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Thought reform in China

Allyn Rickett interviewed

by Susan Johnson

Though reform, or ideological remoulding are terms that conjure up horrifying images of psychological manipulation. To most of us, its purpose seems to be to create slavishness and passive obedience. To the Chinese, however, the meanings of these terms are far different. The Chinese say that some ideas, attitudes and outlooks are derived solely from self-interest and find expression in conduct that is detrimental to the well-being of the wider community. It is these ideas that they challenge.

To the Chinese, anyone, under certain circumstances, can come to see the world through the narrow prism of self-interest. By the same token, anyone can learn concern for others, if the conditions are right.

Although all people are expected to reform their outlooks, those who have committed serious and blatant anti-social acts are in most need of transformation. The Chinese believe that the only enduring correction of criminal behaviour is the correction of the mental outlook that motivated it. It is therefore in the prisons of China that the practice of ideological remoulding can be seen in its most concentrated and systematic form.

Presently, there is very little information available in English on this subject. One fortunate exception is the book *Prisoners of Liberation* written by Allyn and Adele Rickett, an American couple imprisoned in China in the early 1950's for carrying on espionage for the American government. In this work the Ricketts describe their experiences and the progression of changes in their thinking during the full term of their imprisonment. They also describe the American reaction upon their return to the United States in the middle of the McCarthy years.

Allyn Rickett, who now teaches Chinese in the Oriental Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania, was in Halifax last month for a public speaking engagement. The following is a selection of a few questions asked to Rickett during his public presentation and his later discussion with an education class at Dalhousie.

Gazette: How transferable is the whole process of criticism—self-criticism to this society?

Rickett: The technique is not unknown in this society. There are many experiments going on in prisons here using group therapy and other techniques to help prisoners. They can have a certain amount of success but the biggest difficulty is that the society provides no backing at all. The society is not moving along with those experiencing the therapy, so they have trouble adjusting.

There is no such thing as permanent reform. I hope that becomes clear in the book. It is not permanent at all, so without support it can fall apart very quickly.

The other thing about it, criticism groups, is you have to know the motive or purpose for the group. It isn't supposed to be some place to get rid of your frustrations and if that happens it can be a very ugly situation. So if the technique is going to be used it needs two things: the motivation must be very clear and it must be handled very well, very thoughtfully with great sympathy and understanding; the other thing is that there has to be a follow up and that requires a social contact which is not impossible in this country. You can form

very small support groups but don't try to isolate yourself from the world or you have defeated the whole purpose of the reform. So it isn't easy in this kind of situation, you have to adapt the Chinese model to our own situation. Any idea has to be fitted to the realities of your own life in order for it to be worthwhile.

Gazette: Do you think it is possible or profitable to do self-criticism alone; when you are by yourself?

Rickett: No, I think you need a group. You can do an awful lot of self-criticism but a group helps because really it can help you to articulate and formulate your criticism. They can put you in the position where you must go a little bit deeper than just saying the criticism. It is very hard, as an individual to go much further beyond a simple guilt feeling. It is hard to get into reform, unless you have the group helping you and willing to bring the issue up again. It is just very hard to do it on your own. I think we all do it to some extent -- we are sorry for something we've done but it is hard for it to go further than that when you are alone.

As well, intellectualizing your mistakes doesn't mean reform. The real process of reform comes from participating in real life in a new way and not intellectualizing about it. In order to be ready to experience new things you do have to go through an intellectual process but it can't stop there. And this is what has really brought about the change in China. The whole social context is moving ahead, and people interacting upon one another are moving ahead. It is important to have the support of the people around you.

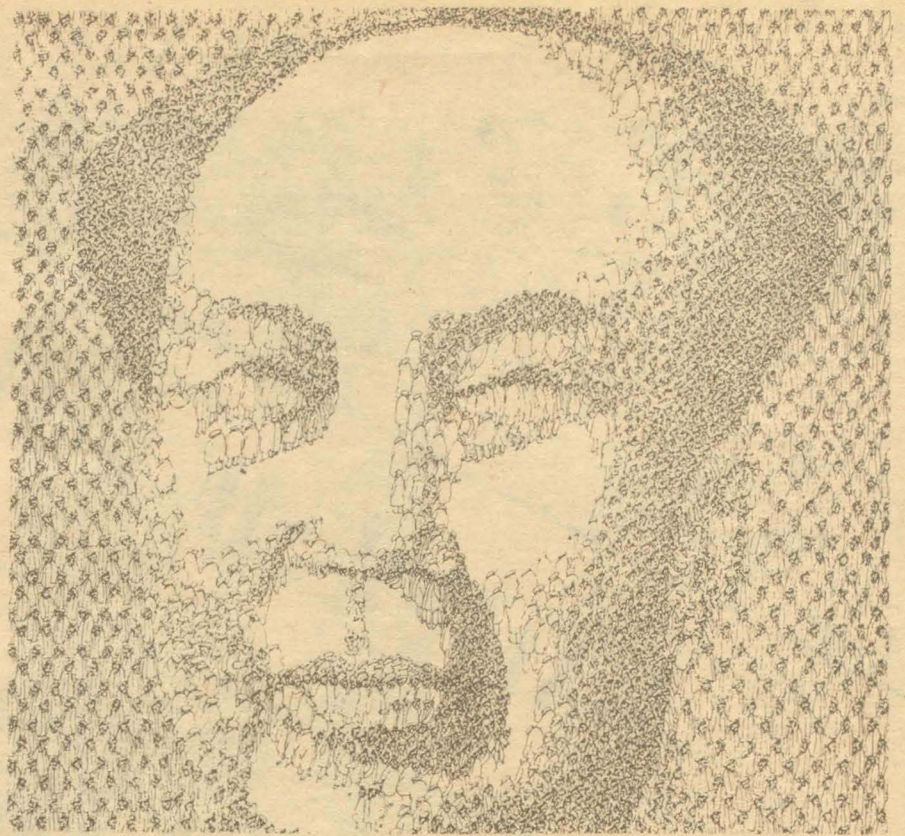
Gazette: What do you think would happen to someone who refused to participate in the process of thought reform?

Rickett: Well the law, of course, was very clear. If you refused to confess and refused to reform in those days just after the revolution when China was still under the military rule you would be brought before the military tribunal; immediately tried and sentenced. The law was such that there was no possibility of leniency under those circumstances. The only way to enjoy lenient treatment was being willing to make a confession and undergo reform. I would imagine that if your crime was serious enough and you refused to take part in reform, after a certain period of time--be it six months or a year--you might be taken out and shot or taken to a maximum security prison.

One of the problems with American liberals, you know, is their great concern about capital punishment. In a certain political context it is important to make sure that it doesn't happen but, on the other hand, when you have gone through a bloody revolution shooting people is not as unthinkable as it is in a lot more staid societies.

Gazette: What of the idea of China being a crime-free society, is there any factual basis for such a belief?

Rickett: Probably in China more effort has gone into making people feel that the goals of the society are their goals or should be their goals, that they should want what the society wants. There is probably more of this than any other place. They can do this because there is a real basis for it. The greatest justification for cheating and crime in the United States is that everybody else does it but if you are



in a society where everyone else doesn't do it then that argument doesn't work. The pressure to not cheat is so great that it seldom happens.

In China there has been an enormous effort to change people's attitudes, habits, and customs; to conform and fit in with the new society. There hasn't been just the building of the new socio-economic structure, but new social attitudes as well. The Chinese would be the first to admit that they have a long way to go. They are also the first to admit that special problems can arise.

China is not a country in which there is not crime: there is crime. There are crimes of passion, occasional crimes of embezzlement, and there is a good deal of petty thievery that comes about from structural problems in the new system. A few years ago there was a whole rash of such crimes because young people going to the countryside for one reason or another--they were homesick, couldn't adjust, the peasants took advantage of them, or whatever--would come back to the city. The system of rationing and the social disgrace which their parents would suffer led these young people to become something of a floating population in the city, living off their friends and occasionally stealing. So there was a sudden rise in this sort of crime. Now that is a special thing, a special situation.

There is no question that in terms of crime China is probably the most crime free country -- in spite of the fact that there is some crime. It does have probably the least crime of any country. It is not a society where crime is a major problem. A good deal of this has to do with the fact that you have a general social consciousness and social morality, a general feeling of togetherness in the society, which doesn't permit that sort of thing.

Gazette: How are crimes handled now--are there definite sentences, and what happens if after your sentence is up you have not reformed?

Rickett: We probably know less about how the system works now than we did when I was there, or even up till 1959. After that time the system became much more flexible.

Basically the situation is this, crimes that would result in less than a three year sentence are handled by the local police or by the street committees. They can impose certain kinds of sanctions such that the person does a certain kind of labour or checks in at certain times.

If the punishment is to be for more than three years it goes before a court and the court can then decide what kind of punishment

should be meted out. They can decide if the person would do best sent to the countryside to work or a factory--but now people are more often sent to the countryside. Sometimes they will decide that the case is serious enough that the person must be sent to a prison with a definite sentence. However, at the end of that sentence if that person has not reformed, and reform there would be indicated by his/her conduct in prison, the sentence could be prolonged. It can also be reduced, in the sense that they do have reform boards to review the cases.

It is my understanding, though, that the practice of sending people to prisons and so on has more or less ceased. There really aren't very many cases where it is necessary in the first place. The last thing they want to do is coop somebody up in a prison, and they will only do that if it becomes very clear that he is a menace to the society. And, if he is too much of a threat, if he has displayed homicidal tendencies, then as far as the Chinese are concerned you might as well end the problem.

Gazette: In your book you do not go into too much detail about your experience once you left China, the treatment you received from the American authorities and public. Could you elaborate a little on that now?

Rickett: The American authorities were very anxious about us. My wife and I had, separately, come to the conclusion that whenever we were released we would have to tell the truth, and when we got to the United States, again separately, since my wife was released before me, we were considered prime examples of brainwashing. The government was seriously interested in this business of brainwashing so, they just happened to have a psychiatrist on the ship my wife came over on, and they really put her through it. When she got to San Francisco she suddenly found that to get into the United States she had to take the Cornell Medical Test. I don't know if you've ever seen it but it asks such brilliant questions as "do you ever feel that life isn't worth living?" and "do you wet the bed at night?" She also had to have a physical and they kept wanting her to go to New York for check-ups...and they were quite willing to do all this for free.

Actually, the government, in our case, took a very careful position. They didn't want to be in a position of seeming to harass these two kids that had been brainwashed in China and spent a couple of years in prison. They didn't like that position one bit, so all they did was have us carefully watched and so on and not much more than that. We

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Diplomats play while Cyprus torn

by Nicholas A. Pittas

The Cyprus problem has a long and complicated history. Much has been written about it from various angles, so I do not propose to re-hash old arguments, which the interested reader can easily gain access to by investing a little time in the library. What I would like to discuss in this article are some of my personal observations and feelings as regards the cruel fate of my native land in recent years.

When the Turkish war-ships and fighter-bombers struck across the narrow stretch of sea, that separates the two countries, I had only been gone a fortnight from my home. After two years of service in the army on Cyprus I had decided to return to Dalhousie to complete my degree in political science. The island I left behind me was troubled, but for the vast majority of

the people life there had an ambience of easy rhythm and prosperity which, coupled with an almost ideal climate, made Cyprus somewhat of a 'Shangrila' both for the local inhabitants, and the many tourists who swarmed to her shores to enjoy the island's bountiful physical and cultural attractions.

Although Cyprus, in terms of territory and population, is a micro-state, in the intensity and variety of her history, physical environment, agriculture and 'international' population, she becomes a phantasmagoric kaleidoscope in which one can perceive the course of our Western civilization over the past several thousand years. If ever there was a cultural mosaic Cyprus was it.

And then the tanks came. In a month of terror and unprecedented destruction Cyprus was reduced to a

bleeding, helpless orphan in the world of nation-states. Diplomats rushed hither and thither 'tut-tutting', the U.N. Security Council rushed to meet in 'extraordinary' sessions and came up with repeated resolutions calling for the usual litany of 'good-will' and restraint. The pleas went unheeded. Greece, Turkey and Britain played diplomatic games at Geneva while the Cypriot was being cruelly crushed into the soil, that up 'till then he had nurtured with his sweat, and which now was being washed abundantly with the blood of its men, women and children.

So now I am reduced to repeating cold figures: over 10,000 killed, over 200,000 refugees in their own country, massive economic destruction, looting and unemployment. If we compare Cyprus to Canada a comparable tragedy in this country would mean 400,000 killed, 8,000,000 refugees and the loss of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes to the invader.

When the fighting stopped Cyprus had been transformed from a 'Shangrila' into one more divided country in a world which seethes with the problems inherent in arbitrary and violent partitions. Like Ireland, Germany, Palestine, Korea, Vietnam and on, and on and on. It's now too late and useless to allot blame for the massacre of Cyprus, in relations between states (as with individuals) things are seldom 'black and white'. The problem for Cyprus, now, is to try to pick itself up, and hope that the

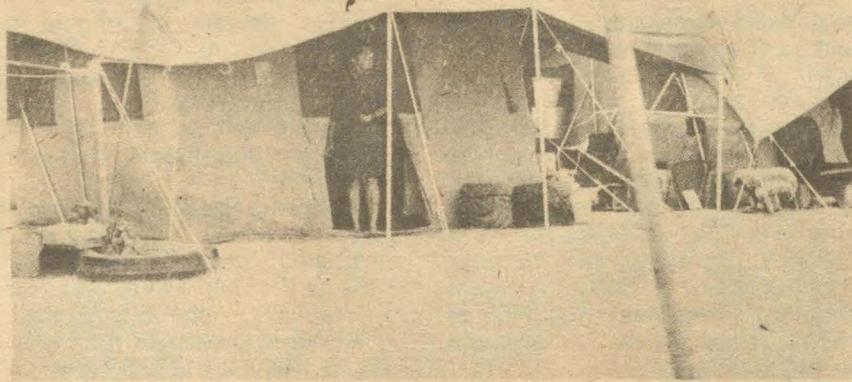
years will erase the scars and bitter memories.

To do this its people, Greeks and Turks, must be allowed to come to a **modus vivendi**. I believe the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus can live and work together. I know this from personal experience, and because the mentality of the Cypriot is neither aggressive nor petty. People can rise above 'ancient hatreds' and feuds, which political opportunists are so adept at manipulating in order to attain their 'strategic' goals, if they are left to put their own house in order.

But will it happen? Nothing is certain, least of all in international politics, but there are people working hard to bring about 'the conditions for future harmony in Cyprus. Our own Dean of Law (Professor St. John MacDonald) has been engaged, through the 'good-offices' of the U.N. Secretary-General, in assisting the Cypriot negotiators, who are trying (one would hope), to arrive at a workable constitution for the island.

Canada has been contributing peace-keeping forces in Cyprus for twelve years, and has assisted Cyprus in other, less tangible ways through their association in the British Commonwealth Nations. What we can do, here in Canada, is to support the efforts of the U.N. in this (and other) disputes, and to let our leaders know that in Canada, at least, people will not put up with the institutionalisation of the laws of the jungle and the use of brute aggression in the pursuit of morally reprehensible aims.

The basis for a solution to the Cyprus Problem has already been *Cont'd on pg. 4*



Refugees still languish in camps

Under the Persian carpet

by Lynn Watson

Present-day Iran is a land of vivid contrasts and strong contradictions. More than two-thirds of the population of 26 million are illiterate, while some 10 billion dollars has been spent on American arms in the last few years.

The country is now undergoing a period of extremely rapid modernization, it being the Shah's ambition to turn Iran into a big industrial and military power. The benefits of growth have been distributed very unequally, however, and economic development has been accompanied by severe political repression.

The public image portrayed by the Shah is that of a benign father of a growing nation. He is however a father who expects complete and unthinking obedience, as is shown by his statement that his people "have every freedom, except the freedom to behave treasonably". The definition of treasonable behaviour is interpreted in Iran as meaning the formation of or association with any group whose ideology is opposed to that of the constitutional monarchy as embodied in the person of their ruler.

In 1975 the Shah declared Iran to be a 'one-party state'. Those who refused to join the regime's "Resurgence Party" were warned that they would be "either communist or without a country", and thus be faced with either prison or exile.

The Shah's instrument of repression of any opposition to his autocratic rule is the secret police organisation, SAVAK. This association is invested with wide-ranging powers and it has been ruthless and effective in crushing political dissent before it seriously endangers the Shah's position as an absolute authority.

The Shah has also used the more subtle tactic of appeasement in order to consolidate his own power. Thus he instigated the White

Revolution in 1963, which included a program of extensive land reform, the aim of which was peasant ownership of the land. This reform has in large measure been implemented, and there is little doubt that conditions have improved for many peasants. However, the political effect of land reform has been to transfer the dependence of the peasant from the landlord to the Shah himself, as the landlords have been replaced by State functionaries responsible to their monarch.

Social changes are taking place under the Shah, some of them to the benefit of the poor of the country. He is now faced with the problem of how to reconcile social progress with his own authoritarian, one-man system of government, as with social progress must come a degree of political awareness. At present, there is very strict censorship of the media, the Shah having closed down 95% of the Iranian press last year. Arrests for political offences are a frequent occurrence, and the procedure of trial of political offenders deserves some scrutiny, in the light of the Shah's professed respect for fundamental Human Rights.

Suspected political dissidents are arrested by SAVAK; which is then responsible for the pre-trial investigation of each prisoner. There have been numerous reports of torture during interrogation; SAVAK has made no concessions in order to disprove these claims, and prisoners are not allowed to receive any visitors nor consult with their counsel during the time when SAVAK is building up a file for prosecution purposes. It is disturbing that evidence of guilt has often rested solely on confessions made allegedly under torture.

Political offenders are tried before a military tribunal, and they are represented by a military counsel selected from a short list compiled



by the tribunal. The effectiveness of such defence is demonstrated by the fact that in 1964 four defence counsellors were themselves convicted of political offences as a result of presenting the cases of their clients too earnestly!

Very often political trials are held partly or wholly in camera, and even when the trial is declared 'open' foreign journalists and observers are barred from entry. On several occasions executions have resulted from secret trials, as in March 1972 when the official announcement of the verdict on nine political prisoners was made only after the executions had taken place.

In the course of the trial the onus lies with the defence to disprove the evidence compiled by the SAVAK during the pre-trial period, thus the defendant is seen as guilty until proven innocent.

The difficulty of proving one's innocence is greatly increased as the charges are very often extremely vague, consisting of imprecise allegations of "taking measures against internal security". The prosecution case in many trials has been extremely weak, and in one trial the only 'evidence' produced was that some of the defendants knew all of the others, and that all

of the defendants knew at least one of the others!

The rate of executions of political prisoners has been very high; Amnesty International estimates that a total of almost 300 people were executed for political offences during 1972 and 1973. Obviously the Shah is concerned that his method of dealing with opposition is not made public. Hence, the secret trials, the banning of foreign observers, the expulsion of an Amnesty International delegate in 1970, and the subsequent sentence of ten years imprisonment for this Iranian interpreter.

However, as Iran is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and as Teheran played host to an international conference on Human Rights in 1968, such violations of fundamental freedoms as seen in Iran cannot and should not be glossed over.

Evidently the Shah clings to the hope that potential critics will be overawed and dazzled by the glitter of such occasions as his coronation ceremony in 1967 or Persia's 2,500th anniversary in 1971, and will omit to investigate all that has been swept under the glorious Persian carpet.

Ford on the CIA - make it more efficient

by H. MacKinnon

In a television speech to the U.S. a few weeks ago, President Ford announced his plan for "sweeping reorganization" and "reform" of the CIA. This "new" policy, unveiled with all the predictable hoopla, is in reality not "new", "sweeping", or a "reform" at all. It's just another good old-fashioned cover-up.

Ford's plan is to organize a more centralized, more efficient, and more secret "intelligence community". That is the upshot of more than a year of leaks, investigations, and revelations about the international political police of the USA - the CIA.

True, the "exposure" of the CIA helped to clarify its real mission - the promotion and defense of US industries both at home and abroad. But none of the "investigations" in Congress or the press seemed to be concerned with curbing, let alone

stopping, this basic aspect of employing secret armed force. They still believe in a covert police force dedicated to maintaining US interests.

In his speech, Ford hailed the CIA, along with the army, as the "central pillars" of America's world wide power. He saluted "the dedicated men and women of the intelligence community who... carry out missions that advance our interests in the world", and served notice that he will do nothing to alter the essence of the CIA's mission.

When the CIA organized the Chile coup, perpetrated the Phoenix Program that murdered 20,000 Vietnamese, conducted a secret war in Cambodia, installed reactionary governments in Guatemala, Iran, Brazil, South Vietnam and a score of other nations, backed puppet "liberation" movements, in Angola, masterminded the Bay of Pigs



Who's the boss?

invasion of Cuba and assassinated leaders of national liberation movements, it was carrying out the tasks assigned to it by "imperialism", that is, to preserve U.S. domination, control, and interests throughout the world - witness CIA funds going to the Social Credit party in B.C. to aid in the defeat of the NDP. To expect that Ford or even his critics in Congress would alter that assignment would be to expect "imperialism" to promote its own demise.

It appears what the Ford policy will do is to streamline the CIA,

eliminate inter-agency rivalries, and further centralize the power of the CIA. In this regard it is essential to see the political police (the FBI and the CIA) not as an independent policy-making "secret government" or an "agency gone berserk" but as the executor of the armed action required to defend imperialist rule.

In announcing the CIA 're-organization' Ford alluded to the essence of his concern-that "excessive disclosures" had compromised the ability of the CIA to function. His solution is to prosecute and imprison any government employee who makes public "government secrets". Ford proposes harsh suppression for anyone who releases a Pentagon Papers, or even speaks the truth to a reporter.

It is important that we, as Canadians, recognize the forces which the U.S. will use to protect their interests. Considering present world conditions, it appears that armed action, both covert and overt, is increasingly necessary to protect the interests of transnational monopoly capitalism. While the U.S. has suffered defeats in Angola and Indochina we have to realize that the CIA and the army are not through subverting foreign governments as well as nationalist and liberation movements throughout the world.

Reviewing the actions of Ford and the CIA, one is reminded of the surprisingly candid remark made in 1959 by the then Secretary of State of the USA, John Foster Dulles, when he said "The United States has no friends, just interests". We would do well to remember that statement.

The brighter side

New world society

by Mahesh K. Raju

A new world society is gradually emerging. It has been growing quietly and steadily over the past decade or so. The tumult and excitement, the anger, violence and confusion seem to point to the birth of something new. People around the world are more than ever revolting against the old order. We, as inheritors of this planet are called upon to work with all the energy and capabilities we possess.

The dawn of the twentieth century coincided with a wave of Nationalist feelings. People were looking for a national identity that would separate them from other existing ideologies and modes of thought. While this level of thought still persists in some parts of the world, an advanced level of universal well being is gradually emerging.

East and West are relative terms. They are geographical expressions and not cultural types. The differences among countries like China, Japan and India are quite as significant as those in European or American countries. These distinct cultural patterns arose from habits and religious beliefs in the different regions in relative isolation from one another.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution, the West has dominated the East. This revolution aided by many new scientific discoveries has created a large gulf not only between the West and the East, but even the present Western civilization and that of its own past.

Recent trends of thought seem to suggest that while the West is scientific in outlook, the East is spiritually minded. The one is said to be rational while the other is held to be religious. This view is quite misleading if one looks back at history. China and India have made fundamental contributions to science and technology till about three hundred years ago, and there have

been illustrious examples of religious wisdom in the West. As the late President of India Dr Radha Krishan puts it, "Science and religion are aspects of every culture. The rational and spiritual are two strands inextricably woven in human nature, though in varied patterns. One or the other may be more prominent in different periods of human history."

Human beings are fundamentally the same and hold the same deep values. The difference among them which are no doubt, significant are related to external, temporary, social conditions and are alterable with them.

In spite of sharp international conflicts, setbacks, and differences, the world is getting to be one. Science knows no borders. Art and culture of other countries are becoming more well known and respected. The isolated existence of societies have given way to mass communication to any part of the world. Thus the physical barriers are rapidly being broken down paving the way for intellectual communication.

Today this is absolutely necessary in view of the development of nuclear weapons of fantastic power. The present stress on the development of more effective intercontinental missiles could very well obliterate any possible aggressor from the face of this earth. The nuclear arms race indicates the possibility of putting an end to the human species in a nuclear war. Whoever may be the strong power, no one will survive a nuclear war. The fate of all nations is therefore inseparably tied up. Either we live together or die together. The ending of human life on earth is a real possibility we all have to reckon with. Faced by such an immense challenge, our differences of race and religion, color or class, nation or ideology become totally irrelevant.

Cyprus Cont'd from pg. 3

established in resolutions of the U.N.'s Security Council and General Assembly, which have called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Cyprus, and the return of the refugees to their homes. Cyprus has now become a test-case for the U.N.'s effectiveness in promoting international peace and security under the principles of its Charter, to which practically every state in the world is a signatory.

Every school-child who has studied modern history, knows that the failure of the League of Nations to counter Italian aggression in Abyssinia, German aggression in the Sudetenland and Japanese aggression in China contributed mightily to the breakdown of international peace and security on a global scale during World War II. Our world today is not so different. If the international community sanctions, by inaction, aggression by the strong against the weak, it will encourage those who covet what is not theirs to act according to the precept 'might is right.'

Rickett Cont'd from pg. 2

had more real problems with other people--remember the McCarthyism was rampant in the country at the time and it was the good solid citizens who chickened out.

The newspapers, of course, their job is making news and they were the ones who tended to try and cook up the worst kind of sensational stories. They were really unpleasant, the whole business. But that is their job....

The really disappointing thing was the number of essentially good people who didn't come through; and the really good thing was the number of good people who did come through. We found a lot of support at home from people who didn't agree with us but still supported us because we had adopted such an honest position.

Gazette: We understand that you have been back to China since your release from prison. How did it feel to go back?

Rickett: Of course, I went with a

The consequences for our already fragile 'world-order', if this view were to prevail, I need not elaborate. Cyprus is a small country, but the crime committed against it was neither small nor without broader implications for the world. If we turn a blind-eye to such 'small' acts of aggression, if we try to rationalize or put-off a concerted international response, we are courting disaster on a larger, and of course, less manageable scale.

As individuals, as citizens we are limited in our capacity to influence the behemoth that is our governmental institutions, but that does not absolve anyone from speaking out, and letting the 'mighty' of the earth know that, ultimately, no institution can continue to exist if it (through our leaders) divorces itself from certain principles of justice and fair-play, upon which our civilization must be founded if it is not to perish.

Otherwise, the only peace this world shall ever know will be that of the grave.

good many misgivings, at least two of them. One stemmed from my own arrogance in thinking that China is my business since I am a professor of Chinese at Pennsylvania University. So I didn't think I was going to get much out of the trip but I still wanted to go--professionally it was important for me to go. My other problem was that I wanted to see old friends but I was really hesitant. I didn't want to embarrass them or myself, or do something stupid, again, in the eyes of the Chinese government. So I was under this kind of tension when I got there. But as it turned out my problems vanished when I got there. Visiting China you see so much and experience so much that you can never get from study alone. The other thing was that when I did meet some old friends, after twenty-five years, we sat down and it was soon like we had hardly been apart at all. Everything turned out just fine.

DALHOUSIE INTERNATIONAL is a joint production of the Dalhousie Gazette and the International Students Association. Published monthly during the school year it is designed to be a forum on international issues. Contributions from all sources are welcomed.

The final issue this semester will be coming out April 8. In this issue there will be a special vacation section. All students are invited to submit short articles describing an especially momentful spot that you have visited on your world travels.