

# I SAW CHINA

By WALTER SISULU

**M**Y visit to the new China has been a remarkable and unforgettable experience.

From Manchuria, in the North-East, I travelled to Peking, China's ancient capital. I visited Mukden, Harbin and the beautiful little city of ~~Nanking~~ Nanking, site of the Mausoleum of Sun Yat Sen, and also the site of a hill where more than a hundred thousand patriots and fighters for freedom were murdered under the Chiang Kai-Shek regime. I was in Shanghai, the industrial centre of China and — with a population of six million — its largest city; Shanghai, the cradle of the Chinese revolution, where the famous "Fourth of May" students movement was started in 1919, and where the Communist Party of China was founded in 1921; Shanghai where from 1926 to 1927 the workers revolted and expelled the war-lords.

I went to Yanchow, in the East of China, capital of Chekiang province: a lovely holiday resort of such beauty that the Chinese have a saying: "There is heaven in the skies, but there is Yanchow in China."

I walked through the streets of famous Canton, the largest city of South China with a population of a million and a half, and with a revolutionary tradition second to none in China. Its industrial workers and seamen carried on many a famous battle against local reaction and foreign imperialism; yet it was the last city to be liberated — on October 14, 1949.

And I went to the administrative capital of Central South China, one of the largest cities in the country. I was told there of the famous strike of February 7, 1923, in which the imperialists and warlords killed 32 and wounded 200 people. I met some of those who had taken part and been wounded, and they told me how Len Shen Chen, leader of the strike, was tied to a tree and murdered, as also were the workers' legal advisers, because they refused to call off the strike. These and thousands of other sons and daughters of China who were killed by the former Government are revered by the people of China today as martyrs in the struggle for freedom.

I visited well-stocked, Government-owned shops filled with people buying their needs. I went to cinemas, theatres, libraries and halls crowded with people.

I attended the national celebration on October 1, and stood for

four hours watching more than five hundred thousand enthusiastic and happy Chinese people: intellectuals, factory workers, peasants, religious leaders, sportsmen, students and members of the Chinese People's Army of Liberation, parading past their leader on the platform: Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, army leader Chu Teh, veteran labour leader Lao Sho Shi, Madame Soong Ching Ling, widow of the revered Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Mr. Chou En-Lai, the Prime Minister, and other members of the Government. I heard the people shouting pledges to fulfil the tasks assigned to them by "Chairman Mao" and his Government. I was impressed by the obvious enthusiasm of the Chinese people and their unquestionable devotion to their country and confidence in its Government.

Thus, for more than a month I travelled to the North, the South and the East of China, covering more than twenty of its thirty provinces. Every day I started my programme at eight in the morning, rarely finishing my day before ten at night. Everywhere I spoke to people and listened to what they said about various aspects of their lives, in towns and villages, factories, universities and farms. I conversed with former landlords, who honestly confessed their past misdeeds and told me how they had been converted to the new idea that labour is noble. I spoke to factory owners and peasants, university professors and religious leaders.

From these experiences, it is clear to me that tremendous changes are being brought about in this vast country by the Mao Tse-Tung Government, and that when China's six hundred million speak of their liberation, they mean something very real. Although the Communist Party of China is the leading party in the coalition government, there is real unity in China today, based upon the common opposition of many classes to imperialism, the landlord classes, bureaucratic capitalism and the reactionary Kuomintang clique of Chiang Kai-Shek. Workers and peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie form the People's Democratic State of China. The Government is composed of no less than ten different parties. Besides the Communist Party, there is the Kuomintang Revolutionary Party, the Democratic Party of Workers and Peasants and a number of others.

In order to understand how these different groups work together, it is necessary to understand something about modern Chinese history, beginning with the democratic revolution of 1911. The leader of that revolution was Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Kuomintang as the national liberation organisation of the Chinese people. He stood for a revolutionary democratic policy, going beyond the confines of narrow nationalism. In 1924, he proposed a programme to the Kuomintang Congress based on these three principles:

1. Friendly relations with the Soviet Union,
2. Alliance between workers and peasants,
3. Co-operation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China.

This programme was adopted. But Dr. Sun Yat Sen died, and his principles were betrayed by the right wing of the Kuomintang, headed by Chiang Kai Shek.

Who is Chiang Kai Shek? He is the man who, in 1927, betrayed the struggle and deliberately turned against the Chinese people to serve his own selfish interests and those of his rich capitalists clique. He and his colleagues supported the warlords and sold the Chinese people to the foreign imperialists. They betrayed the cause of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. They stained the soil of China with the blood of patriots, Chinese workers and peasants, who carried on the struggle for freedom.

Chiang Kai Shek and his Government failed to defend the country against the invasion by Japanese imperialism; they were more concerned with the fight against Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Despite every appeal for unity to defend the country, Chiang held back, and it was the People's Liberation Army which had to bear the brunt of the fight against Japan.

No sooner was the war against Japan concluded than Chiang, with American backing, again plunged the country into civil war. It is no wonder that today his name is spoken of with hatred and contempt throughout China. The American imperialists are making a colossal blunder if they imagine that Chiang Kai Shek could ever make a "come-back" in Chinese politics; his unpopularity is matched only by the great enthusiasm shown by the people for the People's Government, which, indeed has brought them very substantial benefits.

The national economy has been transformed and China, previously dependent and backward, today stands on her own feet and advances rapidly, despite the economic blockade imposed by the United States and her satellites. They have reconstructed their railways, and added greatly to them. They have built gigantic water conservation works, and tamed the Chinese rivers, to the great advantage of the peasants, and with wide implications for the future electrification of the country. Everywhere, new factories have been built and new industries are springing up. China is becoming a great modern industrial power, capable of manufacturing every-

thing her people need. This is a factor of incalculable significance for the future of the world.

Land reform has been carried out throughout the country. The land question is fundamental in the Chinese revolution. Eighty per cent. of the Chinese people live on the land, and nothing has transformed life more than the fact that millions of hungry landless families have at last, after generations of merciless exploitation by greedy landlords, come to share in the land they work on. For instance, preliminary figures from East China show that 21,000,000 mou of land has been requisitioned and redistributed. (A mou =  $\frac{1}{3}$  acre or  $\frac{1}{16}$  morgen) Ninety per cent. of this land was given to the poor peasants.

The women of China have been liberated from the age-old system of feudal bondage. They now participate in all forms of administration in the country: both in the central government and in local governments and institutions. They hold high positions in factories and in the villages.

Education is another foremost concern in the Chinese People's Republic. A campaign against illiteracy is in full swing, and millions of people are now in part-time schools for adult education. The number of students in all institutions of learning has been doubled since 1949. The "campaign" is a characteristic feature of life in China, and the people delight in completing each campaign before schedule. Successful campaigns of this nature have been carried out against corruption, against crime, to prevent disease, and against subversive activities.

Since 1949, wages in China have increased by amounts ranging from sixty per cent. to 120 per cent. Prices, which were wildly inflated under the corrupt Chiang Kai-Shek administration have been firmly curbed and controlled. The people are better fed, better clothed, better housed than ever before; they are conscious of a perspective of steady and unlimited improvements in the future. To these realities, we must add the fact that China is really a united state for the first time in its history, that its international prestige has enormously advanced, and that the artificial dams which for so long have impeded the progress of this great people have been removed. Adding all these factors together we will gain some understanding of the tremendous enthusiasm and love for the Government which is so outstanding a feature of the Chinese people today. Everywhere, in all walks of life, one finds Chinese people using such phrases as: "Our great Motherland has entered upon a new era," "Construction has begun in our country," "Our main task is to fulfill and overfulfil the tasks assigned to us by Chairman Mao." The broad masses of the people are being mobilised not only for the industrialisation of the country, but in all fields in the building of the new China.

This radical transformation in the life of the nation with the largest population in the world, from semi-colonial slumber and backwardness to the front rank of progress and advancement, is of tremendous significance to the future of humanity, both to the countries of western imperialism and to the people of the colonies in Asia and Africa and elsewhere. In what direction will the giant's power of the new China be exercised, so far as foreign policy is concerned?

In the first place, it is clear that the will and the influence of the Chinese government and people is directed towards world peace. China needs to carry out her great plans for construction and transformation. She ~~wants~~ peace because her people are civilised, cultured and humanitarian. No visitor to China can fail to be struck by the universal desire of the people to abolish warfare as a means of settling disputes between nations, expressed by peace posters, peace slogans, peace meetings and spontaneous expressions of opinion through the length and breadth of the country.

Secondly, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the hopes of the imperialists to disrupt the friendship between China and the Soviet Union are idle and doomed to disappointment. The people of China say often enough that they could never have succeeded in their great construction plans without the unselfish assistance of the Soviet Union. Soviet equipment and technical ~~advices~~ have contributed enormously to Chinese industrialisation and this process continues. Many Soviet technicians are helping in the industrialisation of China. The friendship between the two countries, based on mutual respect for one another's independence, is steadily growing.

Thirdly, the sooner the western world, and particularly the United States of America, realise that the People's Democratic Republic of China has come to stay, that it will not tolerate infringements of its national sovereignty and territory, and that it must be given the place to which it is entitled in the United Nations, in the UN Security Council, and in all discussions of international importance concerning Asia and the world; the nearer the world will be to securing a lasting peace.

Finally, let me say that my talks with the people of China, both the senior Government leaders and the ordinary folk of the farms and factories, have convinced me beyond doubt that they have the warmest sympathy with and regard for the oppressed people of colonial countries; including those of our own African continent. You may imagine what it has meant to a South African in my position, born and brought up under the shadow of racial contempt and discrimination, to visit such a country. I have come away with redoubled determination to play my part in the liberation of our own people, fortified with the sure knowledge that we have hundreds of millions of friends and well-wishers beyond the seas.