairman Mao, which have been neglected in the past and this done, then the other things will begin to come in. China still has to rebel against nature. She still has to..., the Yellow River, and the Yangtze River, the deforestation and the erosion problems. All these [*coughing*] science problems have to be met. China has dealt in a fantastic way with increasing rice production. Over these years it has been able to export to Pakistan as well as being able to feed a quarter of the World's population herself. She has been able to do all these things, er, [*coughing*] in a really fantastic way. In the country side, the communes have brought in [*coughing*] this er, hump-turbine? thing, bringing in hundreds of thousands of *mǔ* of ground⁵, which was only dry land, cropping ground, before, making it paddy fields. All these have been done on a big scale all the time. But she still has enormous problems to face. And the way to face them is to gather the people around these ideas that they are now given.

Question:

We've heard a lot about Madame Jiangqing. Is she..? What actually is her role in the Cultural Revolution itself?

Rewi Alley:

Well, all I know about, er, her is that she is a member of the Cultural Commission and, er, a very active one.

Questioner:

Uh huh.

Rewi Alley:

[*Cough*] very much about her. [*Long pause*]

Question:

Mr Alley, China seems [*cough*] to have a rigid programme for the future and America also seems to have a rigid programme in so much as, together with Australia and New Zealand, they claim to be protecting the free world. Now, both of these seem to be conflicting systems. Do you think there is any chance of conflict

⁵ 1 *mǔ* 畝 = 614.4 m²

between these two great systems [coughing][unclear]. This is a question that lies at the back of many peoples' mind. Er, neither party seems to be making concessions, nor is there much room for diplomacy.

Rewi Alley:

The Americans are going ahead with a plan to control the world. The Americans talk freely about the time that they going to take Australia and New Zealand into the American system. One man I spoke to in NZ the other year, in 1965, said "The sooner the better"- his view. But are they using Australia and NZ in their plan for taking over Asia as best they can? In 1941, [Henry Luce](#), in Chongqing, said to me "Rewi, it's the American century. Join in with us and we'll make you." He didn't say 'Go against us and we'll break you'. But that is what he meant. But, he is a China-born boy and a missionary's son, and always was one of the big influences in America. And that is a general idea, that they are going to control the world. That the Americans.. the atom bomb in the hands of the Americans, is a safe proposition. In the hands of the Chinese it's not. And I believe that the atom bomb in the hands of the Chinese isa safe proposition and in the hands of the Americans it is not and Hiroshima proves that! And Australia and New Zealand are with the Americans officially [coughing] or for many people [coughing] they are not [unclear] and this the problem that China must face. China has no troops anywhere. China on the other hand is with the revolutionary peoples of the World – the two thirds of the World that goes hungry. The ??? in New Zealand prefer to stay with the 'haves'. And the struggle? [coughing] will be between the haves and the have-nots for the, for the right, for the one world that we hope there in the future. [Pause]

Leader: Dory?

Question:

[Not clear. [6:50] ...unanimity. When we go back home, although we will be agreed in every way..[several sentences are unclear]... even among our own group there are questions of fact since January this year, and contrary to ...sent out.. this year...have any.... mass movement.... The sort of thing..... Red Guards... militia...protests ... attitudes change..... January 20th...[8:00]...unclear.. [8:50] [coughing] We were in Shanghai immediately after... [unclear. Glasses clinking]

Rewi Alley:

Um. Well, all, all I can say, you have been here since in this month of January, and I have come back from the country in this month of January and it's.. we have all been following what has been said. Of course a great deal of dirt comes out in the washing – a great deal of dirt has come out in the washing. Whole things have been found to be going on that people didn't know about [cough] and the revolution, of course, is not a bed of tulips. It's a very.., it's a rough-and-tumble. It's a rough-and-tumble and some of these people who had, er, exercised big authority were not above using their authority to get workers to do things, er, that the workers didn't really understand. The incident in Harbin shows that up. Where this, er. I think a [Chinese words?] what you call it. A sort of an army of workers came to smash up the International Hotel and were herded inside by the rebel groups and were er, and talked to, and then, when the whole thing was explained to them, they then said 'Oh so-and-so told us to come and do this and here we are'. Then they turned on the other people, you see.. That is... this is revolution. It's not so simple. In many parts of China, we have things happening. China is so huge. Way back in Tibet and Xinhai and Xinjiang you've got all kinds of conditions. Er. They are not quite so easy to deal with, you know.

Question:

Would you get the Nanking [Nanjing] ??? [cough] where it was said on January 3rd that 200,000 Red militia in Nanking at that time were involved in substantial riots? [unclear interjections].

Rewi Alley:

The point about all these newspaper reports that you get every morning from Radio Japan and Australia and all the other radios that I listen to, they are usually based on, on on reliable reports sent from our Peking correspondents and our Japanese correspondents in Peking. Then you hear that these Japanese correspondents have been around reading the *Dajebaos*, the 'wall newspapers' and these reports have come

from them. *Dajebaos* are written mostly by people who don't always know very much about it. Er. Because they are written just as the kids want to write them. So, exactly how reliable these reports are, I'm not quite sure.

Questioner:

That one came from a factory [*cough*] named.. [*unclear*].

Rewi Alley:

Possible. It's possible. People would use, people would use... People would.. in authority would tell the workers that a whole load of kids were coming to take us over and we have got to resist them, or something like that

Leader: It's in order Bob. ??? [*unclear - coughing*] Bob. ??? speak.

Questioner:

[*coughing - unclear*] can be justly proud of the progress that has been made in China since the formation of the Peoples Republic [*cough*] itself. [*unclear*] see that China continuing to [*unclear*] the Chinese people have the greatest respect to World peace against? American imperialism. There are two aspects which bother me. First of all, we have had discussions with the matey? Red Guards and, um, the impression I get is that, as far as they are concerned, the thought that Mao Zedong is the absolute Universal Truth and I put the question to them that although up to this point in time Chairman Mao has not made errors it is conceivable that as an old man it is conceivable that in the future he may make mistakes or alternatively [*cough*] his successor may make provisions as tentative as he made, might make mistakes, I put the question to these Red Guards that they should question what they are given, that they should analyse it or definitely study it and then come to a conclusion as to its worth. They say 'No, Chairman Mao is right. This is the absolute truth. We must not question it'. This concerns me. I think for the good of China and China's ??? especially what they are given. Secondly, um, if, if, er, it's best ??? if there is only 5% less opposition in China to, er, the Mao Zedong regime, er, if this so I? cannot find out before this, this very small, er, sort of minority opposition, if the masses are under Chairman Mao, will they not in the end, um, eventually provide it anyway?

Rewi Alley:

The thing?, er, the one percent, the 5 percent is, you can take the 5 percent as being the people in authority and, er, of 700 million, how many people is that in authority? Five or six million people. [Indistinct reaction] That's quite a lot of people, isn't it? [**Response:** '40 million'] Forty million And if all those are people are those who are, who are more or less in authority, it would be a problem.

[*short pause*] I would say about Chairman Mao's works [*coughing*] there has always been all the way through the revolution, right from the very beginning, that his analysis has been the correct analysis. Where he has been followed, there has been victory. Where it has been neglected there has been defeat. Way back in Ruijin, in those early days of the Red Army, the Soviet Union sent in a German general to take over, and he made all kinds of mistakes. He said Mao's ideas were all wrong. He said that guerrilla warfare was all wrong and he went into positional warfare and so forth. And the result of all that -they lost about 300,000 men. And, er, the er, all the way through, wherever they have taken the Mao line, it has worked out. And that's a long record. That's a long record. It hasn't been done... He hasn't been in the majority all the time. He hasn't been able to put that over all the time. But, it's a.. it's a very convincing thing to the Chinese people, and once tried it worked. And, er. I think that in Mao, we, er, people do have that confidence just now. The, er.. One of the basic things that people are taught in China is to create and analyse. Everything must be analysed and that analytical process, I think, will go on. It's a thing of the future. He says create and to create you have to bring out the creative mind and analyse everything that you are told. And that will help us just now, at this particular period, of revolution, people are following very closely what they feel that he is the guiding star in this thing and that this idea will lead them through.

Lady questioner (Mrs Lake?): [*Unclear 16:25*]

There is one thing that irritates me that I think is unfortunate.??

Rewi Alley: You tell people

Mrs Lake?:

[Unclear] Just one thing.... because Rewi Alley.. [unclear] he says [unclear] well anyone can make mistakes, we all make mistakes. But the thing is an ??? But he says, well, let everyone speak up [unclear] ... read the Little Red Book and this is why people read the Little Red Book because [unclear] [unclear].

Male questioner:

We, we haven't seen yet anyone questioning any of the quotations of Chairman Mao. There is one on the American negro which says that the American negro is being opposed by the upper class in America where sort of sociological evidence seems to prove that the main opposition to the advancement of the American negro is held by the working class itself.

Mrs Lake?:

Ah [Cough] if it is a question of class struggle [unclear – speaking very fast 17:20] you are thinking of, isn't it, my love? [possible **Rewi answer:** 'Yes'] and, um, in the class struggle, the poor whites are without mate?? for a while [unclear] line-up? with the ruling class. But, they are included in the ruling class too. I think this war on class [unclear17:35 – 1745]...]. I think this will come out in the wash in the future. And be.. this is a bit controversial but, I think the main point is that, um,[unclear] to question everything.

Rewi Alley:

That is what I have just said. Analyse everything. That is what I just said.

Male Questioner:

Is there any evidence, Mr Alley, that [cough] opponents of the Cultural Revolution are inventing stories of civil and military strife in parts of China? For example, one of the most disturbing reports in the Western I remember? is the so-called bloody rebellion by the army in Xinjiang. The report was based by a Buddhist correspondent on a Peking wall poster which goes in very great detail about events in Xinjiang over the last two or three weeks. Is there any evidence that some of these [cough] are fictions invented by the opposition to the Revolution?

Rewi Alley:

Could be, because we, also.., there were many.. many of the younger Red Guards.. more excessive [unclear] Some of the things were done by people in authority using their influence on, er. on er, certain Red Guard youth to do things that they wouldn't otherwise have done, because they, er, wanted to discredit the revolution. That may be. But I still think that you've got war-lord spirit in the far-flung marches of China There would still be a good deal of the war-lord spirit left. We haven't got rid of that in all these years. We haven't got rid of the idea of people making their own kingdoms – build up, build-up their own family, build up their own family er, er, [pause] property. We still haven't got rid of those ideas. It takes time. And war-lordism, er, possibly would still exist in [cough] places? like Xinjiang and, er, I haven't been to Xinjiang since 1957. But, er, [cough] that place where it was said to have been in the sector to have taken place – Shevortse, in Monask, is a place that was taken over by the Guomintang army which surrendered – 300,000 of them – and they were put to work to reclaim these fens, on an army basis. And it may be that somebody has made some trouble among those people, I don't know. I don't know, it's too far away and I'm not in a position to say.

Questioner:

Do you mind if I just follow this up, Mrs Lake [20:10] I have already said to you that, in the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class struggle. Among the whites in the United States, it is only the ruling reactionary circles, who oppress the black people. They can in no way, represent the workers, farmers, revolutionary intellectuals and other enlightened persons who compromise the overwhelming majority of the white people. If the people, the Red Guards for example, read this they believe this word for word. Now, in,

in our.., in, in my interpretation, there is an incorrect statement here. The one about 'It is only the reactionary circles who are oppress', you see?

Mrs Lake:

Well, this [4 secs unclear. speaking fast and indistinctly] main problem. You must take ????? [21:00] the same reasons imperialist have set different nationalities against each other in Old China and in other countries ??? the same thing in America divide and rule

Rewi Alley speaks over lady [21:50]:

I was just going to say that. The, er, .. Chairman Mao himself has a pretty close observation of this nationality business [coughing]. In fact? [coughing][unclear] if you could buy a Miao woman for a sack of rice and you killed somebody in Xinjiang you paid a Uyghur, [22:10] you paid a donkey and, er, people, soldiers on the roads would shoot up at the Yi people in the mountains. Er, and all the while, people of the mountains try out their ammunition on them. And this kind of thing was, er, this was definitely, although many ordinary Guomintang people did these things, but the thing was definitely a divide-and-rule thing by the old order, to keep those people in subjection. And that was done over the whole 40 to 50 minority areas of China where 60 million people lived. And those people have come out of that, that thing, and he [Editor: Chairman Mao] knows that the same thing does happen practically everywhere in the world.

Male questioner:

Mr. Alley, [another person interjects] ...your second [not clear, cough] sorry. Mr Alley, I have two questions to put to you. The first, I think, is in answer to Mr Turnbull's question on, um, a question of criticizing and examining material given to you. I think this... The fact that people don't criticize the Works of Chairman Mao is that they have a lack of education and this book is pretty self-contained and it is the only source they are given. There is no comparison for them to make [background noise] [Unclear 23:30] ... criticism. Um. Perhaps you would like to comment on this.

The second question is on a question of justice, er, concerning the Revisionists. These revisionists seem to be subject to the judgment of the masses and it seems to me, to lead to great injustice compared with our system where we will spend 500 pounds [coughing, unclear, coughing] there seems to be a great discrepancy in our values of justice. Um. I, er, did see a revisionist from the bus and he seemed to be subject to how the judgment of the masses, which seemed to me to be quite unjust.

Rewi Alley:

Well, I think that [unclear, coughing] many things would be considered to be unjust looking at it from a public viewpoint. Many things in Australia, which the.., er, would raise the hair of the Chinese who looked at them. They would say 'Well that's an injustice that we just couldn't stand. Er. That, er, does happen in our countries. And, er, [coughing]. I would say as a bush farmer in Taranaki in six years, as a bush farmer, where the price of wool was nothing. But to all the land company people had to have, had to have cars and were sitting on top of the world, but we bush-farmers had to go out on the road to get enough, er. get enough er, money to buy tea and sugar with, and try to work and get some little job like that. We would say that is gross injustice. Whereas in New Zealand, [noise of glass being banged] .. not so. That is quite alright, er.. and we have plenty of those things. I would say when you talk about education of Australian people, who are educated and Chinese people are not, I think you are running up against something there too. Because, what is education? Er. The Chinese people know more about living together and getting on with each other than many individualists in our countries, er, and are starting to learn again. Er, and.. What is education? Is it the.. Is it getting hold of a whole lot of books and, er, and finally it, er, coming out from the mass of books which [coughing] [unclear] leave? the mind more confused than when you went in?. Or is it something that deals with life and knowing each other and knowing the problems that are in front of you, er, what is education? I think that is something we have to start and think about. [coughing] Er. Technique? Sure. China, China is keen on 'technique', and keen on science and these things I think will be going,, er, gone on with, in a big way. But education, [pause] after all, I think we have to think for a moment or two, er, who is truly civilized and who is not. I don't think that the Australians joining in the, er, decimation of Vietnamese villages are truly civilized or educated. I think they are very ignorant, to allow themselves to be able to do

that. I think the same goes for New Zealand. People who allow, er, allow themselves to be used in that way, of burn - kill and burn in the same old way as the Japanese did on the Chinese coast. Er. I know nothing more ignorant than a Japanese militarist. He may be able to write beautiful Chinese characters and he may be able to arrange flowers, but he is the most brutal thing in the world. And I know that myself, having stood in front of, er, a group of Japanese with my pants off while they flayed my bottom and shot a whole line of Chinese people in front of me – just to show how big they were. I consider that extremely ignorant – gross – uncivilized. At the same time I think that the Americans doing the same thing in Vietnam today – the things that we support, are ignorant, [coughing] uncivilized and disgusting. And I think that the average Chinese person doesn't, er, thinks much the same way.

Student Leader:

Roger, then Tony, then Warwick, then Mary.

Questioner (Roger):

Mr Alley. In comparison with what we are seeing now in China, when you look around, [unclear] to what extent before the Cultural Revolution [coughing...] was the personality of Mao propagated in the forms of photographs, um, wall posters, propaganda trucks, er, how much was there before the Cultural Revolution [unclear - cough]?

Rewi Alley:

Practically none. Practically none. This is a thing that has come up in the last few months. Er. It has come up in the last few months because the people were denied access to Mao's works. This thing hadn't come up at all. Then suddenly ..

Questioner interjects:

Can you also comment on the enthusiasm we see at present, if so, in comparison with the past?

Rewi Alley:

Yes, well, I think this comes from an intensive study of these Works. When you see people get together, er, and everybody is reading for instance: "Serve the people" and the little kids are memorizing "Serve the people". And after a little kid has recycled the whole essay on "Serve the people" and then you say 'What have you done to implement that?' and he says 'I have been out and picked all the castor-oil beans and then I helped somebody to mind the baby and I pulled that fellow's cart out of the ditch'. Well it might sound like the boy scouts – 'the good-thing-a-day' but it's not taken that way. It's taken as an actual part of the daily life, of, of implementing that "Serve the people" essay. And the old blind people who used to tell fortunes amongst the Miao, all learning Mao's Works and are going to teach them to the old bed-ridden people inside the houses that can't get out, or something like that. Well this is a big movement that is going all over the country and is bringing unity and a great deal of sense. [coughing...].

Male questioner:

[Very faint...]. Mr Alley, if I can make one suggestion, [cough - rumbling of people moving?] Can you give us more information about internal goings-on in China? I find it most frustrating that in fact the newspapers have very little, um, news in Asia, and even less [unclear] on the rest of the World. Um. It is very hard to, in fact, verify these reports you hear in the West – whether they are true or false, because the News Agencies, they give out Chinese newsletters??? [coughing] many Chinese papers have similar news releases, so I don't have very little concrete news. [30:05]

Secondly, um [unclear - background noise..] it's quite possible that the Chinese have an admiration for Stalin since Stalin's whole philosophy seems to have been almost [coughing] entirely opposed to [coughing] the Cultural Revolution. And Stalin, all the way along, I think, has distrusted the masses and he in fact established a system er which, um, the... in Russians, the Chinese now see as, er, the equal ??? [unclear] to socialist development which is leading, in the long run, to the restoration of capitalism.

Rewi Alley:

Er, I think the Chinese look upon Stalin as a great revolutionary, a man who really tried to push through collectivisation of agriculture, who was a part, a revolutionary who could be talked to in revolutionary terms. I think that is so Stalin's mistakes, the legacy of bad education, of following the West, in education, of bringing up cadres' children to be little lords er.. and those sort of things are, are bad, but those are the things that China was trying to avoid, halt and not to do. But.....

End of Agfa 2, Side I.

Beginning Standard Tape 2

It starts by Rewi Alley answering an un-recorded question:

Rewi Alley:

I haven't seen the particular paintings you're talking about. I don't know. Er, but there were a certain number of things done in the beginning which probably wouldn't be done at this moment, actually. But people do want to get rid of the old and there has been... The youth people said we don't want any of this.. that there has been too much veneration of the old because in the past. For instance in our countries, in Australia and New Zealand, we don't know anything about China much - China's culture is more or less an unopened book. So consequently we are interested in knowing something about Chinese culture through antiques or through pictures and so on.. and it does bring a warmth of feelings with China [*coughing*] that's interesting. But to the young Chinese who are in colleges, who have been over laden with all their professorial know-all, who've been telling them that no, you couldn't do this because in the Shui dynasty they tried it and it didn't work and the Tang dynasty they tried that and didn't work - a veneration of the old and a denial of the future. That is the thing that upsets them - this terrific veneration for everything old and only the old was any good, the new was no good. But if you knew anything about the old, it was viciously bad. The whole Chinese history was made up of court records and the courts were filthy, were rotten, all the way through history, so consequently there rose a contradiction there people said to hell with the old. We are not going to have it, done with the lot of it so now we will turn over the page and do it afresh. You see. So they went along, the young people were in charge and some of them did those things. But actually, I don't think there was anything of very great value destroyed. Anything of real value was carefully collected and you will see them in the museums. If you went to the Summer Palace most of those things all the good things, were first looted by the Japanese and taken away and then the war lords took their rake off and the Kuomintang took their rake off. What was left was pretty much the poorest leavings. There wasn't anything much down there. The good things, anything that is good was very carefully collected into the palace museums and other museums is kept for posterity. There is no problem about that.

Question:

..... [*Coughing*] You have written quite a lot of poetry. I was wondering if you have a favourite poem or poet?

Rewi Alley:

I am very much, - I like the old Chinese poets. I like to try to translate [Du Fu](#), I didn't make a very good job of it for the Du Fu centenary?. I like [Zhou Li](#)???. I like a good many of the old time poets they are very pleasant to read and they're very cultured people for a long time. I like [Dai Ra Mi](#)?? and many of the others. If you come down to the present time, . Well then if you are writing for the future and today that's another thing. These people were writing for the old cultured class and for Westerners who don't know anything about China in discovering a new culture very interesting but for the Chinese today they don't carry quite so much there's nothing so much to them. With the new poetry coming out, it's extremely good poetry. Chairman Mao himself is a poet. In fact, in China you know, practically everybody writes poetry. Especially for a man who comes to the fore, [Chen Yi](#) writes poetry and they all write poetry. All the revolutionary martyrs have written poetry. When a man is going to be killed, he seems to always write poetry and leave it somewhere or other. Once I collected poems of revolt from all over China, so much of it. There is enormous resources in poetry..

Question:

Mr Alley. You are one of the very few Westerners who were given the title, carrying some honour, I think, of being an Old China hand. Some other people such as [C P Fitzgerald](#) and perhaps journalist [Richard Hughes](#), also carry this title but recently these people have not been granted permits to enter China and to see progress being made in this society. This seems very difficult to understand because the Chinese are justly proud of their achievements since liberation. I wonder if you could explain this refusal to permit their entry into China

Rewi Alley:

I don't know really know much about exactly the policy that has to do with that. All I know is that Australian China Society the old group around Sydney which Fitzgerald was head of took a revisionist point of view. Maybe that had something to do with it. I don't know. They took a revisionist point of view. And I think Pat Fitzgerald himself would be quite shocked at some of the old intellectual friends of his, the old professors: that these old professors of the old days who were academic authorities that these people are no longer in charge as much as they were. Perhaps it would be rather difficult for him to understand all these things today. The rise of this youth that has come about in these 17 years would be probably difficult for him to understand. It is easier for me to understand those things because my life has been spent amongst the ordinary people here in China, especially in the village people. To me these are people who really count most. I imagine to Pat Fitzgerald the thing that would count most would be the carrying on of the old cultural traditions through the academic authorities that he had previously known and had respected and worked with. That would have a bigger influence with him, I don't know. But anyway, it's something that I don't really know much about.

Question:

Mr Alley, three questions:

Firstly, do you think that the implementation of communism in Australia and New Zealand is desirable? If so, do you think it is conceivable that it will eventually be eventually implemented?

Secondly, do you personally believe in the infallibility of the words of Chairman Mao [7 mins 30] since before liberation up to the present point in time is ? incorrect? Would you not be prepared to accept that it is conceivable that he can make a mistake?

And thirdly, although we are told that revisionists are those who take the capitalist road, the impression I have got through talking to Red Guards, a revisionist is simply somebody who deviates from the works of Chairman Mao.

Rewi Alley:

I am a member of the NZ Communist Party. So naturally I believe that. That is understood.

Up to the present, everything that Chairman Mao has put down has been clear and has worked out and has been a very reliable guide. And I think that that guide will take us through a long way yet. Whether or not the future generations will analyse and find that it has to be changed, I don't know but for the moment, I think that is the thing that is taking the line.. er, taking the people through. Now in the revisionist and the road to capitalism, the road to revisionism, we have a very bitter example in the Soviet Union. Certainly people who were spoiling their children and bringing up youngsters who would bully their teachers and became really delinquents - that was the revisionist road and no question about that and people are determined not to place their future in the hands of the same people who took it over in the Soviet Union. And I think that struggle against revisionism ... a man may be following the revisionist road and not really realising it but after it has been pointed out to him in meetings, he may quite say that you are right and I am with you, as many of these leaders have done. If a thing is pointed out clearly, he might say, "By Jove you're right,??...that's the way we have been doing." But anyway, this is an immense experiment in throwing the thing over to the whole people and letting them argue about it.

I was down in the Hai river in November where 300,000 people were making six new mouths for the Hai river which flooded the whole of a province every year, or parts of Hubei? province, because the water couldn't get out. In Tiensin? they were making six new outlets, cutting canals right across the country, big

wide canals going under the Grand Canal. And these people were coming to this. They worked eight hours days and then did two hours study at night. It was just a great big university in this whole cultural revolution and the way forward. The whole lot of them the whole 300,000, they were politically awake when they came in. They were picked because they were good people. They all wanted to come and they went away knowing a great deal more about it because of debates with one another and debates with the other brigades and communes, than what they did when they came. These are the people of China. This is the 700,000,000 that we have to try to understand.

Leader:

We have time for another 10-15 minutes questions before Mr Alley has to get away. We probably have time for another 6 questions.

Questioner:

In your opinion, who is the most reliable and objective commentator on China, living outside China?

Secondly, how much objectivity do you think can be achieved by writers living outside China, living in a capitalist environment [*repeated coughing*]?

Thirdly, just by way of explanation, in our conversations with Chinese students at various universities, we found it very difficult to have truly fruitful conversations because so often we find that these students invariably believed that in this book they have the basic truths of the reality of history and politics. And on this basis we find we can establish very quickly the Chinese student's point of view. We found it very difficult to get through our point of view because almost invariably the student will say to me or someone else "Your thinking is conditioned by your bourgeois capitalist society and you [*coughing*] class background. While this is true to an extent, I think this inhibits a really fruitful conversation.

Rewi Alley:

There you come across one of the difficulties of Internationalism. Of course, they will say "Who do you support? Do you support monopoly or do you support the Australian people? If you support monopoly, are you against [*unclear*] But ??? [13min10]

As regard to authorities around the world, there are so many people come and go and they write. But some of them have more background to write from than others do. [Edgar Snow](#) has made a pretty good effort to try to understand China as best he can, as a bourgeois journalist. But he has struggled very hard since his first big book "Red Star over China" hit the road. It is a very important book. I think you should read it again, if you haven't read it already. It gives you some background to the beginnings of things in China. ? Ellis Green? has written some quite interesting books. [Han Suyin](#) has written the "Crippled Tree" and "The Mortal Flower", two quite good books, which give impressions of a person living through that period, an Eurasian person, who knows her China, brought up in China. And I think they are worth reading and worth studying. [Bill Hinton](#)'s book called "Fanshen", in America. He's a chap who worked here for some years after liberation- "Fanshen" is a very good book to get. I think all those are all important books to be read about China.

Question:

[*Coughing*] Mr Turnbull asked you on the possibility of Australians supporting socialism or the communist system. I wouldn't say that this is so far possible and as an example I would take the USSR. They have turned/gained revisionist tendencies. But I think this is largely due to the fact that they are at a different stage than China and they are in a different predicament. For example, they have only 112m people whereas China has 700m. They are rich in industrial areas, whereas the bulk of China's population has [*coughing*] agrarian interests and they are at a different stage of the revolution. As the country progresses, the people gain more goods from production and they have more goods to enjoy. And because of this they tend to turn more revisionist. I think that that which China tends to call revisionist failures is more a question of difference. Would you believe that?

Rewi Alley:

I would say that's quite a mistaken view. 150000 people a year leave Siberia, the Far Eastern province of Siberia, to go back to Soviet Moscow. Young people who have gone through the polytechnics to go to

Siberia will do anything almost to stay in Moscow because of the privileges that Moscow offers. In other words people are flocking to the towns in the same way as in NZ and Australia. People flock into the cities and leave the continent unpeopled practically. While those tendencies should be encouraged...

[*coughing...*] Leaving of the main problems, the Soviet Union wants to get 80m tonnes of wheat for next year and hopes it will, but hasn't been getting for the last two or three years, and has had to buy wildly therefore Australian wheat has brought prosperity to Australia [*coughing*] to a certain extent conditioned by the purchase by the Russians in Australia and so therefore you are profiting from revisionism to a certain extent. And I would say that the Soviet Union is not as strong now under revisionist leadership as it was when Hitler smashed the infantry with the Soviet Union and the 'other day?', she is not so strong. With the atomic bomb she has - she has things like that, but from the mass point of view, she is not so strong as she was though I think it's progressive, I think she has gone back, not forward

Question:

I want to ask something which is very down to earth and different from the questions that have been asked so far.

This is a matter of our experiences in China at present. Some of us going out [*not clear*] in small groups with Australians very quickly would get a retinue of Chinese people. These are from all age groups but are predominantly children. They seem to wander along with us and personally I can't figure out what their attitude is. Such curiosity is that they just want to look at us. ??*unclear*??? Perhaps it's a wrong reaction on our part. [*Coughing masks the last question*]

Rewi Alley:

I think that's inevitable because they hear all about people from other countries but they have never seen them. People can now around might have walked in from country towns all over. I just met at the front gate, coming in with Ruth this morning, a bunch of kids from Yundang, in Gansu, just next to Shandan, that's about 2500 miles straight to the west from here and they have been walking on the road until they got here and they were speaking in broad Gansu dialect. They collected round me at the gate. So that's understandable. When I was a kid in NZ, we used to follow the Chinese in Christchurch, I remember. We used to shout out "Ching Chong Chinaman, chow, chow, chow". The old Chinese would chase us with a carrying bowl, which they then carried. We would go off laughing. It was the big joke of the day. Those are the beginnings of International contacts!

Question: [*first part of question not clear*]

What price do you think would China have to pay for the achievements of the Cultural revolution?

Rewi Alley:

Well, a revolution upsets people. When you have a revolutionary situation, everything is upset. Peoples lives are upset. Everybody is touched by it. People who thought they were doing very well, everything was going alright. You suddenly find there is questioning about that. And it affects their families, the wives and the kids, everybody. They're all sitting wondering what the devil did I do wrong? Is this the wrong thing or is it right? It affects everybody. It affects naturally... It affects... You can't stop the schools for so long without that affecting. That's a price you have to pay... ..? to get people to do all the things that they have done... Those are the prices, all those things are prices that have to be paid. You don't get anything for nothing. You don't get anything for nothing. The struggle was essential.

Question:

You made some comment of Soviet trade with China and with the west and South Australia is also selling wheat to China. I wonder if you would comment on China's trade with other countries. Is it a good thing, bad thing, the general attitudes on the question. Perhaps following on an earlier question, America has admitted that she is trying to isolate China from the rest of the world. It is said by people, some with some considerable sympathy for China, that China is, in fact, isolating herself from the rest of the world, as well as suffering from American attempts to isolate. I wonder if you would talk about these questions of trade and Chinese contact with the outside world and particularly this interpretation that China is perhaps isolating herself more than she needs.

Rewi Alley:

The Chinese trade fair every year in Shanghai and Canton. Chinese contacts with the rest of the world have been growing every year. The last trade fair in Canton showed a vastly improved situation with international trade. I think that's going on all the time. Chinese takes in cotton from countries such as Sudan, that can't get rid of cotton and process it in China and exports it and many things like that are being done all the time. Many of the things on the American embargo to China are now being sold all over the world. I don't know how many Chinese experts in other parts of the world, I think maybe 60,000 - putting up cotton mills for this country, putting up paper factories, printing factories for various countries: Tanzania, Somalia, Burma and so on. I think these things have been going on all the time. Chinese machinery goes out all the time. Chinese machine tools are extremely good. Hand tools, if you find them, Chinese ones, are definitely superior to anything else in Hong Kong these days capturing the market there pretty much. These trade contacts are going on all the time. I don't know how many, I know the Russians who are anxious to get fruit from China were keen in a big way. Hong Kong lives off Chinese products pretty well all the time. 4m people there. All the fish comes from China. The pork comes from China. I think China's done a good deal to help the economy of quite a number of countries around the world. I think that international contacts are being made steadily all the time. But America's main object is to bring down the present government in China. And that is a aggressive thing. China is not isolated. As you might think, you are here for one thing and That is something I hadn't thought to receive you sitting in this old club which was once the refuge for diplomats of Peking in the old days. And you couldn't get in here, and if you didn't have just the right school tie. To find 50-60 Australian and NZ students sitting in here now taking in the Chinese Cultural Revolution is something that shows that China is not so isolated as you might think.

Student Leader: We'll take just two more questions.

Question:

United States and if so ???....[*Question not clear*]

Rewi Alley:

Yes, I've seen quite a number of members of the new left at various conferences around the world. They are much brighter and much more on the job than the old left. I remember Dr Apteker?, who was one of the pillars of the old left in America and the now strongly revisionist party "But Rewi, you, you can't say that the Angolans want arms, you can't say that!" I said "But we do say it. The Angolans do want arms and that's the way they are going to get peace for themselves". With Portuguese rule where you chop off a leg for a minor offence, or something like that, that is bad. That's the old American way. New American left is an entirely different thing. The new American left which we do have, and there are very young Americans who work in China and who come and go around the coast are definitely different. The New American left is, I think, full of hope.

Question:

Mr. Alley, what support is China giving these suppressed nations around the world who are trying to liberate themselves?

Rewi Alley:

It all depends on what they can give. In any way they can help, they will try to help. Sometimes it's not very easy. It's a matter of distance and can't get at such places. Places like, I say, Zanzibar, I remember they came and they said "What can we give to help you". They said they wanted bicycles to get their ?carters? to get to go all round the place. Well they got some bicycles. The carters weren't able to buy bicycles on a small the islands down there. Things like that. I think, wherever people want something that China can give and is able to give they will try to give and If they are revolutionary people she will try to give it. And if you ever have a revolution in Australia, China will help too.

Student Leader:

I think we should finish up now. We have given Mr Alley a pretty rigorous, well not rigorous time but a tiring time.

Most of us have looked forward to meeting him every since we left Australia, and we are very happy that he came along today and gave us his time. But more importantly, he has also given us the wealth of his experience in China both before and since 1949.

So, on behalf of the students here today, Mr Alley, thank you very much for giving us his time”.

[20 seconds applause.]

Rewi Alley: Thank you very much indeed. Very nice to see you all. I hope you didn't mind my mumbling accent. I have become used to speaking more in Chinese than English. There is an old Chinese poem that I thought of all the time when I went back to NZ in 1960: *shao xiao li jia lao da hui* . When I was young I left my home. When I was old, I returned again. My hair was white, and my *bin mao shuai* . But my accent remained the same. The children saw me and they looked at me, laughing, and they said “Old man, where do you come from⁶? [Laughter]

End of the session.

End of Tape: Standard 2

⁶ "Returning Home" (*Hui Xiang Ou Shu* 回乡偶书) by the Tang poet He Zhi Zhang 贺知章