

‘Telling the Truth About People’s China’.

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Abstract

This work is a discussion of the history of the construction and propagation over time (1949-2002), by New Zealanders, of positive images of the People's Republic of China (PRC). This was done primarily through the New Zealand China Friendship Society. The thesis also looks at China-aligned communist parties, students who went on New Zealand University Students' Association study tours in the 1970s, and key interlocutors such as Rewi Alley. These other groups had cross-membership with the NZCFS but differing engagements with China.

The images propagated by the New Zealanders altered over time in response to changes in the PRC, developments in New Zealand, and shifting characteristics amongst the people who were engaged in the practice of producing images of the PRC. The thesis looks at how these observers of the PRC, and the organisations which they are combined, are themselves created, and see themselves, in relation to their process of viewing the PRC.

This idea of a shifting sense of China and the changing sense of self is explored using a range of ideas. These include ideology, subjectivity, concepts of truth and practices of truth-telling. The thesis is an attempt to provide a sympathetic reading of a wide range of material and trying to understand what the PRC has meant at different times, in different circumstances and to different people. Accounts of the PRC are examined contextually. This involves the re-reading of a range of texts that have 'written' the PRC for those New Zealanders who, in different circumstances, have themselves been sympathetic to projections of successes taking place in the PRC.

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Introduction

When Mao Zedong declared the Chinese people Liberated and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) there were just a handful of New Zealanders who had the sort of contact with China that meant that their relationship continued with 'New' China.¹ On the whole this small group found themselves in conflict with the majority of New Zealanders who subscribed not only to the 'China has been "lost" to communism' thesis but also who saw 'Red' China as a real threat to 'world peace'.²

The New Zealanders in question were mainly Pakeha – Chinese New Zealanders and Maori were few. They lived in a New Zealand that was dominated by ideas relating to the Cold War and within a society in part structured towards an essentially white New Zealand produced by exclusionary immigration.³ Further, most of the people who are the subject of this thesis did not know Chinese. The end point of this study, the winding down of many of the relationships discussed here from the late 1990s, corresponds with the growth of a sizeable population of New Zealanders who had come from the PRC. Prior to that there was almost no-one in New Zealand who had experience of living in the PRC. This began to change in the 1970s as people who went to the country to learn Chinese, to be diplomats, to teach and to undertake business increased. With few exceptions, the latter are not the subject of this study. The groups who are the focus of this thesis are distinguished by a shared belief in the social transformative capacity and reality of the CPC-led Chinese project.⁴

This work is the story of how this small group of New Zealanders, and those who followed them with the same endeavour, attempted to construct and propagate a positive image of China. This was done primarily through the New Zealand China Friendship Society (NZCFS).⁵ This study also looks at China-aligned communist parties and students whose engagement with the PRC occurred through their involvement in New Zealand University Students' Association (NZUSA) study tours. The images propagated by the New Zealanders altered over time in response to changes in the PRC, developments in New Zealand and shifting characteristics amongst the people themselves engaged in the practices.

¹ Most contact between New Zealand and China from the 1920s through to the pronouncement of the PRC was either by missionaries, who were almost all out of China by 1951, or through the familial ties of Chinese New Zealanders. Contact for the latter was considerably difficult in the early period of the PRC, even more so after the start of the Korean War.

² See the first parts of chapter 3 for more discussion about this.

³ Barry Gustafson, 'New Zealand in the Cold War World', in Alexander Trapeznik and Aaron Fox, *Lenin's Legacy Down Under*, Otago University Press, 2004, 23. Patrick Ongley and David Pearson, 'Post 1945 International Migration: New Zealand, Australia and Canada Compared', *International Migration Review*, 29, 3, Autumn 1995, 176-793 particularly 773-775.

⁴ The Communist Party of China (CPC) is often written in English as the CCP or Chinese Communist Party. I have used CPC as this is how the Party tends to refer to itself in English language materials and is also consistent with the nomenclature used by the Marxist inspired New Zealand groups to refer to their organisations: CPNZ, CPA, etc.

⁵ The Society went through a number of different names. For simplicity I will usually refer to the 'Society' or the NZCFS.

The ‘China threat’ construction was a recent one although it built on historic ones. Just a few years earlier China and New Zealand had been on the same side of a war against Japan. Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression had been a *cause celebre* in New Zealand and the toil of the Chinese peasants, as witnessed from a New Zealand that also regarded itself as having an agrarian identity, had been largely favourable. Although New Zealand, since European settlement, has been one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world, its export economy was developed under colonisation as a supplier of agrarian products to the United Kingdom. This is an important linkage between the New Zealand left and PRC radicalism – there was a strong emphasis on involvement with agricultural labour and factory work as part of the political action in Maoism and in the practical experience and cultural imaginary of people in the New Zealand left in this era: large numbers of New Zealanders had personal experience of physical labour in either rural or urban contexts from the 1950s to the 1970s and this cut across class lines.⁶ Intellectuals such as R.A.K. Mason and Communist leaders such as Victor Wilcox each had experiences as rural labourers. This was different from other Western countries, where members of the working class were less likely to shift back and forth between agricultural and factory labour, and where members of the intelligencia were less likely to have worked in farming or in factories at some stage in their lives. Maoist emphasis on the agrarian sector, and on agricultural mechanisation undertaken as a revolutionary activity, sounded less remote from everyday politics and economics in New Zealand than it might have in other rich countries. Leftist New Zealanders translated both what they read and what they saw in Maoist China into terms that fitted with their own economies – material and moral – in which ideologies and technologies associated with rural egalitarianism closely linked to mechanised farming, and strongly interpenetrating rural and urban sectors, even including such structures as farming cooperatives, seemed to be present in both systems.

New Zealand’s most famous son in China, Rewi Alley, said that in the 1920s he had read in the *Weekly News* ‘on the great revolution in China’ and decided he ‘would like to go and have a look at [it]’.⁷ Given the agrarian links identified above, Rewi Alley’s involvement with rural industrialism was a significant issue from both the New Zealand and Chinese ends. Alley’s exploits with Indusco during the War of Resistance and activities such as the transport of sheep to China along the Burma Road by CORSO fuelled the public imagination, albeit in a colonial manner not necessarily suited to the new environment.⁸

⁶ Richard Bedford and Brian Heenan, ‘The people of New Zealand: reflections on a revolution’, in Holland, P.G. and Johnston, W.D. (eds), *Southern Approaches: Geography in New Zealand*, New Zealand Geographical Society, Christchurch, 1987, 133-77.

⁷ Rewi Alley, *Rewi Alley an Autobiography*, New World Press, Beijing, 1987, 42.

⁸ Indusco is the Industrial Cooperatives Movement, founded by Edgar and Peg Snow. Rewi Alley was the international face of the movement and become essentially its CEO within a short time of it being established. Most foreigners were encouraged to leave ‘New China’ after Liberation, this was especially true of those the Communist Party considered to have been engaged in an imperialist or colonial activity, such as missionaries, or those accused of having worked too closely with the former regime. The latter category included almost everyone connected with international donor

The image of China depicted by those there during the Japanese occupation had drawn an extremely sympathetic audience in New Zealand, especially when New Zealand too was at war with Japan. In fact this time represented, for the first time, the beginning of a shift away from a preponderance of anti-Chinese racism.⁹ According to the Korean War scholar Ian McGibbon

[Underlying] New Zealand's attitude to Asia and Asian was a sense of racial superiority, deeply embedded in the national consciousness through more than a century of perceiving that part of the world through imperialist lenses... Chinese were regarded as inscrutable, untrustworthy, corrupt.¹⁰

Yet the image of the toiling Chinese peasant, subjected to unconscionable treatment at the hands of the invaders, resonated with the New Zealand public fearing the same. But since most of the New Zealand fighting force was in Europe, and England was still 'home' to so much of colonial New Zealand, China remained an explored and distant 'other'. The foundation of the friendship relationship, however, was forged in this period, and in the period of civil war after Japan's surrender (1945-1949).

While most New Zealanders were fed a diet of China 'being lost', those New Zealanders with firsthand experience presented an image of 'unimaginable suffering of the people under Chiang's Kuomintang regime' (KMT).¹¹ The KMT did have its supporters, William Goddard for example, but the NZCFS consisted of people who believed in the idea that everything was going to change under the CPC.¹² For them, the Communist Party of China represented order, stability and a new beginning.¹³ For those who would be the founders of the NZCFS, the PRC was 'New China', a project to which they were prepared to offer their complete support. Yet despite their initial activities, the historical interest and the agrarian connection, China was quickly constructed through the popular media as an enemy and as a threat. As New Zealand made its commitment to the containment of communism, China was depicted as a 'coiled dragon' whose unfolding would spread socialism and the 'yellow peril' southwards. This was exacerbated by war on the Korean peninsula, where New Zealand and Chinese troops faced off against one another.¹⁴

Reflecting this popular position, New Zealand's involvement in the Korean War was supported by both main political parties, had universal press approval and only the 'numerically insignificant

agencies. CORSO was the Council of Organisations for Relief and Services Overseas. Of even Indusco's Bailie Schools the new government was unimpressed: 'It was too closely associated with missionary activity, foreigners and the Nationalists to be a desirable model for New China', (Anne-Marie Brady, *The Myth of Revi Alley*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003, 54).

⁹ For an alternative view – that racist policies continued until the 1980s, see Nigel Murphy, 'Poll Tax & Other Anti-Chinese Legislation', Paper presented at Crouching Tiger, Hidden Banana Conference, Auckland, 4-5 June 2005.

¹⁰ Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War*, vol 1, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1991, 1996, 16.

¹¹ Barbara Spencer, *Desert Hospital in China*, Jarrolds, London, 1954, 166.

¹² See Jeremy Taylor, "Taipei's 'Britisher': W. G. Goddard and the promotion of Nationalist China in the Cold-war Commonwealth", *New Zealand Asian Studies Review*, 9, 2 (December, 2007): 126-46.

¹³ This remains the official position: see Bill Willmott, past-President and Life Member of the NZCFS when interviewed by Linda Clark on Radio New Zealand's *Nine-to-Noon* on 8 November 2002.

¹⁴ See McGibbon, 16.

New Zealand Communist Party' opposed the commitment of New Zealand troops.¹⁵ Rewi Alley's efforts to speak against New Zealand's participation, and to condemn what he referred to as biological warfare on the part of the United Nations troops, resulted in official efforts to discredit him throughout 1952.¹⁶

The organisation that was formed to represent alternative images of the PRC, the New Zealand China Society, was actually dreamed up in China. Alley and Shirley Barton, the latter in China on behalf of CORSO and working with Alley's Indusco project, wrote to their New Zealand supporters suggesting that they convert the support they had offered through aid into political support for the new regime.¹⁷ This was by no means an easy task as the small-scale publications supporting China or opposing New Zealand's commitment in Korea were officially denounced as 'communist fronts' and dissenting views to the majority had 'difficulty finding expression in the press'.¹⁸

Shirley Barton worked with Alley in China where she was Chinese Field Secretary for CORSO from 1947 until CORSO's work formerly finished with Liberation. She stayed in China and assisted Alley with the production of his first two books, *Yo Banfa*, which she edited, and its companion edition *The People Have Strength*, published after she returned to New Zealand. She was also an important confidant for both him and R. A. K. Mason, whom she saw and corresponded with regularly. Her papers, now deposited with the National Library, show she continued to be a regular and effusive correspondent with Alley, helping him, in part, to craft his messages in accordance with developments in New Zealand. She was a member of the CPNZ, having worked with the CPNZ bookstore (Progressive Books) and the CPNZ-dominated Peace Council before she went to China and she formally joined the Party after her return from China in 1953. Whilst in New China she attended the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference, which is discussed in chapter 2, joining the New Zealand delegation in Beijing as an observer. She became Secretary of the then Auckland-based New Zealand China Friendship Society on the retirement of Mabel Lee for health reasons in 1954 and was the first National Secretary when the society was formed on a national basis, with Mason as President, in 1958.¹⁹

Other early prominent participants had also been to China to see things with their own eyes, as part of a tradition that would be crucial to legitimating their claims to having experiential knowledge about China.²⁰ They included nurses Kathleen Hall and Isobel Thompson who had

¹⁵ McGibbon, 82.

¹⁶ Director of Information Services to Minister in Charge of Publicity and Information, 21 October 1952, ATL, Marshall Papers, folder 22/2.

¹⁷ Letter to Wolfgang Rosenberg (Rewi Alley Aid Group) 1 August 1952, Barton papers, ATL.

¹⁸ McGibbon, 310.

¹⁹ Tom Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 1995, 70-80.

²⁰ The idea of first-hand experience being crucial to understanding the 'truth' of China is discussed further in chapters 3 and 5.

both worked during the war years in northern China, and Professor James Bertram who had been a correspondent in China and later a Japanese prisoner of war.

Kathleen Hall went to China in early 1923 and spent two years studying Chinese before working in mission hospitals in Datong, Hejian and Anguo. In 1933 she set up a cottage hospital in Songjiazhuang, a small village in western Hebei. By 1938 the area lay in the no-man's land between the Japanese-occupied lowland and the mountain headquarters of the Eighth Route Army. Hall made trips to Peking to collect supplies for the hospital and when asked by the medical adviser to the Eighth Route Army, Norman Bethune, a Canadian doctor, she would also bring back medical supplies for the army. In 1939 the Japanese carried out a punitive raid on Songjiazhuang, destroying the mission and hospital, and demanded Hall be expelled from China. Back in New Zealand, she spoke on China whenever she had the opportunity and worked for the missions, for the China Aid Council and for CORSO. She was involved in setting up branches of the New Zealand China Friendship Society. In March 1960 she met Rewi Alley for the first time, home on a visit from his work in China. She returned to China to take part in the national day celebrations in Beijing later that year and visited China again in 1964 as a guest of the Chinese Peoples Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.²¹

In 1935 James Bertram accepted a travelling fellowship from the Rhodes Trust to visit China, and spent 1936 in Beijing learning Chinese. He made his way the following year to Xi'an, where KMT leader General Chiang Kai-shek had been seized by officers sympathetic to the communists, a crisis that led to the formation of the United Front against the Japanese invaders. After interviewing Mao Zedong in Yan'an (the first British journalist to do so), he travelled for five months with the Eighth Route Army in north China. These experiences resulted in his books *Crisis in China* (1937) and *North China Front* (1939). During these two years Bertram became acquainted with a number of the men and women who would later take high posts in communist China. He later worked for Song Qingling's China Defence League (CDL), soliciting and distributing western refugee and medical aid. Bertram worked for the league in Hong Kong until the Japanese seized the colony in December 1941. He became a prisoner of war in Hong Kong and Tokyo for nearly four years. After the war, he also travelled for a period throughout New Zealand as a CORSO representative and directed help once again to Song Qingling and to Rewi Alley. The remainder of Bertram's life was spent as an academic. He was active for a while in groups such as the Society for Closer Relations with Russia and the New Zealand China Society, but was never attracted to the Party politics that sometimes dominated those organisations. He returned to China with the official cultural group discussed in chapter 2 in 1956, and again in

²¹ Hall, Mary. 'Hall, Kathleen Anne Baird 1896 - 1970'. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 22 June 2007, <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> (accessed 23 April 2010).

1986 as an honorary guest of the Chinese government for the anniversary of Chiang Kai-shek's capture.²²

Isobel Thompson worked in China as a nurse with CORSO, the Field Service Unit (Quakers) and the Chinese Welfare Fund (headed by Song Qingling) from 1947 until June 1950. She met and worked with medical doctor George Hatem, a close confidant and friend of Rewi Alley who, like Alley, was to spend the rest of his life working in China. Through CORSO she worked with Shirley Barton and on her way back to New Zealand, she stayed with Kathleen Hall in Hong Kong. She joined the NZCFS on her return but never took up a leading role in the organisation. She would return to China in 1990, as a member of a 'prominent person's delegation'.²³

When the Society was founded its participants 'represented' China in both a diplomatic and literary sense, reflecting its centrality to the people-to-people relationship.²⁴ The Society and its activities provided the principal means by which an official, or even pro-'New China', perspective was represented to the New Zealand public and its officials. This thesis investigates how China was constructed and represented over the period from China's Liberation in 1949 until the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the NZCFS in 2002.

As those responsible for external propaganda in the PRC changed how they represented China, so too did the PRC's 'support organisation' in New Zealand. Yet the representations did not simply map onto one another. The way that the PRC has been represented in the activities of the NZCFS has also reflected the relationship that the NZCFS has had with New Zealand society, the relationship that the NZCFS has had with Chinese authorities, and changes in the New Zealand domestic situation. Further, the Society and the other organisations involved in this study repositioned themselves, as did the individual members thereof, in the face of such changes. This process of subjectivity, of becoming subjects, as events played out in China and in the relationship with China is a further area of investigation.

This work draws on archival material obtained from long-standing members of the NZCFS, including official records. I interviewed a broad cross-section of people engaged in people-to-people activities, in both New Zealand and the People's Republic. In China, these included foreigners resident in China, people involved in hosting people-to-people activities, people in leadership positions in the key organisations, and people retired from people-to-people activities. Interviewing the latter, in particular, gave me an understanding of the changes and continuities in people-to-people goals, activities and outcomes during the fifty-three years since the People's Republic of China was founded.

²² Thomson, John. 'Bertram, James Munro 1910 - 1993'. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 22 June 2007. <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz> (accessed 23 April 2010).

²³ Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, 73-77.

²⁴ The term 'represent' as used in the sense of 'standing in the place of', is common to both the idea of 'representing your country' as a diplomat and 'representing' something by way of description. See below for further discussion. 'People-to-people' is discussed in chapter 1.

Given their political nature, the issues I wanted to discuss could have been considered sensitive. Central to my research is the changing representation of China abroad. A common claim is that the PRC's people-to-people activities constitute propaganda, and that foreigners engaged in them are somehow disloyal, even 'traitors', to their own countries.²⁵ Undertaking research into such a sensitive issue, while relying on official Chinese government connections (in this case quasi-official), can be difficult. Although I found some hesitancy among members of some of the organisations I approached, this did not in the end constitute a real barrier.

In part the reason for this was that I quickly rejected the approach of some of the others who have investigated the phenomenon of people-to-people diplomacy. Many who have explored these questions have approached them from a standpoint that those involved have been manipulated and duped. The most obvious examples of this are David Caute, Paul Hollander, Herbert Passin, Simon Leys (Pierre Rickmans), Stephen Mosher and Anne-Marie Brady. They have been joined more recently, although to varying degrees, by Timothy Kendall and Agnieszka Sobocinska who both look at Australian images of the PRC constructed through eye-witness travel.²⁶

For these authors, those engaged in the activities detailed through this thesis have been 'willing captives to the PRC's strict system of control over foreigners'.²⁷ They 'failed to question the reality of what they saw, taking their ability to see the truth for granted'.²⁸ 'Every Western visitor... fell under the Chinese policy for the management of foreign visitors, *Waishi jilu*, the "Chinese shadow play" by which foreigners' perceptions were carefully stage managed by the centralised leadership of the Chinese Communist Party'.²⁹ They were 'agents in their own censorship, happily bearing witness to a fantasy of Chinese Communism, a "giant socialist theme park" which claimed to be the happiest place on earth'.³⁰

What was most striking about the visits to China, however, was not whether or not what people saw was representative of what was the general state of the country, but that what had been chosen to show to outsiders was so different from what a New Zealand Government of the time might have chosen. The fact that the Chinese state in the contemporary era chose to show off

²⁵ See for example the media coverage and discussion in New Zealand of Rewi Alley's trips to New Zealand in the 1960s, or even that which accompanied the release of Anne-Marie Brady's book on Alley in 2003 (Anne-Marie Brady, *Friend of China: The Myth of Rewi Alley*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003). This is discussed in chapter 7.

²⁶ David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends Of Communism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988. Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981. Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, Praeger, New York, 1962. Simon Leys, *Chinese Shadows*, Viking Press, New York, 1977. Stephen Mosher, *China Misperceived*, A New Republic Book, Harper Collins, New York, 1990. Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic*, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland, 2003. Timothy Kendall, *Ways of Seeing China: from Yellow Peril to Shangrila*, Curtin University Books, Freemantle, 2005. Agnieszka Sobocinska, 'Australian fellow-travellers to China: devotion and deceit in the People's Republic', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 32, 3, 323-333.

²⁷ Sobocinska, 'Australian fellow-travellers', 324.

²⁸ Timothy Kendall, *Ways of Seeing China*, 99.

²⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, *Managing Foreigners*, 93.

³⁰ Kendall, *Ways of Seeing China*, 116-117.

things which would be similar to the indicators New Zealand states might use – impressive buildings, flashy shopping streets and good restaurants, historic and natural sites – suggests that the commitment to an alternative order in China and by those looking to China from New Zealand has diminished.

Non-Chinese academics concerned with China in New Zealand and elsewhere have tended to shy away from the activities of friendship societies, communist groups and short-term visitors to China. One consequence of this is that the insights of people who were not necessarily highly literate in Chinese or did not approach the country from an academic perspective, or who did not live there, could be dismissed as simplistic. Equally, the people who threw their lot in with the CPC and chose to live there in the 1950s and 1960s, are often seen as dupes or puppets. These critiques are simplistic. There is a more complex picture to the sympathisers and short-term visitors and this thesis seeks to develop a systematic account of what these people thought and perhaps, why they thought it. It is a history of their truth-telling, rather than trying to tell whether or not what they said was true.

In talking with those involved in these activities, and putting to them the allegations that are commonly made, the idea of wilful complicity in a grand lie is simply not compelling. Further, by reading these accounts in this way, the interpreters have ignored much of what the person engaged in providing the account had to say. My interview subjects showed a complex and sophisticated understanding of their role. The overwhelming sense was that people knew exactly what it was that they were engaged in and that they were willing and conscious participants in a process that was designed to lend assistance to a project that they supported – the development of the People’s Republic of China and improvement of lives of the Chinese people.

The manipulation theses are based on some claims that simply do not stand up to evidence. Sobocinska, for example, says that ‘Tourists were issued with a centrally-planned itinerary which showcased the most positive aspects of the Chinese state and left no time for anything else’, and that ‘Contact with foreigners was forbidden for Chinese citizens without the necessary accreditation’.³¹ Brady claims that ‘even fluent Mandarin speakers had to conduct conversations in English through their interpreter’. These may be majority positions, I am not in a position to say, but as is detailed in this thesis they are not universally true. It seems to me that if someone had a particular experience then that experience should be accepted as true, if only for that interlocutor. If a visitor to the PRC saw something then that experience was a real one, even if what they saw was special or constructed just for their visit. By looking at these real experiences and the truth, for them, of people’s accounts a picture of a changing China can be drawn. It is precisely the questions of discontinuity and change that I am interested in.

³¹ Sobocinska, ‘Australian Fellow Travellers’, 330.

It is not a question of distinguishing carefully between the dreamed and real version of China – and then favouring one or the other. Michel Foucault, one of the major architects of understanding of social reality, an intertwined set of textualities that help to create and structure our daily experiences of reality, is useful here. In Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966, translated as *The Order of Things*) he moves subtly between the West's simultaneously topographical and utopian sense of China. It is at the same time a 'precise region' and a 'reservoir of utopias', a real place and a non-place (utopia). It is a 'site of space' in a 'dreamworld', a tangible place in an intangible space. As China moves from a 'dreamworld' to the earth's 'other extremity', 'China' becomes both the name of the place that exists in the imagination and in the world at the same time, like a dream from which one cannot be sure one has woken up, or a reality in which one thinks one is dreaming. Foucault acknowledges the real force of dreamed China, and the degree to which that China constructs the appearance of Western reality. China – the name alone – works not simply as a single vision of otherness, but as something like a library, full of books with the same name but different texts. For these subjects, their China, imaginary or otherwise was, is just like the real one.³² The fragments of experience and insight which the New Zealanders I have surveyed relate should not be treated as matters of fantasy or delusion but attempts by people to try to find out some truth about what they were seeing, even if these truths were often considerably at variance with the ones produced by other observers. With historical phenomena as complex as those unfolding in China in the years after 1949 one would expect there to be a whole complex of true observations, but we can equally expect that in an area where there is bitter and violent political contest, there will be intense struggles over what is true. With this in mind it seemed sensible that instead of second-guessing or critiquing such accounts, I took them at face value. Where people claimed a particular motive then I have accepted it. Where the record is silent and it is important for my analysis I have articulated what I believe to have been behind things. I have tried to do this in a way that is faithful to the motives of those involved. I am interested in how the images changed over time, the process of such changes, and the construction of subjectivity in this context. What had gone on to cause changes in the images that were now being propagated? What was different about what was being said? What was different about those doing the saying?

This is certainly not to say that there is no 'real' or that context is not important. For the period between 1 October 1949 and 22 December 1972 there was no official recognition of the PRC by the Government of New Zealand. There were no diplomatic representatives exchanged, no embassies, no official state-to-state discussions or negotiations. During this period most contact between China and New Zealand took place at the sub-state, or people-to-people, level. China's

³² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage, New York, 1970, xix. Foucault's work is rich and I am not intending to go much further into it here. Perhaps it is enough just to note that after Foucault, it is hard to ignore the very systemic presence of historical imagination and its effects, in light of nuances existing on individual levels.

image was thus represented through the activities of what the Chinese refer to as ‘people-to-people diplomacy’. International relations literature refers to this under a whole range of descriptors: informal diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, civilian diplomacy, popular diplomacy, and Non-Government Organisation (NGO) diplomacy. Note that these are conceptually and in practice different things, yet the PRC uses people-to-people diplomacy as an umbrella term to cover these unlike things.³³

If concepts of ‘discussing’, and ‘standing as an advocate for’, both refer to the notion of ‘representation’, then we are naturally drawn to the work of Edward Said, who wrote so influentially on the idea of representing the ‘other’, in particular the ‘Orient’. Said identifies what he termed ‘Orientalism’ as a ‘style of thought’, or a form of geographical and specialised knowledge which is structured by a relationship of power and based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’. He also refers to Orientalism as academic and governmental knowledge and as a ‘corporate institution’ that has the power to dominate and restructure the Orient. Said insists on a dynamic exchange between these different forms, that is, between authors, scholars, and administrators on behalf of the state. Orientalism, although not universally accepted, can be productively extended to the representational techniques used by New Zealanders to construct an image of China.³⁴

A relationship that these New Zealanders had with the PRC is more than just the process of representing. It is also the sense of self of those doing the relating. Reflecting on the curious, paradoxical, and imaginary relationship that exists between China and the West one is reminded of Lacan’s theory about the ‘mirror stage’ that describes how a small child identifies with their mirror-reflection and accordingly achieves a kind of self-identity. This birth of the ego is, however, only achieved by an already alienated image, as the child identifies with an ideal-ego that seems to be in full control of its body. The frustration born out of the child’s incomplete control of the various parts of his own body that don’t match the image of the ideal-ego lays the ground for aggressive feelings against the seemingly more perfect others the child will meet later in life.³⁵

If it is this imaginary register that directs our response to others then theories like that of Said’s ‘orientalism’ will never elucidate cross-cultural encounters fully. The attention to China is of a different character than the mix of imperialism and hegemonic knowledge Edward Said outlined with his hypothesis of a western ‘orientalism’. China, for those looked at in this study, was not an ‘other’ to be studied in order to dominate it. And in contrast with the orientalists’ engagement in

³³ The terms tend to be used synonymously in official PRC material. See the discussion in chapter 1.

³⁴ Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Penguin, 7th Edition, 1996, especially 2-4. Echoing Foucault, Said suggests that there is no such place as the one that people are representing in their texts. He wrote: ‘In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all of these’ (Said, *Orientalism*, 177).

³⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2007, 75.

what they perceived as a hostile but still strangely familiar Orient, China was often a place for projections and reflection about their own culture - a third space outside the dichotomies of orientalism, a place that could be filled with all kind of fantasies about such things as a 'happy life', 'the new man', and 'full equality'. In this sense 'China' came at one time to encapsulate a romantic dream of pure social togetherness from pre-modern society, a return to a 'people's culture' unsullied by consumerism, pornography and decadence.

Lisa Lowe calls this 'postcolonial orientalism', which refers us back to Said. Much work coming out of *Orientalism* has focused on the ways in which Western texts produced their own colonial experiences as part of an attempt to 'manage' the colonial situation. Lowe, and others, would still regard these texts which valorise China as orientalist – even as they try for a sympathetic, anti-Western reading of the East. In doing so, she raises a number of troubling questions, not least of which is how the West might ethically talk about the East when even praise can be taken as fundamentally mistaken. The question of praise – the fantasy in the name of the other – is central to what Eric Hayot refers to as the 'Chinese dream'.³⁶

On the one hand, the Marxist enthusiasms of many of those sympathetic to the PRC made them rather unsympathetic to the idea of China as a mysterious other. There is a difference between the kind of colonial knowledge structures Said criticises and the revolutionary modernising projects of sympathisers with the Chinese revolution. However, it might still be said that a hidden Orientalism haunts the thought of enthusiasts for People's China, particularly the idea that China was a place from which to make a critique of New Zealand society. Yet, for those observers, People's China furnished a puritan fantasy rather than a fantasy of luxury and sensuality.

There is a question here regarding the kind of knowledge that one has of a society which one visits periodically as contrasted with the kind of knowledge one has of a society in which one lives. The distinction at some level is that of the spectator rather than the participant, and entails a different kind of knowledge relationship. These participants were not permanent residents in a society which was experiencing revolutionary transformation: they were faced then with a particularly problematic situation in that the constant shifts in the entity with which they were engaged complicated even further the relationship of the traveller/spectator. The pro-revolutionary traveller/spectator was doing something different from travellers of other kinds; they were also doing something different from the resident. The knowledge is not simple, and should not be dismissed in comparison with the knowledge of either the resident or the non-revolutionary traveller.

³⁶ Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Cornell University Press, 1991, Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel*, University of Michigan Press, 2003.

One way through these conceptual complications is to focus on the changing motivations of those interested in supporting the CPC-led project in the PRC. In doing so we stop looking simply at representations of China and look instead at those doing the representing. For the New Zealanders who were sympathetic to the project underway in the PRC then, there was a reflective process by which they themselves were constructed in relation to the object of their interest. In order to be supportive of the project underway in the PRC, the organisations in New Zealand have been forced to keep reinventing themselves in relationship to it.

This idea of a shifting sense of China and the changing sense of self that this requires, calls upon post-foundational philosophy such as that of Alain Badiou – himself in a tradition that draws upon but surpasses Foucault, Lacan and Said.³⁷ If the traditional notion of ‘truth’ in Anglo-American analytical philosophy encompasses a fixed notion to be ‘discovered’, and the post-modernist turn opened up the possibility of multiple truths – and at its most extreme no truth – then post-foundational philosophy looks at ‘truth’ as the real; it is the viewers and their multiple subjectivities that keep changing. At the core of Badiou’s analysis is the notion of Being through fidelity to an Event. For Badiou, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), and its rupturing of the relationship between party and state, constitutes such an event in PRC history.³⁸ On a lesser scale, even outside this transformative event to re-write the existing situation in its entirety, this idea of identity through fidelity to an event is still illustrative of a shifting and changing sense of self in relation to a relationship with a changing representation of a situation.³⁹

A travelogue is revealing of this process. One visits and sees. The way that a viewer represents what they see is naturally subjective, but the subject viewer themselves is changed as a result of the viewing. There is another possible tension. If the viewer wants to have a constant relationship with the thing they have viewed, but that the thing, in this case the PRC, keeps changing, then they too are forced into a state of flux. In order to be supportive of the project underway in the PRC, the organisations in New Zealand have been forced to keep reinventing who they are, and who they are in relation to China. Badiou’s notion of such changing subjectivities provides a real insight into this process.

An example of this is the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ). In the late 1950s the CPNZ would have described its relationship to the CPC as one by which they were all included in the great brotherhood of communist parties. Its self-identity was that of a (national) communist party amongst many. When it took sides during the Sino-Soviet split, however, the CPNZ defined the CPC as an ‘orthodox’ party standing against the Communist Party of the

³⁷ See Peter Hallward, ‘Order and Event’, *New Left Review*, 53, September-October 2008. Further, Badiou also has a hint of Habermas (see chapter 2), as Hallward writes, ‘[for Badiou] a truth must be universally and even “eternally” true, while relying on nothing more, ultimately, than the militant determination of the subjects who affirm it’ (Hallward, ‘Order and Event’, 98).

³⁸ Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, Verso, London, 2006, 291.

³⁹ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003 and Badiou, *The Century*, Polity, London, 2007.

Soviet Union (CPSU)'s 'revisionism', and itself similarly as 'orthodox'. By the last 1960s, with the GPCR in force, the CPC was clearly no longer an 'orthodox' Marxist-Leninist party. The CPNZ also saw itself as 'revolutionary'. In the mid-1970s, as China experimented with what was to become 'Market Socialism', the CPNZ represented the CPC as reflecting the specificities and particularities of what was needed in Chinese circumstances – and itself therefore as tolerant of such differences. This did not continue and in 1979 the CPNZ broke with the CPC, reaffirming its position as an 'orthodox' party against what it described as 'new revisionism'.⁴⁰

The NZCFS, similarly, although differently, reinvented itself throughout its fifty years of engagement and support of the PRC. It began as an organisation that down-played the politics taking place in China in order to promote peace and engagement. It developed into a committed advocate for recognition, simultaneously promoting China's road to development as a lesson for other underdeveloped countries. As this position morphed into the claim that 'New Zealand can learn from China' it became an enthusiastic supporter of the transformational potential of the GPCR. This engagement with and embracing of Chinese politics culminated in a whole-organisation discussion on the 'Theory of the Three Worlds' and its applicability to understanding the world at the time. As China's projection of its domestic politics to its supportive organisations lessened, the NZCFS became a facilitator of 'prominent persons' engagement with the PRC, working with elites instead of a mass base. Struck by a serious crisis of confidence and self-assurance after Tiananmen, it would become in the early 1990s an organisation promoting little more than 'Chinese culture', without politics and without apology. Yet as China grew economically and in terms of global influence – through the 1990s to the turn of the millennium – so too did the Society's sense of the rightness of its cause and its self-belief. The thesis looks at these broad themes.

The work itself is divided into seven chapters. The first attempts to situate the concept of 'people-to-people diplomacy' by placing it internationally and historically. With respect to the history of 'people to people diplomacy' I offer an interpretation of the changes in self-definition that those engaged in these activities on behalf of the Chinese state have used and how these reflect a changing China. I trace different conceptions of people-to-people diplomacy: as proletarian internationalism, international NGO activism and public diplomacy.

Chapter two explores the notion of 'telling the truth'. This is an important concept for those involved in the relationships explored in this thesis for a commitment to 'truth' and 'accuracy', and challenging what they perceived as 'untruths' about China are a consistent refrain in their materials. The chapter explores different approaches to truth, truth-telling and truthfulness and looks at how these have been utilised by those who have engaged in supporting the CPC-led project in China of building the PRC.

⁴⁰ This is discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter three is the first of two chapters that explicitly trace the representations of the PRC that have emerged through the activities of the New Zealand China Friendship Society. The first of these looks at how change in the New Zealand Society affected its representations of China (1949-1976) while the second considers how change in China affected those representations (1976-2002). I review the representations made by the NZCFS of the PRC over the period, seeking to understand and interpret the changes in the images involved. While the discussion necessarily dwells on how these representations reflected the PRC's own projection, in the first of these the focus is on how the particular engagement that those doing the representing had with the PRC and how this served to shape the images they constructed about China.

In the fourth chapter I explore the idea of ideology in the representation of China through an exploration of New Zealand's Marxist-Leninists and their imagining of the socialist project in the PRC. A principal focus is on the Sino-Soviet split and the Communist Party of New Zealand's development towards a close association with the Communist Party of China - particularly the reasons for their closeness on questions of ideology. I also explore what happened to the idea of 'China' for some of the post-CPNZ parties: the Organisation for Marxist Unity/Struggle Group, the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist Leninist), and the Red Flag Group. The source material is a series of interviews and personal papers, the *People's Voice*, *New Zealand Labour/Communist Review* and the smaller parties' publications.

Chapter five looks at the New Zealand student study tours to the PRC and the images constructed through them. The source material is a series of interviews conducted around the reunions which were themselves inspired by the showing of films taken by students on NZUSA tours to the PRC during the GPCR in 1971 and 1974.⁴¹ In this chapter I show that there was more discontinuity than continuity in the experiences of these two tours, just two years apart, and explore the reasons for that. I map those changes more broadly, showing that the contemporaneous international visitors represented by the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars in 1971 and the *Tel Quel* group in 1974 reflect these same changes.

I show that for the students there were essentially two quite different groups, reflecting a changed engagement with the PRC. The first, in 1971, was made up of leaders enthused with the transformational capacity of socialism – for China – and for a closer relationship between New Zealand and China. The second trip I look at in this way, in 1974, was made up of radical activists who saw China's Cultural Revolution as offering a transformative path for changing New Zealand society. As in the NZCFS chapters, I show that these changes in those who sought

⁴¹ 1974 was the third of the NZUSA-organised tours. The trip in 1973 did not reflect the characteristics of either of these positions, having an 'in-between' status. Later tours (which took place from 1975 to 1978) reflected the 1974 perspective although with reducing radical commitment. Hence my focus is on the 1971 and 1974 tours.

to relate to the PRC reflected changes in domestic Chinese politics, and changes in New Zealand society.

Chapter six is a second chapter on the NZCFS. It also reviews the representation of the PRC, and looks more at how the changes in the way that members of the NZCFS represented the PRC reflected changes taking place in the PRC. Like its predecessor, it is based on interviews, internal documents, and publications. I draw on the ideas of Wang Hui, who argues that 'China' has moved from being a political to a cultural descriptor for the Chinese state and how the Party and State have become one. I show that the same thing has happened for the representation (and the activities) of the NZCFS.⁴²

The seventh chapter looks at the NZCFS' heroes; Rewi Alley and Kathleen Hall, noting that the heroes are presented differently over time and also differently to New Zealanders than to Chinese, since particular references are made that will resonate differently to the different target groups. Further to this, the images that the heroes take in each context are different at different times. Over his sixty years living in China, Alley's representation is in flux, which itself reflects a changing and shifting PRC and a shifting relationship between China and New Zealand. Reflecting a problematic historiographical period for the PRC in the early 1990s, another 'hero' in Kathleen Hall is produced who does not have the same connection to the Chinese state that images of Alley carry.

This reflects an important aspect of the transmission of the tales of travellers – the construction of the image that is given to the travellers themselves. For the stories of story-tellers have veracity attached to them, at least in part, through how the story-teller is remembered. The NZCFS makes a significant claim for its own legitimacy by an appeal to its own history. Given the change in the PRC, and New Zealanders relationship with it, there has naturally been the changing construction of Alley, which has also seen the emergence of Hall.

In some respects, this thesis is nothing more than an attempt to construct a history of the changing people-to-people relations between the PRC and New Zealand. In that respect it is not yet complete. The material is too rich, and still constantly being unearthed, to be able to do it justice in a single volume. Instead I have attempted a re-reading and contextualisation of the material produced by supporters in New Zealand about the PRC, and tried to look at the construction of images involved, while looking at ideas of hegemony, utopia, ideology and above all the idea of shifting subjectivity. Each of these chapters explores, in slightly different ways, one of these themes, alongside the concept of change and how subjects – in this case the viewers from New Zealand – are created in relation to the object of study, the People's Republic of China.

⁴² Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East To West', *New Left Review*, 41, September-October 2006, 42.

Chapter 1: People-to-People Diplomacy in Context

Putting the PRC's people-to-people diplomacy in context requires more than coming to terms with the changing domestic situation, developments in the international situation and the ideological debates that have been a feature of China since liberation.⁴³ Examining China's approach to people-to-people diplomacy in context also requires locating China's practices within an international context. All countries undertake activities that could be called people-to-people diplomacy. Differences in approach are due to time, circumstance and ideological outlook rather than anything essentially Chinese.⁴⁴

The image that the PRC has chosen to project to the world has changed over time in accordance with its particular needs. As the domestic situation in the PRC has changed, so too the goals the CPC, and by extension the Chinese party-state, has sought to achieve through people-to-people diplomacy changed. From the founding of the PRC in 1949 to the break with the Soviet Union in 1963 the images were dominated by what might be termed 'peace diplomacy'; from 1963 to 1976 by proletarian internationalism and utopian projections; from 1976 to 1989 increasingly state-centred needs dominated and the images were characterised by 'normalising' and 'cultural' projections; after a break for the disruption caused by the Tiananmen incident these same foci for national image building continued anew. This was increasingly the same as other countries' projections, as the idea of a Chinese alternative to ordering society faded. In accordance with changes in goals and outlook, the specifics of the image that was being projected also changed. Sometimes these have been particular, or can be viewed as having been particular, but there have also been patterns and elements of continuity. In addition, the method by which China has chosen to project these images has been subject to corresponding changes. These changes and continuities over time have related to both domestic change and global influences on the PRC. Examining these changes provides for a contextualisation of China's people-to-people diplomacy.

The ideological outlook that dominated the PRC until the death of Mao, and has lingered in some form or other, meant that people-to-people diplomacy in practice has reflected socialist practice as well as changing ideas of this. The conceptualisation of such practices in the socialist system has been quite different from the conceptualisation of them in liberal-capitalist diplomacy. For socialist countries they have been seen as part of a global movement for revolutionary

⁴³ David E. Apter, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994. For an analysis that develops similar ideas to explain the transition from Maoist to post-Mao China, see Kalpana Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng's China*, Routledge, New York, 1998. For an application of changing ideological position flowing into CPC practice see G. C. Lim, M. H. Lee, 'Political ideology and housing policy in modern China', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 1990, 8, 477-487 and Mahmoud Ezzamel, Jason Zezhong Xiao, Aixiang Pan, 'Political ideology and accounting regulation in China', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 32, 2007, 669-700.

⁴⁴ In philosophy, essentialism is the view that, for any specific kind of entity, there is a set of characteristics or properties all of which any entity of that kind must possess. It is permanent, unalterable, and eternal; and present in every possible world. This viewpoint has been criticized by Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, and many modern and existential thinkers. To the extent that essence implies permanence and inalterability, essentialist thinking tends to agree with political conservatism and militate against social change.

internationalism rather than simply winning friends overseas. Japan's post-war diplomacy might be seen as a parallel and contrast since it similarly operated from a position of distrust. After World War Two, the Japanese state was anxious to win friends in countries like New Zealand and to humanize the image of Japan, in particular in response to the image of Japan as a monster during the war.⁴⁵ There is a contrast however with the revolutionary style of people-to-people diplomacy, in that it did not, in any way, seek to challenge the idea of nation-states at any level, whereas the more radical phase of Chinese socialist people-to-people diplomacy sought solidarity across states on the basis of revolutionary class-consciousness, which implied a rejection of a state-centred world.

In some respect, those attracted to the revolutionary version of people-to-people diplomacy were attracted precisely because it seemed not to be about sovereignty and geo-political influence: just as a liberal democrat diplomat might be concerned about a foreign policy that does not conform with foreign policy 'norms', people anxious to see an alternative to 'normal diplomacy' wished to see and be part of a version of diplomacy that was not in pursuit of self-interest. While the CPC-led activities were based on 'international solidarity' and 'revolutionary class consciousness', such seemed to be true. In the aftermath of the Mao effort (and by some analyses from the formation of the PRC) this has seemed to be increasingly downplayed.⁴⁶

Accordingly, since 1976, when the revolutionary aspects of the Chinese state's activities have been less prevalent, people-to-people diplomacy has looked more like that practiced by other states. In terms of contemporary international relations literature, people-to-people diplomacy can therefore be examined simply as part of a process of national image building and public diplomacy. In this view, 'sub-state' diplomacy, such as what China refers to as people-to-people diplomacy, is simply part of a range of activities that seek to influence public opinion.⁴⁷ Literature that looks at public diplomacy, which almost crosses into the realm of public relations, tends to take as its focus an understanding that such activities are a feature of the international activities of most large states.

In these terms, what the PRC engages in is not an exception to 'normal' state behaviour. Indeed, writing of the international relations activities of the PRC, as Michael Swaine and Ashley Terris

⁴⁵ For a discussion on Japan's post-war diplomacy, see Kazuo Ogoura, 'Japan's Postwar Cultural Diplomacy', *CAS Working Paper Series No. 1/2008*, Centre for Asian Area Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. Ogoura writes that 'during the 1950ies and 1960ies, the goal of Japanese cultural diplomacy was to transform the prewar image of Japan as a militaristic country into a new image of Japan as a peace-loving nation. Japanese officials therefore emphasised such cultural activities as the tea ceremony and flower arrangement, in the hopes they would convey Japan's serene, peace-loving nature to the world'.

⁴⁶ See Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power*, Macmillan, 1999, 113-116. This is discussed below.

⁴⁷ The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) has itself changed how it described what it was engaged in. In the 1950s it was Peace Diplomacy, in the 1970s people-to-people diplomacy, the early 1990s NGO diplomacy and it now refers to its activities as people-to-people diplomacy again (Ling Ting, interview, Beijing, 6 August 2003).

conclude, there is little that has been unique.⁴⁸ They identify three primary goals:

First and foremost, the preservation of domestic order and well-being in the face of different forms of social strife; second, the defence against persistent external threats to national sovereignty and territory; and third, the attainment and maintenance of geopolitical influence...⁴⁹

Domestic well-being, national security and international influence are goals that are hardly unique to the PRC. Swaine and Terris also show that the PRC has been unexceptional in other important ways. For example, they identify that the PRC has adapted its grand strategy to its relative power at each period in time, thus it has proved itself to be pragmatically sensitive to the need to moderate its position when it is weak and be more confident and assertive when it is stronger. They regard this as typical state behaviour. As Kenneth Lieberthal wrote, 'A careful look at the full sweep of Chinese history demonstrates that strategic thinking in China can be understood along lines quite familiar to students of other countries'.⁵⁰ As Swaine and Terris show, since normalization in 1971 when the PRC joined the United Nations, the approach the PRC takes to multilateral regimes in spheres like nonproliferation, trade, nuclear development, and human rights is pragmatic and unsentimental. Where joining a regime brings asymmetrical benefits to the PRC's own developmental and foreign policy goals, the PRC joins. Where the balance is less one-sided China is less enthusiastic, and where the regime runs counter to its interest it refuses participation. There are plenty of other examples of such behaviour, where countries, like the PRC, take a self-serving approach to such issues. Such examples include Australia and the United States regarding the Kyoto Agreement, and the United States with respect to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child or the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights, and the Helen Clark-led New Zealand government's position with respect to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁵¹

However, despite contemporary similarities, ideas about Chinese exceptionalism still persist. To some extent this is a result of a simple lack of faith and trust in the intentions of the PRC, but underpinning such a foundational position is an underlying belief that the Chinese state is simply different from other states.⁵² This projection of Chinese difference is really a representation of

⁴⁸ Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present and Future*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2000.

⁴⁹ Swaine and Tellis, x.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Lieberthal, 'China's Grand Strategy and Chinese Exceptionalism', *International Studies Review*, 2001, 207.

⁵¹ New Zealand was one of just four countries that voted against the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The others were also colonial settler societies: Australia, Canada and the United States. Although after the 2008 election the new government reversed this position, the case shows that the particularities of New Zealand's history can mean that New Zealand is out of step with the international community, although usually regarding and often presenting itself as a model UN member.

⁵² Chris Connery, 'The China Difference', *Postmodern Culture*, 2.2, 1992, online journal see http://muse.uq.edu.au/journals/postmodern_culture/v002/2.2r_connery.html.

China being contra to the west and of China standing apart, and on its own.⁵³ Part of the reason for this understanding is the United States' own sense of universalist exceptionalism. Richard Williamson argues thus:

American exceptionalism is grounded in the belief that American values have universal application. Human rights, religious tolerance, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, representative government, and so on are not merely for the fortunate few, but are the inalienable rights of all mankind. These values are transcendent. They are values for which American patriots have died. It is the opportunity and responsibility of Americans today to keep faith in those values at home, as well as in the animation of our foreign relations.⁵⁴

The representation of Chinese exceptionalism can be construed in that China stands outside international standards, that is the standards of the West and in particular the United States. It is, as Chris Connery argues, 'China's teleological failure to adhere to how things should operate', although not necessarily from how western powers do operate. Yet because the PRC is not the West, it therefore represents some sort of outsider status. For Connery,

'China' is problematic as a determinable category and the consequence of the 'China difference', from a nostalgic margin, or an area of nationally defined knowledge, or an essentialising critique of Western hegemony is always 'reducible to a gesture of denial'.⁵⁵

The existence of a China difference on the basis of presenting an alternative model of socialist diplomacy, however fleeting, is underemphasized in most discussion. Instead, Chinese particularism has been claimed to be based in some 'Confucian tradition' albeit, incongruously, alongside representations that this same tradition was being destroyed. Although not at all sympathetic to the goals being pursued by the CPC and the PRC, for Stephen Mosher

The mystical invocation of Culture and History to explain Chinese Communist Party practices is all the more odd in view of Mao's conscious and violent rejection of China's past.⁵⁶

Citing Ping-to Ho's finding that Maoist ideology is wrapped in a 'two-thousand year old bottle of authoritarianism', Mosher notes that given the rarity of societies based on individual freedom internationally, until the very recent period, claiming the 'reappearance of authoritarianism' after

⁵³ For further discussion of the representation of Asia, and China in particular, as 'other' in Western media, see David Birch, Tony Shirato and Sanjay Srivastava, *Asia: Cultural Politics in the Global Age*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, especially 9-13.

⁵⁴ Richard S. Williamson, 'Nation-Building: The Dangers of Weak, Failing, and Failed States', *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Seton Hall University, Winter/Spring 2007, 14.

⁵⁵ See Connery, 'The China Difference'.

⁵⁶ Stephen Mosher, *China Misperceived*, Harper Collins, New York, 1990, 104. Maurice Meisner makes a similar point, 'the aim was not to revitalize old Chinese traditions but to find ways to bury them'. (Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic*, The Free Press, New York, 1977, 5).

1949 ‘scarcely constitutes convincing evidence of continuity’.⁵⁷ For Mosher, presciently, the CPC is Marxist, rather than Chinese. For Anne-Marie Brady, in contrast, the People’s Republic of China’s approach is unique and uniquely Chinese. She even consistently refers to it by its Chinese name to distinguish it from other countries’ practices.

The origins of many of the methods and much of the terminology of China’s *waisi* system lie in the practices formulated by the Soviet Union from the early 1920s.... As in all processes of cultural exchange, the Chinese communists did not adopt Soviet approaches to foreign relations wholesale. What they did... was to apply them and interpret them in terms that were culturally appropriate to Chinese norms and traditions.⁵⁸

For the Chinese involved in the early exchanges they were involved in something universal, reflecting how those who interacted with them from the West saw what they were engaged in. Later, when the revolutionary practices subsided, the activities mirror the activities of other states. The reading of the activities needs to be understood in terms of the contextual aims and the particularities of the political situation of the PRC and those who engaged with it. It is this context, rather than Chinese exceptionalism, that provides a deeper understanding of the practices involved.

People-to-People Diplomacy in Theory and Practice

One way that the PRC’s image has been represented to New Zealand, in both a figurative and loosely diplomatic sense, has been through the activities of what the Chinese refer to as ‘people-to-people diplomacy’. The international relations literature sometimes refers to this as ‘cultural diplomacy’, ‘informal diplomacy’, ‘popular diplomacy’, ‘sub-state diplomacy’ and ‘NGO diplomacy’.⁵⁹

There is a lot of differentiation between the various forms of diplomacy that are subsumed within the term ‘people-to-people diplomacy’. In addition, there was a complex interaction between the ideal of an alternative diplomacy, linked with PRC radicalism, and pragmatic problems related to the PRC not enjoying recognition by many states in the world prior to 1971.

⁵⁷ Ping-ti Ho, *China in Crisis: China’s Heritage and the Communist Political System*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, 5, and Mosher, *China Misperceived*, 104. For Mosher, the most striking connection is the ‘organisational, ideological, and policy isomorphism between the PRC and the USSR’ (Mosher, *China Misperceived*, 105).

⁵⁸ Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People’s Republic*, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland, 2003, 8.

⁵⁹ See Herbert Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*; Nathan White, ‘People’s Diplomacy: its use by China to influence Japan 1949-76’, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 3, 1979; Allen Whiting, *China Eyes Japan*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989; Margaret Fisher and Joan Bondurant, ‘The Impact of Communist China on Visitors from India’, *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 15, 2, 1956; Anne-Marie Brady, *Managing Foreigners*; Josh Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, where these terms are used virtually interchangeably to describe the same activities. See also ‘Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy’, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy*, U.S. Department of State, September 2005.

It is the complex position outside the norms of the international order, especially between 1963 and 1971, which made it possible for the PRC to appear uncorrupt in the eyes of dissenting populations in countries like New Zealand. Since people-to-people diplomacy is part of a radical alternative to normal diplomacy, it cannot always be equated in a straight-forward way with national image building. However, since the current friendship apparatus in Beijing is heir to a very complex legacy, those involved in it will be apt to smooth over the contradictions and historical and political shifts that have affected it between its original incarnations and the present.

The PRC began its people-to-people activities on 2 October 1949 with the establishment of the Chinese People's Committee to Safeguard World Peace (CPCSWP), that same month the Society for Sino-Soviet Friendship was started, both under the leadership of Song Qingling.⁶⁰ According to those involved, these organisations were delineated from the operations of the state. 'There was no need for direction' since the aims of those involved 'were the same' as the CPC, which also led the government. The CPCSWP and the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (CPACRFC) were 'mass organisations, driven by members', however 'the aim of the government and the organisation were the same'. The goals of the first interactions with foreigners were 'to end the isolation of China... and to make friends all over the world'. As proof of their independence from the state they pointed to the relationship with the African National Congress in the 1960s. The ANC supported the Soviet Union 'but we still supported them. We didn't mind that they had close relations with the Soviet Union, we just supported them. Later some of them came to China and we grew closer together'.⁶¹

The primary agency by which the PRC now conducts its people-to-people activities is through the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) or as it is abbreviated to in Chinese *youxie*. In addition there are other agencies such as the Chinese People's Institute for International Affairs, the New China News Agency (Xinhua),⁶² the Chinese Organisation for International Understanding, the International Liaison Section of the CPC, and the Society for People's Friendship Studies. *Youxie* and many of these other groups are officially non-government organisations in China and *youxie* even attends United Nations conferences for NGOs in that capacity. Although it also grew out of the CPCSWP (and the Peking Peace Committee, which hosted the Peking Peace Conference in 1952), *youxie* officially began as the

⁶⁰ Song Qingling was the widow of Sun Yatsen and first Vice President of the PRC. She founded the Chinese Welfare League which served to channel Western aid to China during the Second World War. She also started the magazine *China Reconstructs* (now *China Today*). For more on Song Qingling see, Israel Epstein, *Woman in World History: Soong Ching Ling (Mme Sun Yatsen)*, New World Press, Beijing, 1995.

⁶¹ Wang Jinghua and Li Jianping, foundation members of the Chinese People's Committee to Safeguard World Peace, interview, Beijing, 24 July 2003.

⁶² In Hongkong Xinhua operated as a quasi-Embassy, although this is not always the case. See Peter Wesley-Smith, 'Chinese Consular Representation in British Hong Kong', *Pacific Affairs*, 71, 1998.

Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.⁶³ It is headed by a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is staffed by foreign affairs functionaries who are seconded from the PRC diplomatic service, and is described by some as a GONGO or Government Organised NGO.⁶⁴

In New Zealand the NZCFS, the tours it organises and those who attend its local activities, communist parties attracted by the model represented by the PRC, and other organisations such as the New Zealand China Trade Association, are each made up of disparate individuals, their companion Chinese organisations are intimately connected with the Chinese state. There are still parallels in New Zealand of the Chinese organisations, such as the Asia New Zealand Foundation which undertakes some similar activities in terms of hosting visitors from Asia, projecting an image of New Zealand to Asia, and engaging New Zealanders with Asia. Like the Chinese organisations it represents itself as an independent foundation. Yet, like them, the Asia New Zealand Foundation is largely, but not exclusively, government funded, undertakes a large number of its activities alongside branches of the state, and has been most commonly headed by someone who was formerly involved with the New Zealand diplomatic service.⁶⁵ Similarly, Sister Cities' organisations are effectively part of local government.⁶⁶

The structures represented by the Asia New Zealand Foundation were not present in the 1950s and 1960s. They are a product of the post-Cold War order in which the various market economies in the world tend to have similar kinds of structures. That *youxi* is similar suggests that China in the contemporary period is more like these market economies than one might have expected, and they both belong to what Michael Dutton would refer to as the 'Age of Contract'.⁶⁷

Before the emergence of literature on 'national image building' and 'public diplomacy', few international relations theorists acknowledged the existence of people-to-people activity. In addition, in the PRC's case since the recognition question was resolved in the 1970s, when state-to-state activity began to take place, analysis of sub-state activity fell away. Those who have

⁶³ See chapter 3 for discussion regarding the Peking Peace Committee. The CPACRFC was also established by Song Qingling to act as an umbrella for the various country-based societies.

⁶⁴ For example, CPAFFC Vice President Madam Li Xiaolin has been with the organisation since 1975. She served as head of the Department of American & Oceanic Affairs of CPAFFC in 1993, took office as vice-president of the CPAFFC in 1996 and served as First Secretary in the Chinese Embassy to the United States from 1990 to 1992. She is the daughter of former PRC President Li Xiannian. For a discussion of this type of organisation see, Tony Saich, 'Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China', *China Quarterly*, March, 2000, 124-41. According to Wang Jinghua and Li Jianping, the relationship of linking the CPAFFC and Foreign Affairs in this way dates from late 1970s. This is consistent with the analysis of Wang Hui (see above, chapter 1, note 33).

⁶⁵ The current Executive Director is Richard Grant. Before he joined the Foundation in January 2008, he was a career diplomat. He had postings to Germany, France, the United Kingdom and to Singapore. The governing board of the Asia New Zealand Foundation is dominated by representatives from government departments; the Chair of the Advisory Board is the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Chair of the Trust Board (the Hon. Phillip Burden) is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

⁶⁶ See Wellington Xiamen Association, *Sister Cities: A Resource Book*, Wellington Xiamen Association, Wellington, 2003.

⁶⁷ Michael Dutton, *Policing Chinese Politics*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2005, 262-265.

looked at it have tended to use definitions that strongly suggest Chinese or communist exceptionalism:

[People-to-people diplomacy] may be thought of as a process by which a communist state attempts to project its influence into a foreign country through a broad array of programs designed to reshape attitudes in the target society and prepare the way for mobilizing pressure on the foreign government to adopt policies conforming with those desired by the communist state. Conceptually, people-to-people diplomacy is to be distinguished from traditional government-to-government diplomacy and party-to-party diplomacy.⁶⁸

At least since 1978, when the Chinese party-state 'rigidified', this distinction between what the PRC practices and what other states engage in is at best arbitrary. Yet a feature of much of the examination of China's people-to-people diplomacy is that both the activities and motives of the PRC are examined from a perspective of hostility or from the perspective of agencies that see themselves in the role of rivals to the PRC's activities in this area.⁶⁹ The attempt to influence public opinion in other countries has hardly been unique to the PRC. For those supportive of the aspirations of the project represented by the PRC, supporting it was a natural extension of their political perspective. It was also completely consistent with their humanist values such as the desire for peace and cross-cultural understanding.⁷⁰

Ideological Difference: Proletarian Internationalism

For Marxist Leninists, the practice of people-to-people diplomacy is an integral and essential part of building and maintaining relations with other countries. In this sense, people-to-people diplomacy is a complement to state-to-state and party-to-party relations. As Don Ross explained, for him

The aim of people-to-people diplomacy is to give effect to the desire of the people for peace, to involve their participation, to heighten their sense of responsibility, to support state policies of preserving world peace and relations of mutual benefit etc, by

⁶⁸ Nathan White, 'People's Diplomacy'.

⁶⁹ Among the works commonly invoked to 'explain' the purpose of China's people-to-people activity are Lim Lien's *The Chinese Communist's United Front Strategy and Policy for International Diplomacy*, published by the World Anti-Communist League, China (Taiwan) Chapter. Nathan White left his position at Columbia University shortly after writing the article referred to above to take up a position with the Central Intelligence Agency. Josh Kurlantzick is a columnist for the neo-conservative publication *The New Republic*. Anne-Marie Brady's work is dominated by a dismissive approach towards the ideas that might have motivated her subjects (see chapters 2 and 7 for more discussion on this point). The journal that has devoted more pages than any other to the treatment of cultural diplomacy is *Problems of Communism*. As much as you can read into titles, those on this sort of topic are often revealingly partisan Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960 being a case in point.

⁷⁰ See the chapter 3 for more about the motivations of people involved in these activities in the early years.

establishing wide-ranging contacts between people of different countries.⁷¹

Marx's attitude to the idea of the nation is revealed in his approach to the 'Polish question', which itself was determined by his general strategy for revolution. Marx regarded tsarist Russia as the main enemy of the working class. Since there was no working class in Russia at that time, there was no immediate possibility of revolution in Russia.⁷² Therefore Marx supported Polish independence as a means of striking a blow against the main enemy, Russian tsarism. For both Marx and Lenin the national question always occupied a subordinate position to the class struggle and the perspective of the proletarian revolution. Marx originally supported Polish independence but was opposed to the independence of the Czechs and was also opposed to the 'national' liberation movements in the Balkans in the latter half of the 19th century. These two apparently contradictory positions were motivated by revolutionary considerations. Marx considered that, whereas a victory of the Poles would have represented a blow against Russian tsarism and would have had revolutionary implications, the national movement of the South Slavs was used by tsarism as a tool of its expansionist policy in the Balkans.

The national question for Marxists was subordinate to the question of revolution or in a post-revolutionary society to the building of socialism. The project of socialism is of primary importance and the idea of the nation is to be marshaled to support that project.⁷³ In addition, for someone like Don Ross, representative of New Zealand's Marxist-Leninists, the basis of people-to-people diplomacy lies within the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism. This theory states that the masses are the motive force behind all historical development and social progress. That is, the masses play the decisive role in production and through this in political and cultural affairs.⁷⁴

People-to-people diplomacy links the socialist state with 'the masses' of the other country to arouse their revolutionary consciousness and seek solidarity with those whose own position in society is understood to make them sympathetic to socialist ideas.⁷⁵

For Ross then, people-to-people diplomacy went beyond a state-to-state, or even a socialist state-

⁷¹ Don Ross, interview, Whangarei, 17 April 2003. Ross was the editor of *Struggle* from the mid-1980s until 2004. He joined the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ) while working on the Mangakino Power Scheme in the late 1940s and helped to edit the Party's paper there. He was elected to the CPNZ's Political Committee (which sat below the National Secretariat) in the 1970s but left (according to the CPNZ was expelled) when the Party broke with China in 1978. He was involved with the Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist-Leninist) and helped to form the Organisation for Marxist Unity when the Preparatory Committee merged with the Struggle Group in the early 1980s. Ross was a member of the delegation from the Preparatory Committee that toured the PRC in 1982 and produced the pamphlet 'China is Not Selling Out Socialism!' See chapter 5 for more discussion of Marxist-inspired formations in New Zealand.

⁷² Vladimir Lenin, 'The Right of Nations to Self-determination', *Lenin Collected Works*, 20, 108.

⁷³ See Zheng Yongnian, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999, especially 22-28.

⁷⁴ Louis Althusser is perhaps clearest in his interpretation of this when he argues it is not the individual, but the masses who make history, see Althusser, 'Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon', *New Left Review*, November-December 1970, 3-11.

⁷⁵ Don Ross, interview.

to-people relationship. People-to-people diplomacy was simply a reflection of the joining together of those who were similarly engaged in the Marxist project to bring forth a new society.

There were various discussions regarding the validity of nationalism amongst people on the left in the period that this thesis examines. In fact part of the initial force of Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* was Anderson's identification of the Sino-Vietnamese war as a watershed - because it involved a conflict between socialist countries that were 'the first to occur between regimes whose... revolutionary credentials are undeniable, ...[without] attempts to justify the bloodshed in terms of a recognizable *Marxist* theoretical perspective'.⁷⁶ It had seemed in the early 1970s that nationalism was finished, a 19th century idea that would disappear; the fact that commitment to nations has proved stronger than a commitment to class in the course of the last thirty years has been a matter of ideological confusion for many sympathetic with Marxism. Many of the people in New Zealand who were enthusiastic about China in the 1960s and 1970s had little sympathy with dominant and state-centred forms of New Zealand nationalism. The intensity of Chinese nationalism in the 1980s was one of many things that puzzled people who thought that Mao's China had been an advocate of human rather than national liberation.⁷⁷

The practice of people-to-people diplomacy is also based on Marx's theory of knowledge which contends that knowledge is dependent on and develops from experience and practical activity.⁷⁸ Visits to socialist countries provided a learning experience for those involved. There have been various opportunities for this: Russia in the 1930s, China from the 1950s and especially in the 1970s, Cuban and Nicaraguan work teams in the 1980s. Those involved in applying Marxism-Leninism to New Zealand conditions had contact with China in the 1950s and 1960s, and experienced progress during the period of socialist construction. For them, people-to-people diplomacy gave concrete expression to the role of the people in promoting what they saw. A country that saw itself as engaged in socialist construction would accordingly encourage overseas visitors to see for themselves what was happening.

Don Ross was impressed in what he saw of the CPC, China's working classes and other people engaged in socialist construction.⁷⁹ The cadre they met seemed to be highly aware of class struggle. As a supporter of the Marxist-Leninist project, he understood that the 'exploiting classes', inside and outside the PRC, 'would resist socialist transformation and would attempt to undermine the new regime'. He saw this in what he regarded as attempts to misinform the people of the world and understood that international support was a significant prerequisite to defend the socialist state, to counter isolation and to gain recognition. For him and his ilk, the PRC's efforts to build on the work of those who had been supporters of Rewi Alley's work in China,

⁷⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition, New York: Verso, 1991, 1.

⁷⁷ This nationalism question is discussed further below: see pages 31-32.

⁷⁸ Mao Zedong, *On Practice*, Selected Works, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1, 291.

⁷⁹ Ross, interview.

and to transform those supporters into members of the NZCFS, was an example of this desire for international support.⁸⁰

Those New Zealanders whose connection with the revolution that brought into being the PRC was support for Marxism-Leninism reflected upon on the conditions and the situation confronting the people engaged in socialist construction.⁸¹ They saw what was happening in China in terms of a larger revolutionary scheme, a conceptual framework which has subsequently disappeared, but was powerful at the time. They regarded imperialist powers, especially the US, as hostile to revolutionary struggle for independence and socialism, and that the propaganda of the imperialists needed to be combated. In addition they regarded the capitalist class as possessing state power in New Zealand and having a monopoly over the news media. They expected the capitalists to attempt to isolate the PRC ideologically, economically and politically through conducting an anti-communist campaign. For Don Ross, ‘Such campaigns, in absence of anything else, would achieve success by “misleading people”’.⁸² Those engaged in supporting the PRC saw their efforts in challenging the mainstream images of the PRC as more than a ‘commitment to accuracy’, it was part of a wider struggle for socialism.⁸³ Working people, especially those from countries as geographically isolated as New Zealand, faced great financial difficulties in visiting socialist countries. Yet the ability to speak the truth of the successes of the project of building socialism required such eyewitness accounts.⁸⁴

The simultaneous ‘commitment to accuracy’ and a conceptualization of engagement in a wider struggle for socialism are at the core of what was going on. The two things run together, and now that the revolutionary socialist vision is rather weak in world terms, all that is left is the factual errors which such sympathizers made in their accounts. If China was a matter of hope rather than simply a matter of fact, then the drives of these observers to explicate achievements and to play down problems are easier to understand, especially if they saw themselves locked in a battle with a hostile and distorting media.

There’s a possible contradiction here, between the ideals of what people-to-people diplomacy was meant to be and its actuality – including the idea that it was manipulation, and a strategy used because the other forms of diplomatic engagement weren’t there. Were these tours in fact about revolutionary engagement or were they window dressing, or a bit of both?

In Marxist-Leninist diplomacy, there had been a long heritage of people-to-people activity. Lenin had paid special attention to developing contacts with overseas people, especially from the USA. Some of this is documented in Savva Gangulov’s *Lenin Talks to America*. This book is a tribute to

⁸⁰ See chapter 3 for more details of this process.

⁸¹ These are common themes in my interviews with those involved in the NZCFS who had come out of a Marxist-Leninist tradition: Don Ross, Jack Ewan, Nancy Goddard and Cecil Fowler, among others.

⁸² Ross, interview.

⁸³ Compare this with James Bertram’s position, which is discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

⁸⁴ See chapter 2 for a discussion of the efficacy of eye-witness accounts.

Lenin's activities in personal diplomacy where, Gangulov writes, he 'fought for the hearts and minds of men, winning over the best of those who came from outside of our country'.⁸⁵ Gangulov, himself a Soviet diplomat, notes that the activity 'began with Raymond Robins, an American who came as an enemy but left a friend'.⁸⁶ Under Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union, this work continued.⁸⁷ So by the time that the PRC was founded there was quite a historical precedent for what should be undertaken to spread the word about the Chinese revolution and socialist construction.

Even amongst progressive people, little was known in New Zealand about China in 1949.⁸⁸ Following the founding of the PRC, the Korean war involved the PRC in a war with countries such as New Zealand and led to a lot of publicity that was critical of the Chinese revolution. People-to-people activity by New Zealand's supporters of the Chinese revolution and the relevant Chinese organizations was 'stepped up'. Rewi Alley contributed to this work through his involvement in the peace movement.⁸⁹

For people like Ross, then, as a New Zealander whose activities were inspired by Marxism-Leninism:

Internationally there exists a great desire for social change, which they attribute to the excesses of monopoly capitalism. As they understood and experienced, many individuals were attracted to the revolutionary experiments of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. These individuals are not confined to working people (for example, HG Wells and Russia, James Bertram and China) so people-to-people diplomacy could utilise the abilities of such people to advance the goals of understanding what they understand as the successes of revolutionary transformation.⁹⁰

For Marxist-Leninists, people-to-people diplomacy puts 'the people' at the centre of the occasion, in the same way that they believe socialism does:

The significance of people-to-people diplomacy can only be understood when the essential features of a socialist administration with its people are understood. Contrary to

⁸⁵ Savva Gangulov, *Lenin Talks to America*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, 1.

⁸⁶ Lenin Talks to America, introduction, 4. Raymond Robins was an American in Russia at the time of the October Revolution. He had gone as the head of the United States Red Cross mission to Russia and at one time established a newspaper dedicated, according to John Reid, 'to the advancement of American interests'. An anti-Marxist he, none-the-less, returned to the US advocating an end to US army engagement with the Soviet Union and a normalisation of relations. See Robins' *Raymond Robins' Own Story*, Harper Collins, 1920.

⁸⁷ For example, his well-documented meetings with H.G. Wells, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and George Bernard Shaw, all of whom wrote favourably of Soviet Russia.

⁸⁸ Don Ross suggests that partly this was because of the 'otherness' of China and New Zealand's fixation on Europe as 'home' (Ross, interview). According to Passin, it might have been due to a desire not to detract from the successes and pre-eminence of the Soviet Union in people's eyes (Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, Praeger, New York, 1962, 57).

⁸⁹ Alley was asked to leave his work with the Gong He movement and the Shandan Bailie School to become a 'Peace Worker'. See chapter 7.

⁹⁰ Ross, interview.

the relations pertaining to monopoly capitalist class minority rule, where the relationship is one of domination and subordination, the relationship between a socialist administration (government) and its people is one of cooperation, common interests and aspirations.⁹¹

As Marxist-Leninists understand it, neither a revolution nor socialist construction can be achieved without the fullest participation of the people. Towards the goal of developing friendly relations with people of other countries, the conscious and willing involvement of the people is essential. For those involved in people-to-people diplomacy, there was also a role for helping to create the conditions for these exchanges to flourish and to mutually assist both sides in practical ways:

For a socialist government people-to-people diplomacy plays a strategic role in the defence of the gains of the revolution, the defence of socialist construction, world peace, and friendship between nations, by countering the designs of imperialist circles to isolate the socialist country politically, to undermine its economy, to block trading relations, import of advanced technology.⁹²

For Ross, it was only ‘when people have real political power led by the working class and its revolutionary party can people-to-people diplomacy genuinely flourish and contribute to world peace’.⁹³ He pointed to historical experience that in part explained some of the shifts and downgrading of China’s people-to-people diplomacy since the 1980s.⁹⁴ For them all organisations working for peace, friendship, establishing/building relations with socialist countries, in whatever field, are giving expression to the needs and aspirations of ‘the people’. Members of the communist movement also believe that they are part of this general effort to give expression to the needs of the people.

There is a natural conflict between this idea of the needs and aspirations of ‘the people’ and what the PRC increasingly expressed as a state-centred nationalism, in particular from the 1970s. As Fred Halliday notes, central to the idea of the progress offered and promised by communist transformation ‘was the idea of totality’, in aspiration, capability and *locus*. Socialism would solve

⁹¹ Ross, interview.

⁹² Ross, interview.

⁹³ Ross, interview.

⁹⁴ The publications of the parties which regard the CPC as having diverted from the Marxist-Leninist project decry the end to people-to-people diplomacy. Those parties which deny such a diversion by the CPC from Marxism-Leninism tend to claim that people-to-people diplomacy continues, although accompanied by other activities. For them this merely gives the impression that there has been a downgrading of people-to-people diplomacy. Compare *Struggle*, the paper of the Organisation for Marxist Unity in New Zealand which upholds the correctness of the CPC’s line and continues to discuss visiting exhibitions and the like as examples of people-to-people diplomacy in action and *Liberation*, the publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines which describes the CPC as ‘the world’s leading revisionists’, noting the links between the ‘revisionist’ CPC and ‘reactionary’ politicians in the Philippines. See also Max Elbaum, *Revolution is in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, Verso, New York, 2002, for a contemporaneous discussion among US parties as China ‘changed its colour’.

the problems that capitalism could not, including ‘the national question’. Although as early as 1960, the Chinese leadership was suggesting that

The socialist revolution cannot triumph at a single stroke in all countries of the world simultaneously. It will come, separately and gradually as a result of the inherent factors of society in the various countries and the political awakening of the people themselves, their own efforts and their preparations for revolution.⁹⁵

Internationalism, in the original Marxist sense, is incompatible with the conventional kind of nationalism, which consists in defending and advancing the national interests of a particular country. But since socialist states are all forced to play international politics, that comes, according to Horace Davis, with ‘all the hypocrisies that that involves’ and the heads of state ‘must... put the interests of their countries first’.⁹⁶ The same Marxist internationalism, however, is quite compatible with support for anti-imperialist movements, especially if these are socialist orientated. In 1972, the Romanians, Davis cites approvingly, claimed that the pursuit of national interests is ‘true internationalism’.⁹⁷ This is the essence of internationalism – so long as it is employed to support the international socialist revolution.

Even after its break with Moscow, the CPC never sought a sustained way to organize an international following. Even after other communist parties followed China’s line they tended to act in an individual way, paying merely an ideological tribute to Mao Zedong. In contrast to Soviet proclivities, Beijing tended to resort to broad appeals to the peoples of the world, even as it went beyond its sympathetic fraternal communist parties to form alliances with states and nationalist movements.

This is not to say that China did not systematically and consciously seek to promote and sustain revolution abroad. The PRC continued to espouse a world view in which both revolution and nationalism had a central part. Halliday finds that ‘it was only in the early 1970s when, maintaining its opposition to Moscow but seeking to find a rapprochement with the USA, China began to back away from support for revolutions abroad’.⁹⁸

For Halliday, recognizing the conflict between internationalist and statist concerns is not to say that the latter is a disguise for the former and that revolutions are simply national or imperial projects. It is inaccurate, he writes, to conclude that revolutions easily abandon their internationalist orientation. As long as there is a significant divergence between the domestic constitution of states an element of confrontation continues.

⁹⁵ Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: the rise and fall of the sixth great power*, Macmillan, London, 1999, 111.

⁹⁶ Horace B. Davis, *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1978, 18.

⁹⁷ Robert R. King, *Minorities Under Communism: Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan States*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1973, 253.

⁹⁸ Halliday, *Revolution in World Politics*, 113-114.

The central question is not whether the revolutionary state is 'socialised' in its external relations, but whether in the longer run the pressures of the external context lead not just to changes in foreign policy but also to an internal change, whereby the commitment to an alternative path of social development is abandoned.⁹⁹

The relationship between nationalism and internationalism is thus a subjective one, much like the question of truth explored in the next chapter. It depends upon the desired goals of the person engaged in the activity. If it is employed to achieve socialist aims then nationalism is an embodiment of internationalism and 'progressive', if not then it is parochial and reactionary.

People-to-People Diplomacy as 'Public Diplomacy'

If the essence of diplomatic activities is to develop and cultivate favourable perceptions and attitudes then it is logical that governments pay attention to the needs and desires of foreign public opinion in foreign policy making and communication. Over the last few decades, the study of diplomatic communication, historically based primarily on 'government-to-government' and 'diplomat-to-diplomat' interactions, has expanded to include 'government-to-people' contacts. Public diplomacy is now understood as an indispensable vehicle of international relations.¹⁰⁰

Broadly defined, public diplomacy refers to:

a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.¹⁰¹

This is extremely similar to White's definition of people-to-people diplomacy found earlier, with the allusions to it being the sole preserve of communist states stripped away. It encompasses a wide array of activities, ranging from media programmes (Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, CCTV-9), to cultural and educational programmes (Fulbright scholarships, British Council, the Colombo Scheme, Confucius Institutes).¹⁰² The goals of these programmes are often twofold: achieving political advocacy and culture communication, with the former aiming to build support for particular foreign policies and the latter developing overall better understanding of peoples and cultures.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 135.

¹⁰⁰ Jarol Manheim, *Strategic public diplomacy and American foreign policy: the evolution of influence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, 3.

¹⁰¹ Hans Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U. S. Public Diplomacy Overseas*, Macmillan, New York, 1990, 3.

¹⁰² Eytan Gilboa, 'Mass Communication and Diplomacy: A Theoretical Framework', *Communication Theory*, 10, 2000, 275-310.

¹⁰³ Gifford Malone, *Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication: Organising the Nation's Public Diplomacy*, United Press of America, Lanham, 1988, 3-4.

In many ways public diplomacy is a form of international public relations. Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs argued that with similar concepts, objectives and tools, these two areas of communication practice are 'in a natural process of convergence' and that 'modern nations find themselves more and more in the area of public relations as they attempt to influence the opinions of foreign publics'.¹⁰⁴

For much of the period the PRC's public diplomacy bore little resemblance to that of the organizations cited here. There was tension too, between 'soft-power' type diplomacy and beacon of revolutionary diplomacy; there was always soft-power diplomacy in the revolutionary era, but it was always in tension with calls for radicalism. Zhou Enlai encompasses both these dimensions. There are parts of the contemporary order of Chinese public diplomacy that have their origins in the Mao era, but other parts of it are part of an attempt to convince people that China is a 'normal' country not an exporter of revolution.

In 1978 Philip Lesly noted that 'virtually all nations now conduct international public relations programs'. Yet for him 'sophistication varies greatly', depending on the awareness a particular nation's leaders and on the size of the country involved while large country's seek what Joseph Nye popularized as 'soft power'.¹⁰⁵ As Lesly wrote, 'Programs among smaller nations tend to be directed toward tangible goals, such as tourism, investment in local industry, and marketing of local products'.¹⁰⁶

A third component of public diplomacy is around the promotion of particular policies. For some this fits uncomfortably alongside 'cultural activities', in part because of an association with covert intelligence agencies. However, a wide array of official and quasi-official operations are used to influence the outlook and behaviours of key individuals and organizations abroad. An example was the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) support for noncommunist trade unions in France and Italy following World War Two.¹⁰⁷ In the United States many of what were formerly functions of the CIA have been taken over by the semi-official National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the CIA's role has receded.¹⁰⁸ Two Chinese parallels of direct political campaigns were the PRC's work through friendship groups to promote the political goal of

¹⁰⁴ Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs, 'Public Relations and public diplomacy: conceptual convergences', *Public Relations Review*, 18, 1992. 145-146.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Lesly, *Lesly's Public Relations Handbook*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1978, 352.

¹⁰⁷ The CIA was active in postwar Italy as part of a multifaceted political action campaign designed to ensure a Christian Democrat victory in the elections of 1948. For a brief account see William E. Daugherty and Morris Janowitz eds. *A Psychological Warfare Casebook* John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1958, 319-26. On other CIA political action see further Joshua Muravchick, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*, American Enterprise Institute Press, Washington DC, 1991, especially chapter 9. For foreign attempts to influence the American political process, see the analysis by Janal B. Manheim, *Strategic Public Diplomacy and American Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Influence*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994.

¹⁰⁸ According to Allen Weinstein, who helped establish NED, 'A lot of what we [NED] do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA', see Gerald Sussman, 'The Myths of 'Democracy Assistance: U.S. Political Intervention in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe'', *Monthly Review*, December 2006, 15, and Stonor Saunders *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York, 2000.

formal diplomatic recognition and the use of public relations agencies to create favourable publicity around the bid for the Beijing Olympics.¹⁰⁹

Many embassies have press attaches whose job it is to cultivate their country's image. German institutions serving image cultivation abroad include the Press and Information Office of the Federal Republic, the foreign cultural policy section of the foreign office, the Goethe institutes, the German Academic Exchange Service, the Humboldt Foundation, foundations of the political parties, the Carl Duisberg Society, Deutschlandfunk radio, Radio Deutsche Welle, and Trans-Tel sells German television programmes. According to Allen Hansen both Germany and France spend about 1% of their annual budgets for such purposes.¹¹⁰ France spends upwards of \$US5 billion on information and cultural activities. For France, this form of public diplomacy is an essential instrument of foreign policy; it funds 70% of the budget of the Agence France Press (AFP) news agency.¹¹¹

The United Kingdom also has at its disposal the British Council, the activities of which encompass language teaching, cultural exchanges and presentations, and libraries. The British Council was founded in November 1934 'to make the life and thought of the British people more widely known abroad and to cooperate with the Dominions and Crown Colonies in strengthening the common cultural traditions in the British Commonwealth'. During Britain's conflict with Nazi Germany, the Germans argued that the British Council was an instrument for the political and cultural encirclement of Germany and ejected from the German Republic.¹¹²

Increasingly, what the PRC engages in is understood as public diplomacy, as Ingrid d'Hooghe argues:

Public diplomacy may not be a current term in China, yet China has certainly developed a remarkable array of activities that together form a consistent and quite effective public diplomacy policy.¹¹³

Activity undertaken which is defined as public diplomacy has a clear parallel to that understood as people-to-people diplomacy. In 1957 Belgium initiated a PR campaign in the United States designed to boost sales of Belgian products there.¹¹⁴ The aim of the PR firm, Communication Counsellors Inc (CCI), was to 'put Belgium on the map for the American public'. This was the same year as the Beijing Opera troupe toured Australia and New Zealand and which is discussed in chapter 3. CCI supplied the business press with information materials; key business people and

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 3 and also Nathan White, 'People's Diplomacy', regarding the recognition issue and above (note 55) regarding the hosting of the Olympics.

¹¹⁰ Allen Hansen, *U.S.I.A. Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, Praeger, New York, 1984.

¹¹¹ all data from Hansen, *U.S.I.A. Public Diplomacy*.

¹¹² Kunzick, *Images of Nations*, 63.

¹¹³ Ingrid d'Hooghe, 'Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China', in Melissen, Jan ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, 88-105, 88.

¹¹⁴ Irwin Ross, *The Image Merchants*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1959.

newspaper publishers were sent a newsletter with 'facts and figures' about Belgium; and Belgian products were advertised in publications, on the radio, and on television. The activities conducted by Belgium's Public Relations company and the CPAFFC are similar although the target market reflects some differences. The immediate goals are different reflecting the international situation that saw China diplomatically isolated. However, broadly speaking, the desire to promote national image is clear and unambiguous.¹¹⁵

In the early years of the Cold War, public diplomacy was widely viewed unapologetically as a form of psychological warfare. Those responsible for U.S. policy tended to conceive of public diplomacy as part of an arsenal of capabilities that could and ought to be used in the developing worldwide struggle against the Soviet Union and the worldwide communist movement. Public diplomacy programmes thus emerged as an independent dimension of national strategy fully comparable to diplomacy, military force and economic power. None of these activities were politically controversial at the time, but reflected a broad consensus among American elites that 'propaganda' (as it was still widely called) was a legitimate and important tool of policy and topic for serious academic study.¹¹⁶ In an era of rigid alliance systems and nuclear stalemate, public diplomacy seemed to offer the West an offensive strategy option that was otherwise lacking. Yet the difficulty of bringing about quick changes in the Soviet bloc was probably underestimated, while the usefulness of propaganda as a stand-alone weapon of political warfare in the Third World was overrated.¹¹⁷ With the American involvement in Vietnam becoming unpopular, the idea that the 'hearts and minds' of the world's masses could be won to the cause of the West came to seem not only problematic but morally repellent.¹¹⁸

Criticisms of the PRC's public diplomatic activities has a heritage in two factors. The first comes out of an ideological position where the other country's activities are 'propaganda' and one's own is 'information' or only produced to counter such propaganda.¹¹⁹ Accordingly such thinking is bound up with prejudice, ideological difference and a Cold War mentality. Yet there is also a second heritage, a growing skepticism of the morality of engaging in activities that at their heart are about manipulating the way that other people think, even if one regards the goals, and even the particular tactics, as being well motivated. Yet the practices continue and will always be linked to achieving clear benefits for the state involved. As James Lord, himself significantly involved in the United States public diplomacy activities wrote,

¹¹⁵ Kunzick, *Images of Nations*, 16-17.

¹¹⁶ See 'Propaganda in International Affairs', a special issue of the *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Nov 1971.

¹¹⁷ Kunzick, *Images of Nations*, 250-251.

¹¹⁸ Kunzick, *Images of Nations*, 51.

¹¹⁹ Jacques Ellul is one who is critical of this claim. For him, propaganda is simply the formation of attitudes and is a feature of all modern societies. (Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Vintage, London, 1973, xv and 52).

Those in positions of authority thus cannot escape a responsibility for ensuring that U.S. public diplomacy conforms to American policy and advances palpable national interests.¹²⁰

So too for the PRC's propaganda activities.

The Changing Focus of the People's Republic of China

Alongside changes in the way that the West has seen or viewed China, the PRC's own activities have also changed in accordance with changes in political focus, ideology, and its understanding of the international situation. Herbert Passin was an early examiner of what he called 'China's Cultural Diplomacy'. In the 1950s and 1960s, he identified that 'cultural relations with China are very strongly affected by the political atmosphere at particular moments'.¹²¹ These ideas about change and continuity are explored in chapters 3 and 6 with respect to New Zealand organisations engaged in these activities. The changes in cultural relations, or people-to-people diplomacy are closely related to the CPC's own periodic and official re-evaluation of its contemporary history.¹²²

Another useful study is Gerry Groot's work on the United Front in Chinese politics.¹²³ His shifting timetable of United Front politics maps onto the global context and is related to Dutton's friend/enemy thesis. He identifies a fluctuating relationship between the CPC and the PRC's official minor parties and groups. He draws on Gramsci's ideas on hegemony and explores how the CPC looked outside of its own members and successfully incorporated at times broader and then other times more narrowly defined groups to advance its campaign goals. Groot's theory is that the CPC's relationship with minor parties and groups is reflective of United Front policies in general. The periodisations that he identifies are also likely to be pertinent since reaching out to different strata in Chinese society is likely to have followed a similar trajectory to that undertaken internationally.

Groot identifies seven periods in the CPC's United Front activities: Building Socialism [1949-1955], when the groups that had been involved in the united front against the GMD withered. This was followed by a period of Blooming and Contending until the Anti-Rightist Campaign [1955-1957]. Opinions and involvement of other groups was initially encouraged but this was quickly followed by a crack-down against those not deemed to be supportive of the socialist

¹²⁰ Cames Lord, 'The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy', *Orbus*, Winter 1998, 49-72, 71.

¹²¹ Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy*, Praeger, New York, 1962, vi. See also Allen Whiting, *China Eyes Japan*, University of California press, Berkeley, 1989 and Margaret Fisher, and Joan Bondurant, 'The Impact of Communist China on Visitors from India', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1, 2, 1956, 249-265.

¹²² See Geremie Barmé 'History for the Masses', in Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1993, 260-86.

¹²³ Gerry Groot, *The United Front in Chinese Politics*, Routledge, New York, 2004.

project. The build-up to the GPCR [1957-1966] saw a rise in United Front activities which is identified as a time of Hibernation and Renewal [1966-1981]. This saw the virtual disappearance of all groups that were not identified with the revolutionary aspirations of the Chinese state. Groot considers that after 1981, the United Front reemerged as Deng Xiaoping looked for allies outside of the CPC itself on his return to power. Groot calls this Rebuilding for the New Era [1981-1986]. It coincided with economic reforms. This was followed by Political Reform [1986-1989], where space was made available for alternative viewpoints under the oversight of Zhao Ziyang, and Expansion [1989->], as the CPC needed more allies in the face of the events of May and June in Tiananmen Square and sought to diffuse the sense of estrangement by many parts of Chinese society that had led up to those events.

For Michael Dutton, an analysis of the shifting sands of the Chinese revolution involves an explicitly political process since the regime itself is founded in what he calls 'commitment politics'. Drawing on Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt he places the central aspect of the Chinese revolution as the binary distinction between 'friend' and 'enemy' with an explicit reference provided by Mao's phrase that begins his *Selected Works*: 'Who are our enemies, who are our friends? That is the question of the first importance for the revolution'.¹²⁴ The question of where the line between friends and enemies is drawn is a shifting one. As Dutton wrote in his study of Chinese policing, 'To police this revolution was to patrol this ever shifting thin red line that separated revolutionary friend from reactionary enemy'. He further points to periods when there was unity in the face of external 'enemies', where the collection of friends was permitted to grow, and 'revolutionary excess' where in the absence of external enemies the greatest threat to the revolution was seen to come from the 'enemy within'. Finally, consistent with other chronologies, Dutton identifies that with the end of the radical period (following the death of Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four) 'politics was no longer painted in binary colours but took on a very different and more complex hue'. For Dutton, 'economic reform transformed the single political question of friend and enemy into a multitude of discrete and largely non- or even de-politicizing questions... Policing stability, not the political line, became the new order of the day'. This new era, as Dutton describes it, becomes the Age of Contract.¹²⁵

The period immediately after 'Liberation', then, was one when the distinction between friends and enemies was a sharp one, although this was relaxed (or the line shifted) as the state felt more comfortable with itself, until the Anti-Rightist Campaign when the distinction became more acute again. The conflict with the USSR saw an external threat and a wider search for friends until the GPCR which was a period of sharp contrast between those considered supportive or not of the correct revolutionary line. The end of the radical period saw the end of the binary

¹²⁴ Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1977, 1, 13.

¹²⁵ Michael Dutton, *Policing Chinese Politics*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2005, 11-19.

distinction and a space for many who would not have fitted into the category of ‘friends’ in earlier periods to be accorded a relationship with the Chinese state.

Combining these analyses, a periodisation of the image projection activities of the PRC can be produced. The 1950s and the early 1960s were largely a period of ‘peace diplomacy’. The PRC was officially engaged in a process of leaning towards the USSR, and its activities were in part designed to prevent war between the socialist and capitalist camps so as to allow for China’s development. Meetings such as the Peking Peace Conference drew Chinese from the All China Federation of Trade Unions, academics, returnee Chinese and the head of the Chinese Society for the Promotion of International Trade.¹²⁶ Outside the PRC those involved in friendship activities tended to represent similar groups and were often also engaged in the peace movement in their respective countries.¹²⁷ There were periods when there was a tightening, broadening and tightening of the united front to include people further away from, or restriction to be closer to, the ideological underpinnings of the socialist project. This tightening, broadening and then tightening again was associated with the Five-Antis Campaign (1952), the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-57), followed by the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-58) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-59).

The period 1962 to 1976 was a period of utopian and political transformation at home and the projection of ideas advocating these same ideas externally. China was seen as the home of the world centre of revolution, the Soviet Union and its allies increasingly an enemy to be opposed even more vociferously than the West. Although the CPC projected a more rigid orthodoxy in terms of ideology, it simultaneously broadened the range of people it sought to bring into contact with that ideology.¹²⁸ As we will see, the friendship organisations became broad fronts of sector groups, and tried to build links with teachers, students, indigenous peoples as well as workers, and others with particular capacity to be influential with the public such as artists and writers.

This period is also of particular significance because of the CPNZ’s stance on the Sino Soviet split.

¹²⁶ This was emphasised by Chinese cultural workers Wang Jinghua and Li Jianping, interview, Beijing, 24 July 2003. They had been involved with the first ‘cultural diplomacy organisation’ established after Liberation, the Chinese People’s Association to Safeguard World Peace, it was transformed into the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries over a period of time. This is discussed below, the conference is discussed in chapter 3.

¹²⁷ This was a position being promoted internationally. See chapter 3 for details about the links in New Zealand between socialists, friendship with China and the peace movement. In the PRC, it was identified that ‘there are now large scale, powerful peace campaigns in capitalist countries. Those participating in these campaigns represent all kinds of people, including petty-bourgeoisie and even capitalist elements. Although such campaigns are not socialistic in nature, they are against imperialism, the deadly enemy of the working class. The development of such campaigns is undoubtedly helpful to the liberation of the working class. Therefore the [Communist Party] must participate in and lead such peace campaigns. (Hu Sheng, Yu Kuansheng, Yu Kuanyuan and Wang Hui, ‘Strategies and Tactics of the Communist Party’, Series 27 of Lectures on the Fundamental Knowledge of the Social Sciences, *Xuexi*, 1, 1952, 41, cited in Frederick Yu, *Mass Persuasion in Communist China*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1964, 24).

¹²⁸ In addition, the ideological position was increasingly flexible with respect to ‘class’ (Richard Kraus, ‘Class conflict and the vocabulary of social analysis in China’, *China Quarterly*, 69, March, 1977, 54-77).

Wang Hui argues that the post-Cultural Revolution period (1976-1982) was accompanied by the 'end of politics' as Chinese increasingly saw 'politics' as referring to the excesses and turbulence of a discredited period.¹²⁹ There was less political engagement by the NZCFS with the internal campaigns and ideological disputes within the PRC. One manifestation of this was that amongst the friendship organisations there was an increased tendency to republish of material from the CPC and PRC rather than produce their own material. This was coupled with the belief that to show support for the PRC required the adoption of ideas considered correct in the PRC.¹³⁰ In addition this period saw an end to the sense that China meant something for New Zealand to draw from, in particular an end to utopian and aspirational aspects of China as a political vision. It also saw the end of the special relationship between the CPNZ and the CPC.

The re-starting of people-to-people diplomacy after the Cultural Revolution had profound implications. This was a time when those enamoured with Cultural Revolution radicalism in New Zealand were becoming disenchanted with China. In addition, this period saw the conflation of the party and state activities of the CPC and state organs of the PRC. The CPC reconfigured its activities away from supporting 'leftist and anti-revisionist' parties in favour of 'advancing state interests'.¹³¹ When the people-to-people organisations were restarted after the GPCR they were part of the PRC's Foreign Affairs apparatus.¹³² Wang Hui refers to this as the 'rigidification of the party-state', which he puts down to an attempt by those who were engaged in a 'thorough negation' of the Cultural Revolution to undertake a process of "depoliticizing" faction fights and bureaucratization'.¹³³

The early 1980s, until 1989 was a period that is exemplified by debates over the meaning of, and the nature of, culture under China's processes of modernisation. Liu Kang, drawing on Fredric Jameson, suggests that late capitalism is dominated by questions of 'culture' and that this too has dominated the activities of the Chinese party-state.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East to West', *New Left Review* 41, September-October 2006, 29-45.

¹³⁰ The clearest example of this was the discussion around the Theory of the Three Worlds. In the end those groups that adopted that theory as a correct analysis of the world and believed in applying it to New Zealand conditions were 'pro-China' and those which did not, were not. To some extent these debates mirrored – and coincided – with the so-called 'two whatevers' in China. The 'two whatevers' refers to the statement that 'we will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave' (*People's Daily*, 7 February 1977). The 'two whatevers' was a label used by the supporters of Deng Xiaoping to discredit those who did not support the changes he made after his return to power. Subsequently, the PRC's official positions on many things were in a state of flux for some period yet the New Zealand organisations sought to faithfully follow each change. This largely uncritical support for what were sometimes mutually incompatible positions could only be sustained on the basis that they were each un-investigated (see Max Elbaum, especially 232-266, for an analysis of similar issues in US-based organisations).

¹³¹ Communist Party of China, *CPC Seeks New Relations with Foreign Political Parties*, New Star Publishers, Beijing, 1998, 2.

¹³² Wang Jinghua and Li Jianping, interview. This was true for what was now called the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC – *Youxie*) the Chinese People's Committee to Safeguard World Peace was not restarted.

¹³³ Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East to West', 30.

¹³⁴ Liu Kang, *Globalization and Cultural Trends in China*, University of Hawaii Press, 2003. See also Wang Jing, *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics and Ideology in Deng's China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996.

This change in the theme of culture was part of a shift from a revolutionary to a nationalist paradigm, with the CPC redefining itself as the party that represents China, with many of its basic positions coming close to the line of the old KMT.

In New Zealand, increasingly, connections were drawn with those who were interested in 'Chinese culture'. At the same time, a relationship with the PRC organised around 'prominent people' replaced one based on mass participation. Increasingly these were business people. There was an attempt to both commodify and leverage support for the PRC off a notion of culture. However, all such efforts were disrupted by the events of May and June 1989 in and around Tiananmen Square.

The crisis around the events of Tiananmen led to a dramatic rethinking of what it meant to be engaged in a friendship relationship with the PRC. It was a time of great uncertainty. However this was eventually followed by what Josh Kurlantzick calls a 'charm offensive' through the 1990s and early 21st century.¹³⁵ In part this was an extension of the cultural-based activities of the pre-Tiananmen period but combined with a more systematic approach of engaging with Western elites in part accompanying an increased assertiveness of the Chinese party-state. One of the ultimate conclusions of this systematic process has been the practice of establishing Confucius Institutes.¹³⁶ Thus the PRC has begun to operate on the level of the governments of France (Alliance Française), Germany (Goethe Institutes), Britain (British Council) and Japan (Japan Foundation).¹³⁷

China's National Image Building

In 2003, Wang Hongying wrote that 'Chinese leaders have repeatedly called for the improvement of the country's image abroad'.¹³⁸ In order to coordinate its image-building efforts, the Communist Party of China had established an Overseas Propaganda Department under the Party

¹³⁵ Josh Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's soft-power offensive is transforming the world*, New Republic, New York, 2007.

¹³⁶ A Confucius Institute is a non-profit public centre jointly established by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (HANBAN), a local university (such as the University of Auckland), along with a partner Chinese university. Its primary role is to promote Chinese language and culture, and to be a centre for co-ordinating and enhancing China-related activities for individuals, communities, institutions of education and business.

¹³⁷ Kurlantzick doesn't identify this similarity or draw this connection, in fact he regards the Confucius Institutes as anything but benign – since his perspective is predicated on a fundamental distrust of the activities of the PRC. Others do make this link however, see for example, Lai Hongyi, 'China's Cultural Diplomacy: Going For Soft Power', East Asian Institute Background Brief, 308, National University of Singapore, 26 October 2006,

<http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB308.pdf>. For the development of Goethe Society as a propaganda organization see Eckard Micels, *Deutsch als Weltzprache? Franz Thierfelder, the Deutsche Akademie in Munich and the promotion of the German Language Abroad, 1923-1945*, *German History*, 2004, 22, 2, 206-228.

¹³⁸ For instance, in late 1990 the PRC's top leaders presided over a meeting on overseas publicity. The meeting called for Chinese from all walks of life to help project a favourable image of the PRC to the rest of the world. It required propaganda workers to study the differences between foreigners (and overseas Chinese) and people in China, and to distinguish methods of propaganda for these two audiences. At a similar conference in early 1999, President Jiang Zemin called for massive publicity efforts so as to raise China's international stature. He asked CPC committees and governments at all levels to provide support for the publicity work (Wang Hongying, 'National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy' *China: an International Journal*, 1, 1, March 2003, 46-72, 48).

Central Committee in 1990, and the Chinese government followed this in establishing a new Information Office under the State Council in 1991.¹³⁹ Wang has identified that, for example, it issued white papers on subjects such as on human rights, the situation in Tibet, China's national defence, and the environment. These papers are designed to explain to the international community China's positions on what have been identified as being sensitive questions. Wang regards these papers as

presenting a step forward from the days when the Chinese government simply brushed aside international criticisms of Chinese policies without engaging directly with the arguments.¹⁴⁰

In addition, the Chinese government has begun to hire international media expertise to polish China's image.¹⁴¹ In 1991 it employed the American firm Hill and Knowlton to lobby the US Congress for the unconditional renewal of most-favoured-nation trade status for China. In its bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, the Chinese government hired another American firm, Weber Shanwick Worldwide, to run its public relations campaign.¹⁴²

There have been continuities, in terms of the PRC sponsoring and organising cultural events in other countries to help improve the PRC's image. For many New Zealanders this began in 1957 when a Beijing Opera Troupe visited Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The troupe performed to appreciative audiences but had a political focus too – it was connected to the efforts to gain political recognition for the PRC by the New Zealand government.¹⁴³ Such cultural activities have continued. In 2000, the PRC spent millions of dollars and sent cultural groups on a road show in the United States. The director of the PRC's State Council Information Office explained the motive behind this undertaking was that he hoped: 'some day an American president will say something good about China'.¹⁴⁴ In 2001 Chinese Central Television reached an agreement with AOL Time Warner to begin broadcasting English-language programmes in the US around the clock, hoping to present Americans with an image of a softer and gentler China. This is now also in other countries.¹⁴⁵

A new aspect of these activities is represented by Confucius Institutes. The first of these opened in Seoul in November 2004. Many have since been established in other countries and one opened in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2007. As of November 2008, there were 307 Confucius Institutes

¹³⁹ In 1998 the Party Propaganda Department changed its English name to Publicity Department, even though its Chinese name remained the same.

¹⁴⁰ Wang, 'National Image Building', 48.

¹⁴¹ Countries that use public relations firms have seen their national image improve. See Jarol Manheim and Robert Albritton, 'Changing National Images: The International Public Relations and Media Agenda Setting', *The American Political Science Review* 78, 3, 1984, 641–57.

¹⁴² Wang, 'National Image Building', 48.

¹⁴³ This is further discussed in chapter 3, including the use of this tactic internationally.

¹⁴⁴ Elisabeth Rosenthal, 'China's US Road Show', *New York Times*, 23 August 2000, A3.

¹⁴⁵ <http://english.cctv.com/english/about/index.shtml> retrieved 14 March 2008.

in 78 countries.¹⁴⁶ The Chinese Ministry of Education aims to establish 1,000 Confucius Institutes by 2020. Confucius Institutes are one of the focuses of Josh Kurlantzick's book *Charm Offensive: How China's soft-power offensive is transforming the world* and have been subjected to other criticism too. Some critics have pointed out that unlike other cultural institutes, such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute, the Confucius Institute operates within universities and thus some of its activities are less visible.¹⁴⁷ The Institute has also attracted concern from some Western governments. Members of the Swedish Riksdag have expressed concerns that the Institute provides a platform for the Chinese government and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service said the Institute is part of the PRC's bid to win over western hearts.¹⁴⁸

Wang Hongying's study made a quantitative content analysis of coverage of a related aspect in *Peking Review*. She charted the type of actor in international affairs that the Chinese government has portrayed the PRC to be.¹⁴⁹ Her summary of the results of a content analysis of representations of the PRC's foreign relations in *Peking Review* between 1958 and 2002 shows that over forty years the PRC government attempted to build images of China in international affairs around a series of themes. These were that China was peace-loving, a victim of foreign aggression, socialist, a bastion of revolution, an anti-hegemonic force, a developing country, a major power, an international cooperator, and an autonomous actor. The data indicates that over time, there have been both changes and continuities in these images projected of the PRC by its government. On the side of continuity, the government has consistently pursued an image of the PRC as a peace-loving nation, a victim of foreign aggression, an opponent of hegemony and a developing country. On the side of discontinuity, the Maoist era (from 1949 to 1976) saw the government emphasising the images of China as a socialist country and supporter of revolution. During the reform period (from 1976 to the present), the government de-emphasised those images. Instead it highlighted the images of China as an international cooperator and a major power.¹⁵⁰

Looking closer into this data reveals a consistency with the other periodisations that have been identified above: the promotion of socialism in the late 1950s, retreating after the failures of the Great Leap Forward, then the promotion of a revolutionary image through to the 'twilight' of the Cultural Revolution (1972-76), and a cooperating, 'normal' member of the world community since the mid-1970s.

¹⁴⁶ "China threat" fear countered by culture', *People's Daily*, May 29, 2006, online edition http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200605/29/eng20060529_269387.html.

¹⁴⁷ 'Confucius deal close despite concerns', *The Australian*, August 22, 2007, online edition, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22284825-12332,00.html>.

¹⁴⁸ 'CSIS say: Confucius part of Chinese bid to win over western hearts', *The Chronicle*, 27 May 2007.

<http://www.themonitor.ca/article-cp69319033-CSIS-say-Confucius-part-of-Chinese-bid-to-win-over-western-hearts.html>.

¹⁴⁹ *Peking Review* was launched on 5 March 1958 by the Chinese government. Its purpose is for 'foreigners to know about China's policies and study China's political situation and development trends'.

¹⁵⁰ Wang, 'National Image Building', 52.

National Image in Theory

In *National Character and National Stereotypes* Hubertus Duijker and Nico Frijda discuss problems connected with the idea of national character.¹⁵¹ They approach this idea from the perspective that such a thing exists, although, as Karl Deutsch argues 'a nation is [merely] a group of persons united by a common error about their ancestry and a common dislike of their neighbours'.¹⁵²

Benedict Anderson is perhaps the leading thinker on the idea of the 'nation'. He defines it as 'an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.¹⁵³ A nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their collective nature. Ernst Gellner makes a similar point when he declares that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist'.¹⁵⁴ Gellner claims nationalism masquerades under false pretences and he equates 'invention' with 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than with 'imagining' and 'creation'. He implies thereby that 'true' communities exist. For Anderson, in contrast, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. These imagined communities are to be distinguished, not by the level to which they are false or genuine, but by the style in which they are imagined. Members of a nation are connected to people they have never seen through the tools used to construct the modern nation such as the census, the map and the museum.¹⁵⁵

The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.¹⁵⁶

According to Anderson, the nation is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm... For him, 'the gage and emblem of [the modern nation] is the sovereign state'.

The nation is imagined as a community, because, regardless of what goes on within the nation-state, each nation is 'conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'. For

¹⁵¹ Hubertus Duijker and Nico Frijda, *National Character and national stereotypes*, North Holland, Amsterdam, 1960.

¹⁵² Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and its alternatives*, Kopf, New York, 1969.

¹⁵³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1983, 6-7.

¹⁵⁵ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 163.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

Anderson, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, 'for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.'¹⁵⁷

For Anderson this is not just explanation but also critique. His expectation, like other leftists, was that nationalism would wither away, to be replaced by 'real' criteria, such as that based on class or on a commitment to a cause. As mentioned above, the Sino-Vietnamese War undid this belief.

Whether or not there are essential national characteristics and the extent to which these are constructed, there are national images. Conflicting characteristics about other nations are ascribed and the fact that most of these are gross exaggerations or irrelevancies does not prevent circulation of the images.¹⁵⁸ Robert LeVine argued that most human populations are hostile to some other groups and carry negative images of them.¹⁵⁹ This tendency to devalue others, especially when there is little knowledge about them, can extend so far as to deny their very humanness. Reflecting the work of Edward Said, very often the evaluation of foreign peoples is made through contrasts: human beings vs. barbarians; the faithful vs. infidels; civilized vs. natives; Whites vs. Blacks, and such like. Even history has been interpreted to fit such contrasts. Greek civilisation, had its roots in African and Semitic cultures, yet it was stylized into a notion of pure European culture, other cultures being more or less barbaric. Such polarizing labels are also used for political systems: democracy and dictatorship, communism and capitalism; individualism and collectivism. In 1994 a brochure published, in German, by the Croatian Tourism Office described Croatia as trying to defend 'the splendid achievements of Western civilization against the barbarian aggression from the Orient'.¹⁶⁰

References to the past, often artificially created, are crucial to the creation of national identity and national image. Appeals to the past, as Said points out, are among the most common strategies used in interpreting the present. Said emphasised the mobilizing power of images and traditions and their fictional, or at least romantically coloured, fantastic quality. Yeats gave the Irish nationalist struggle something to revive and admire, an Irish past. Byron was of similar importance to the Greek struggle for independence. According to Kenneth Boulding, the conception of an image means not only the conception of the present, but also aspects of its past and future expectations. National image, can be defined then as the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation-state and its inhabitants. Of special importance to political action is the benevolence or malevolence imputed

¹⁵⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 102-108 for a discussion on how the manufacture of the 'Orient' flows into the construction of the 'Oriental'.

¹⁵⁹ Robert LeVine, 'Socialisation, social structure and intersocietal images', in H.C.Kelman (Ed), *International Behaviour: A Socio-Psychological Analysis*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Kunzicik, *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997, 41. This is also consistent with Said's analysis in *Orientalism*, and is not surprising, given the post-Yugoslavia Croatian elite's sympathy with fascist ideas (see Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1995).

to other nations through such images, as well as the historical component of the image.¹⁶¹ Said claimed that during the Algerian War of independence the process of decolonisation encouraged Algerians and Muslims to ‘create images of what they supposed themselves to have been prior to French colonisation’.¹⁶²

Boulding summarises this:

On the whole the images of the international system in the minds of its decision-makers are derived from a process that I have described as ‘literary’ – a *mélange* of narrative history, memories of past events, stories and conversations, etc, plus an enormous amount of usually half-digested and carelessly collected current information... it would be surprising if any images were formed that even remotely resembled the most loosely defined realities of the case.¹⁶³

Changing Images of the People’s Republic of China

Western images and attitudes concerning China have been divided and conflicting. For Stephen Mosher, the strikingly consistent feature of the images of China is inconsistency.

The most that can be conceded is that America’s intense and long-running emotional involvement with China – which some have described as a love-hate relationship – has exaggerated the swings between the ‘good’ China and the ‘evil’ China.¹⁶⁴

Several chronologies have captured changing Western opinions about China over the years. One such chronology was presented by Harold Isaacs in 1958. He characterized the chronology as shifts from The Age of Respect (in the Eighteenth Century), The Age of Contempt (1840-1905), The Age of Benevolence (1905-1937), The Age of Admiration (1937-1944), The Age of Disenchantment (1944-1949), The Age of Hostility (1949-[1958]).¹⁶⁵ In reviewing American’s perception of China after the Communist Party of China came to power in 1949 and up until the 1989 Tian’anmen student demonstration, Mosher ignores Issacs’s pre-PRC chronology and extends the analysis through to the present. For him the period from the founding of the People’s Republic through to the Nixon visit continued as The Age of Hostility (1949-1972).

¹⁶¹ Kenneth Boulding, ‘The Learning and Reality-Testing process in the international system’, *Journal of International Affairs*, 21, 1967, 422.

¹⁶² Said, *Orientalism*, 17.

¹⁶³ Boulding, ‘National Image and International Systems’, in J. N. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, The Free Press, New York, 1969, 9. Note that regardless of the fact of construction, for the talked about country the notion of ‘truth’ may still be particularly important. See chapter 2 for more discussion on the motivation of wanting to correct ‘misstatements’.

¹⁶⁴ Mosher, *China Misperceived*, 214.

¹⁶⁵ Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds: American images of China and India*, John Day, New York, 1958. See also, Wang Jian and Chang Tsan-Kuo, ‘Strategic public diplomacy and local press: how a high-profile “head-of-state” visit was covered in America’s heartland’, *Public Relations Review*, 30 (2004) 11-24.

This was followed by The Second Age of Admiration (1972-1979), The Second Age of Disenchantment (1977-1980), and the Second Age of Benevolence (1980-1989).¹⁶⁶

Richard Madsen presents a timeline that is organised around whether American liberals saw their vision for the PRC as likely to come to pass or not. He presents the 1950s as a 'bitter debate about "who lost" China' becoming a breeding ground for McCarthyism. The late 1950s and early 1960s were clouded by 'anxiety about the spread of Chinese communism... a more virulent and evil version than its Soviet counterpart'. In the 1970s, the Nixon and Kissinger's efforts to engage with the PRC were 'a beacon of hope for Americans immersed in the gloom of the Vietnam War'. By the 1980s, 'the opening of China was a harbinger of the liberalization of the whole Communist world: finally "they" were becoming like "us"'.¹⁶⁷

In *Western Images of China*, Australian academic Colin Mackerras divides views about China between 1949 and 1986 into three sub-periods: 1949 to 1966, 1966 to 1976 and 1976 to 1986. In 1949, the dominant image was one of China being 'lost' to communism, suggesting that the country was leaving both the international community and the world market, 'as if China was a belonging, subject to losing and finding. On the whole the image of China which Western governments tried to convey to their people was more negative during these years than at any preceding time'.¹⁶⁸

For Mackerras, a 'very persuasive image... was of China as a totalitarian society without any freedom'. Then, however, the decade 1966 to 1976 saw 'enormous ramifications for Western images of China'. The doubts about the Vietnam War caused a rethink of attitudes towards Asia, the Cultural Revolution raised questions about the nature of the Chinese revolution, and Nixon's visit to China meant that the United States 'no longer regarded China as a major enemy'. Since 1976, Mackerras argues, 'one of the dominant images Westerners held of China was that, while retaining its essential Chineseness, it was progressively and willingly becoming more like the West'.¹⁶⁹

While each of these periodisations suggests dichotomy and wild swings between extremes, others have suggested that the love/hate understanding can occur simultaneously. 'To Americans', write Wang Jian and Chang Tsan-Kuo, with an obvious reference to Said's *Orientalism*, 'China is at the same time familiar and strange, peace-loving and belligerent, civilized and barbarian'. According to other China-watchers, western public attitudes toward China have become more divided and

¹⁶⁶ Mosher, *China Misperceived*, 21.

¹⁶⁷ Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, ix.

¹⁶⁸ Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, Australia-Asia Papers No. 41, Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations, Griffith University, 1987, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, 8, 16 and 57.

contentious since the reforms in the late 1970s, accompanying China's great progress in economic development.¹⁷⁰

On the one hand, the prospect of China as the world's manufacturing and consumer market is ever more enticing to Western businesses. On the other hand, the last great 'Communist' power: China, and the indisputable world superpower: the United States, appear to be inching towards a clash between two seemingly incompatible civilizations.¹⁷¹ Stories of China's economic success are balanced by stories of its impending economic collapse; the story of the PRC lifting millions of people out of poverty balanced by stories of wide-spread 'human rights abuses' and failure to live by the standards the Western world sets.¹⁷²

Guided Tourism

In the face of these conflicting and mostly negative images, the PRC embraced from 'Liberation' a system of 'guided tourism', whereby visitors were invited to be witness to the reality of what was going on in China but to be managed in terms of what they saw and what they were told about what they were seeing.

This process of managed exposure towards discrete political goals had antecedents, both in terms of Marxist Leninist diplomacy, as detailed above, but also in the West. In order to mobilise public opinion in favour of the United States entering WWI and to convince 'every corner of the civilised globe the full message of America's idealism, unselfishness, and indomitable purpose', President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information under former journalist George Creel. Creel regarded one of his most effective ideas was to bring to the United States 'delegations of foreign newspaper men' such that they might 'see with their own eyes, hear with their own ears', and be able to report on America's morale and effort.¹⁷³ This was the practice of guided tourism that would be followed by the Soviet Union, and later the People's Republic of China. When James Bertram spoke with Zhou Enlai in 1957, Zhou complained:

so many Americans really believe what one journalist wrote in their papers – that China is 'one vast concentration camp'... what sort of concentration camp is that, when I myself am in it, when all of us are in it? ... Of course this story is not true. But how can we prove that to the Americans, if they will not come to China to see for themselves?¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Wang and Chang, 'Strategic Public Diplomacy', 14-15.

¹⁷¹ See for example Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1997.

¹⁷² Timothy Weston and Lionel Jensen, *China Beyond the Headlines*, Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2000.

¹⁷³ George Creel, *How We Mobilised America*, Harper, New York, 1920, 227.

¹⁷⁴ James Bertram, *Return to China*, London: Heinemann, 1957, 157-158.

The Chinese practice had some features that differ from Creel's, in part reflecting the small numbers involved, and the close connection between the groups involved and the State itself. These particularities made the activity powerfully compelling in giving a sense of status to the visitors. As Bertram related:

If a mixed group of Chinese tourists came to Wellington, I wondered as we left, would a New Zealand Prime Minister agree to receive them? It was not impossible... But that he should be prepared to give nearly two hours to serious discussion of the main problems of his Government with them, inviting their questions and replying to them in detail [was] inconceivable.¹⁷⁵

Note that Bertram was likely a special case, and his presence undoubtedly changed the nature of this particular delegation and affected the welcome given to them. Bertram had a special place in the history of the CPC as he is the only foreigner whose interview with Mao appears in Mao's *Selected Works*, so he was not simply anybody and his delegation was more than 'a group of... tourists', even though he seems not have sensed this. Note too, another tour that was also not an ordinary one (as is detailed in chapter 5) the 1971 NZUSA delegation, had a similar audience with Guo Moruo.

In the PRC, what the visitors 'saw with their own eyes' and 'heard with their own ears' could successfully overcome all that they had been told back in New Zealand. For Ron Smith, for example, his visit to the Institute of Nationalities and interview with Tibetans steeled him to be able to argue with those in New Zealand who complained of the 'Chinese invasion of Tibet', or advocated for the restoration of the rule of the Dalai Lama:

we had long interviews getting the harrowing life stories of three Tibetans – two 22-year old women ex-serfs, and a 21-year old male slave who had run away from his owner and walked for 22 days to find a People's Liberation Army camp.¹⁷⁶

As is discussed in the next chapter, the guided nature of their experiences often meant that the visitors deliberately engaged in practices to overcome their own scepticism at being shown 'only the best'.¹⁷⁷ Yet for those who expected to see a new society being born their ideas were only reinforced. As Smith wrote 'As everywhere, we picked houses at random and the occupants enthused about life being heaven now compared with hell before'.¹⁷⁸

Barbara Tuchman, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, travelled on a guided tour in 1972. She railed against the constraints of the tour, which she put down to 'the nature of the Marxist

¹⁷⁵ Bertram, *Return to China*, 163.

¹⁷⁶ Ron Smith, *Working Class Son: My Fight Against Capitalism and War*, Wellington, 2002, 129.

¹⁷⁷ Or a sense that those they spoke to back home would be sceptical (see chapter 2 for more discussion on this aspect of eyewitness reportage).

¹⁷⁸ Ron Smith, *Working Class Son*, 132.

system' and that for Chinese, to control things is 'in their blood'.¹⁷⁹ However, when left to wander one day in Yan'an:

we blundered into the courtyard of the local high school... and were invited by smiles and gestures into the reading room. It was the only institution unalerted to our coming that we managed to visit. In the fact that nothing was notably different or deficient in comparison with the planned visits to pre-selected schools lies the significance. What the revolution and the Communist regime have accomplished... speaks for itself. Visitors do not need to be carefully steered and shepherded to see that.¹⁸⁰

The idea of control was not universal. Jack Shallcrass, who selected students to tour the PRC in 1971 and went himself 11 years later, said of those on the NZUSA Study Tour whom he met on their return:

when they were in China they got to do whatever they wanted – at each location they would be asked 'what do you want to do?' and then that's what they would be shown. No one could say that they were denied any opportunity.¹⁸¹

Critics would suggest that the level of care that the PRC took to organise these experiences was substantial, and often unnoticed by people with limited experience. The argument would go that no-one would risk telling a foreigner bad things: it was simply too risky at the time. But this does not mean that many people were not sincerely proud of the achievements of the revolution.

Instead, for David Caygill, the difficulty was not in terms of control but cultural barriers preventing a greater level of understanding.

The questions we asked were from our own culture. We met a student who had just finished high school... I asked him 'What are you going to do now?'. The answer eventually came back 'it depends on the need of the state'. I meant 'what are your individual aspirations?' but he couldn't comprehend the question – or at least didn't interpret the question that I had asked in that way. He didn't answer begrudgingly - or anything. It was just speaking from a different cultural experience.¹⁸²

When the US Public Relations firm CCI was conducting a campaign on behalf of the Belgium government in 1957 they advocated flying journalists to the Brussels Trade Fair. Although, this was rejected for cost considerations, CCI had argued that

¹⁷⁹ Barbara Tuchman, *Notes From China*, Macmillan, New York, 1972, 67.

¹⁸⁰ Tuchman, *Notes from China*, 67.

¹⁸¹ Jack Shallcrass, interview, Wellington, 20 November 2003.

¹⁸² David Caygill, interview, Wellington, 21 November 2003.

the money would have been well spent because after trips of this kind the editors concerned do feel a sense of obligation and invariably reciprocate with favourable stories and features.¹⁸³

Claire Donovan reflected this. Although she subsequently said that on her return from the PRC she had begun to have grave doubts about what she had seen there, and her own commitment to Marxism-Leninism began to wane, in part as a result. Yet this was not reflected in what she wrote for the *Dominion* 'out of a respect for [her] hosts'.¹⁸⁴

For the students in the 1970s, the obligation they felt extended beyond just writing stories. They were quite prepared to put aside the most extravagant claims of Maoism and concentrate on what to them made sense, to overlook the rhetoric, even though these might have otherwise have pointed to dysfunction in the system.

They would hand out plates of cigarettes at functions in the same way as we would *hors d'oeuvres* and I remember asking 'haven't you heard of lung cancer' and the reply was 'don't worry about that, lung cancer is caused by the stresses and strains of capitalism'. That was nonsense of course. On the delegation there was a range of views but there was no confrontation. We were there to learn.¹⁸⁵

Even by the late 1970s, the practice of guided tourism was by no means unique to the PRC. When Michael Crook went to the United States in the early 1970s, he found that the USIA was conducting exactly the same activities in the US as he had witnessed in the PRC.¹⁸⁶ He got a job accompanying Chinese tour parties as 'up and coming Chinese' were introduced to the US system. His particular task was to listen to see if the guests found anything they did not like so that it could be worked on or that disliking could be better understood and addressed for the next time around.¹⁸⁷

There are many who have regarded guided tourism as not being particularly troubling. When John K. Fairbank addressed the issue of 'guided tourism' in his book *China Perceived: Images and Policies in Chinese-American Relations*, he wrote that guided tourism presents a distorted image but given how poor and inaccurate the dominant image of China was in the United States, 'guided tourism is a plain necessity'.¹⁸⁸ This sense of providing a 'balance' was also invoked by James

¹⁸³ Kunzick, *Images of Nations*, 66. This practice continues to the contemporary period, in particular with journalists being given free trips and as a consequence writing articles that are essentially advertising on behalf of the tourist industry that put up the price of the airfare.

¹⁸⁴ Moira-Claire Donovan, interview, Wellington, 13 November 2007.

¹⁸⁵ Murray Horton, interview, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Crook was born in the PRC, his parents taught at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. They are discussed further in chapter 2.

¹⁸⁷ Michael Crook, interview, Beijing, 18 April 2003. This practice dated from at least the 1960s. Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association president Douglas White went on a U.S. State Department organised trip of US universities in 1968. White was a conservative student leader and went on to become a leading barrister and Queen's Council (Douglas White, personal communication, Wellington, 4 March 1999).

¹⁸⁸ John King Fairbank *China Perceived: Images and Policies in Chinese-American Relations*, Knopf, New York, 1974, 169.

Bertram, who claimed: 'I have tried to dwell here on the more encouraging features of the Chinese scene, because it seems to me important that people in Western countries should appreciate them'.¹⁸⁹

Yet what matters also is that what the Chinese would show their guests was different from what the Americans (or New Zealanders) would have shown their guests. In 2006, NZCFS Leader Marie Greetham noted that while the Chinese choices of what to show were now much closer to that which Westerners would show off, there were still differences:

the trip I went on included museums and Shanghai's magnificent new port rather than the former Tibetan serfs' dirt huts I saw in the late 1970s, [however] I was still struck at how a pre-school would suspend its classes for an afternoon so that the children could be gawked at by a group of non-de-script foreigners.

Conclusion

Context requires an understanding of the changing ways in which the PRC had conducted its people-to-people diplomacy and a mapping of this against other geo-political and ideological factors. In the PRC's case, the ideological framework saw the focus on 'peace diplomacy' in the 1950s, where links were drawn with peace activists and organizations on the basis of preventing further war between capitalist and socialist states and challenging anti-communist beliefs that socialist states wanted war.

The 1960s for the PRC was dominated by the Sino-Soviet split, which saw the PRC reach out to a broader number of supporters, yet its commitment to Marxist orthodoxy also saw it focus on the question of class and ideological commitment in terms of how those relationships developed. Increasingly the image it projected was one of revolutionary utopianism, and of a universal project offering an alternative for humanity.

After the death of Mao Zedong, however, the PRC began to project a state and nation centred image, based increasingly on ideas of culture, 'normal' state behaviour and projecting historical continuities. The immediate period was dominated by a de-politicisation process and a rigidifying of the relationship between the Party and State. Although Tiananmen disrupted the projection of the PRC's chosen images, the post-Mao changes continued anew and apace through the 1990s until the end of this study.

Contained within the term 'people-to-people diplomacy', for the PRC, is a range of different activities. These have included: proletarian internationalism, national projection, people's diplomacy. These different activities have different characteristics and have appeared at different

¹⁸⁹ Bertram, *Return to China*, 250-251.

periods, in accordance with the changing needs and conditions the PRC has faced. This chapter has charted the different types of activities and drawn a useful periodisation that will be able to be examined in conjunction with, in order to help describe and explain, the activities of New Zealanders sympathetic to the PRC in later chapters.

There is a lot of differentiation between the various forms of diplomacy that are subsumed within the term that the organizations connected to the PRC favour of ‘people-to-people diplomacy’. Further, there was the important interaction between the ideas of an alternative diplomacy, which was linked to the radicalism of the PRC, or its perceived radicalism, and the pragmatic problems the PRC faced at not having formal diplomatic links with many states. Accordingly, people-to-people diplomacy cannot always be equated in a straight-forward way with national image building, but there are significant similarities.

For Marxists, the national question for Marxists was subordinate to the question of revolution. Marxism-Leninism suggests that bringing the masses into socialist construction, including of the international order, is essential for progress. Proletarian internationalism was bringing together those who would struggle together to bring about the universal and international Marxist-Leninist project. While supporting a socialist country was an aspect of that practice it was a means to the end of global communism, not an end in itself.

There is a natural conflict between this idea of the needs and aspirations of ‘the people’ and what the PRC increasingly expressed as a state-centred nationalism, in particular from the 1970s. Yet since socialist states are all forced to play international politics, states tend to put the needs of their countries first. Although controversial, it is likely that many Marxists believed that doing so was in fact ‘true internationalism’ – so long as it is employed to support the international socialist revolution. For others though, the increasing similarities between how the PRC behaved and other states, not based on an aspirational alternative, meant that they would lose interest in the PRC altogether.

One consistency through the period examined here is the use of the tool of guided tourism, whereby foreigners are brought to the PRC and taken through a managed visit. It is focused on what they want to visit, although various observers have also been struck by what it was that the Chinese hosts wanted them to see, and supplied with guides and interpreters to explain, in appropriate terms, what they are bearing witness to.

Even this approach, albeit consistent, has also changed in accordance with the question of context. New Zealanders in the 1970s were struck by what their hosts were interested in showing them, in the 2000s far less so, since the trip would include the same sorts of things that visiting dignitaries might be shown in New Zealand. The target market for such tours also changed, from those sympathetic to seeing socialism in practice, as part of an international commitment to the

Marxist project, through to 'prominent people', who tended to be either civic and community elites or those with access to the mainstream media and who could produce good news about China. By the late 1990s, if such visitors had had a commitment to socialism it might be considered a burden rather than an attraction. The distinction between friends and enemies was not related to ideological commitment, merely to whether or not someone might say nice things about the PRC.

Chapter 2: Telling the Truth

This thesis looks at changing representations of China. I focus in particular on those images that were adopted and projected by its friends in New Zealand-based organisations. These organisations included the New Zealand China Friendship Society, the Communist Party of New Zealand (and derivations thereof), and for a period, the New Zealand University Students' Association. Each of these organisations in turn, for they have had at times understandings and therefore representations of China in conflict with one another, has attempted to make its own ideas about China into a hegemonic perspective or orthodox view. This process has, naturally, involved an attempt to make the representation authoritative or to make a claim in some way to truthfulness. At the heart of the discourse about the People's Republic of China at the centre of this thesis has been the notion of representing the 'truth' about China.

This chapter looks at ideas of truth and how those ideas relate to the activities of the groups identified above. In particular, I look at a range of ideas about subjectivity and objectivity with respect to truth and what they reveal when examined alongside the activities of those organisations committed to telling what was, for them, the truth about China. I do this by examining what claims to authority the groups use in their representations of China, with a particular focus on the claims of empiricism that have accompanied New Zealander's eye-witness accounts of travel to the PRC. Finally I explore how Alain Badiou's ideas on truth and the event – whereby an occurrence of what Badiou calls a truth-event makes previous understanding of the truth untenable – can be used to understand the disruption to the accounts of activities in the PRC that are explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Alain Badiou has gained renown in contemporary continental philosophy for his theory of truth as a situated 'truth-procedure' consisting in the practice of fidelity to an event. Badiou's theory of truth has gained notoriety as a critique of postmodern philosophy and post-structuralism, articulated from within the tradition of continental philosophy. Of additional pertinence, Badiou was a member of a Maoist party in the 1970s and still regards himself as both a revolutionary and an activist.¹⁹⁰ He wrote in 2006 that Maoism 'is part of our political current... I can say "our", for I was part of it, and in a certain sense, to quote Rimbaud, "I am there, I am still there"'.¹⁹¹ His current political activities include articulation on behalf of the *sans-papiers*, identification as a Maoist comes amidst his discussion on the significance of the Cultural Revolution. I will return to Badiou's notion of truth through fidelity to the event with respect to the events that shaped the truth of the PRC to its New Zealand friends later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁰ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 31.

¹⁹¹ Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, Verso, London, 2007, 291.

Approaches to Truth

Sympathy with the communist or socialist project that China in some way represented was a key part of the early attraction of the PRC. Yet depictions of China were far more commonly couched in terms invoking the real than the utopian.¹⁹² James Bertram, for example, denying that he was a fellow traveller of the Chinese revolution, explained that he was required by a ‘commitment to accuracy’ to acknowledge ‘the real nature of [communism’s] achievements in China’.¹⁹³ Similarly, when the NZCFS was formed in 1952, one of its goals was to ‘clear the mists of ignorance and provide *accurate* information leading to mutual understanding and mutual respect between our two peoples’.¹⁹⁴

According to Terry Eagleton, a brief history of truth might go something like this: in pre-modern times, truth was by and large a phenomenon set apart from the material world, considered above everyday realities. Truth was thought to dwell ‘in some Olympian sphere of its own’; or truth was conversely deeper than the real, ‘lurking exclusively at the heart of things’. Revealing the truth for pre-modernists meant discarding the ‘empirical shells of phenomena’ in order to get at the vital essences of things. For Eagleton, this view of truth survives well into modernity, pointing to Hegel among others; but he writes that it is only with modernity that truth ‘descends to earth on a dramatic scale’, as people turned from religious explanations and began to focus their accounts on the actually existent.¹⁹⁵

A dictionary definition of truth reveals multiple meanings. These include honesty, good faith, and sincerity in general, which might be better defined as truthfulness¹⁹⁶, to agreement with fact or reality in particular.¹⁹⁷ There are differences amongst philosophers and scholars with respect to what constitutes truth; how to define and identify truth; the roles that revealed and acquired knowledge play; and whether truth is subjective, relative, objective, or absolute.¹⁹⁸ There are at least five substantive theories contending as a proper basis for deciding how words, symbols,

¹⁹² Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor show why Marx becomes and must become entangled in a web of confusion regarding utopia: ‘[Though] normative considerations were dismissed by Marx and Engels as irrelevant in the face of the certain knowledge furnished by historical materialism... [they] did not actually succeed in the attempt to purge their work of all moralistic/ethical notions... due to the fact that in order to attract the support both of bourgeois intellectuals and workers, they had to be able to present these groups with some sort of picture of what a desirable future socialist and communist society would look like’ (Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, Hutchinson, New York, 1983, 163-4). They argue that Marx’s and Engels’ commitment to the communist party compelled them to enter into a normative discourse. In doing so they introduce a tension between this discourse as it emerged in the utopian vision of communist society and their belief in the dialectical necessity of communism. See also Staci von Boeckmann, ‘Marxism, Morality, and the Politics of Desire: Utopianism in Fredric Jameson’s “The Political Unconscious”’, *Utopian Studies*, Special Issue, Spring, 1998, 34.

¹⁹³ James Bertram, *Return to China*, Heinemann, Auckland, 1957, 1.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Why China Matters to Us?’, pamphlet, 1952, NZCFS Archives. Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁵ Terry Eagleton, ‘On Telling the Truth’, *Socialist Register 2006: Telling the Truth*, Merlin Press, New York, 2005, 269.

¹⁹⁶ See Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002. Williams discusses the distinction between the idea of something being true, which is so problematic, and what he sees is much less problematic, the virtue of truthfulness in seeking out the truth or expressing it.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Williams, ‘Truth’, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Macmillan, New York, 1996, 572-573.

¹⁹⁸ Hartry Field, *Truth and the Absence of Fact*, Oxford Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001. See also Simon Blackburn, Keith Simmons, eds., *Truth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

ideas and beliefs may properly be considered true. These theories are usually entitled: correspondence, coherence, constructivist, consensus and pragmatic theories.¹⁹⁹

According to correspondence theories of truth, true beliefs and true statements are true because they correspond to the actual state of affairs. These theories attempt to draw a positive relationship between thoughts or statements and the things or objects they refer to. It is a traditional model, the heritage of which can be traced to classical Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. These theories hold that the truth or the falsity of a representation is determined in principle solely by how it relates to objective reality, by whether or not it accurately describes that reality.²⁰⁰

On the face of it, NZCFS President Roy Evans was applying a correspondence theory of truth when he wrote that:

Those members of our Society who have visited China *know* – *they know* that this country of over 700 million people are enjoying a rapidly rising standard of living. They *know* that the Chinese have their priorities right. They also *know* that here in New Zealand we do not have our priorities right... under our private enterprise system... our priorities are completely haywire. *There is something to learn from China.*²⁰¹

Evans was arguing that the things that the New Zealanders saw in China, on their study tours, were true – and that the revolutionary activities in China were truly transforming China for the better. He, and the rest of the Society at this time, *knew* this because it corresponded with what those committed to the socialist project *already knew* about the world. Many modern theorists have noted that the idea behind correspondence theory cannot be achieved independently of analysing such additional factors. Such critics of correspondence notions of truth assert that there are yet other issues necessary to the analysis, such as language and translation, interpersonal hierarchies, community and societal interactions, personal biases and other factors involved in deciding what is seen as truth.²⁰²

There are a complex series of claims being made by Evans, in which facts and values are interchanged. Note that it is the eye-witness experience that is the source of knowledge – a

¹⁹⁹ Blackburn and Simmons, 1999, lists these five. Some of the theories relate directly to the activities of the organisations examined in this thesis, two of which seem of less application for our purposes: these are coherence and pragmatic theories so I have not developed them further. Coherence theories are about truth systems. To satisfy coherence, truth merely requires a proper fit of elements within a whole system. Under pragmatic theories of truth, a statement is true if and only if it would satisfy our expectations were we to act upon it. That is, the consequences of being able to integrate knowledge, predict events, and achieve goals, determine whether a belief is true. Truth is thus a function of human endeavour, not some existence apart from us.

²⁰⁰ Arthur N. Prior, 'Correspondence Theory of Truth', in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol.2*, Macmillan, 1969, 223. For correspondence theories, truth is simply a matter of copying 'objective reality' and then accurately representing it in thoughts, words and other symbols. A major proponent of this theory was Thomas Aquinas, who wrote that 'Truth is the conformity of the intellect with things'. For further discussion see F.H. Bradley, 'On Truth and Copying', in Blackburn, et al, eds., 1999, 31-45.

²⁰¹ Roy Evans, 'President's Report', NZCS Biennial Conference, 1973, NZCFS Archive. Emphasis in the original.

²⁰² See, as but one example, Hartry Field, *Truth and the Absence of Fact*, 2001.

skeptic might ask how Evans knew that the lives of 700 million people were being improved. Evans is stating convictions rather than facts, and he is constructing the members of the NZCFS not only as those who know more about China but also as those who know more about where New Zealand should be headed.

Although Marxists are concerned about the problem of truth and authenticity, in part it is simply explained through their commitment to their cause, yet it is also worrisome precisely because of what might be done in the service of the project to which they are committed. In particular it is worth noting that Orwell's *1984* came out before the formation of the PRC, and placed a particular burden on supporters such as those in the NZCFS since it was instantly well-known as a critique, from a social-democratic perspective, of totalitarian rule.²⁰³ While Marxists' views of truths are in some respect subordinate to the agreed project of Marxism, liberalism challenges this. Liberalism holds that state authority such as that under socialism can be a threat to the truth because it prevents some people from saying what is true.

Constructivist ideas of truth, which emerge partly in response to such criticisms, instead hold that truth is constructed by social processes. Normally this results in truth being accordingly historically and culturally specific, and shaped through power understood as struggles within a society. At its extreme, constructivism views all knowledge as 'constructed', because it does not reflect any external transcendent realities (as a correspondence theory might hold). Rather, constructivist perceptions of truth are viewed as contingent on some agreed norms, subjective human perception, and social experience.²⁰⁴ Many constructivists believe that representations of physical and biological reality, including race, sexuality, and gender are socially constructed.²⁰⁵ Hegel and Marx were among the early proponents of the premise that truth is socially constructed, in their case by the dominant structures of the current epoch.²⁰⁶

This idea of a constructed, subjective and contingent truth comes through very clearly from talking to those currently involved in China friendship activities. It explains the activities and statements of those who came before them in the face of criticisms that they were 'political pilgrims',²⁰⁷ 'fellow travellers'²⁰⁸ or in some way being 'managed', willing or otherwise, by the regime.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ George Orwell, *1984*, Penguin Classics, London, 2000.

²⁰⁴ Ralph Pettman, *Commonsense Constructivism*, M.E. Sharpe, London, 2000.

²⁰⁵ See for example Ernst von Glasersfeld, *Radical Constructivism. A Way of Knowing and Learning*, Falmer Press, London, 1995.

²⁰⁶ Stuart Hall, B. Lumley and Gregor McLennan, 'Politics and Ideology: Gramsci' in *On Ideology*, University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Hutchinson, London, 1978.

²⁰⁷ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981.

²⁰⁸ David Caute, *The Fellow-Travelers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988.

²⁰⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2003. See also Simon Leys (the pen-name of Pierre Rickmans), *Chinese Shadows*, Viking Press, New York, 1977.

Michael Crook's parents had each come to China in the 1930s and worked to promote the PRC in the West after 1949.²¹⁰ He has since continued their work. He takes up this constructed notion of truth to explain his parents', and their peers', motivations:

the truth... for these people there was no need to brainwash, [the great success of the PRC] was their truth. The different experiences that these people went through led to their different understandings.²¹¹

He noted the particularism of those who were enthused about the CPC's project for China:

there were an awful lot of foreigners came to China in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s. The Shanghai that my dad arrived at in 1938 had Russian dance halls, it was a paradise for adventurers. There were people there for all kinds of reasons: some to make money, whatever. [Those who became friends of China were a] selective group. Take for example Ma Haide/ George Hatem, [he] left his practice in Shanghai and went to North China to work with the communists. When Alley took his first holiday he heard there was a flood, so he went to the flood. He didn't go to the beaches of Thailand or those things that expats do now... Perhaps for the average person tumultuous social events get in the way. The friends of China were not these average people.²¹²

What Crook reveals here is an interaction between a set of political beliefs and a set of perceptions of what counts as true. What is required as evidence to persuade the supporter of a particular political project is different from that required for someone not committed to that project. Commitment to ideals – sincerity – is central to explanations about truth for socialists. Alley was sincere, and had the correct values, therefore he can be believed. Others might criticise people like Alley on almost exactly parallel reasoning: that he was hiding the truth precisely because of his sincerity and it was his lack of objectivity that distorted the truth.

Further along a continuum away from 'transcendent' reality, some post-modern thinkers claim that what passes for truth is in fact, merely, a process of mass consensus of the public. This idea would mean that no effort, or application of theory or experiment, is required to arrive at truth, since truth is in effect only a by-product of social processes. Such 'consensus theories' hold that

²¹⁰ Michael Crook was born in the PRC. His father, David, first went to China in the 1930s as an agent of the Communist International (or COMINTERN). His mother, Isobel (née Brown) was also in China as a missionary working on agricultural projects. The Crooks taught English in a rural school which trained staff for the foreign service of the future government. After Liberation, the Crooks taught at the Peking First Foreign Languages Institute. The Crooks published *Revolution in a Chinese Village: Ten Mile Inn* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1959), and *The First Years of Yangyi Commune* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1966). Both books are sympathetic accounts of changes in the Chinese countryside based on first hand observation. The couple were clear voices in introducing and defending the programs of the new government to the English speaking world. Michael now teaches at the Foreign Languages Institute and is Chairperson of Gung Ho, the International Committee of Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, which continues the work of Rewi Alley and Edgar Snow from the 1930s (for more on Gung Ho and Rewi Alley see chapter 7).

²¹¹ Michael Crook, interview, Beijing, 23 July 2003.

²¹² Crook, interview.

truth is whatever is agreed upon, or in some versions, might come to be agreed upon, by some specified group. Such a group might include all human beings, or any subset thereof consisting of more than one person.²¹³ Although he does not identify as a post-modernist, among the current advocates of consensus theory accounting for the concept of ‘truth’ is the philosopher Jürgen Habermas.²¹⁴ For Habermas, truth is what would be agreed upon in an ideal speech situation.²¹⁵ Habermas argues for a radical democracy where even statements as to what exists are subject to a contested discourse where ‘the truth will out’.

The idea of contested notions of ‘truth’ or at least truth claims is at the heart of the struggle for making the NZCFS’s ideas about the PRC hegemonic or orthodox. The Society saw one of its functions as contributing to ideas about the PRC, without which alternative ‘truths’ that would be unhelpful for its other goals might be formed. As NZCFS President Jack Ewan wrote, ‘Our job is not propaganda for China but all would agree that we couldn’t go wrong in publishing the truth about China’.²¹⁶ When it incorporated in 1977, for example, the NZCFS included as a goal ‘To oppose and correct misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese government and people’.²¹⁷ While accepting the power of hegemony and consensus ideas about truth – and seeking to influence representations about the PRC – the Society often found itself challenging the prevailing view. This was true when it argued for recognition for the PRC, for Taiwan being part of China, and that Communist Party of China-instituted programmes were successful in improving the living standards of hundreds of millions of Chinese. Later, these disputes were also with others with whom they had previously been closely aligned, and who had agreed with those previous campaigns. For example when CPNZ cadre withdrew from the NZCFS in the late 1970s, in part because of disputes over China’s international activities and in particular over the Theory of the Three Worlds, the Society organised a workshop that encouraged ‘[the popularising of] China’s Foreign Policy, Including “Chairman Mao’s Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds”’.²¹⁸ That workshop noted debate about China’s foreign policy, the Gang of Four and the Theory of the Three Worlds but reported that the confusion was manufactured: ‘some people have been confused by the nonsense of the capitalist press

²¹³ Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995.

²¹⁴ This was first articulated in Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Thomas McCarthy (trans.), Beacon Press, Boston, 1979.

²¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, Barbara Fultner (trans.), Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003.

²¹⁶ Jack Ewan, New Zealand China Society Minutes, October 1959, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive.

²¹⁷ See the Rules of the NZCFS from 1977. This is available online from the Incorporated Societies Office at www.societies.org.nz/scanned-images/28/BC10042430628.pdf (accessed 16 June 2008). The rule was changed as a result of the impact of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 (see chapter 6 for more discussion about this matter).

²¹⁸ The ‘Theory of the Three Worlds’ was a theory attributed to Mao Zedong that suggested that the world is politically and economically divided into three worlds. It is discussed further in chapters 4 and 6.

which calls the present Chinese leadership “moderates” and the disgraced “gang of four” “radicals”.²¹⁹

The workshop showed that the Society believed in a single truth, regardless of the requirement to engage in popularising it. It declared that all members had a responsibility to study China’s foreign policy and to be ‘well-informed as to the situation’ and, as Jack Ewan was reported to have pointed out, ‘The Theory of the Three Worlds must be discussed. It is a clear statement of the present situation in the world’.²²⁰

In contrast, in 2002, looking back on this same period, Michael Crook’s thoughts certainly reflected a subjectivity of truth:

To a large extent truth, when it is presented, is subjective to the extent that, given one’s life experience, equips one in a certain way with a certain understanding. Take for example my father who died at 93 a few years ago, and Alley died aged 90. These people came to China in the 1920s and 1930s as young people in a time of great turmoil and how could they not be struck by the difference after Liberation? How could they not go overboard and be positive? That was their truth, their great truth.²²¹

Crook further acknowledged that not only was the subjectivity due to the particularities of the person, it was also historically contingent:

My mother got so cross the other day when a Chinese colleague was doubting whether the land reforms were really such a great idea. The direction in China today is giving back land titles to the families they were taken from under land reform. Is it right to hand it back is one question but even if the answer is ‘yes’, then that’s a separate question which is ‘Was it right to take it away in the first place?’. China’s very different now, it’s a different time it’s a different set of circumstances.²²²

These ideas are consistent with those of the theologian Soren Kierkegaard. For him, while objective truths are final and static, subjective truths are continuing and dynamic. The truth of existence is a living, inward, and subjective experience that is always in the process of becoming. Kierkegaard wrote that the values, morals, and spiritual approaches a person adopts could only become truly known when they have been inwardly and subjectively appropriated. Human truth cannot be found separate from the subjective experience of one's own existence; this experience is itself defined by the values that underpin one's way of life.²²³

²¹⁹ National Executive Council Meeting Workshop Report, ‘The Popularisation of China’s Foreign Policy, Including “Chairman Mao’s Theory of the Three Worlds”’, May 1977. Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive.

²²⁰ Ron Howell, quoted in ‘Three Worlds Workshop Report’.

²²¹ Crook, interview.

²²² Crook, interview.

²²³ Alastair Hannay and Gordon Marino, *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1998, 249.

Perhaps the best example of this, from the representations of the PRC involved in this study, was those who said that they knew what they were saying was an incomplete picture of the truth, but that it balanced equally incomplete negative images. In his final words of the book that details his trip to the PRC in 1956, James Bertram wrote: 'I have tried to dwell here on the more encouraging features... because it seems to me important that people in Western countries should appreciate them'.²²⁴ Propaganda that prevented war, or eased the relationship between NZ and China was justified – especially since objective truth was elusive anyway.

The position that truth is subjective, in particular because of ideological perspective, surfaces again and again in accounts of travel to the PRC. It is often employed to dismiss anti-China perspectives as having been pre-determined:

Our New Zealand party brought back from China (as they had certainly taken there) a number of very different points of view. To Charles Hilgendorf, the most striking thing about present day China was that 'it really is Communist. There is a complete dictatorship, intensive and all-pervading propaganda, secret police and spies, standardisation of thought, armed soldiers seldom out of sight and mass executions'.... To Ormond Wilson, most things in China seemed 'a good deal better than I had expected... My personal impression was that there is far greater ease and easiness in China than I recollected in my encounters with totalitarian countries elsewhere'. All of us, I have no doubt, were trying to tell the truth as we saw it.²²⁵

Four years prior to Bertram's account, Margaret Garland, herself convinced of the 'truth' of claims that the United Nations forces, in particular the United States forces, had used germ warfare in Korea against Chinese troops, wrote:

The effect of the exhibition on us was mixed. All of us felt that the evidence shown here, plus the report of the International Scientific Commission, looked pretty conclusive. In fact, none of us had much doubt about it, though one or two thought that our opinions were not of much value, and others that we could not be convinced that the USA had engaged in bacteriological warfare from this evidence. Others of the delegation who disagreed with this view interpreted it to mean fear of coming out

²²⁴ Bertram, *Return to China*, 250.

²²⁵ Bertram, *Return to China*, 242. It seems unlikely Hilgendorf saw any evidence of such, as no one else's comments reflected that they had. Margaret Garland, who was on the same trip as Hilgendorf and also travelled to the PRC four years earlier, wrote on re-entering Hong Kong from the 1952 trip, 'I had not seen a single policeman anywhere in New China' (Margaret Garland, *Journey to New China*, Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1954, 157). Wilson's comment is likely influenced by his experience in the Soviet Union. In Moscow in 1939 he experienced 'bureaucratic officiousness and intrusiveness'. His photograph of a building led to his film being taken from him and destroyed after an hour spent 'in and out of the office of several... officials ... [which] implied a paranoia far exceeding normal precautions against espionage'. Janet Paul, 'Wilson, George Hamish Ormond 1907 - 1988', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>.

honestly with what we believed and I noticed a tendency for the party to split into two groups.²²⁶

Karl Marx engaged with the idea of subjectivity obscuring an actual existing truth. For him, knowledge should be thought of in a realistic fashion. The subject does not create the object, for the object exists independently of the subject. Knowledge results from the fact that copies, reflections, or photographs of this actual existing reality are present in the mind. In contrast to the conservative thought of much of his day, Marx held that the world is not unknowable but rather is entirely and thoroughly knowable, and that the true method of knowing consists solely in science combined with technical practice.²²⁷ The peculiarity of Marxist materialism lies in the fact that it combines this realistic outlook with the pragmatic. From the notion that all contents of our consciousness are determined by class perspective, it follows equally that each class has its own science and its own philosophy. An independent, non-class-based science is impossible. Further, the truth for communists is whatever leads to success, and practice alone constitutes the criterion of truth. While knowledge is a striving for absolute truth, it is relative, answering to the needs of the movement.²²⁸

How to combine Marx's belief in an absolute truth and the subjectivity of perspective has confounded Marxists ever since *The German Ideology*. Vladimir Lenin argued that a summation of relative truths would reveal the absolute truth. In *Materialism and Empiro-criticism* he claimed 'human thought then by its nature is capable of giving, and does give, absolute truth, which is compounded of a sum-total of relative truths'.²²⁹ Mao challenged this notion in his essay *On Practice*. In it he wrote:

Marxists²³⁰ recognise that in the absolute and general process of the development of the universe, the development of each particular process is relative, and that hence, in the *endless* flow of absolute truth... knowledge of a particular process at any given stage of development is only relative truth. The sum total of *innumerable* relative truths constitutes absolute truth.²³¹

²²⁶ Garland, *Journey*, 87-88.

²²⁷ Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology', 1845, in Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1978, 146. See also Mao Zedong, 'Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?', *Four Essays on Philosophy*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1968. Mao argues that correct ideas do not 'drop from the skies... They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle and scientific experiment'.

²²⁸ Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', 1857, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 218.

²²⁹ Vladimir Lenin, 'Materialism and Empiro-criticism', 1925, in *Lenin Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, 151.

²³⁰ Adrian Chan argues that since, except for here, Mao uses the term 'Marxist-Leninists' throughout the work this is a deliberate refutation of Lenin. Mao is thereby making a distinction between Lenin's theories of knowledge and truth and what Mao regards as Marx's. See Adrian Chan, *Chinese Marxism*, Continuum, London, 2003, 110.

²³¹ Mao Zedong, 'On Practice', 1937, from *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1975, 307. Emphasis added.

For Mao, then, innumerable relative truths are needed in order to reach absolute truth. While this goal should be strived for – through a process of ‘practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge... with each cycle the nature of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level’ – this process will naturally and logically be an endless spiral.²³²

Alain Badiou reveals his own heritage in Maoist thought by continuing this notion. For Badiou there is an absolute truth but that truth only exists in a particular moment (which he calls ‘the situation’) and since truths become untrue with the passage of time they cannot be achieved over time. The foundation that is needed for a truth to be able to worked towards is being continually disrupted by events, each giving rise to a new conceptualisation of truth. Badiou has gained renown in contemporary continental philosophy for his theory of truth as a situated ‘truth-procedure’ consisting in the practice of fidelity to an event. According to Badiou, truth-procedures are situated, singular, subjective, and universal.²³³

How To Discern Truth From Non-Truth?

Metaphysical subjectivism holds that the truth or falsity of all propositions depends, at least partly, on what we believe. In contrast, metaphysical objectivism holds that truths are independent of our beliefs. Relative truths are statements or propositions that are true only relative to some standard, convention, or point-of-view, such as that of one's own culture. Relativism is the doctrine that all truths within a particular domain are of this form, and entails that what is true varies across cultures and eras. For example, moral relativism is the view that a moral statement can be true in one time and place but false in another. This is different from the less controversial claim that people in different cultures and eras believe different things about morality: moral relativism claims that the moral facts themselves are different. Thus, justification is a normative notion. The standard definition is that a concept is normative if it is a concept regarding or depending on the norms, or obligations and permissions (very broadly construed), involved in human conduct.²³⁴

Despite the problems with objectivity and justification, we hang on to ideals about truth as important for our sense of humanity. In *Truth and Truthfulness* Bernard Williams argues, against deniers of the possibility or importance of objective truth, that it is indispensable to any human

²³² Mao, ‘On Practice’, 308.

²³³ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003. Note though that for Badiou a truth, while historically contingent and particular to a situation, is itself necessarily universal. It also must be new; in this way Badiou distinguishes between truth and mere knowledge. A ‘truth-event’ disrupts the appreciation of the truth situation, by injecting something new into it, and making that existing understanding of the situation no longer possible. Badiou discusses this in a range of his works. See *Being and Event*, Oliver Feltham (trans.), Continuum, New York, 2006, and chapter 2 of, ‘Philosophy and Truth’, in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (eds. and trans.), Continuum, London, 2005, 43-51.

²³⁴ Chris Gowans, ‘Moral Relativism’ in Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2004, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>.

society to accept both truth and truthfulness as values, and sincerity and accuracy as corresponding virtues.²³⁵ Such beliefs do not need to imply anything disreputably metaphysical. On the contrary, Williams argues, Nietzsche believes that while a vindictory history of the notions of truth and truthfulness certainly has to be a naturalistic one, that is not to say that such a history is impossible. Such an understanding of truth and truthfulness can lead us to the less elevated and more realistic hope that truth, as a human institution, will continue to sustain the virtues of truth

in something like the more courageous, intransigent, and socially effective forms that they have acquired over their history... and that the ways in which future people will come to make sense of things will enable them to see the truth and not be broken by it.²³⁶

In order to argue that what one is saying is the truth there is often the claim to some authority. One of the most famous attempts at this is Marco Polo's account of his travels, where he claims that everything he has either seen himself (he being trustworthy due to his noble birth) or heard from 'men of credit and veracity' is therefore true:

Our book will relate them to you plainly in due order, as they were related by Messer Marco Polo, a wise and noble citizen of Venice, who has seen them with his own eyes. There is also much here that he has not seen but has heard from men of credit and veracity. We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication. And all who read the book or hear it may do so with full confidence, because it contains *nothing but the truth*.²³⁷

Those documenting the successes of the PRC in the years immediately after Liberation harnessed not only the persuasive power of the eye-witness account but attempted to convey why the particular evidence that travellers were told seemed so convincing to them. As Margaret Garland wrote:

There was no mistaking the emotion with which these peasants spoke. Rewi Alley and Nancy Lapwood, as well as Dr Chou, the Dean of the University of Peking, were deeply moved for they knew the truth of what was being said and I daresay a great deal more of what lay behind this kind of story.²³⁸

This was the sort of remark that made me so sure that the people who were showing us the sights, conducting us on our tour, believed in what they were showing us themselves.

²³⁵ Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 265.

²³⁶ Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 269.

²³⁷ Marco Polo, 'Prologue', *The Travels of Marco Polo*, introduction by John Masefield, Dent, London, 1908, 33. Emphasis added.

²³⁸ Garland, *Journey*, 126.

Professor Chou, who is a scientist and a scholar with an international reputation, is not a man whose word I found it possible to doubt. There was no need for him to have said that unless he wanted to say it. I also had the same feeling about the information we got from other people. Listening to speeches and question and answer is one thing; observing the look on the speaker's face and the tones of his voice is quite another, and it is in these that the foreigner who cannot understand the language reads the answer to his enquiry.²³⁹

It was very important to these early travellers that they would be able to convince people that they had been able to get beyond propagandistic images to see 'the real China'. Alan Monteith led the first delegation to go from New Zealand to the PRC to attend the Peking Peace Conference in 1952. He recounted a spontaneous trip to a church that the delegation requested, leaving it to the last minute before they suggested it:

It couldn't have been a set up. From the time we made the request to the time the car pulled up would have been no more than ten minutes... To some extent we deliberately did these things. We would leave it to the last minutes, [so that things] couldn't be jacked up. In many cases we were doing it at times when it would be inconvenient for the people at the other end, we were kind of testing them, and it was no problem at all. When we came home we were told that things had been laid on for us but it couldn't have been... do you see?²⁴⁰

Before Margaret Garland left for China her conversations with friends had left her in no doubt as to the enormity of the task of being able to present what she discovered as being an honest and useful account of her experience:

[One friend said] 'You'll see nothing whatever. They can easily fool you about what they are doing... You can go and be fooled and come back here and get yourself called a communist. That's all you can do and if you take my advice you'll stay at home...'

I rang up another acquaintance. 'It's no good. Anything good about Communist China you come back and say won't be believed and anything bad about it will do no good to the cause of peace', he said.²⁴¹

When Tom Newnham went to the PRC in the 1960s he too was aware of how anything he might report would be received in New Zealand. He details in his autobiography *Interesting Times* how he

²³⁹ Garland, *Journey*, 131.

²⁴⁰ Alan Monteith, interview, Auckland, 8 July 2002.

²⁴¹ Garland, *Journey*, 13. Note the differences between these two positions. The first friend claims that Garland will not be able to see the truth, and further that she will deservedly have no authority to represent whatever she sees. The second that the situation means that even though she has seen the truth, and that it will be positive, it will not be able to break through the situation because it will not be listened to on Garland's return to New Zealand. It is precisely in response to these constructions that Garland subsequently frames her reportage.

'had asked to visit villages in three areas ... and in this I was given every assistance'. He writes that

I knew that I would be accused of being taken to 'showpieces'... However, during the whole month I did not get any such feeling. Already, in those days, my Chinese, both Mandarin and Cantonese was sufficiently good for me to understand what was being said around me. Many times I asked for impromptu changes to our planned route and these were always complied with. For example at a cotton factory I was discussing her work with a female employee and asked about her domestic situation, as I felt it would make a good case-study. Knowing that the employees lived very close to their work I asked if we could go and see her home. Within five minutes it was arranged and we went across to take snaps.²⁴²

He records that at the woman's home 'I could understand what they were saying and it was totally natural and honest, nothing contrived'.²⁴³ Further he recounts a number of occasions when

as we were travelling in a car from the special village I had looked at – I sometimes spotted another village over yonder and thought I would like to compare it. So I asked to be taken there. They always complied immediately.²⁴⁴

The authority of the Society's representations of the PRC depended upon a number of factors. Not least of which was the climate of anti-communism and the international situation. For example, they were considerably enhanced after China joined the UN and recognition moved towards becoming a reality and the status of Rewi Alley improved immeasurably.²⁴⁵ Compared with the virtual media blackout of his 1965 trip the *NZ Listener* in 1971 positively gushed:

Public Meetings in Wellington and Auckland have drawn nearly 2000 to hear him... with the knowledge that he speaks for China on the public platform, he holds an audience spellbound.²⁴⁶

For the NZCFS, refuting dominant images of the PRC was still an essential part of its activities. As National President Roy Evans claimed:

The point is that the news media here does not give China's side of the case. That is where the China Society must step in. By making it our duty to help our own people to

²⁴² Tom Newnham, *Interesting Times*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 2003, 149-150.

²⁴³ Newnham, *Interesting Times*, 149.

²⁴⁴ Newnham, *Interesting Times*, 150. He also recounted this story in an interview, Auckland, 9 July 2002.

²⁴⁵ See chapter 7 for more on this.

²⁴⁶ Bruce Wallace, 'At Home in Worlds Apart', *NZ Listener*, 13 December 1971, 10.

understand China's policy and reasons for policy, we will be accepting the new role for our Society.²⁴⁷

In the 1970s, tours continued to be the main source for instructing particular individuals about China, individuals who could propagate those images to a wider population. For the Society, there was nothing that could produce a more accurate and enduring image than that which had been observed with their own eyes. For example, the 1976 Worker's Tour travelled to China after the death of Mao and during the factional struggles that led to the arrest of the Gang of Four. They saw it quite differently from foreign observers viewing the PRC from afar and reported that claims in the Western media of unrest, chaos and infighting were 'completely at variance' with what the group 'witnessed first hand'.²⁴⁸

These first hand experiences led to the production of other material. In March 1974 the Auckland Branch of the NZCFS organised a two-day 'Seminar on China'. It featured speakers on trade, history, education, industry, literature, Rewi Alley, China's foreign policy, medicine and the situation facing women and children. Every speaker had been on a tour to China and although their personal experiences formed only part of their presentation, this experiential knowledge underpinned their understanding of the PRC. The seminar, and the resulting publication of the speeches, represented an attempt to consolidate the impact of the tours of the early 1970s.²⁴⁹

The novelty of visiting the People's Republic, right through to the early 1970s, was such that almost all foreign travellers produced a record of what were seen as pioneering journeys.²⁵⁰ Indulging in the personal, these travelogues, testimonies and eyewitness accounts draw their authority from this direct experience while combining a type of socio-political analysis with travelogue in an endeavour to produce and present new knowledge about China.

Experience is employed as an uncomplicated foundation. Yet the experiential is employed to give authority not only to what is seen but also for what amounts to historical and cultural analysis. It is precisely the author's personal authority that is called upon to protect the work from the charge of fictionality. The authority of each travelogue is based on the act of experiencing and observing China. Each author implies that cultural knowledge is licensed by observation and each establishes direct experience as the privileged mode of knowledge.

Some years after other tourists began returning to the West expressing their praise for the People's Republic, the Belgian-Australian Sinologist, Pierre Ryckmans, writing under the nom de

²⁴⁷ Roy Evans, 'President's Report', 1973.

²⁴⁸ Don Franks, 'As We Saw It', *New Zealand China News*, September 1976, 3.

²⁴⁹ Joan Donley (ed.), *Seminar on China*, New Zealand China Society, Auckland Branch, Auckland, 1974. This is discussed further in chapter 3.

²⁵⁰ See Louise Pratt, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnology*, cited in Timothy Kendall, 'Marco Polo, Orientalism and the Experience of China', *Asian Studies Review*, 28, 4, December 2004, 373-389. Books written by New Zealanders include Bertram, *Return to China*, Garland, *Journey to New China*, and Barbara Spencer, *Desert Hospital in China*, Jarrolds, London, 1954.

plume Simon Leys, published his alternative account of the Cultural Revolution, *Chinese Shadows*.²⁵¹ In this text he dismisses all authoritative accounts of China, except his own, as an unambiguous staging of experience. In a disjointed collection of travel notes and personal and scholarly reflections, Leys claims that what tourists saw in China was mediated by the Chinese authorities and that the Maoist authorities' *tour de force* managed to limit China to closely regulated areas. Leys regards the viewing practices of tourists as controlled by the state and 'neutralised' in a 'frenzy of movement'. He dismisses these tourist accounts as the ravings of those carried through China in a cage.²⁵²

I maintain that under the conditions in which foreign residents and visitors now live in the People's Republic of China, it is impossible to write anything but frivolities, and those who think they can do something serious when reporting their Chinese experiences, or who pretend they describe Chinese realities when they are in fact describing the Chinese shadow play...

The foreigner who wants to talk about 'China' can do one of only two things: he can copy down the official slogans... or he can try desperately to glean the crumbs of the reality denied to him, and to patch together as best he can a series of unrelated vignettes.²⁵³

As Timothy Kendall argues, despite the presumption of a Chinese 'reality', the authors of eye-witness accounts actually produced a striking unreality. In replicating the ideologically inflected sociological categories of existence they were shown – the collective farms, the hospitals, educational institutions, industrial plants, communes – these texts provide a series of descriptions about the interior of Leys' 'cage'.

The revolutionary itineraries, the propagandistic offerings of guides, interpreters, model citizens, CPC representatives and other bit-players, come together to make these works appear less as objective, knowledge-generating accounts than as multi-authored socialist fictions.²⁵⁴

However, in reading the accounts, Leys' denigrations appear ill-informed. The travellers seem remarkably aware of both what they were engaged in and how critics might read it. One is hard-pressed not to have some sympathy with people such as Margaret Garland and her account, given what she experiences. As she recounts:

²⁵¹ Simon Leys (Pierre Rickmans), *Chinese Shadows*, Viking Press, New York, 1979. Colin Mackerras points out that Leys' 'discoveries' about the Cultural Revolution merely confirmed what Leys had believed when it started. 'The attack on the Cultural Revolution was led by those who never had any time for it anyway' (Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations, Griffith University, Brisbane, 1987, 31).

²⁵² Leys, *Chinese Shadows*, 24.

²⁵³ Leys, *Chinese Shadows*, xiv.

²⁵⁴ Kendall, 'Marco Polo', 383-384.

We asked one peasant picked out from the crowd what were the illnesses the people now suffered from. The answer was, 'There are no illnesses since Liberation'. Dr Yoh whispered to me, 'That is nonsense of course. What he means is there is nothing like what there was. The difference is so great that some of these simple peasants really believe in miracles. You can't blame them'.²⁵⁵

An old lady reeled off [a list of the vegetables they now ate] and we could see it for ourselves. She added 'Before, in all my life I have eaten only the peels of sweet potatoes and the waste from bean curd and we all went about like the pigs. Life is happy now we have Chairman Mao Zedong'. This may have been an exaggeration, but it is what she said, and it certainly seemed to come from her heart: tears stood in her eyes as she spoke.²⁵⁶

Leys' ideological perspective colours his own work and there are more complicated explanations for the process of truth creation than that of naïve viewers being lied to by their hosts. According to the Chinese hosts of the tours in the 1960s and 70s, visits to communes and factories and so on would not be accompanied by such declarations as 'we are taking you to an average duck farm'.²⁵⁷ Typically, in contrast, the guide would say, 'we are taking you to this amazing duck farm. This one has outshone all the others around'. It was the viewers, wanting to convince themselves of the superiority of the system they were witnessing in China who would return to New Zealand (or wherever) and be effusive about how all duck farms in China were amazing. As Michael Crook, himself both a tourist and a guide to foreigners visiting the PRC in this period, said:

There was no deception! They were showing you the best. And you would write about it and it might carry an element of deception because the serious social scientist would say that they want to see the average... but there was no deliberate attempt to obfuscate.²⁵⁸

Those who went on the student tours of the 1970s echoed Newnham's demands noted earlier. They would ask to see a poor, a middle and a rich example. Even if these were all 'models', they would come away with a sense of the range of experiences on offer for Chinese in China.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Garland, *Journey*, 69.

²⁵⁶ Garland, *Journey*, 74

²⁵⁷ Liang Zhihong and Ji Derong, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries cadres, interview, Beijing, 28 August 2003.

²⁵⁸ As detailed in chapter 1, Crook was also, subsequently, a tour guide for Chinese being hosted by the State Department in the United States.

²⁵⁹ David Caygill and Graeme Clarke both made reference to their request to see 'a poor, a middle and a rich' commune (interviews, Wellington, 21 November 2003 (Caygill) and 7 November 2003 (Crooke)). Dazhai, *the* model commune, was the middle one, so they saw one doing worse than Dazhai and one that was doing better in terms of providing for the material desires of its inhabitants. Dazhai is discussed further, in conjunction with the students' images of it, in chapter 5.

Intuition, Belief and Truth

In Anne-Marie Brady's *Making the Foreign Serve China* she details how each 'foreign friend' of the PRC was in some way 'bought' into the service of the propaganda state. At the heart of her analysis is an inability to comprehend that those who were enamoured with the project of the PRC had an ideological allegiance and were committed to some higher ideal that was served by propagating what they believed about the PRC. Instead she presents their motives as a result of, for example, crass materialism, deviance or duplicity.

Brady argues, for example, that Israel Epstein had nowhere else to go except the People's Republic of China and then, when sick, he depended upon the Chinese government for his medical care. This first point is based on a claim that Epstein's application for residence in the United States had been rejected, which she puts down to his pro-CPC views during the climate of McCarthyist anti-communism. Epstein himself claims to have never made such an application, although he had written away to request the forms. He says that he left the US because he was having trouble getting his material documenting China's successes published. So when Song Qingling, having established *China Reconstructs*, asked him to return to the PRC to edit it, he leapt at the opportunity. Although the Chinese government has provided for his healthcare in old-age, as it does for other former civil servants, Epstein does not feel restricted in voicing his concern at the retreat from socialism he believes characterises the PRC's current political direction, or in continuing to note his belief in the tremendous successes since Liberation.²⁶⁰

Brady also suggests that George Hatem's medical practice in Shanghai was not financially viable and he thought he could make more from the communists. When he began a relationship with the CPC, she claims, he was driven by his commercial interests. Hatem, a Lebanese-American who took the Chinese name Ma Haide, served as a physician and adviser to the Red Army from the mid-1930s until the founding of the PRC. He became a Chinese citizen and the first foreign member of the Communist Party of China. He was later a senior figure in China's public health initiatives, until his death in 1988. Hatem's own account, and the biography written about him by Edgar Porter, suggests he was convinced of the desirability of a communist victory by the conditions he saw in Shanghai in the 1930s, and he made a commitment to their cause that he continued until his death.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Epstein, interview, Beijing, 19 July 2003. See also Israel Epstein, *My China Eye: My Life as a Jew and a Journalist*, Long River Press, San Francisco, 2005.

²⁶¹ See Edgar A Porter, *The People's Doctor: George Hatem and China's Revolution*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1997, 56-59. Hatem's account as to why he joined the revolutionary forces is similar to that put forward by Alley and all of Alley's biographers, except Brady. This was that conditions in Shanghai in the 1930s convinced a number of people that the Guomindang and imperialism were what China needed to be free of in order to improve the lives of the Chinese people. Brady rejects this and claims that since Rewi Alley was gay, itself a controversial claim, Alley made a 'Faustian choice' in 1949 in favour of the sexual freedom of Shanghai over conservative and homophobic New Zealand. For more discussion see chapter 7.

At the heart of it, however, is the fact that those who became spokespeople for the PRC were convinced of the desirability of the project underway in the PRC, and they supported that project. This coloured, although not always in a blinding way, their perspectives. The Crooks, for example, were communists and saw China as a calling. As Michael Crook described it:

[My father], like Norman Bethune,²⁶² fought in the Spanish Civil War, read *Red Star Over China*²⁶³ and came to China to be part of the revolution. There was never disillusionment because there was not an illusion. They were genuinely excited at what they saw and what they were part of. They supported land reform because they saw it as a good thing and they promoted it because they saw that advocating China's cause to hold it up to other developing countries would be a valuable experience that could be adopted elsewhere, in India for example.²⁶⁴

After 1949 when the Crooks became teachers and Alley became a 'peace worker', and Shirley Barton and Kathleen Hall went back to New Zealand and helped to establish the New Zealand China Friendship Society, some would describe their activities as 'propaganda work'. But they simply saw it as a significant activity to undertake to support the project that they had become part of. Nobody told them to write letters or articles promoting the PRC since Liberation, it was simply something that they did because they believed in what they saw and in that to which they saw themselves contribute. As Shirley Barton explained to Rewi Alley:

I can only say that whatever I decided to help was viewed by me as objectively as possible... I had learned to give help and support not for a person but for a cause – and to 'take cognisance of the objective situation' – an excellent, never failing guide... I backed you Rewi, both in Shandan and in *Yo Banfa* etc. not for your charms (considerable as these are!), but for what you are and what you represent – the cause you are identified with – the cause of the people of China and of the world.²⁶⁵

According to Michael Crook, again speaking principally about his father:

²⁶² Norman Bethune was a Canadian physician. Bethune is best known for his service in war time medical units during the Spanish Civil War and with the Chinese communists during the Sino-Japanese War. Bethune received international recognition when Mao Zedong published his essay entitled 'In Memory of Norman Bethune', *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, 337). This essay documented the final months of the doctor's life in China and portrayed Bethune as a model of 'proletarian internationalism'. Almost the entire Chinese population knew about the essay part of which was included in the publication *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* more popularly known as 'The Red Book' during the Cultural Revolution.

²⁶³ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, Left Book Club, London, 1937.

²⁶⁴ Crook, interview.

²⁶⁵ Shirley Barton to Rewi Alley, 22 August 1972, Shirley Barton papers, ATL It is quoted in Tom Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic, Auckland, 1995, 80.

It wasn't like the Party or the government said to him 'why don't you go and do this and the other, why don't you write some articles, why don't you go on speaking tours', it was just this inner thing.²⁶⁶

Badiou's use of the apostle Paul as an example to illustrate his procedure of truth transforming the state of being is not the only Biblical reference point of interest. When Robert Reid spoke of his introduction to Mao Zedong-Thought – which set off a life-long commitment to social justice and internationalist activity – he noted that he himself had never been to the People's Republic of China.²⁶⁷ In doing so he recounted John 20: 29: 'Jesus said, "Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!"'²⁶⁸

Thomas is frequently dubbed 'doubting Thomas' because of that famous incident where he refuses to believe in Jesus' resurrection simply on the basis of the eye-witness testimony of his fellow disciples. Instead, Thomas insists that he must personally be an eye-witness of the risen Lord before he can believe that Jesus is risen. Yet, according to theologian Jack Crabtree, if you read the gospel accounts, you discover that every disciple had an opportunity to believe in the reality of Jesus' resurrection merely on the basis of someone's eyewitness account (a person or an angel); and yet none of them believed until they had some first-hand empirical evidence of their own.²⁶⁹

Two points follow from this discussion of the evidence required by Thomas and the other disciples for belief in the resurrection. The early Christians were not obsessed with wishful-thinking and an unrealistic desire to overcome the power of death. Instead, they were hard-headed realists. The second point is more significant: Why do people believe? Are they satisfied with something told to them by other people? Belief in something that is counter to our intuition or to everything else that we have been told is difficult. We have not seen, how can we believe?

Those who believe without evidence do so because they want to believe. They make a choice: 'I would prefer reality to be a certain way, so that's what I will believe reality is'. We see examples of this desire to believe in the accounts of those New Zealanders caught up in wanting to

²⁶⁶ Crook, interview.

²⁶⁷ Robert Reid was International Vice-President of the New Zealand University Students' Association in 1972 when the Study Tours to China were getting started. He had previously been a key organiser of the Organisation to Halt Military Service (OHMS) and the Campaign Against the Vietnam War. He went on to be a union organiser with the Manufacturing and Construction Workers Union in the Mitsubishi car assembly plant in Lower Hutt, helped found the Trade Union Federation and Unite Union and is currently the President of the National Distribution Union and on the International Committee of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions. His politics have always reflected the influence of Maoism. He wrote for *The Paper* and was a member of both the Marxist-Leninist Organisation and the Workers' Communist League. Despite all this, his first trip to the PRC was with a NZCTU delegation in 2006 (Robert Reid, interview, Wellington, 13 January 2004). Reid also recounted his connection with Maoism in 'Looking Backward, Looking Forward', the Inaugural Rona Bailey Lecture for the Trade Union History Project, Wellington, 30 November 2007.

²⁶⁸ *The Bible: Contemporary English Version*, John 20: 24-29, at www.biblegateway.com, accessed 12 April 2009.

²⁶⁹ See Jack Crabtree, 'Two Reflections on Thomas and the Story of Easter', <http://www.mckenziestudycenter.org>, accessed 12 December 2009.

support the transformations underway in the PRC. Keith Buchanan was Professor of Geography at Victoria University of Wellington and President of the Wellington branch of the NZCFS. His representation of China's commune system reflected the picture of revolutionary successes that China's friends believed at the time.²⁷⁰

Between 1959 and 1962... China experienced an unprecedented series of natural calamities... In the face of this situation the individual peasant would have been helpless; he would, as was the case [with] Old China, have starved in his millions. The organisation of the commune system gave him the means to fight... It was a lean period – but there was no starvation and China emerged from it more than ever convinced of the advantages of the commune system.²⁷¹

The time Buchanan was in the PRC coincided with the so-called Great Leap Forward. This period was one of expansive revolutionary enthusiasm and the apparent belief that volunteerism and marshalling the capacity of the Chinese people would be able to overcome anything. His account of the 'success of the commune system' was a common representation. It of course was consistent with a teleological progression from what people had seen before and therefore what people expected. It was also strongly correlated with other accounts. Ron Smith, who went to the PRC on a CPNZ delegation in 1961, wrote an account of that trip in his book in 2002 using his notes from the time. He said that he had witnessed poverty in China 'aggravated that year by the last of a three-year's series of droughts'.²⁷² Forty years later, Smith was still strongly swayed by what he had seen, and been shown, at the time:

Western China-watchers said there was widespread famine with millions of deaths. All I can say is that... the people we met said that food shipments were sent where needed. They denied any starvation and we never saw any sign of it. In the old days in a drought the landlords and merchants cornered the grain while the peasants starved. In this drought I am sure the Party officials, in the main, shared weal and woe with the people...²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Among other notable achievements he started the highly regarded academic journal *Pacific Viewpoint*. See the account of his contribution to the study of geography written by the then Head of the Victoria University of Wellington School of Earth Sciences, Phillip Morrison (himself a member of the 1971 NZUSA Study Tour to the PRC) and senior lecturer Warwick Murray, entitled 'Calling All Viewpoints', *Asia-Pacific Viewpoint*, 44, 1, 2005, 1-5. For a contrary view, whereby claims made in support of the PRC (in this case over allegations of the use of Germ Warfare by US troops in Korea) clouded a view of the rest of someone's career, see George Steiner, *My Unwritten Books*, New Directions, New York, 2008. In a chapter entitled 'Chinoiserie', Steiner details how Needham's claims from the 1950s coloured Steiner's interactions with him thereafter. Although invited to write a Needham biography it remained unwritten, in part because Steiner could not see Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* as other than a 'mythology of learning... among [other] unicorns in the garden of reason' (Steiner, *Unwritten Books*, 31). For a view that places travel such as Buchanan's in context, see Brian Matthews, *Manning Clark, A Life*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2008. Matthews addresses Clark's book *Meeting Soviet Man* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1960) in a chapter of the same name and places it in a genre alongside that of work by Bruce Chatwin and George Orwell.

²⁷¹ Keith Buchanan, *The Chinese People and the Chinese Earth*, G. Bell and Sons, London, 1966, 47.

²⁷² Smith, *Working Class Son*, 125.

²⁷³ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 132.

In contemporary accounts, such as those by Jasper Becker and Jung Chang, the Great Leap Forward is now associated with an unprecedented disaster and mass starvation.²⁷⁴ How do we reconcile what is known now with what these accounts claimed? What Buchanan and Smith understood about the ‘successes of the commune system’ mirrored what others were writing about the PRC. It strongly correlates with what Rewi Alley wrote in his contemporaneously published material.²⁷⁵ In his 1965 book on China, *A Curtain of Ignorance*, Felix Greene says that in 1960 he travelled through areas of China where food rationing was tight but he did not see mass starvation. He also cites other eyewitnesses.²⁷⁶ All these observations indicate that starvation was not a nation-wide phenomenon. In fact the evidence that Jasper Becker relies upon emerged only in the 1990s. There were earlier accounts, but as Greene points out, those opposed to the regime in the PRC made unsubstantiated allegations about massive famines virtually every year and these were able to be dismissed as inaccurate and ideologically inspired. The ‘disaster’ claims were only taken seriously in the 1980s when the new Chinese leadership began to also attack the Great Leap Forward as part of the campaign against ‘ultra-leftism’.²⁷⁷

The ideas of the day, then, reflected not only what people saw – and can reasonably be believed to have seen – but also the ideals of the day. Travellers to the PRC were told, as Smith was, that ‘Despite 200 days of drought...[the commune] had got a record crop and were able to help other communes whose crops had failed’.²⁷⁸ This was consistent with a belief that China was succeeding and any contrary claims, especially given the surfeit of evidence that those claims would be based on, were dismissed as those of ‘anti-communists’.²⁷⁹

A decade later, George Rosenberg, instead of being concerned that universities in China had been closed for three years, wrote that the Cultural Revolution struggle at Qinghua University meant ‘there is every reason to hope that China has forever abolished the risk of creating a new class of privileged bureaucrats’.²⁸⁰ Throughout the rest of the 1970s students applied for the

²⁷⁴ Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts, China's Secret Famine*, J. Murray, London, 1996 and Jung Chang, *Mao, the Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005.

²⁷⁵ See chapter 7 for discussion of this.

²⁷⁶ Felix Greene, *A Curtain of Ignorance*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1965, 340-342.

²⁷⁷ As Maurice Meisner writes ‘multitudes of scholars and theoreticians were brought forward to expound on the “petty bourgeois” (sic) social and ideological roots of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution’, Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping era : an inquiry into the fate of Chinese socialism, 1978-1994*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1996.

²⁷⁸ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 132.

²⁷⁹ See Han Dongping, ‘The Great Leap Forward Famine, the Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Rural Reform: the Lessons of Rural Development in Contemporary China’ <http://www.chinastudygroup.org/article/26>, 2003, he extended this argument through to the Cultural Revolution with respect to his home county Jimu in Shandong, see Han Dongping, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Life and Change in a Chinese Village*, Monthly Review, New York, 2008.

²⁸⁰ George Rosenberg, ‘Chinese Universities’, *Nexus*, 13 August, 1971, 12. He would later lose interest in the Chinese Revolution and the Cultural Revolution in particular. See chapter five for more details.

annual tours by writing of how they wanted to visit the Chinese socialist paradise or to view 'socialism in practice'.²⁸¹

At its extreme, we might interpret this desire to believe in the absence of evidence as a severe form of correspondence theory. Comedian Stephen Colbert would refer to it as 'truthiness'. Colbert popularized 'truthiness' in 2005 as a satirical term to describe things that a person claims to know intuitively or 'from the gut' without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or facts.²⁸² By using the term as part of his routine, Colbert sought to satirize the use of appeal to emotion and the 'gut feeling' as a rhetorical device in contemporary socio-political discourse. He particularly applied it to U.S. President George W. Bush's defence of the decision to invade Iraq in 2003.²⁸³

Truth Events and the Changing Subject

For Badiou, we never get to the truth. Not only because we need to summate innumerable relative truths but also because the truth itself keeps shifting. What is true in one moment is not true in another. The moment at which this change in truth takes place Badiou calls a truth-event. When a truth-event occurs it gives rise to a new truth, most importantly the previous truth becomes impossible and the process of working towards the new truth begins. Badiou also constructs a new concept of the subject. For him truth is objective and universal. Since subjectivity is with the beholder then the discovery of the truth gives rise to a new subject in relation to that truth. The observer is (re)constructed in association with the truth-event.

The major propositions of Badiou's philosophy all find their basis in *Being and Event*, in which he attempts to reconcile a notion of the subject with ontology, and in particular post-structuralist and constructivist ontologies. Two elements mark the thesis of *Being and Event*: the place of ontology, or the science of 'being qua being' (being in itself), and the place of the event — which is seen as a rupture in ontology — through which the subject finds his or her realization and reconciliation with truth.²⁸⁴

Badiou concludes that while ontology can mark out a space for an inhabitant of the constructible situation to decide upon the indiscernible, it falls to the subject to nominate this indiscernible, this generic point and give a name to the undecidable event. Badiou thereby marks out a philosophy that refutes the apparent relativism and apolitical features of post-structuralist thought. Badiou's philosophy is one of the radically new, of possibility and innovation of 'events'

²⁸¹ The applications are held in the VUW Library's Beaglehole Room, with the records of the New Zealand University Students' Association.

²⁸² Dick Meyer, 'The Truth of Truthiness', CBS News, 12 December 2006.

²⁸³ Interview with Stephen Colbert by Nathan Rabin, AV Club, 26 January 2006. Accessed <http://www.avclub.com/content/node/44705>.

²⁸⁴ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, Continuum, New York, 2005, 433.

or truths that rupture or break from the given situation. Echoing Jacques Lacan, Badiou argues that truth ‘punches a hole’ in the situation, and this truth-event that breaks from the situation induces a subject, which is a bearer of a truth. If, along with Badiou, we see truth as breaking from accepted knowledge, and the subject of an event of truth as breaking from the situation as it is, we may view Badiou as a philosopher who seeks to open up and maintain a space for thought to fill out these breaks.²⁸⁵

The truth-events are real but are conditional, contingent and subjective in their interpretation. Badiou uses as an example Paul’s epiphany on the road to Damascus.²⁸⁶ For Paul the truth-event means that what he used to believe becomes impossible – he can no longer deny the resurrection, but exactly what the resurrection means is not clear. For Paul the event gives rise to a new universalism, a truth, which transcends the difference between Jew and non-Jew, or more particularly Greek and Jew. Crucially, Paul is constructed himself through the process. Dramatically, Saul becomes Paul. A new subject is born.²⁸⁷

Badiou’s work is of direct relevance to the imagining and interpretation of the PRC by its New Zealand viewers. Not only are there a series of truth-events which are of themselves transformational, in each of them we find the viewer (in this case an organisation) transformed as it seeks to re-position itself in accordance with the new truth. Furthermore, not only is the interpretation of the truth-event subjective, but what constitutes a truth-event – an event that ruptures the existing situation and give rise to a new truth – is also and of itself subjective.²⁸⁸

For the Communist Party of New Zealand, telling the truth about China is an ideological process and the ideological questions are the ones that are transformational: the practice of building actual existing socialism, the Sino-Soviet Split, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, rapprochement with the United States, Deng Xiaoping’s ‘coup’ and the fall of the Gang of Four, market reform (or ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’), China’s participation in ‘The War on Terror’. Yet, for the New Zealand China Friendship Society, the truth-events that matter are the

²⁸⁵ Hallward, *Badiou*, xxvii.

²⁸⁶ Badiou, who identifies as an atheist, does not believe this event took place. He writes, ‘For me, truth be told, Paul is not an apostle or a saint. I care nothing for the Good News he declares, or the cult dedicated to him. But he is a subjective figure of primary importance’ (Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 1).

²⁸⁷ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, especially chapter 2, ‘Who is Paul?’, 16-30, and chapter 10, ‘Universality and the traversal of differences’, 98-106.

²⁸⁸ For Badiou ‘Truth-events’ are earth-(or truth)-shattering interventions into what he calls ‘the Situation’. An Event leads to a new conception of Truth which makes it impossible for the previous situation to continue. Of things that have taken place in the PRC, he regards only the Cultural Revolution as constituting an Event due to what it does to the understanding of the party, the revolution and the state. For Badiou the Cultural Revolution was Mao’s effort to saturate the party-state with the revolution and that its outcome, in its failure, was that revolutionary praxis needs now to be outside the party-state or parties-state. That is, that the revolution must forever be re-thought. See Badiou, *Polemics*, 321. My analysis of shifting truths and subjectivities within New Zealand-China relations draws on Badiou with respect to a shifting nature of what is understood as true as an interpretation of the situation, and accordingly a reconstitution of the subject. Badiou might well regard that many of the events dealt with here, while amending the situation, do not rupture it, and therefore do not constitute Truth Events *per se*. I do not think this detracts from my analysis, which is consistent with Simon Critchley’s reading of Badiou. See, for example, ‘Ours is not a terrible situation’ - Alain Badiou and Simon Critchley at Labyrinth Books, New York, March 6, 2006, http://slought.org/files/downloads/events/SF_1385.pdf (accessed 23 April 2009).

events that rupture their descriptive narrative about China. These are Liberation, the Great Leap Forward, recognition of the PRC by New Zealand, the dispute with Vietnam, the repudiation of the Great Leap Forward, a change from 'mass line' to 'leaders and prominent people', and the Tiananmen Square incident. There is virtually no overlap between the key events for the two organisations.

The Sino-Soviet split is a case in point. For the CPNZ this represented a moment where the communist world was forced to take sides, where there was no longer a united Communist Bloc, where the truth of a communist-led Soviet Union was shattered. The CPNZ itself was transformed through its rejection of Soviet 'revisionism' and took on a new role of propagating a new 'orthodoxy' very similar to the line promoted by the CPC. Through the event of the Sino-Soviet Split the CPNZ became an anti-revisionist party. This event was crucial for the CPNZ. It was the basis of its understanding about China for the next decade and a half, it catapulted the party onto the world stage where CPNZ Secretary Vic Wilcox shared platforms with Mao Zedong, and it resulted in an acrimonious split in the communist movement in New Zealand. Yet for the NZCFS the matter was very clearly not important and it is all but ignored in the publications of the period.

Other events that were transformative yet subjective were the series of events related to recognition of the PRC in 1971 and 1972: the PRC replacing the Republic of China (Taiwan) at the United Nations, the visits by Kissinger and Nixon, and the recognition of the PRC by New Zealand on 22 December 1972. These were vital for members of the NZCFS, as a culmination of a political struggle, and also because they made their activities a great deal easier. It was not until after recognition that the NZCFS began to have 'Society tours' to the PRC, for example, whereby the Society organised tours for all sorts of people, up to six a year, and by which it began to make a lot of money. Yet for the CPNZ and other radical groups recognition, and in particular the Nixon visit, represented something of a crisis. The China that they looked to as a beacon of hope became aligned with their enemy – or at least the enemy of those they protested on behalf of, the Vietnamese villager.

The Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979 was a crisis for the NZCFS, with many members leaving, especially those who had been drawn into the Society because of anti-Vietnam war activities.²⁸⁹ For them, China no longer represented the purity of an alternative model. The Society's leadership was drawn into an impassioned defence of the Chinese position, for the most part to convince its own membership. However, for Marxist-Leninist parties still supportive of the CPC (this did not include the CPNZ by this stage), the war with Vietnam merely confirmed their

²⁸⁹ Peter Franks estimated 'in the hundreds', interview, Wellington, 24 January 2004.

world view. It showed the truth of the threat of the Soviet Union ('the main threat to world peace'), and its 'encirclement' of China.²⁹⁰

Similarly, the events of May and June 1989 in Tiananmen did not affect those members of communist parties who still viewed China's revolutionary trajectory favourably, yet it 'almost destroyed' the NZCFS.²⁹¹ For the Preparatory Committee and Organisation for Marxist Unity the events of Tiananmen merely confirmed that there was an ongoing struggle for socialism and that the Western imperialists would do anything to undermine the People's Republic.²⁹² They accepted without question the official position of the Communist Party of China on what had taken place and undertook a study mission to the PRC to confirm that view. It caused no rupture or disruption of the Party's image of China.

For the NZCFS, however, the truth-event of Tiananmen transformed it and was to colour the Society's identity for the next decade. Members of the NZCFS stopped believing in what they heard from official Chinese sources. The Society issued media releases condemning the Chinese government's actions. NZCFS members stopped believing that the Chinese government represented the Chinese people. The Society's leadership started talking about the organisation's solidarity being between 'the New Zealand people' and 'the Chinese people'. They no longer spoke of solidarity with the 'China' that represented the CPC-led project of socialist transformation and rejected a political engagement with the PRC. The NZCFS suspended the Society's tours. The goal to 'Tell The Truth About China' was lost. Instead of adhering to its constitutional obligation to 'To oppose and correct misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese Government and people', which would have meant promoting the Chinese government line on 'the Tiananmen incident' the constitution was reworded. The NZCFS no longer attempted to speak on behalf of the PRC.

²⁹⁰ See chapters 4 and 6. Note that for the Workers' Communist League, the articulation of the Chinese position 'caused some problems' although this with respect to the groups the League tried to work with rather than within its own membership and the effect was muted, in part because it put forward its position through the Society ('Report of WCL Delegation to China', December 1982, document in my possession).

²⁹¹ This was according to newly elected NZCFS President (professor) Bill Willmott. He said that the Society, then some 2000 strong, would have been left with just a few hundred members if the National Committee had not produced a statement condemning the Chinese state's repression of the protesters. Bill Willmott, interview, Christchurch, 22 May 2004. See chapter 6 for more discussion on this point.

²⁹² See chapter 4, for a brief history of the communist movement in New Zealand from a single-CPNZ in 1963 to a plethora of organisations of the 1980s.

Chapter 3: The New Zealand-China Friendship Society and its changing representations of the PRC 1949 – 1976.

The Early Members

From the beginning, those involved with the people-to-people relationship with China were sympathetic to at least some aspect of the communist vision that China represented. This was true even if, like James Bertram, they explained this by claiming that they were required by a commitment to ‘accuracy’ to acknowledge communism’s ‘achievements in China’.²⁹³ The representation of China they propagated was strongly influenced by current fashions in left-wing orthodoxy as well as official Chinese revolutionary discourse – especially where those two currents happened to be in concert. In the 1950s this resulted particularly in the promotion of ‘peace’.

It was common in left-wing circles to equate peace not with pacifism but with the struggle against imperialism and for socialism. For those in the ‘peace movement’, by preventing imperialist war, they were allowing the socialist project to consolidate itself in China. The bulk of the early membership of the Society had been involved, or would concurrently be involved, in organisations such as the New Zealand Peace Council. One person reflecting this, who was at the first meeting of the NZCFS was Flora Gould, a national committee member of the CPNZ and secretary to the Peace Council.²⁹⁴ The first New Zealand delegation to the new People’s Republic was to the Peking Peace Conference,²⁹⁵ led not by someone who had previously expressed any interest in China but by Alan Monteith, returned serviceman and chair of the New Zealand Peace Council.²⁹⁶ It was in such organisations that the Society saw the opportunity to build its membership and a number of early activities were conducted in conjunction between the two groups, further assisted by leaders who were common to both organisations.²⁹⁷ Rewi Alley hosted the delegation in China. He had been shifted from his work as headmaster at the Shandan Bailie School and with the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives movement to be a ‘peace worker’ based in

²⁹³ James Bertram, *Return to China*, Heinemann, Auckland, 1957, 1. I have discussed the significance of this claim to truth in chapter 2.

²⁹⁴ Flora Gould, interview, Auckland, 2001. Gould was Secretary of the New Zealand Peace Council through the 1950s and early 1960s, a National Committee member of the Communist Party of New Zealand and active in the NZCFS. She presented a paper along these same lines to the 1963 National Conference of the CPNZ which is reported in Ron Smith’s, *Working Class Son: My Fight Against Capitalism and War*, R.J.Smith, 2002, 135. In Sid Scott’s account of his removal from office as the general secretary of the CPNZ, he claims he was rebuked for ringing a Party member on the Peace Council office telephone, thus conducting Party business ‘in a manner which would easily supply the class enemy with all that is necessary to completely publicly link such organisations as the Peace Council with our Party’ (Sid Scott, *Rebel In A Wrong Cause*, Scott, Auckland, 1960, 189). This scenario suggests that there actually were strong links between the CPNZ and the Peace Council, which to some extent confirms the beliefs of those engaged in anti-communist promotional activities.

²⁹⁵ The Beijing International Conference for Peace, 5 to 14 October 1952. Even those members of the Society quite familiar with things Chinese referred to Beijing as Peking until at least the 1980s. There is further discussion about the conference below.

²⁹⁶ Alan Monteith, interview, Auckland, 8 July 2002.

²⁹⁷ Gould, interview.

Beijing. The committee that hosted the Peace Conference had been formed as the Chinese People's Committee to Safeguard World Peace on 2 October 1949. It would eventually become the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), with which the NZCFS has its primary relationship now.²⁹⁸

RAK Mason was representative of the New Zealand side of this. He would become the Auckland branch president in 1954 and the Society's first national president and had been involved in the Peace Council. Although Mason and Shirley Barton made 'it a rule to keep all spare time and energy for China business', they broke that rule 'to help the H-bomb protests'.²⁹⁹ For those who travelled to the PRC under the Society's auspices in the 1950s, peace was a common refrain:

Probably one of the most outstanding impressions I gained was of the sincere desire of the Chinese people for peace, so that they can go ahead to build up their standard of living by being given the opportunity to increase production through years of peace.³⁰⁰

The general impression I had of China was that the people know where they are going... in order to raise the standard of living... they need peace, and it is fantastic to think China is a warlike nation. The very thing that would break down the reconstruction of China would be war, and it is logical to say that one thing more than anything else the Chinese people want is peace.³⁰¹

For many of the early members of the Society, 'China' had a meaning beyond the geographical location – it meant that alternative development project of a socialist state. As NZCFS President Bill Willmott said in 1992, at a celebration to commemorate 40 years of the Society, 'Forty years ago, [NZCFS]... members were mostly people who wanted to publicise the achievements of the socialist countries, including China'.³⁰²

The nature of the Society's aims and the fact that the bulk of the participants were inclined towards or involved in left-wing politics meant there was very little need for the Communist Party of New Zealand to attempt to dominate the Society. In addition the conservative nature of

²⁹⁸ On 3 May 1954 it became the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries. It was renamed as the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries on 14 October 1969. This comes from interviews in Beijing in July 2003 with Lu Wanru, Wang Jinghua and Li Jianping who were all members of the committee and then the CPAFFC.

²⁹⁹ 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant: the life and writings of R.A.K. Mason (1905-1971)*, Steele Roberts, Wellington, 2004, 211-212. Shirley Barton had just returned from working with Alley in China where she was secretary for CORSO. She assisted with the production of his first two books, *Yo Banja* (Shanghai, China Monthly Review, 1952) and *The People Have Strength* (Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1954) and was an important confidant for both him and Mason. She was also a member of the CPNZ. For more on Barton see Tom Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 1995, 70-80. The Barton quote is from her papers in the ATL: M-RH 12.6.1957.

³⁰⁰ Harold Kay, 'May Day in Peking', *Challenge* (the publication of the Northern General Labourers' Union), June 1955, 10.

³⁰¹ Harold Kay, 'New China As I Saw It', *Challenge*, August 1955, 7.

³⁰² Bill Willmott, *NZCFS Celebrates 40 Years On*, pamphlet, NZCFS, 1992, 1. NZCFS Archive.

New Zealand society at the time meant that the NZCFS, and the contribution that it could make to combating anti-communism, was best served by having members who were not known as communists in the forefront.³⁰³ In addition there is some sense that the CPNZ regarded the Soviet Union as the centre of world communism and that support for China was meant to support this rather than represent an alternative model.³⁰⁴

The New Zealand China Friendship Society was formed at a meeting in Auckland on 27 February 1952. Mabel Lee instigated it and the first meetings were at her house. The Society was being actively promoted from China. Alley and Barton, then working with Alley as the secretary of Gong He, wrote to the New Zealand supporters of CORSO and Alley's work with INDUSCO suggesting that the way to continue this support was to fight for political recognition of the new Chinese regime by way of a friendship organisation.³⁰⁵ Alley's letter to Wolfgang Rosenberg sets this out:

...in the matter of AID, it is now felt that China's need is not so great as the needs of the struggling peace and friendship movements... the best way for friends overseas to help the Chinese people is to put all their efforts into maintaining and furthering of these friendly relations... may I venture to suggest that your group form the nucleus of a New Zealand China Friendship Association, with which I should feel honoured to keep in contact and give any help in my power.³⁰⁶

Lee became secretary but when her eyesight failed she asked Shirley Barton, then back from China, to replace her. The latter was elected in March 1954. She commented: 'It wasn't an easy time to start a movement befriending the new China'.³⁰⁷

Dorothea Beyda, Mason's wife, also joined the Society. As she said to John Caselberg: 'We sympathised with its aims and were only too ready to be roped in as members. This gave Ron a real interest and he took part with zest... We had meetings, lectures, film shows with films sent

³⁰³ The Society's foundation Secretary, Mabel Lee, publicly identified that her interest in China was related to her husband being Chinese. See 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant*, 203. She would later 'come out' as a member of the CPNZ (Barton papers, MS-1265/II/3/27, ATL). Shirley Barton succeeded her. The first President, Leo Sim, was a lapsed member of the CPNZ. He would eventually be forced out as he had 'turned Trotskyist' and be replaced by RAK Mason (Rachel Barrowman, *Mason: the Life of RAK Mason*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2002, 328).

³⁰⁴ Ross, Interview, Whangarei, 17 April 2003. This is consistent with Herbert Passin's interpretation of the situation in Australia where he notes 'according to qualified observers... there was evident from the start a certain luke-warmness on the part of the Australian Communist Party'. He claims that the Communist Party of Australia 'did not want [the Australia China Friendship Society's activities] to rival the work for Soviet friendship'; in spite of the CPA's growing links with China, 'it was clearly Party policy that Russia was Socialist fatherland No. 1, and China only No. 2'. There was even criticism in the Party's publication of 'Party members who exalted Chinese achievements at the expense of Soviet'. Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Relations*, China Quarterly, London, 1962, 57.

³⁰⁵ The Industrial Cooperatives movement established by Peg and Edgar Snow in the 1930s of which Alley was the first Director, also known as the International Committee for Chinese Industrial Cooperatives (ICCIC), INDUSCO or Gong He (often written Gung Ho). There is more discussion of Alley's involvement in this organisation in chapter 7.

³⁰⁶ Alley to Wolfgang Rosenberg, (Rewi Alley Aid Group), 1 August 1952, 1952, Barton papers, ATL.

³⁰⁷ 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant*, 202.

from China'.³⁰⁸ In 1954 Mason, then Chairperson of the Society, wrote 'Why China Matters to Us', a pamphlet published by the Society. This stated:

China is in the front rank of world importance today. Her population is one half of that of all Asia, one quarter of the whole human race... We in New Zealand have an especial interest in China, as a near neighbour and another Pacific country. Questions involved in relations with this great country are crucial for us all. It is the purpose of the New Zealand China Friendship Association to assist actively in their solution.³⁰⁹

Typical of the early members of the Society, Mason's other associations were with a trade union (the General Labourers Union whose paper he edited) and the Auckland Peace Council.³¹⁰

The Society was born in 1952 of 'the necessity for a sane policy towards the newly established People's Republic of China'.³¹¹ Its initial goal was for diplomatic recognition by New Zealand of the PRC and one of its aims was 'To clear the mists of ignorance and provide accurate information leading to mutual understanding and mutual respect between our two peoples'.³¹² Early members were left-wingers who had supported Alley and CORSO's work in China, such as Wolfgang Rosenberg.³¹³ The organisation of the Society was mostly taken over on their return by those who had actually been in China, such as Shirley Barton, just back from six years working with Alley for CORSO, Barbara Spencer, who had also been with Alley at Shandan, and Kathleen Hall whose story is discussed in chapter 7.

There were few Chinese formerly involved in the Society because it was difficult, in particular for those whose own immigration status was unclear, to be seen to be supportive of Communist China.³¹⁴ The fear of intervention from a few Chinese-New Zealanders who had citizenship such as Jim Wong, Nancy Goddard (nee Kwok) and later Jock Hoe rose to prominence but for many their involvement was either veiled in secrecy or through a companion front organisation. Jim Shew, Albert Wong and Bin Fon, among others, set up the latter, the so-called 'Chinese

³⁰⁸ 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant*, 203.

³⁰⁹ 'Why China Matters to Us', NZCFA, Mason papers, China Society folder, Hocken library.

³¹⁰ Mason was also close to the CPNZ. He had edited the Party's pseudo-paper *In Print* from 1941 when the *People's Voice* was suppressed and retained close friendships with leading members.

³¹¹ 'New Zealand China Society', initial pamphlet, 1952, NZCFS archives.

³¹² 'NZCFA Constitution', Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive. The aims are also reproduced in early pamphlets.

³¹³ Canterbury University economist Wolfgang Rosenberg was a refugee from Nazi Germany who arrived in NZ in 1937. He also had a law career in Christchurch. He died in 2007. During his 70 years in New Zealand Wolf became a well-known public figure as one of the country's foremost left-wing economists, with a string of books to his name. He was a staunch proponent of socialism and travelled extensively in what used to be known as the Communist bloc. He was the founder and driving figure behind the NZ Democratic People's Republic of Korea Society, and spent many years fostering people-to-people relations with that country. (Murray Horton, 'Obituary', *Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa Newsletter*, 26 January, 2007).

³¹⁴ Shirley Barton, remembering the beginnings of the Society, wrote in 1977: the Chinese embassy here was manned by Chiang Kai-shek's discredited remnant – bitter enemies of the new China. This made it harder for us but harder for our Chinese friends here'. See Shirley Barton, 'Some Early Memories of the New Zealand-China Society in Auckland, A Talk Given At the 25th Anniversary Dinner, Auckland, 27 February 1977, Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archives. This was confirmed by Albert Wong and Bin Fon, interview, Wellington, 7 February 2004.

Cultural Society'. It was just for Chinese, which made it harder for the security services to infiltrate, and had no links with the CPNZ (which also meant that it was immune from the divisions in that organisation that impacted on the NZCFS in the 1970s).³¹⁵ The Cultural Society organised films about the PRC, 'to which many Chinese came because they wanted to know about and were proud of what was happening in their own country'. It also organised a very large welcome to the new Ambassador in early 1973. However, few would join the organisation, as they were afraid of being labelled as 'communists' and outside of the 'New Zealand mainstream'.³¹⁶

Other members and early travellers to the PRC tended to come from socialist and trade union backgrounds, such as Bill McLeod and Bernie Hornfeck, and Nancy and George Goddard.³¹⁷ There were also individual visits by members of the New Zealand Labour Party people to China through the 1950s. In 1955 Warren Freer, a New Zealand Labour MP, and his wife went for a one-month visit. Former Labour MP Ormond Wilson led the 1956 tour that is discussed later. John A. Lee and Walter Nash spoke in favour of recognising the PRC. The earliest trade union contacts were through the left-wing trade unions such as the Labourers.³¹⁸ New Zealand peace activists also had regular contact at this time. In April 1959, two vice-chairmen of the New Zealand Peace Council, Willis Airey and Warren Feer, were entertained at a banquet, with their wives, by Guo Moruo.³¹⁹ From June to July 1960, H. W. Auland, a farmer and another vice-

³¹⁵ It was however regarded as a 'front' for the CPNZ in the late 1970s, presumably after sharing many public forums commemorating Mao Zedong after his death in September 1976 (Valerie Bloom, 'New Zealand', *International Yearbook on Communist Affairs*, Hoover Press, Stanford, 1977, 373).

³¹⁶ Albert Wong and Bin Fon, interview.

³¹⁷ Bill McLeod, a dock worker, was recruited to the Society by George Goddard, whose wife Nancy was Chinese. George was in the CPNZ. McLeod said there was a 'China table' and a 'Russia table' in the dock workers' canteen and he sat with George on the 'China' one. He and Bernie Hornfeck, who is still involved in socialist activities in New Zealand as the Rotorua contact for of the Socialist Workers' Organisation of New Zealand went to China and Russia on a CPNZ organisation delegation in 1958. From Bill McLeod, interview, Wellington, 25 September 2007 and Bernie Hornfeck, personal communication, Rotorua, 15 September 2004.

³¹⁸ The General Labourers Union left the FOL over its refusal to back the Watersiders during the Lockout of 1951, and was still refusing to rejoin despite CPNZ pressure for 'unity' in the trade union movement. The general secretary Pat Potter was a member of the CPNZ although would leave in 1956 over the USSR invasion of Hungary.

³¹⁹ Guo Moruo was a writer, historian and palaeontologist. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, he held a number of high-level government posts. He was at times Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) and of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). He was Chairman of the China Federation of Literature, and President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences from 1949 until his death in 1978. He was one of the first intellectuals attacked during the Cultural Revolution, but was quickly rehabilitated, called upon by Mao to 'represent the right-wing inside the Party'. He was often called upon to meet visitors, in particular those who were themselves cultural workers (Tang Tao (editor), 'Guo Moruo', *History of Modern Chinese Literature*, Foreign Languages Press, 1998, 140-168). When the NZUSA delegation met him in 1971 he was acting chair of the NPC. This position, the students said they understood as being 'like the Prime Minister'. They also said that they were led to believe that in the absence of the President – Liu Shaoqi having been removed from office – that Guo was the acting Head of State (Caygill, Interview, Christchurch, 2002). Note that although this may have been how the students understood things to be, it was not the case. Guo was the equivalent of Speaker of the House of Representatives so certainly a senior leading figure, albeit of a body which had little real authority in China, certainly at that time. Liu Shaoqi had been formally replaced in an acting capacity with Dong Biwu and Song Qingling sharing the position – so they were the nominal heads of the Chinese State.

chairman of the New Zealand Peace Council, and his wife spent, a month in China at the invitation of the Chinese Peace Council. It was Mr. Auland's third visit.³²⁰

Producing An Imaginary of China

The most common accounts of the relationships between China and New Zealand ignore those activities that take place 'below' state-to-state activities³²¹ or look at them only in terms of how they were related directly to the State's formal position.³²² This approach ignores the possibility of gradual changes to official positions that occur by way of a process of the perception and interpretation of public opinion. Ideas and conceptions about identity and political communities are constantly evolving, although this may be reflected in a state's behaviour only in an obtuse and indirect manner. The state-centred approach ignores that non-state actors are interesting in and of themselves. Accordingly, examining how their ideas develop and interact is a fruitful object of study even if the non-state actors have no significant impact on state behaviour.³²³

The forging of this intersubjective context is a contentious process, but often particular representations are so successful that they become 'common sense' or hegemonic – they develop into a dominant discourse. Within the NZCFS this process was highly complex. Not only were the members of the Society themselves interpreting and developing a discourse about China, they were also involved in attempting to influence how China was understood in the realm of New Zealand public opinion.

This chapter is not a textual analysis of NZCFS texts and their intrinsic links with politics and representation, rather, and more specifically, it examines the production and reception of the China imaginary in New Zealand. The narratives about China (both as a socio-political entity and a cultural symbol) served as a transnational inspiration. In this way it is as Hong Liu writes: 'an exercise in going beyond the nation-state-centric historiography' that has been the defining characteristic of Asian Studies³²⁴ and pointing to the need to study Sino-world relations from the

³²⁰ Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*, 69-70.

³²¹ See chapter 1 for more discussion as to this point.

³²² This approach has dominated the literature, see for example Bruce Brown, *Asia and the Pacific in the 1970s the Roles of the United States, and Australia, and New Zealand*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1971, and his *New Zealand in World Affairs* series published by the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs. See also Lindsay Watt, *New Zealand and China towards 2000*, Institute of Policy Studies, Wellington, 1992. However there has been an increasing interest in public perceptions, most noticeably in Australia. For an example of this see Lachlan Strahan's *Australia's China: Changing perceptions from the 1930s to the 1990s*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

³²³ Timothy Kendall, *Ways of seeing China: from Yellow Peril to Shangrila*, Curtin University Books, Fremantle, 2005. Kendall looks at images and their relationship to the social milieu from which they arise but is not focussed on the relationship of those images to state policies.

³²⁴ Hong Liu, 'The Transnational Construction of "National Allegory": China and the cultural politics of postcolonial Indonesia', *Critical Asian Studies*, 38, 3, September 2006, 179-210. See also Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1995.

angle of domestic 'interest-group' politics and its intertwining ambiguities with conventional diplomacy.³²⁵

The focus of constructivism is generally on discourse, rather than ideas, belief systems, or ideology, because discourse can be witnessed and examined in terms of its effectiveness.³²⁶ Yet the subjective nature of the constructivist approach suggests that what lies behind the discourse is itself crucial. The discourse that the NZCFS attempted to propagate, in an attempt to make the way of talking about China that its members engaged in hegemonic, was necessarily a product of a range of factors. Among these were matters of ideology, a contextualised reading of events taking place in the People's Republic of China, the nature of the membership of the Society, and an interpretation of the receptiveness of New Zealand society to any particular message. These factors were themselves subject to shifts and changes.

The Early Years

In the early part of the decade, in the years immediately after 'Liberation' when New Zealand troops faced off against Chinese soldiers in Korea, the opprobrium from official circles for those who sought connection with the People's Republic of China was particularly marked. Anne-Marie Brady writes that the New Zealand government even participated in a campaign to discredit Rewi Alley after letters in New Zealand newspapers supporting Alley's viewpoint on China and the Korean War far outweighed those opposing it. She says that editors of New Zealand's major newspapers willingly participated in the campaign against Alley. The main paper in Alley's home city of Christchurch, where support for him was strongest, likened his work for the Chinese to that of Goebbels, and called him 'a Moscow agent on a propaganda mission'.³²⁷

This government-instigated campaign, falling as it did on those already raised on a diet of anti-communism, was highly successful in demonising both China and those who sought friendship with it.³²⁸ Margaret Garland, on her way to the Peking Peace Conference in 1952, recounted the following exchange:

³²⁵ See Ronald Hrebennar, *Interest Group Politics in America*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1982.

³²⁶ See for example Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the US Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974: From 'Red Menace' to 'Tacit Ally'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005. See also Ted Hopf, 'Anarchy is What Societies Make of It: Bringing Society Back into Social Constructivism', a paper presented at the Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, March 2006.

³²⁷ Anne-Marie Brady, *Friend of China: The Myth of Rewi Alley*, Routledge, London, 2001, 66. This would continue until into the 1960s. Alley's trip in 1960-61 included a 'packed out' meeting at the Auckland Town Hall yet there was no mainstream newspaper coverage of it (Geoff Chapple, *Rewi Alley of China*, Sceptre, Auckland, 1980, 193).

³²⁸ See Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War*, Oxford University Press in association with the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1992 for more detail as to developing New Zealand public opinion towards China and the Korean conflict during its duration. Rachel Barrowman writes that Barton, returning from six years in China was 'shocked by the pervasiveness and vehemence of Cold War feeling' in New Zealand, even amongst progressives who were 'anti-Soviet and anti-Communist' (Barrowman, *Mason*, 327).

A friend rang me up next day to ask me for lunch during the holidays and I told her I didn't think I could because I was thinking of going to Peking.

'Peking! China! You ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'But it's a Peace Conference.'

'Peace Conference! Rubbish! I won't discuss it. Absolute nonsense. Fellow-traveller, that's what you are...I would have nothing to do with them. The Chinese communists have done horrible things.'

'What have they done?'

'I can't remember just at the moment but I know they have.'³²⁹

The situation meant travellers such as Garland were guarded in the enthusiasm they felt that they could express and conscious about how what they wrote would be interpreted back home. One way of overcoming this was to present things as if the positive elements they experienced were as much a surprise to the traveller as to the general population for whom the image was being constructed.

He also repeated what I had heard said before, 'We have no flies in China now'. I challenged this.

'It seems impossible,' I said. 'How could it be done? There were no flies to be seen, it's true, but I simply can't believe they have all been exterminated.'

'It's because everyone has been drawn into a really big campaign,' he said. 'It couldn't be done, I'm quite sure, under anything except a People's Government.'

This does seem extraordinary, but I can only say that it was, in my experience, absolutely true.³³⁰

Looking back from the position in 1992, NZCFS president Bill Willmott noted the circumstances these pioneers faced:

³²⁹ Margaret Garland, *Journey to New China*, Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1954, 13.

³³⁰ Garland, *Journey*, 38. Garland also wrote that from then on she 'decided to keep her eyes open for evidence to support or refute it. I also began to look about for any sign of a fly but I could see none (Garland, 39). Note that while the question of flies was one that all visitors to China were interested in, the response could also be as ridiculous as the question, and for a receptive audience that was exactly what they wanted to hear. From the trade unionists who visited the PRC in 1956 came the following account: 'I was particularly interested to know how they had managed to get rid of all the flies in China, so I asked one of the interpreters. Without batting an eyelid, he answered: "All the flies were Nationalists, and when we threw out Chiang Kaishek they all went with him to Taiwan".' Quoted from Ur Karaka's speech to the Labourers Union forum, Auckland Concert Chamber, 19th June. Printed in *Challenge*, July 1956, 5.

Among [the early members] there were a few who had direct experience of China through their association with Rewi Alley and his projects, the Shandan Bailie School and the Gung Ho Industrial Collectives. The wide support these projects had enjoyed in New Zealand during the previous decade when CORSO was established had been seriously eroded by the anti-communist rhetoric and government policies of those dark days.³³¹

The first images that New Zealanders brought out of what they saw and described as ‘new’ China reflected then both their own support for this new society and an awareness of the incredulity that they knew their representations would find back home. For example, in her book *Journey to New China*, Margaret Garland went to an enormous effort to detail the machinations that proved that her visit to a practicing Chinese church was neither staged nor in anyway interfered with by the Chinese authorities. The book details her participation in the 1952 New Zealand delegation to the Beijing Peace Conference. These involved last minute arrangements and essentially ‘dropping in’ on the service while it was in progress.

As it was a Baptist church, there was no sign of any Christian symbol and I suddenly realised that the picture of Mao on the vestibule was rather an indication that it might be being used to teach a different doctrine. I therefore asked if we could see the Bible that usually was used for reading the scriptures. The minister sent one of his friends into another room and he returned in a moment with three fat bibles in Chinese. They had stamped on the edges in English, ‘Baptist Church, Canton’. I said to Miss Hsui, ‘Now we are convinced’. She said, ‘Do you want me to translate that? You did believe him before, surely?’ The way she said this satisfied me that she herself was quite sure that the minister was telling us the truth.³³²

The images throughout the reports of these earliest trips are of a developing China now being able to feed its people, drawing a contrast with the situation under the Guomindang and pre-liberation China. When Harold Kay asked Rewi Alley why those witnessing the May Day parade seemed so happy and so supportive of the new regime Alley responded: ‘before the liberation they were hungry, whereas now they are fed and clothed’.³³³ The images were also expressly designed to replace images propagated by those who had previously witnessed China. In doing so these travellers made themselves into the new experts on the PRC. Since changes in China had been so dramatic that you had to see the PRC *first hand* to be able to understand it, and since only those with a relationship with the new regime could witness the new China, the new visitors

³³¹ Willmott, *NZCFS 40 Years On*, 2.

³³² Garland, *Journey*, 44. Alan Monteith, leader of the delegation, was similarly emphatic about the same issue in my interview with him (Monteith, interview) suggesting that issues around the freedom to practice religion in China were particularly important to New Zealanders at the time.

³³³ Harold Kay, ‘May Day in Peking’, *Challenge*, June 1955, 10.

ensured that those earlier images were to be regarded as out of date. They also presented those who had known pre-liberation China as no longer knowledgeable about the current situation:

Not long before reaching Hangchow I noticed the first good metalled road since we started, with motor trucks on it. Here girls with white masks over noses and mouths were lined up in orderly rows, wearing blue and white uniform clothing and carrying glass-covered boxes containing fruit and cooked food. I had been warned by Jim Bertram of dirty conditions at railway stations and not to buy food however hungry I might be. He told me it would be offered for sale somewhat clamorously. He did not know conditions in New China.³³⁴

Bertram was definitely sympathetic to the new regime, although not supportive of socialism, except for China. Despite this, the construction Garland adopts above is designed to disempower him – until he too had visited New China, which he did (a trip Garland was also on) in 1956.

Barbara Spencer had spent two years at the Shandan Bailie School with Rewi Alley and published *Desert Hospital in China* shortly after her return to New Zealand. She also presented the PRC and its representatives as being fundamentally different from those before them. As the People's Liberation Army forces 'liberated' the school she enthused:

no one had ever seen soldiers like this in China before...in contrast to the terror and corruption under the Kuomintang regime, what [the Shandan residents] saw and learnt in the next weeks and months certainly convinced them and us, that these soldiers and officials were determined to do everything they could to give the people a chance to live and work together ... in the struggle to rebuild their war-torn country.³³⁵

In this construction, different from that told by other Shandan foreigners, everything finally looked rosy for the school, the teachers and the new society.³³⁶ It was however a construction entirely consistent with CPC and the PRC party-state's historiography: before liberation China had been chaotic, dangerous and without hope, after liberation every aspect of China had been transformed.³³⁷

Like others attempting to construct a positive discourse around the concept of a new China, the image Spencer created wasn't merely one that represented positive content. It was also designed to overcome the scepticism of the New Zealander brought up on a constant diet of anti-communism. She contains her enthusiasm and she presents her perspective as a powerful

³³⁴ Garland, *Journey*, 56-57.

³³⁵ Barbara Spencer, *Desert Hospital in China*, Jarrolds, London, 1954, 164-5.

³³⁶ Spencer's account mirrors Alley's (in *Yo Banfa*) but other contrary stories emerged too. Hugh Elliot, a Canadian, wrote that there was a lot of intrepidation, followed by frustration at constraints imposed by the new authorities, see Brady, *Myth*, 66.

³³⁷ See Paul Cohen, 'Ambiguities of a Watershed Date: the 1949 divide in Chinese History' in his *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on a Chinese Past*, RoutledgeCurzon, New York, 2003, 131 – 147.

statement from the authority that came from her personal experience. 'I saw' was impossible for detractors to dismiss.

Even as China's New Zealand friends enthusiastically threw themselves into the task of representing this new China, the image that they were presenting was already subject to change. The PRC's short existence had already witnessed a series of sharp changes in both its internal situation and its international relations.³³⁸ This was particularly so in people-to-people relations, which in the Chinese model of proletarian internationalism were understood as the way to influence how the world saw China.³³⁹ The period 1949 to 1952 had been one of extreme tension, marked internally by a massive offensive against 'rightists' and socialism's opponents and externally by support for insurrectionary movements in South and South-East Asia. Neutralists were forced to take sides for or against the revolution and the new regime. However, from 1952 on there began a shift in China's projected image towards a far softer line, encouraging greater cooperation with a more extensive group of allies. This was reflected in formal diplomatic activities. It was marked by improved relations with the outside world, especially after the Bandung and Geneva Conferences.³⁴⁰ Within the communist world, China appeared more and more as a supporter of the 'national' road to socialism. Internally, there was a brief period of ideological relaxation before and during the Hundred Flowers Campaign although it was soon to be followed by the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the road towards the Great Leap Forward.³⁴¹

It was in this context that a visit was made to China in the autumn of 1955 by two Labourers' Union representatives, Te Uri Karaka (as president) and Harold Kay (South Auckland organiser). Karaka became the first Maori spokesman to travel officially in the People's Republic of China.³⁴² Kay described their journey in articles published in the June, July and August issues of *Challenge*. In Harold Kay's account some themes emerge that would dominate eyewitness reportage of the PRC for the next three decades. First, his writing makes a claim to authority through its first person narrative. It was entitled: 'I Saw China', giving it authority over all those who had not. Second, like many who would follow him, crossing the bridge from Hong Kong to Shenzhen

³³⁸ See Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, W.W. Norton & Co, New York, 1991, 531-551, for an account of these changes. For the links between China's domestic programmes and international activity see Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996 and Harry Harding, 'The Domestic Politics of China's Global Posture, 1973-78', in Thomas Fingar (ed.), *China's Quest for Independence: Policy Evolution in the 1970s*, Westview, Boulder, 1980, 114-24.

³³⁹ Anne-Marie Brady puts this down to the PRC's diplomatic isolation which led to Zhou Enlai adopting a strategy known as 'using the people to bring the governments closer together' (Brady, *Managing Foreigners*, 23).

³⁴⁰ The Bandung Conference was a meeting of Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent, which took place between April 18 and April 24, 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia. The conference's stated aims were to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism or neo-colonialism by the United States, the Soviet Union, or any other "imperialistic" nation. China played an important role in the conference and strengthened its relations with other Asian nations. The Geneva Conference (May 8 – July 21, 1954) was a conference between many countries that agreed to end hostilities and restore peace in French Indochina and Vietnam. The PRC being a signatory to the accord was seen as a diplomatic coup for the new regime. In addition, the British and Communist Chinese delegations reached an agreement on the sidelines of the Conference to upgrade their diplomatic relations.

³⁴¹ Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*, 17-18. The Hundred Flowers Campaign was 1956 to 1957, the Anti-Rightist Campaign 1957 to 1958 and the Great Leap Forward was 1958 to 1959.

³⁴² 'Asclepius', *Poet triumphant*, 205.

was characterised as a shift from ‘poverty stricken and chaotic Hong Kong’ to the order and progress witnessed in the People’s Republic. For Kay, ‘What we saw [in Hong Kong] made me for one pleased to know that we had New Zealand to come back to’. He recoiled at ‘poverty’, ‘wages that didn’t amount to a living-wage’, and ‘child labour’.³⁴³

I well remember, just prior to my leaving New Zealand, someone saying we should get the truth now – meaning of course, my trip to China.

Another person said, ‘Don’t try to make comparisons by New Zealand standards’. I was genuinely worried at the time, as to what standard could be used, but this afternoon a yardstick was given me on my own side of the so-called Iron Curtain.³⁴⁴

This emphasis on living standards and fair wages at this time is an important one and stands in contrast to the emphasis on the correct ideology that emerges with the Cultural Revolution period in the 1960s. The issue of wages equality was critical to the way that New Zealanders sympathetic to the PRC conceived of New China; for them the contrast between an Old China based on radical differences between wealth and status and the one they saw where there was a levelling of the outward manifestations of wealth and power. In this construction Hong Kong represented the Old China, still dominated by British imperialism.

In addition, the message for those friendly with the new regime was deliberately and directly designed to counter the images that people would have had at home:

Before I reached China I had heard the cry of ‘Police State’, and ‘Oppression of the people’, but in today’s demonstration there was not the slightest manifestation of either; no people could have demonstrated in such a spontaneous manner without their being happy and sincere.³⁴⁵

Kay presented everything in terms so that the New Zealanders reading his account would be able to relate and understand the Chinese position:

The Chinese people consider the question of Taiwan to be an internal affair and not the concern of any other country.

³⁴³ Harold Kay, ‘I Saw China’, *Challenge*, June 1955, 9. The contrast between the British colony of Hong Kong (decrepit, poor, chaotic, unfree) and the PRC (liberated, developing, ordered) was an important marker for those visiting China who sympathetic to an anti-imperialist viewpoint right up until the 1980s.

³⁴⁴ Harold Kay, ‘I Saw China’, 9.

³⁴⁵ Harold Kay, ‘May Day in Peking’, *Challenge*, June 1955, 10.

They view it on the same basis as if a foreign country occupied, say, Stewart Island. We in New Zealand would soon be saying; 'We will liberate Stewart Island.'³⁴⁶

And his writing is particularly conscious of the climate in New Zealand in which his words would be read:

In closing this brief report on our visit to China, I would ask all who read it, when they read of adverse comments in our newspapers in respect to New China, that they look with a sympathetic understanding towards China.³⁴⁷

Herbert Passin's *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy* traces the links between the PRC's domestic changes of the mid-1950s and the character of cultural exchange. In the initial period of 1949-1952, very few visitors were attracted or wooed 'other than hardcore communists and fellow travellers'. From 1952, with the shift to a softer line, the political complexion of the visitors began to take on a more representative character.³⁴⁸ Reflecting this, in 1956 former Labour Party Member of Parliament Ormond Wilson led a group of academics, artists and others on a visit to the People's Republic of China.³⁴⁹ The initial invitation had gone jointly to Wilson via the Labour Party and to Mason on behalf of the NZCFS. The group was diverse politically and occupationally. In part this was strategic, their findings would seem more compelling if those on the trip could not all be written off as 'fellow travellers'.³⁵⁰ The diversity of the tour group also reflected the reality that there was a great range of people with an interest in China. It also was a sign of the PRC and CPC's openness, at this time in terms of united front politics. This was echoed in the organisations that were part of the CPC's united front activities in New Zealand. They were reaching out across the political spectrum, looking for all who might be potential allies in the campaign to normalise perceptions of, and relations with, the PRC.

Until these changes in the late 1950s, although China was represented as desirous of peace, there was little other political content. China was represented as a society 'getting on with resolving things in a Chinese way' and that was good 'for China'. It was certainly not projecting itself as having a revolution ripe for export.³⁵¹ In fact the exporting was represented as going quite the other way. The rules of the New Zealand China Friendship Association had as its primary goal

³⁴⁶ Harold Kay, 'New China As I Saw It', *Challenge*, August 1955, 7.

³⁴⁷ Harold Kay, 'New China As I Saw It', 7.

³⁴⁸ Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*, 17-18.

³⁴⁹ Ormond Wilson was Labour Member of Parliament for Rangitikei, 1935-38, and Palmerston North, 1946-49. In the 1950s his political interests centred on foreign affairs. On the left of the Labour Party he was, for example, opposed to New Zealand joining the ANZUS alliance. See Janet Paul, 'Wilson, George Hamish Ormond 1907 - 1988', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz>. The tour party included James Bertram and the trip is the subject of his book *Return to China*.

³⁵⁰ Bertram refers to the issue of the group's independence and the impact that their findings would have directly, saying that the Society's involvement complicated the sense that the group was independent. They ranged from Charles Hilgendorf, a conservative farmer, Margaret Garland and Evelyn Page who were artists with left-wing leanings, Rita Smith, who was a member of the CPNZ, and academics William Geddis, Angus Ross and Bertram (Bertram, *Return to China*, 15-16 and 22-23). This issue is discussed in chapter 2.

‘the promotion of peace and friendship with the people of China’. The pamphlet produced to celebrate its formation called for ‘First Requirement: Recognition’ and argued that the ‘Fruits of Recognition’ would be both economic and cultural. In a theme to be explored again much later in the relationship between New Zealand and the PRC, the Society argued ‘[the] rising standard of living in so vast a market, with over 600 million consumers, means export potentialities which New Zealand cannot afford to ignore’.³⁵²

Traditionally, China has been the source of great movements which have done much to enrich the culture of other countries and inspire their scholars, artists and scientists. Today China is experiencing a renaissance which could similarly act as a stimulus to New Zealand thought.³⁵³

Two Chinese trade union representatives arrived in New Zealand early in June on a fortnight’s tour of New Zealand organised by the Labourers’ Union and the Society. When president Mason welcomed the visitors at a reception, he said:

We are among the most recent of peoples: you are the most ancient... We are a small island: your land occupies the area of a continent. We have the population of a medium-sized city: you alone are a quarter of the human race...]We have made but a small contribution to the stock of civilisation: you are the very fount and origin of civilisation. Your land has been ravaged by war and occupation. Ours is unscathed by any invader – but let us never forget that, if it had not been for the stubborn and terrible sacrifice of your people, nothing is more certain than that our land would too have been ravaged by attack and invasion.³⁵⁴

Although the NZCFS was an organisation dominated by socialist sympathisers, its message was composed in such a way as to be attractive also to far more conservative listeners. This was consistent with Communist Party of China’s goals at this time. The Chinese had identified anti-communism as a barrier to peaceful reconstruction of their new society.³⁵⁵ Their perspective at the time was to present their society as socialist – which was good for China but not for export – and therefore benign, nothing to be afraid of. One immediate goal that it was believed would hasten the move towards peace, or at least lessen the possibility of war, was to establish normal relations between China and other countries. New Zealand, seen as an independent member of the western alliance, was a key target. Accordingly, once the early part of the decade had seen branches of the society established, the consolidation of this base allowed for a vast upsurge in

³⁵¹ This is reflected in all the accounts of the time. See for example Garland, *Journey*, 62 and Bertram, *Return to China*, 242-251. It is also an important theme in Rudall Hayward’s film *China 1957*.

³⁵² ‘Why China Matters to Us?’, 2.

³⁵³ ‘Why China Matters to Us?’, 4.

³⁵⁴ ‘Asclepius’, *Poet Triumphant*, 206.

³⁵⁵ See the discussion in chapter 2.

people-to-people activity around a clear goal of getting the New Zealand government to recognise the People's Republic of China.

This was a real possibility. The Nash government had been elected with a promise of recognising the PRC. A secret submission to Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1957 noted that the United States government was very concerned at 'the possibility of recognition by the 'New Zealand Socialist Government', so much so that US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had asked British Foreign Minister Macmillan to speak personally with Nash about it. The position of the western alliance was that recognition would cause 'the greatest Communist prestige victory in Asia since the takeover of the mainland'.³⁵⁶

Passin details that the Chinese foreign service had identified three groupings of countries. In France and Japan, for example, even though formal diplomatic relations did not exist, there was a substantial body of public opinion very favourably disposed towards China. Here the Chinese pursued their vigorous programme of 'people's diplomacy', by going to 'the people' over the heads of their governments. In Japan, this programme had been spectacularly successful, in France less dramatically so, but equally substantial in 'an important strata of opinion and politics'. At the opposite extreme was the United States, where there was neither official recognition nor any strong public sentiment favourable to Communist China. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada were believed to lie somewhere between these two extremes.³⁵⁷

Shirley Barton described the NZCFS's efforts thus:

So the intrepid little China Friendship Association of 1952 set out to do battle with every means within its power: public meetings and panels of speakers, letters to the Prime Minister and MPs, newspapers and delegations urging recognition, film shows, exhibitions.³⁵⁸

In October 1956 the NZCFS hosted the 'history-making event' of the visit of a Chinese Classical Theatre troupe. 'These highly-talented and charming people won all hearts and delighted large audiences in the three main centres'. The group, including 90 members of the Beijing Opera Company, were hosted at mayoral receptions in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. At a reception given by the Auckland Chinese community, RAK Mason welcomed the visitors, saying:

³⁵⁶ Nash reportedly said that he was in no hurry. *Australia and Recognition of the People's Republic of China (Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2002, 157-158. The actual document is NAA: A1209, 57/4832, ii.

³⁵⁷ Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*, 16.

³⁵⁸ Shirley Barton, 'Some Early Memories, 2.

‘Soon, we trust, through our door... will walk the accredited ambassador of New China. That will be a great day, but we shall still be needing you unofficial ambassadors’.³⁵⁹

This combination of the images of a China for workers, which attracted many of the PRC’s supporters and a more depoliticised image that represented ‘Chineseness’ rather than socialism allowed for multiple political purposes to be served. China’s informal diplomacy was trying to project itself beyond its acolytes, by drawing on the prestige of Chinese culture, and refuting the idea – being circulated by the KMT – that the Communists were destroying Chinese culture. In a depoliticised way such a ‘cultural turn’ would re-emerge in the reform period. For now though, pre-recognition, the export of Chinese culture had a particular political objective.

T.L. MacDonald, New Zealand Minister of External Affairs, described the opera tour as one ‘for which the local communists had tried by every means to get some Governmental recognition’. He also noted that the NZCFS was having some success in their campaigns since the leader of the New Zealand Opposition was advocating recognition, and the government was under considerable pressure to liberalise trade restrictions.³⁶⁰ William Ratcliff’s review of ‘Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy’ towards Latin America notes similar activities. An 85-member folk ensemble became the first large group of Chinese to travel in Latin America between August and October 1956. It toured Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. The group gave 58 live performances, to over 146,000 people and another million saw it on television. The group was accompanied by similar political activity to that in New Zealand, with the Bolivian parliament passing a resolution calling for the ensemble to visit that country. A large troupe of acrobats also toured Latin America in 1958 and another opera troupe in 1960.³⁶¹

In 1957, Chinese trade unionists came to New Zealand and a film crew went to China accompanied by Auckland branch president and poet R.A.K. Mason. Accompanying Mason were Irene Young and Mason’s wife Dorothea, ‘both experienced Secretaries’, and Ramai and Rudall Hayward, film makers. All belonged to the Society, and had made friends among the Classical Theatre Company.³⁶² Like Kay, Mason was presented with a third world point of reference. Unwilling to fly he and his wife had travelled by boat. They landed in the Philippines. Mason described Cebu as ‘just a chaotic junk-heap of relieved misery’. Manila was: ‘Really beautiful in many respects, and some of the new suburbs – foreigners and wealthy Filipinos – have houses and grounds of magnificent modern designs... [but] the horrible huts are only round the corner...’. When they berthed on 10 September at Hong Kong: ‘we were politely met by Chinese

³⁵⁹ ‘Asclepius’, *Poet Triumphant*, 208.

³⁶⁰ Record of conversation of ANZUS Council meeting, Washington, 17 November 1956, NAA: A10576, ix, in *Australia and Recognition of the PRC 1949-1972*, DFAT, 2002, 142.

³⁶¹ William Ratcliff, ‘Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy Towards Latin America, 1949-1960’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 49, 1 (Feb, 1969), 67.

³⁶² ‘Asclepius’, *Poet Triumphant*, 212.

Travel Agency people and taken to our hotel. Luxury and poverty hand in hand everywhere'. Like others who would visit the PRC, Mason represents the short trip across the Shenzhen border as a crossing of supreme importance. As he wrote to Shirley Barton at the time: 'We were liberated about midday yesterday after two days – two days too long – in ... Hong Kong... Was I glad to be over that border. The change was noticeable at once'.³⁶³

Mason wrote to Shirley Barton on 21 October: 'The wonder and the glory of it all have been beyond belief. The Association watched over our stumbling footsteps like angels and the hospitality was overwhelming'.³⁶⁴ The group met Mao Zedong and other leaders at the official event on National Day, when Ramai Hayward presented Mao with a feather cloak.

Then someone came over and took Ron and me over to where Chairman Mao was standing with Premier Chou En Lai and indicated I should present the cloak to Mao... Mao greeted me and I put the cloak on his shoulders and tied it. I said it was a gift from our Maori king of Aotearoa, a gift of goodwill to the leaders of China. I said 'We are the smallest country in the world, giving this gift to the largest nation in the world'. He smiled and said, reassuringly, 'The smallest is as great as the largest'... he wanted to know how the feathers were woven into it... Then Mao turned to Ron, and Ron, of course was most eloquent... They had a lovely conversation, two poets together, and they had an empathy straight away.³⁶⁵

As discussed in the introduction, this image of the fusion of worker and intellectual was one with a lot of appeal to New Zealand educated males in this period and accordingly the image of Mao and Mason together, each as poet and working man, was a powerful one.

Returning home, Mason drafted a review for talks to be given in Australia and New Zealand. It was consistent with what others had seen and would see and like their accounts, it was designed for maximum effect at home. He did not know Chinese but they had met good friends who were bilingual, many experts spoke English, and 'the interpreters were marvellous – guide, philosopher, and friend'. Moreover, they had the 'evidence of their own eyes'. They had seen 'thousands of miles [of] farms kept like gardens [and] whole cities being remodelled'. Also there was: 'No constraint put upon us... China open to us... Never locked rooms... I wandered up narrow crowded back streets late at night and opened wallet for smokes – contrast Cebu and Djakarta'. And: 'Bewildering complexity, tumultuous appearance of life, incredible wealth of

³⁶³ 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant*, 212.

³⁶⁴ 'Asclepius', *Poet Triumphant*, 218.

³⁶⁵ Ramai Hayward, interview, Auckland, 5 July 2002. See Mason papers: China Society (Hocken), Peking n.d. The event is also recounted in Newnham, *NZ Women in China*, 99.

individual expression – children in shoals, all so different’. And the ‘assumption that Western capitalism produces diversity, socialism makes for uniformity. Forget it for China’.³⁶⁶

In a manner that was prescient of how students would take lessons for changing New Zealand from their trips to China in the 1970s, Mason discovered in China much more than that found by a tourist:

It was an event not only in our personal lives but in the history of our country... We found new thoughts, new ideas about our own country beside what we learned about China. We had as it were a new vista – a new horizon of our own country as well. It gave us new hope of friendship among the peoples.³⁶⁷

The Haywards’ films were accepted on a commercial circuit, shown in a Queen Street cinema and then in other parts of New Zealand. Copies were bought by the Department of Education for use in New Zealand schools.

Opportunities Close-up

From mid-1957 a reaction set in: the Anti-Rightist Campaign was followed by the Great Leap Forward. Within the Communist Bloc, following the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where Nikita Khrushchev denounced former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, China began to emerge as the great defender of orthodoxy against relaxation and ‘revisionism’.³⁶⁸ The anti-rightist campaign undertaken in the PRC from the middle of 1957 represented the end of the ‘opening up’ and expansion of United Front activities. There was a gradual deterioration and radicalisation domestically and this was reflected in international activities. China specialists, unless they were identifiable as markedly friendly to the regime, found it increasingly difficult to travel to China. China withdrew from several scholarly conferences and declared that it would not participate in UN conferences on the grounds that Taiwan was a member, although Chinese delegates participated in a UNESCO conference as late as July 1957.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ ‘Asclepius’, *Poet Triumphant*, 220.

³⁶⁷ Barrowman argues that China ‘saved Mason’ and made him interested in writing again (Barrowman, *Mason*, 343).

³⁶⁸ The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was held during February 14 – 26, 1956. It is known especially for Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’, which denounced the ‘personality cult and dictatorship’ of Joseph Stalin. The speech shocked delegates to the Congress, as it dramatically reversed what had been understood about Stalin: that he was a wise, peaceful, and fair leader. After a month the speech was reported to the general public in the USSR, although translated copies mysteriously appeared in the west almost instantaneously. It was not officially published in full until 1989. Not everyone was ready to accept Khrushchev’s new line. Albanian Communist leader Enver Hoxha, for instance, condemned Khrushchev as revisionist. For others, like the CPNZ, it reduced the standing of the CPSU, opening up the space for labelling them as revisionist some years later (see Ron Smith, *Working Class Son: my fight against capitalism and war*, R.J. Smith, Wellington, 1994, 110-114).

³⁶⁹ Passin, *Chinese Cultural Diplomacy*, 18.

By the second half of the decade, the image of the PRC was already subject to change. In New Zealand this meant a closing of ranks around a revolutionary programme. It didn't just represent a more radicalised image of China in its presentations and newsletters, the organisation also changed its own operations. In October 1957, discussion at the Auckland executive meeting raised the question 'are we controversial enough?' and the committee resolved to organise a forum on communes.³⁷⁰

The late 1950s were disappointing to those seeking recognition for China. The Nash government had promised to consider the question but partly due to the radicalisation of the PRC's diplomatic activities, and partly because of external pressure, letters, petitions and delegations from the Society were to no avail.³⁷¹ Despite this the NZCFS was to consolidate and continue its activities. While the CPNZ propagated the CPC's position on ideological issues in particular *vis a vis* the Soviet Union, the NZCFS had tended to lend its own efforts on a more cultural front.

Rewi Alley toured New Zealand in early 1960, speaking to more than sixty groups, in workplaces and homes as well as public meetings. There were as many as thirty separate meetings in Auckland alone. He spoke only from his own experience and in an interview with the *New Zealand Listener* he avoided questions on issues that he could claim he wasn't knowledgeable about. The *NZ Listener* described this as his 'soft pillow in which the harsh questions asked of China abroad are quietly and ever so politely smothered'. He also downplayed the significance of his role:

I simply live there... and go about and write and do my best to bring understanding to people about China. I believe that what happens to one-third of the people of the world is certainly of interest and consequence to the other two-thirds.³⁷²

China was still regarded in a mixed way by the general population. Members of the NZCFS wrote to the *NZ Listener* to complain that his interview on Radio New Zealand's *Point of View* was a 'fiasco', conducted as it was by 'people with an anti-China and anti-communist bias'. However, in the same issue of the *NZ Listener* another letter-writer supported the interviewers, suggesting that

Indeed the freedom and tolerance enjoyed by Mr Alley both over the radio and in the *Listener*, are in marked contrast with the treatment that would be accorded in China to dissident intellectuals who endeavoured to praise American or British institutions.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Minutes of the Auckland Branch of the China Society, 13 October 1959, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archives. Note that the minutes themselves are silent on the practical effects of this discussion but still, it was clearly representative of a reflection in the Society's activities of increased radicalist debates taking place within the PRC.

³⁷¹ In part this was due to the external pressures that have already been covered. See note 66.

³⁷² 'Alley of Shandan' *New Zealand Listener*, 8 March 1960, 6.

Stephen (later Sir Tipene) O'Regan writing for Victoria University College's *Salient* reinforced this point-of-view. Although he wrote enthusiastically of the 'stimulating lecture' Alley had given at the university, he noted 'I would treat [Alley's] approach with caution, and openly differ with him on some points. I am thankful that I can do this. I couldn't in China'.³⁷⁴

Later writers would claim that Alley's visit was partly to shore up New Zealand support for the CPC in its ideological dispute with the CPSU but evidence for this position is rather lacking.³⁷⁵ Rather than to radicalise the CPNZ, in fact Alley's trip was part of an overture based on softening China's image overseas. Alley's job was to be a friendly face for China and to moderate the radicalised image that the media had been presenting. The CPNZ had direct links with the CPC and through Wilcox, in particular, closer links with the leading Chinese theoreticians. Although increasingly associated with the CPNZ Alley's membership of the New Zealand Party was not explicit until years later. This was considerably after the CPNZ had its 1960 Conference and 'stealthily adopted a Maoist programme' and Maoist leadership. Although Alley's reports of China's development and his observations from his travels around the PRC were published in the *People's Voice* and *New Zealand Communist Review*, these were not usually on the ideological questions at the centre of the CPC-CPSU 'polemics'. For ideological questions there were direct links between the CPC and the CPNZ, direct exchange of materials and *Hongqi* (the CPC theoretical publication).³⁷⁶

In the 1960s the Sino-Soviet split and increasing radicalisation of the self-image of the Chinese state meant that China, in a different sense from the traditional one, became once again the 'middle kingdom' for a particular brand of communist. The Communist Party of New Zealand was the only leading communist party in the advanced capitalist world to view the ideological conflict with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the same way as the CPC and the Albanian Labour Party (PLA). The links between the CPNZ and the NZCFS grew even stronger during this period, so too – by the end of the decade and amidst the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – did the stridency of the NZCFS's representation of China and its revolution.

³⁷³ Edna Thacker, letter to editor, *New Zealand Listener*, 22 March 1960, 11. Similar letters were written by James Bertram, of Wellington, J. Wright, of Christchurch and Barbara Spencer of Whangarei, April 8 and 22, 1960, 11.

³⁷⁴ Stephen O'Regan, 'Rewi Alley of China', *Salient*, 23, 2, 1961, 4. Note that this point would re-emerge in the 1970s. Paul Grocott was asked 'Would a 19 or 20 year-old Chinese now be able to make the same assessment of another society that you have made of theirs?' Grocott did 'not agree with the terms of the question' and noted that Chinese students 'were making assessments very similar to our own in many cases'. Further, he claimed that the Chinese 'in my mind are much closer to the ideal of freedom than New Zealand has ever been' (Bob Wellington, interview with Paul Grocott, Kitty Haywood and Frank Hogan, 'China: Through Students' Eyes', *Salient*, 5 July 1972, 7).

³⁷⁵ For a detailed analysis that reveals the ideological and historical foundations for the CPNZ position, which explores the local application of the issues at the centre of the clash between the Chinese and Soviet parties, see chapter 4 and also Alistair Shaw, 'The CPNZ and the Sino Soviet Split', unpublished dissertation, 2001.

³⁷⁶ See chapter 4 for further discussion.

As Chinese international policies became more militant, and Sino-Soviet differences more open, most aspects of people-to-people diplomacy reflected these changes. Guided tours became less frequent and the tone of the PRC's publications became more belligerent. Although cultural diplomacy did not stop, it did decline in effectiveness. Ratcliff's study of the Latin American situation claims that the Chinese were able to continue contacts with 'moderates' while 'simultaneously throwing increased support behind radical revolutionaries', in part because the moderates 'failed to perceive the changes in the Chinese position'. However he says that by the middle of the 1960s contacts with Latin Americans apart from those in revolutionary groups had considerably lessened and that 'China's image has been severely damaged among Latin American moderates'.³⁷⁷

Despite this, by the 1960s the NZCFS was well established, with branches around the country. It was a genuinely national organisation. Yet, as the Communist Party of New Zealand grew in stature due to its position as China's leading Western ally, the Society found its own contacts with the PRC reduced as the CPC-CPNZ relationship took over.

The PRC was then pushing two lines at once through its people-to-people diplomatic activity. On the one hand, because of the Sino-Soviet split, the PRC promoted an accessible and moderate, not-to-be-feared image, as it sought friends from outside from the Communist Bloc that it was now largely estranged from. On the other hand, in meetings with the CPNZ and other radical leftists, it helped to consolidate support for its position and establish China as a red centre for world revolution. This was a process of revolutionary promotion internally amongst communist cadre, but externally preaching that nothing happening in China was frightening. The tour by Rewi Alley in 1960 served to promote the message of moderation.

This difference between state and party is not well understood but is important for Marxist-Leninists and states led by communist parties. In international affairs, examples of the PRC interacting with the state organs of a country while simultaneously supporting movements opposed to that country's government abounded until the mid-1970s.³⁷⁸ The case of the Philippines is one such illustration. Even as the PRC was normalising political and trade relations with the Philippines, the CPC stepped up its support for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which had been re-founded as a Maoist party in 1968. From 1970, CPP members received training in China, and in 1971, the Chinese provided 1400 M-14 rifles and 8000 rounds of ammunition to the CPP-led New People's Army. Yet, contemporaneously, in September 1971, the first exploratory trade mission from the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines visited the People's Republic of China and on 11 May 1972 Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos signed

³⁷⁷ William Ratcliff, *Chinese Diplomacy towards Latin America*, 67.

³⁷⁸ Wang Hui argues that the party and state have rigidified and become one since the end of the 'revolutionary period' and the death of Mao in 1976. See Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East to West', *New Left Review*, 41, September-October 2006, 42.

an Executive Order which effectively opened trade relations with China and other socialist countries.³⁷⁹

In this environment, the new national association adopted as one of its goals ‘To oppose and correct misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese government and people’.³⁸⁰ ‘Not propaganda for China’, wrote Jack Ewan, ‘but all would agree that we couldn’t go wrong in publishing truth about China’.³⁸¹ Jack Ewan was a crucial figure for the Society from the mid-1960s until his retirement as National President in 1989. He had been in the New Zealand Navy and had become interested in Chinese culture when his service had taken him to Singapore in the late 1930s. He joined the Communist Party of New Zealand in 1941. He said that he ‘knew about the [Society] when it was formed in 1952’ but had been busy in his Party work at the time with Progressive Books, the CPNZ-associated bookstore in central Auckland. He had joined the Society by the time it became a national organisation in 1958 and met Alley when Alley was being sponsored by the Society on his tour in 1961. Ewan, then a school teacher, asked about the possibility of teaching in the PRC and Alley undertook to arrange it. Ewan taught at the Foreign Languages Institute in Beijing for a year in 1965 and travelled extensively throughout China during breaks. On his return to New Zealand he became newsletter editor and National Secretary of the Society after Barbara McEwan, who had held that office, died in a car accident in 1966.³⁸²

Ewan’s involvement reflected a more overt CPNZ domination of the Society and a preparedness to engage on the PRC’s behalf to promote Chinese policies. Reflecting this change in line, the Society organised a forum for Professor Willis Airey to speak on the Sino-Indian Border Question and put out a booklet ‘explaining’ the Chinese position. It showed the film *Joy in Tibet* (on ‘the peaceful liberation of Tibet from feudalism’) to a meeting that included eighteen members of the local Chinese community.³⁸³ The films that the Society was getting out of China

³⁷⁹ Trade relations developed quickly from this initial thawing in relations. On 25 November 1973 a trade mission from the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade visited the Philippines. On 20 September 1974 First Lady Imelda Marcos arrived in Beijing for an eight-day official visit. A trade agreement was signed. On 7 June 1975 President Marcos arrived in Beijing for a four-day state visit. On 9 June Marcos and Premier Chou En Lai signed a joint communiqué establishing diplomatic relations between their two countries. As part of this, the Philippines adopted a One-China policy under which Taiwan was considered an integral part of Chinese territory. See William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution: The New People’s Army and Its Struggle for Power*, I.B.Tauris, New York, 1988, 20.

³⁸⁰ Rules of the New Zealand China Friendship Society, NZCFS Archive. The rules are also available from <http://www.societies.govt.nz/>.

³⁸¹ Jack Ewan, ‘Summary of NZCFS minutes’, a document produced for the NZCFS fiftieth anniversary celebration, 2002, NZCFS Archive. The distinction between a subjective truth-position and propaganda is discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

³⁸² Ewan served as Secretary until 1977 when he became National President, serving in that capacity until ill-health forced him into retirement in 1989 whereupon he was made Honorary Vice President for life. He died in 2006. He led the Society’s first tour, in 1972, and the Society’s first ‘Teacher’s Tour’ in 1974. He was made a ‘Friendship Ambassador’, an award of the PRC, in 2002. He broke with the CPNZ in 1978 when it began its criticisms of the PRC’s policies and joined the Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a CPNZ(ML), later led by former-CPNZ General Secretary Vic Wilcox. He was involved with the *Struggle* publication until shortly before his death (Jack Ewan, interview, Auckland, 4 July 2002).

³⁸³ Auckland branch minutes. 4 October 1962, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

reflected the increased domestic radicalisation in China. Films such as *Inside Red China* and Jiang Qing's model revolutionary opera *The White-Haired Girl* were replacing *The Wonders of China* on the play-list.

The radicalisation of diplomatic activities meant that virtually the only delegations invited to the PRC were from the CPNZ, although the entire leadership of the Party went to China, Vic Wilcox nine times between 1960 and 1972.³⁸⁴ Ron Smith went in 1963, on a delegation led by Bill McAra, then the editor of the *People's Voice*.

At that time, the sun shone out of our tiny New Zealand Party as far as the Chinese Party was concerned, and they couldn't do enough for our delegation... We met Mao Tse Tung and many other top leaders.³⁸⁵

Like so many others, for Smith the contrast between Hong Kong and the PRC exemplified the difference between colonialism and the liberation provided by socialism. For him the PRC represented an additional difference – the contrast with the new bourgeoisie that the CPNZ believed had taken over the CPSU.

Hong Kong was the first culture shock, teeming with poverty-stricken humanity, sleeping and cooking and begging on the streets... [Comparing this with] watching the Party officials weeding their vegetable patches in the grounds of the Party Provincial HQ, added up to more culture shock.³⁸⁶

The increased radicalisation of the period meant that trade too was politicised. It was no longer available as a carrot to help bring capitalists in New Zealand into a campaign seeking increased engagement with the PRC. Instead the question of trade was made subordinate to the political question of recognition, if it wanted more trade, the New Zealand government would have to recognise the PRC. Traders such as Victor Percival, Warren Freer and, in particular, Ron Howell were important elements in presenting as broad a pro-China front as possible in New Zealand.³⁸⁷ The CPNZ and NZCFS sought to build on this. Smith met Chinese trade officials and put forward a case for a trade agreement that the CPNZ and other supportive organisations in New Zealand hoped to campaign for: 'but I was soon put straight'. He was told:

³⁸⁴ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 124.

³⁸⁵ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 125.

³⁸⁶ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 126.

³⁸⁷ Victor Percival attended the second Canton Trade Fair in 1957. He was the deputy-Chairman of the Auckland division of the National Party at the time. In 1981 he established the New Zealand China Trade Association, of which he is an honorary member for life (Bruce Kohn, *Kivi Pathfinder: Opening Mao's China to the West*, Grantham House, London, 2008). Ron Howell was a businessman involved in importing a range of products from China. He was National President of the NZCFS, 1962-68 (after RAK Mason retired) and 1974-1977 (after Roy Evans was removed).

In China, trade is by the State and officers running it are cadres of the state. So naturally we consider trade on the basis of the relations between the two countries. New Zealand has taken unfriendly actions against China in the United Nations. The Chiang Kai Shek 'Government' was granted Embassy status in Wellington... Chinese officials had met Australian and Canadian officials but in New Zealand only trading companies... at present there are obstacles and the key lies with the New Zealand Government.³⁸⁸

Smith's confusion represented the dynamic between State and Party, between radicals and business-people, and since he was in China as a representative of the CPNZ – who had suggested he promote the trade idea – it also reflects that changes in China's position was not necessarily quickly communicated to its New Zealand allies. When the PRC sought a broader set of friends people such as business-people would be attracted into the relationship, when it consolidated the distinction between 'friend and enemy' on ideological grounds then they would be frozen out. It is likely that it was exactly this process that led to Ron Howell's replacement as President of the NZCFS for the Cultural Revolution period with the more radical Roy Evans.

This setback in no way affected Smith's impressions of the PRC improving the lives of its citizens and the success of socialism. His group went to a People's Commune near Wuhan. They were told that before liberation about 70 percent of the crop went to the landlords and 'if there was no rain for a month the peasants suffered drought; if it rained they suffered flood'. Under such a situation they were told that thousands starved to death or went begging.

Then came Liberation, land reform, mutual aid teams, primary collectives, advanced collective, and finally communes.... Despite the 200 days of drought already that year, he said they had got a record crop and were able to help other communes whose crops had failed...³⁸⁹

For Smith, the successes in no way meant that the PRC needed to do anything other than speed up the developments already taking place. He witnessed 'an air of crisis, of a desperate struggle against natural and Soviet-made difficulties, a Yan'an spirit of determination to win through to full industrialisation and independence'.³⁹⁰ There was particular excitement in New Zealand at the rejection both of Soviet revisionism, which is explored in chapter 4, and the sense of China standing up against the Soviet behemoth. Reflecting that China neither stable or consolidated, from the middle of the 1960s the New Zealand side of the people-to-people diplomatic relationship was again to reflect the growing radicalism in the PRC. The forward to the photo exhibition that the NZCFS toured throughout New Zealand in 1966 is illustrative:

³⁸⁸ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 127-129.

³⁸⁹ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 132.

³⁹⁰ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 131.

Like other forms of new art, photography in China has developed step by step under the brilliant guidance of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary line... Guided by Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*... Chinese photographers have engaged in this branch of art by ...putting themselves in the midst of the three great revolutionary movements, namely, class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. The exhibits are an ode to the great victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, a reflection of some aspects of China's socialist revolution and construction, and an expression of ardent love the Chinese people cherish for their great leader Chairman Mao.³⁹¹

The NZCFS propagated the *Cultural Revolution Decision of the Central Committee of the CPC* to members and many members read of enormous developments in democracy and volunteerism through their subscriptions to *China Reconstructs* and *China Pictorial* of the period. It imported 15 mailbags of *Mao's Collected Works*, to be sold through Progressive Books.³⁹² It also produced two leaflets: *China and World Peace* and *Our View of China*. Both went through re-writing to appease more moderate members of the Society but would still have been considered radical documents had they been prepared a few years earlier – or even if they were produced today. In *China and World Peace* the Society described China as being desirous of world peace, but also representing a radical Marxist, even Maoist view of the causes of world war.

China's attitude to war is clear and uncomplicated. She believes that as long as superpower domination and rivalry exist, war is inevitable... The struggle for world domination is now concentrated on the opposing ambitions of the US and the Soviet Union... the United States, though still powerful and dangerous, has been weakened, while the Soviet Union... is following an aggressive policy, all the more dangerous and deceptive for being carried out in the name of socialism.³⁹³

Our View of China was a dramatically different document from the 1957 *Why China Matters to Us*. *Our View of China* largely discounts the trade and high cultural elements of the relationship with China in favour of the political vision that revolutionary China represented. Emily Larsen was a member of the CPNZ and the NZCFS who went to China in 1967. Her reporting typified the representation of the politicised image of the PRC at the time. On her return she spoke to some secondary school students about what she had witnessed:

³⁹¹ *Archaeological Discoveries from the Cultural Revolution in China*, Foreign Languages Press, 1966.

³⁹² Minutes of the National Council of the China Society, 13 November 1967, NZCFS Archive.

³⁹³ *China and World Peace*, China Society Leaflet, NZCFS, 1968, NZCFS Archive.

...after the schools were closed³⁹⁴ the Young Red Guard movement started...These young people had grown up in a new society which provided them with a much better standard of living and access to education, hence they did not have personal experience of the shocking conditions that existed before Liberation. So they decided to go on Long Marches throughout the countryside to learn first hand from the older people and the conditions of the past...They also learned that many rich people and big Landlords were making preparations to restore the old order, however these were only a minority of people as compared with the overwhelming majority who wanted to continue to build their Socialist Society... The Revolutionary Line led by Chairman Mao Tse Tung has the full and devoted support of the huge majority of the Chinese people.³⁹⁵

1970-76: The Explosion of People-to-People Activity

The early 1970s saw a thaw in the US-China relationship and achievement of the long-sought goal of the recognition of China by the New Zealand Government.³⁹⁶ It also saw the NZCFS transformed into a travel agency offering, for the most part, the only access for travellers wanting to visit a China emerging from the Cultural Revolution and 'opening up'. As the Society still saw its prime role as carrying out its constitutional objective: 'To oppose and correct misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese government and people', the tours were seen as one of a range of opportunities to reveal the truth of China.

After New Zealand changed its official recognition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic on 22 December 1972 and the world community began to engage with China in the

³⁹⁴ She had earlier spoken approvingly about how much 'real education' was able to take place once the schools were closed.

³⁹⁵ Emily Larsen, 'Diary of China Trip', unpublished. Copy provided by daughter. NZCFS papers, NZCFS Archive. Emily Larsen went on to found the Hamilton Branch of the NZCFS.

³⁹⁶ After tentative communications between the US and the PRC in 1970 and so-called 'ping pong diplomacy', United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger visited Beijing on 9 July 1971. Ping Pong Diplomacy refers to the exchange of ping pong players of the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC). The American table tennis team, in Japan for the 31st World Table Tennis Championship, received a surprise invitation from their Chinese colleagues for an all-expense paid visit to the People's Republic. *Time Magazine* called it 'The ping heard round the world'. On April 10, nine players, four officials, and two spouses stepped across a bridge from Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland. They were the first group of Americans allowed into China since the Communist takeover in 1949. The event marked a thaw in U.S.-China relations that paved the way to the visit to Beijing by President Richard Nixon in 1972. Subsequently the U.S. supported the admission of the PRC to the United Nations where it replaced the Republic of China on 25 October 1971. In February 1972, US President Nixon arrived in China where he signed the 'Shanghai Communique', formally normalising relations between the two countries and agreeing to a 'one-China' policy. New Zealand recognised the PRC on 22 December 1972. This followed the election of the Kirk Government, which had promised to do so in its election manifesto. According to Kirk's private secretary Margaret Hayward there was somewhat of a race to recognise the PRC between New Zealand and Australia and New Zealand thought it was winning. She wrote in her 'diary' on 22 December that New Zealand was due to recognise the PRC that day. 'While Australia has been publicly negotiating recognition through its Ambassador in Paris, New Zealand has been quietly working through its Ambassador to the United Nations, John Scott. New Zealand will beat Australia to the announcement of recognition, but only by a few hours' (Margaret Hayward, *Diary of the Kirk Years*, Reed, Wellington, 1981, 107). Australia had actually recognised the PRC the previous day (21 December). Canada, another country on which New Zealand closely models its international activities and itself very influenced by US thinking – recognised the PRC on 13 October 1970.

1970s, the work of the Society changed dramatically. Accordingly, so did its representation of China. The 1970s saw a large increase in contact between the Society and China, as tours and delegations mushroomed. China was not only a socialist utopia. It was also a utopia that increasingly, even for people outside of the Society, allowed lessons and other features of China's revolution to be brought back with them to New Zealand. Yet by the end of the decade China's retreat from both the Cultural Revolution and what was to be presented as the radicalism of the Gang of Four meant a new construction of China.³⁹⁷ This was exaggerated by the CPNZ leadership rejecting China for Albania as its ideological centre and CPNZ cadre departing from the NZCFS.³⁹⁸ However, as a result of various resignations and expulsions from the CPNZ over the previous decade, including Vic Wilcox himself in 1978, some of the same people continued to 'support' China from a Marxist-Leninist ideological basis, albeit from alternative organisations than they had previously. The conflict between the new Marxist-Leninist formations and the CPNZ entered the Society's activities over this period.³⁹⁹

Formal recognition made the Society's activities much easier to carry out. While the last years of the 1960s had seen China's people-to-people activity slow, just as its state-to-state engagement had, the beginning of the 1970s saw an explosion of activity.⁴⁰⁰ Han Suyin toured New Zealand in 1970, speaking to large gatherings.⁴⁰¹ Her trip was widely covered by journalists and she even appeared on television. Despite her supposed 'independent' status as a journalist and writer her presentation was very much China's official perspective. It was also apparently very compelling.⁴⁰² Rewi Alley toured again in 1971, taking advantage of a renewed interest in China as a result of its entry to the United Nations and its rapprochement with the United States. This time, instead of the accusations of the past and its accompanied media blackouts, he was publicly

³⁹⁷ As Alley wrote to the Society in his note to the 1977 Conference, 'China in 1976 had a really tough year, losing so significant a proportion of her top leadership. The year ended, however, in a great victory for the people, in the unmasking of the counter-revolutionary 'gang of four' and their followers, so restoring to the people their revolutionary dynamism. They are pleased with the new leadership that has now emerged which now, step by step, proceeds to carry the struggle forward (Rewi Alley, 'Conference Greeting', *New Zealand China News*, May 1977, 1, NZCFS Archive).

³⁹⁸ Bill Willmott was born in pre-Liberation China. He came to New Zealand in 1973 from Canada where he had been active in the Canadian Friendship Society. An academic whose research looked at overseas Chinese communities in South East Asia he quickly got involved in the NZCFS through its local branch. Apart from a brief hiatus (1993-1995) he was National President from 1989 until retiring in 2002. He reported that over half of the Christchurch Branch committee was unavailable for re-election in 1978 as they had, not necessarily openly, been members of the CPNZ. The party was no longer interested in pursuing its united front politics through the Society (Bill Willmott, interview, Christchurch, 22 July 2004.).

³⁹⁹ This is discussed in more detail in chapter 4, which deals with the relationship of different New Zealand Marxist Leninist groups and their understanding of 'China'. For the entry of the CPNZ debates into the NZCFS see chapter 6.

⁴⁰⁰ The Cultural Revolution saw many embassies around the world closed from 1968 when criticism of Foreign Minister Chen Yi spread to suggestions that the diplomatic staff were out-of-touch with workers and peasants and that they should return to China to 'learn from the masses'. They would start re-opening from 1971. See Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*, Keegan Paul International, London, 1997.

⁴⁰¹ Han Suyin was a prolific Belgian-Chinese author (nine novels, ten autobiographical works, seven volumes of history). She travelled to the PRC almost every year from 1956, and remained on close terms with the top leadership for over fifty years. *Time Magazine* described her as 'a militant anti-imperialist [who] became an apologist for Mao' (see http://www.time.com/time/asia/2006/heroes/at_suyin.html).

⁴⁰² Jack Ewan in 2002, for example, still referred to the tours and said he 'preferred the understanding of the Tibet situation that Han Suyin had presented' to more contemporary representations (Ewan, interview).

feted and spoke to huge meetings up and down the country. The Hamilton branch of the NZCFS had just 50 members, yet 550 attended his public meeting there. Dunedin, with a membership of 35, also attracted 550 to hear him. This time the *NZ Listener* was fulsome in its praise:

Public Meetings in Wellington and Auckland have drawn nearly 2000 to hear him... with the knowledge that he speaks for China on the public platform, he holds an audience spellbound...⁴⁰³.

As a symbol of his and the embracing of China, Alley was awarded an Honorary Doctorate (D.Litt) from Victoria University of Wellington.

In 1971 New Zealand had its own example of 'ping-pong-diplomacy' when the New Zealand table tennis team went to Beijing and the Chinese team visited in return. Based on the notion of 'Friendship First, Competition Second' the team of Chinese world championship contenders played close games with the much more lowly-ranked New Zealanders. The New Zealand number one Dianne Foggerty even beat her highly rated Chinese opponent in front of Foggerty's Dunedin hometown crowd.⁴⁰⁴ As with the United States, the table tennis exchange was an indicator of much greater contact to come. In August 1971 a four-week study tour of China was organised by the New Zealand University Students' Association under the auspices of the NZCFS. On their return they filled the pages of student magazines and daily newspapers with laudatory reports of what they had seen. Although of varying political standpoints, they all spoke in favour of recognising the PRC.⁴⁰⁵

The Society's first study tour took place the next year, in 1972. Later that same year there were tours by doctors and academics that broadened the involvement to those outside the NZCFS, although they were led by senior members of the Society. These early tours were organised for groups that were recognised as being influential in New Zealand society and who it was hoped would be similarly entranced by what they saw during their visit. These tours followed many that other friendship societies had already been undertaking. Australians, for example, had been conducting similar tours since 1963.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Bruce Wallace, 'At Home in Worlds Apart', *New Zealand Listener*, 13 December 1971.

⁴⁰⁴ Ken Wilkinson, *Fifty Years Across the Table: A History of the New Zealand Table Tennis Association, 1934-1984*, New Zealand Table Tennis Association, Wellington, 1984. Wilkinson notes that Foggerty was easily dispatched by the same Chinese opponent in all their other games and puts down her victory in Dunedin to a Chinese effort to make a good impression.

⁴⁰⁵ New Zealand student engagement with China is explained in more detail in chapter 5.

⁴⁰⁶ It has been an oft-repeated claim that New Zealand has some special relationship with the PRC, which some put down to the influence of Rewi Alley. See for example Lindsay Watt, *New Zealand and China Towards 2000*, Institute of Policy Studies, Wellington, 1992, 17. Through the 1960s New Zealand and China were quite far apart. In the 1960s at the UN, including when it was on the Security Council in 1966, New Zealand promoted a 'two-China's' position, at the behest of the United States (much as Albania was putting up the resolutions on behalf of the PRC promoting the ousting of the Republic of China). Even the Communist Party links, until 1961-1963, were not as strong as Australia's.

While the tours were to become an increasingly important aspect of the Society's activities but its primary goal was still being pursued with vigour. In 1971 it produced a six-sided pamphlet: *New Zealand Should Recognise China: on the grounds of morality, realism and national interest*.⁴⁰⁷ Presciently, it contained much the same arguments that new Labour Prime Minister Norman Kirk would use eighteen months later when he announced that this had been achieved.

Recognition, when it came, seems to have been a surprise to the NZCFS. Just two weeks before it had issued a media release condemning the outgoing government's refusal to budge from its position and declaring that:

‘Taiwan’, that non-state, will continue to be ‘recognised’ as the government of all Chinese...Government policy, it seems, is to continue to pursue the sprat ‘Taiwan’ trade while ignoring the potentially much more promising prospect of trade with the Chinese People's Republic.⁴⁰⁸

If it came a surprise it certainly didn't slow the Society down in ensuring that ‘recognition’ meant what the Society and the Chinese expected it to. In the aftermath of Kirk's announcement, NZCFS President Roy Evans reported to the national executive that he and other officers had ‘contested every indication of a ‘two-China’ policy by way of letters to various MPs, the then Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition’.⁴⁰⁹ The fundamental belief of Society members – that there was only one ‘true’ China and that it was the People's Republic of China –meant that at the Annual General Meeting the year after recognition Evans reported ‘our most important [publication in 1973] was *Taiwan* by Rewi Alley’.⁴¹⁰ The pamphlet clearly articulated the PRC's position with respect to the last unclaimed province. That year more than 500 had been sold through newsagents and bookstores.⁴¹¹

Recognition did not lead to a change in the role of the Society. Evans cautioned against ‘[thinking] that our work is done. [It] is not so’. He went on to declare that it was interest in the politics of the PRC that set the NZCFS aside from groups such as the Netherlands Club or the Yugoslavia Society. ‘The striking difference between them and us is ... that these other groups

Whereas most of the central leadership of the CPA had trained in China in the 1950s, New Zealand's communists did not attend the Beijing-based party school. As detailed, New Zealand was very late, even amongst Western countries, to recognise the PRC.

⁴⁰⁷ *New Zealand Should Recognise China: On the Grounds of Morality, Realism and National Interest*, pamphlet, NZCFS, 1971, NZCFS Archive.

⁴⁰⁸ Media Release, ‘Recognise China!’, New Zealand China Society, December 1972, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archives. Jack Ewan said that he had heard the announcement on the radio while driving, so clearly had not been briefed in advance of the official statement.

⁴⁰⁹ Roy Evans, ‘National President's Report’, 1972 National Council papers, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁴¹⁰ Roy Evans, National President's Report, Biennial National Conference, NZCFS, June 1973, NZCFS Archives.

⁴¹¹ Jack Ewan, ‘National Secretary (Organisational) Report’, Biennial Conference, June 1973, NZCFS Archive.

steer completely clear of politics... while we steer clear of party politics, the politics of China are of vital importance to our Society'.⁴¹²

For Evans, and for many of the members of the Society, understanding the politics of China meant understanding the role and significance of the CPC and Mao Zedong. The China that the Society supported was the one that had embarked on the socialist project that would 'in its turn – build the new man' and in this project was a lesson for New Zealand. The source for such enthusiasm was what members of the Society saw with their own eyes – and what they knew about New Zealand:

...Those members of our Society who have visited China *know – they know* that this country of over 700 million people are enjoying a rapidly rising standard of living. They *know* that the Chinese have their priorities right. They also *know* that here in New Zealand we do not have our priorities right... under our private enterprise system... our priorities are completely haywire. *There is something to learn from China.*

Now 'recognition is a fact', Evans declared that the Society's new role was as a spokesperson for China:

The point is that the news media here does not give China's side of the case. That is where the China Society must step in. By making it our duty to help our own people to understand China's policy and reasons for policy, we will be accepting the new role for our Society.⁴¹³

Hone Tuwhare's trip to the PRC in 1973 reflected this political focus and the desire to 'tell China's side of the case'. It also reflected the CPNZ's position on revolutionary subjectivity. Tuwhare went to China as part of a 'Maori Workers' delegation' organised by the CPNZ and designed primarily to study 'the situation of the ethnic groups in that country'. Tuwhare had not been a member of the CPNZ since 1956 but for this trip he claimed 'anyone who was Maori, with a trade union sort of background' was invited. Yet he rejoined the CPNZ in order to be included in the delegation. He would be expelled in 1978, accused of being associated with former CPNZ General Secretary Vic Wilcox.⁴¹⁴

For Tuwhare and his fellow travellers, China's socialist project was essential for advancing the interests of 'national minorities'. The CPNZ's *People's Voice* introduced what the delegation would be seeing

⁴¹² Roy Evans, National President's Report, 1973.

⁴¹³ Roy Evans, National President's Report, 1973. Emphasis in the original.

⁴¹⁴ Tuwhare's expulsion was ultimately about support for China. He was close to Vic Wilcox, Jack Ewan, and Don Ross and left when they did. See chapter 5, 6 and, with respect to Alley contemporaneous expulsion from the CPNZ, chapter 7.

Under the old regime in China, the many minorities fared badly. Han chauvinism was fostered both under the Empire and the Kuomintang as a political weapon to keep the non-Han in subjection and to exploit them to the full. Only with Liberation did they come into their own and achieve full freedom and the right to settle their own affairs... the visiting Maoris should receive a vivid impression of the difference for minority peoples who once lived under a corrupt class system and now live in one where the socialist system insists on equal right for all.⁴¹⁵

For Tuwhare the trip 'had a profound and lasting effect'. He wrote four poems capturing his images and impressions, subscribed to *China Reconstructs* and joined the Dunedin Branch of the NZCFS. In 1978, when he saw that Guo Moruo had died, he wrote to the Chinese ambassador paying tribute to the 'proletarian fighter, eminent man of letters, Marxist historian, cultural worker and scholar'.⁴¹⁶

Accompanying Tuwhare to the PRC in 1973 were Ama Rauhihi, the Polynesian Panthers Minister of Culture and full time community worker, Tame Iti, then representing Maori protest group Nga Tamatoa, Willie Wilson, a timberworker and trade unionist and Timi Te Maipi, a miner and trade unionist from Huntley. The trip had a similar effect on each of them, in particular about what they had seen in China's implications for New Zealand. On his return from China, Willie Wilson gave an interview to *Salient*:

Before I went to China I never had this hard-line attitude. I thought that this society was a bit racist but not totally... After being to China and seeing how the minorities are treated, how they are permitted to organise and run their own affairs, I was convinced. . . Minorities in China today enjoy a far more fortunate existence than Maoris (sic) in NZ.⁴¹⁷

As in previous decades, propagating China's policies relied a great deal on Chinese sources. Felix Greene's film *China*, produced in the PRC, was shown to students at more than 100 schools.⁴¹⁸ The Society also distributed a sample of *China Reconstructs* to all secondary schools in the North Island and was delighted that 25% of them responded by taking out 1-3 year subscriptions.

⁴¹⁵ 'Maori visit China', *People's Voice*, 12 September 1973, 3.

⁴¹⁶ Janet Hunt, *Tuwhare*, Godwit, Auckland, 2000, 117-118.

⁴¹⁷ Willie Wilson interviewed by Roger Steele, 'The Liberation of Minorities', *Salient*, 8 July 1974, 4.

⁴¹⁸ Felix Greene was a British-American journalist. Born in England, Greene first visited China for the BBC in 1957. He later produced documentary films, including *One Man's China*, *China*, *Tibet*, *Cuba va!*, *Vietnam!Vietnam!* and *Inside North Viet Nam*.

The 1974 Seminar on China

The Society also produced its own material, designed to consolidate its position and to reflect the knowledge its members had gleaned from their special relationship with the PRC and the eye-witness experiences that this had allowed. On 30-31 March 1974 Joan Donley organised a two-day 'Seminar on China'. It featured speakers on trade, history, education, industry, literature, Rewi Alley, China's foreign policy, medicine and the situation facing women and children. Every speaker had been on a tour to China. The seminar, and the resulting publication of the speeches, represented an attempt to consolidate the impact of the tours of the early 1970s.⁴¹⁹

Trade in China, claimed Ron Howell, who had been trading with China since the mid-1950s, was 'based on the principle of equality and reciprocity'. Furthermore 'China is big and her trade is big'. He cited 1973 trade figures to back up this claim, pointing out that China's total trade was some US\$7 billion. While this seemed an impressive figure, this was around half New Zealand's total trade figures for the same year.⁴²⁰

Jim Wong, who had taught in China from 1960 to 1965, covered Chinese history. China was, Wong declared, 'a socialist country in the Marxist-Leninist sense' drawing a contrast to the 'revisionist' Soviet Union. In a reference to the recent campaign in China, he damned Confucius, pointing out that '[Confucius]' teachings had little relevance to the vast majority of ordinary peasants'. In comparison China's modern sage, Mao Zedong, was as one with 'the masses of the Chinese people'. Wong's recounting of modern China's revolutionary history was the same as that of the CPC, drawing links from the Taiping rebellion to 'Liberation' and resulting in the projection of a 100-year continuous revolutionary movement.⁴²¹

Gordon Chandler and Dick Winn had seen China on the 1973 Academic Tour. They spoke on the issue of education in the PRC. For Chandler, China was 'an enormous educational complex that didn't separate life from learning'. Winn had 'never seen such apparent total success in education'. On the success that had been achieved since the launch of the Cultural Revolution they were equally exuberant. Chandler explaining the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) was designed to 'bring the people back to a total commitment to socialism and to break away from traditional values [that] weren't relevant to China today'. Winn represented 'political education' as nothing more than 'education in morals' noting that it was much like the early teaching of the Christian church and that the outcome was, in marked contrast to some of the

⁴¹⁹ Joan Donley (ed.), *Seminar on China*, New Zealand-China Society, Auckland Branch, Auckland, 1974.

⁴²⁰ Ron Howell, 'Trade', *Seminar on China*, 2.

⁴²¹ Jim Wong, 'Background History of China', *Seminar on China*, 5.

stories coming out from China-watchers in Hong Kong, ‘no destruction, no vandalism, no mess’.⁴²²

Positive images of the Cultural Revolution dominated many of the reports. Rex Barry underlined the importance of the GPCR, and not just for China. For him:

The important thing [in industry]... was the continuing participation in ideological struggles such as the Cultural Revolution... If China should fail it would set back the revolution to free man from exploitation and the scourge of war.⁴²³

Dr W I Glass, a doctor, saw the Cultural Revolution was needed ‘because some people had forgotten that the whole basis of medicine was to serve the people’.⁴²⁴ Roy Hollis, introduced as a leading member of the CPNZ, presented the background to China’s foreign policy. It was based, he explained, on ‘proletarian internationalism’ and differed ‘radically from that of the Soviet Union’. Reflecting China’s realignment internationally, there was little reference to the United States.⁴²⁵

In the paper presented jointly by Kitty Hayward, who went to China on the NZUSA tour in 1971 and Jocelyn Logan, a feminist factory worker who’d been on the 1972 NZCFS tour, ‘women in China are no longer regarded as inferior to men’. China’s traditional Confucian hierarchy was going the same way as feudalism and capitalism. While things were not yet perfect ‘socialism gives the base that makes it possible to struggle for equality’.⁴²⁶

Each of the papers reflected a durable set of images and a coherent picture of China. All analyses are political, reflecting the Society’s belief that China ‘is about politics’ – and that those were not national politics but focussed on the ideological and political beliefs that were at the heart of the transformational project that the PRC represented to its friends in New Zealand: the search for the new person – a project based not such in China but of universal application.

Factional Disputes at Home and Abroad

Internecine squabbles in the CPNZ impacted on the Society through the 1970s. Early in 1975, National President Roy Evans had been expelled from the CPNZ along with his comrades from the South Auckland Branch (see next chapter for more details). He promptly attacked the Society as a ‘CPNZ front’, and was also vocally critical of other leaders of the Society, particularly those

⁴²² Gordon Chandler and Dick Winn, ‘Education’, *Seminar on China*, 9.

⁴²³ Rex Barry, ‘Industry’, *Seminar on China*, 13.

⁴²⁴ William Glass, ‘Health of People At Work in China’, *Seminar on China*, 16.

⁴²⁵ Rex Hollis, ‘Basis of China’s Foreign Policy’, *Seminar on China*, 33.

⁴²⁶ Kitty Hayward and Jocelyn Logan, ‘Women and Children’, *Seminar on China*, 48.

of the Auckland Branch, and in the CPNZ.⁴²⁷ The charge was rejected and he was suspended and forced to step down from his role in the Society.⁴²⁸ Later, similar fights between the NZCFS and the CPNZ over Chinese policies would become very important. When the Society, on incorporation in 1977, adopted a goal to ‘Oppose and correct any tendency to misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese government and people’ it cannot have known that the ‘misrepresentations’ would increasingly be made not from the anti-communists of yesteryear but from the CPNZ itself. The ‘Theory of the Three Worlds’ that Deng Xiaoping had spoken of at the United Nations in 1974 would become an issue in 1978. As would the CPC’s understanding of the nature of imperialism, the relationship of that understanding to the situation in New Zealand and therefore the application of a two-stage revolution. This had been a background issue for a number of years. China’s ‘reform and opening up’ policies would also emerge as contentious issues, as indeed would Mao’s contribution to Marxism, China and humanity.

In 1975 the important links between the CPNZ and the Society and how that reflected the political project of China was clear, although not uncomplicated. Joan Donley led the 1975 women’s tour. She wrote that while ‘we witnessed the progress for women’s liberation in China’ the most important part of the trip was that ‘Many, involved in women’s issues in New Zealand did, I think, grasp [the] essential point... that the struggle for socialism is basic. Without that, women’s liberation is merely a dream’. As a result of the tour she felt that, given the appropriate follow-up, ‘more women would be drawn into the Party and cadre development would be stimulated’. For her, the only organisation correctly applying the lessons from China was the CPNZ and the only way the women who had been exposed to such ideas could contribute to changing New Zealand towards socialism was by following that Party’s line. She notes in the report a concern that some of the women’s groups that the women would return to were in the hands of revisionists⁴²⁹ and Trotskyists and that ‘only the Christchurch women’s group’ was ‘open to following the line of the CPNZ’.⁴³⁰

For many members of the Society ‘China’ was where Mao’s revolutionary project was taking place. Understandably, news of the deaths of senior comrades Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Mao Zedong himself, all in 1976, provoked much sadness. A Mao exhibition was organised at the

⁴²⁷ These issues were canvassed at the Auckland Branch and National Council level. Evans was suspended from membership for a year, subject to him apologising to Ron Howell. He refused to do so. See Minutes of the Auckland Branch, New Zealand China Society, May and June 1975, and Minutes of the National Council, New Zealand China Society, May 1975, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁴²⁸ Subsequently, the Auckland Branch chose to nominate, instead of Evans, former President Ron Howell to be National President. Evans, his wife and daughter were involved in setting up a Waitamata Branch of the Society, in part so as to be able to re-nominate Evans for National President, but the new branch was rejected on procedural grounds (NZCS National Council Minutes, May 1974, and Auckland Branch Minutes, May and June 1974, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive).

⁴²⁹ Such as the former CPNZ group based in Wellington ‘under the leadership of Rona Bailey’, now calling itself the Marxist-Leninist Organisation (MLO).

⁴³⁰ Joan Donley, Report on Women’s Tour, November 1975, Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive.

Progressive Books store on Karangahape Road. Christchurch Branch President Bill Willmott wrote an editorial in the *NZ Listener* mourning Mao's death. He cited Mao's many contributions: supporting the underdog, fighting those who would restore privilege to China, and a 'genius as leader and philosopher'. He wrote 'The death of Mao Tse-tung is a loss, not only to the Chinese people who revere him, but also to all who believe that humanity will one day become human'.⁴³¹

The death of Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four would become a moment of critical rethinking in which questions about the truth in China would become critical. The positive image of China that had been built up in the early 1970s that the Society had had would quickly become associated with what would be called the 'Gang of Four dictatorship'. The rethinking would come later though, and is explored in chapter 6.

The 1976 Workers' Tour travelled to China after the death of Mao and during the factional struggles that led to the arrest of the Gang of Four. Those on this tour saw events quite differently from reports by those not engaged in a friendship relationship with the PRC. They declared that claims of 'unrest', 'chaos' and 'infighting' were 'completely at variance' with what the group 'witnessed first hand'. The group sided with those in China who had recognised and were fighting 'the bourgeoisie right inside the Communist Party' but expected victory:

The Chinese people will not allow a return to the miseries of the old society...lively optimism is the result of popular determination to... stride forward along the road indicated by Chairman Mao.⁴³²

This report epitomises the China and the NZCFS that existed in the middle of the 1970s. China in 1976 was about politics – and the Society saw its role to bring those politics and the political significance of the People's Republic of China and its revolution to New Zealanders. In 1976, the Society saw its role as explaining the PRC to New Zealanders and its members studied and went on 'study tours' in order to understand China better. This experience enabled them to claim that they were the experts who could then discuss it in depth. Those who led the Society presented themselves as having an expertise about China that stretched far beyond what they had seen themselves, drawing extensively on official Chinese-produced materials in doing so. A feature of the tours of the time was access to senior Chinese officials, giving further authority to China's friends' claims to expertise. Supporting China included protesting in New Zealand and fighting for positions that would assist the PRC. It was the official China that they had a connection with. To be friendly with the PRC meant supporting and agreeing with the choices that the Chinese leaders had made, and accepting that those leaders were acting in the interests of the Chinese masses.

⁴³¹ Bill Willmott, 'Mao Zedong 1893-1976', Guest Editorial, *New Zealand Listener*, September, 1976, 3.

⁴³² Don Franks, *What We Saw*, NZCFS (pamphlet), September 1976, NZCFS Archive.

Later in 1976 the political meaning of China was embodied in the debate over a visit by a softball team from the Republic of China (Taiwan). After unsuccessfully campaigning against the election of the National Government in the 1975 election, on the basis that National Party Leader Robert Muldoon wanted to re-establish links with Taiwan, there were many in the Society who attempted to continue to struggle against the new government. Although Muldoon himself visited China and seems to have become infatuated with Mao Zedong, there was still plenty of scope for political engagement.⁴³³ The NZCFS was mobilised 'in view of the importance of the Taiwan question and the equivocal position taken by the New Zealand government'. In 1976 it arranged for the printing of 1000 additional copies of Rewi Alley's 1972 publication *Taiwan*.⁴³⁴

When, in August 1976, a softball team from Taiwan came to New Zealand to compete in an international competition, the NZCFS objected, including having a number of meetings with government ministers. They also threatened public protest at the venue. They called the issue of an invitation to the team as 'interference in China's internal affairs'.⁴³⁵ In the build-up to the 1975 election it had accused the National Party of 'trying to re-establish its old "two China" policy'. It also claimed that incoming Prime Minister Muldoon 'did not understand the seriousness with which the Chinese Government views outside interference in its internal affairs'.⁴³⁶ Even Muldoon's subsequent visit to the PRC was discussed as Muldoon's joining with the 'dreadful anti-democratic company' of US President Nixon and the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos, albeit simultaneously 'proving the correctness of China's foreign policy'.⁴³⁷

This protest was not limited to the topic of China's reunification or defence of the one-China policy. For the NZCFS the issue was one that permitted it to project the perspective on current affairs held by the majority of its members into the domestic political sphere. They opposed the election of the Muldoon-led government and the tournament presented an opportunity that permitted ongoing campaigning. In addition, the communist groups who dominated the NZCFS had an interpretation of New Zealand as being a 'semi-colony' of the United States. For them the decisive feature of the immediate struggle for socialism was to break the link with imperialism. They had represented the decision by the Kirk government to recognise the PRC in 1972 as 'Nixon changes mind... New Zealand government follows'.⁴³⁸ Now, as the US vacillated over

⁴³³ Muldoon was the last overseas leader to meet Mao before the latter's death in September 1976. He travelled again to China in 1982 and when Li Peng visited New Zealand in 1986 Li paid a visit to the former Prime Minister, whose political party was in opposition and who was retired from politics.

⁴³⁴ Minutes of the New Zealand China Society National Council, August 1976, NZCFS Archive.

⁴³⁵ 'Media Release', New Zealand China Society, August 1976. Jack Ewan Papers. (1970s General). NZCFS Archive.

⁴³⁶ 'Media release', New Zealand China Society, May 1975. Jack Ewan Papers. (1970s General). NZCFS Archive.

⁴³⁷ 'Muldoon Visit to China', *New Zealand China News*, June 1976, 1-2. The 'correctness' referred to the separation of Party and State politics, that the fact Muldoon was Prime Minister was 'the responsibility of New Zealanders', and that Nixon 'being forced' to go to the PRC proved that the 'US isolationist policies' had failed.

⁴³⁸ 'Review of 1972', *New Zealand Communist Review*, March 1973, 4. Note that recognition was presented as a success of the PRC and a retreat by the United States. This suited the representation of New Zealand as subordinate to the US, itself consistent with an idea that as a country dominated by imperialism, New Zealand had to go through a 'two-stage' revolution similar to that of the PRC. See chapter 4 for more discussion of this.

converting the Nixon visit into formal recognition, the China question again took on international significance.

The NZCFS National Executive called upon members to protest at events involving the softballers. However, there was a split between the Society in general, and the Wellington Branch, which was located where the tournament would actually take place. To a large extent this was a manifestation of divisions between the branch in Wellington which was dominated by the Marxist Leninist Organisation (MLO) and the National Executive of the Society – especially the Auckland leadership, which was heavily influenced by the Communist Party of New Zealand.⁴³⁹

In this situation the National Executive of the NZCFS had called for public protest but the Wellington Branch said it believed that the softballers themselves should not be the target since ‘it is the New Zealand government which is the appropriate target for protest action’. In addition those in Wellington felt that the National Government had moved a long way from its pre-election position which had been seen as threatening to the ‘one-China’ position. Further, representing the MLO’s strength in the student and anti-racism movements, they weren’t sure that they would actually be able to mobilise large numbers for a protest against the Taiwanese team. ‘It is recognised,’ they observed, ‘that a large number of members will probably be involved in the anti-apartheid groups’ protest against the South African team.’⁴⁴⁰

The differences over strategy did not mean they did not support the line. The Wellington Branch organised a public meeting on ‘The Question of Taiwan’. At the meeting, the branch deputy chairperson Peter Franks gave an historical background to the relationship between Taiwan and the PRC and put ‘the Chinese Government’s position’. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was invited to outline the New Zealand government’s position. Franks’ presentation was subsequently produced as a leaflet and circulated to Society members nationwide.⁴⁴¹

China, then, was ‘political’ on a whole host of levels. It provided a political focus for activities by New Zealand political groups, who saw domestic value in a political engagement with the PRC. The political understanding of the PRC was seen as being explanatory of larger issues – in this case imperialism – so served wider political aims for people who saw themselves as political activists in New Zealand. Since the PRC was understood by its very nature to be a political entity, any discussion about the PRC permitted the exploration of political issues. Finally, a relationship with the PRC provided a locus for political differences between competing New Zealand-based political entities to be expressed, and for their common positions to be explored.

⁴³⁹ The Wellington Branch was led by Peter Franks, a leading cadre in the MLO. Other leading members were from the Wellington Branch of the CPNZ who had been expelled in 1972 but who hadn’t necessarily joined the MLO, such as Nancy Goddard and Alec Ostler.

⁴⁴⁰ Nancy Goddard and Petre Franks, ‘Statement on the visit of the Taiwan Softball Team’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 21 Jan 1976, Wellington Branch Papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁴⁴¹ Minutes of the National Council of the NZCS, 2 February 1976, NZCFS Archive.

However, with the death of Mao the image of China was to change, especially as with in the PRC there was an emergence of a critique of Mao's policies and a complete repudiation of the Cultural Revolution. This process, and how it unfolded is explored at the beginning of chapter 6, the second chapter of this thesis that focuses on the imaginary of China promoted by the NZCFS.

Conclusions

This Chapter has addressed three periods of people-to-people contact between China and New Zealand. The first of these corresponds mostly with a period of the PRC's 'opening up' between 1952 and 1957. It is dominated by ideas about 'peace' and 'culture', and sees relations enabled on a broad basis between the PRC and its New Zealand supporters. The second period begins around the end of the 1950s and runs until the high point of the Cultural Revolution in 1969. This period saw most contact between New Zealanders and the PRC, and certainly virtually all travel from New Zealand to Mainland China, being conducted through communist party interlocutors. The third period is around the recognition of the PRC by the New Zealand government. It sees a new broadening of the people able to be involved in the relationship, yet simultaneously an increased radicalisation of the image of China and an increased use of this image for their own domestic purposes by the PRC's allies in New Zealand.

In the early 1950s, the dominant idea of the relationship between China and the outside world, including New Zealand was that of the pursuit of 'peace'. China was represented as desiring peace, and the PRC's supporters were drawn from, or were also active in the peace movement. Rewi Alley was a 'peace worker'. The other members of the Society were trade unionists and communists, seeking to promote the alternative development model of socialism as represented by the PRC. The Society was formed out of these circumstances. China promoted itself through 'culture' in an effort to obtain diplomatic recognition and is looked at as a third world model. 'Liberation' was a vital marker of change, and Hong Kong was used as a symbol of colonialism, poverty and chaos to contrast with the image that visitors would see when they crossed the border at Shenzhen. Key events were the Korean War, the Hundred Flowers, Anti-Rightists, and Great Leap Forward that represented periods of widening and then tightening the range of people with whom the Chinese people-to-people organisations associated.

From the closing down of the united front policies with the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957) and the Great Leap Forward (1957-60) the PRC changed who it attracted, who it worked with and the image it presented of itself. The image presented by the PRC became increasingly utopian and as a model for the world, most strikingly through the people's communes and as a 'red-centre' representing orthodox Marxism-Leninism in contrast with a Soviet Union that was

regressing into 'revisionism'. The period saw the PRC isolated from the majority of the Communist bloc and looking for a broader range of state-to-state contacts. Rewi Alley's tours to New Zealand served the role of attempting to present an unthreatening image to the New Zealand public. However that public was increasingly outside of those who were able to travel to the PRC. That privilege was reserved for members of the CPNZ, a Party that developed very close links with the CPC, culminating with its General Secretary Vic Wilcox being one of the most famous foreigners in China. This became even more so during the early period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

The 1970s was dominated by the event of diplomatic recognition, which dramatically changed the way that the public saw the PRC but even more importantly corresponded with a massive opening up of opportunities to witness the PRC first hand. Alley was seen differently in New Zealand but continued to play an important role of moderating what China meant to New Zealanders, not least because all the Society tour parties that went to the PRC through the 1970s would have an audience with him. The tours to the PRC created a multiplicity of experts about China and increased difficulty in establishing hegemony over the images that they presented. An increasing number of people got to travel to the PRC and became involved with the NZCFS, being drawn from groups influential in New Zealand society but not necessarily reflecting the class basis of the past. For those dominating the Society, their political engagement with the PRC became an opportunity for serving political movements and goals in New Zealand. The death of Mao saw the Society seeking to explain that what it was that Mao had represented was continuing in the PRC. 1976 ended up being complicated as a succession of contradictory lines were each presented as advancing the revolutionary tradition of the past. The production of culture was itself used to promote the politics of PRC society, rather than as a tool to achieve some other goal.

Chapter 4: 'China' for New Zealand Communists.

Many people around the world have believed in an alternative vision for humanity based in Marxism. Some New Zealanders did so through their grouping within the Communist party of New Zealand (CPNZ) which, in 1963, became the only 'white' party in an advanced capitalist country to take and maintain an 'anti-Soviet' and 'pro-Chinese' position. Although, there were only ever small numbers of people involved in the CPNZ this does not make the debates that it participated in on China irrelevant. One could regard its decision to follow Mao as remarkable and, given the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, strangely prescient. Further, given the smallness of the New Zealand political and cultural world, such people had more influence than their absolute numbers might suggest.

The distinctiveness of the CPNZ's position had a number of causal factors. New Zealanders lived in relative civil peace in the 1950s and 1960s and had little chance of seizing power themselves in a revolutionary struggle, but they believed in a more humane world than the one they inhabited, were troubled by global inequalities and saw in Chinese socialism a unique solution to these problems. Leftist Pakeha New Zealanders of this era enjoyed the global benefits of whiteness, but were strongly sympathetic to movement for racial equality. The idea that China might be a proponent of a fairer international order in which small poor countries would have a voice was therefore an animating concern for New Zealanders on the left. This might also help to account for the apparent strangeness of the CPC and the CPNZ being seen as peer parties in the 1960s and CPNZ leader Vic Wilcox sharing a platform with Mao Zedong. Sincere New Zealand communists saw no incongruity because they took Maoist international rhetoric at face value.

In the main, Pakeha leftists did not see China as a cultural and racial other because they took seriously the idea of socialist solidarities being more important than other kinds of divides, such as nationalism. But equally, the importance of race politics in New Zealand meant that it was meaningful for them that the leading power in the global revolution was not located in the white-dominated developed world. In a New Zealand where there was involvement of Maori in all spheres of political life and with the great arrival of Maori and Pacific workers into Auckland and other cities in the 1960s, New Zealand communists were aware of the race and class political nexus in a way they might not have been in Sydney or Melbourne. In New Zealand in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Maoism seemed to have real power in the analysis of the local situation that they were in.

New Zealanders sympathetic to Marxism-Leninism and to the espoused project of China's leaders since 1949 have understood 'China' as, variously: a location of revolution; the site of a project in building socialism that could (or could not) be generalised from; a benefactor to the movement in New Zealand; an ideological centre; the source of correct interpretations of

Marxism-Leninism; and a resource or textbook for lessons on building the revolution and/or socialism in New Zealand. At the same time, 'China', for others, has meant the geographical entity: the People's Republic of China (PRC) with all the encoding included in those words; a location of a particularly Chinese socialist project; the base of the Communist Party of China (CPC); the home of Mao Zedong; the home of Mao Zedong Thought; and the home of Maoism.

The investigation of these images of China is necessarily linked both to the history of communism in New Zealand and to international developments, particularly those of which China has been at the centre. To a large extent the inner-party disputes in the communist movement in New Zealand, which have led to the formulation of new organisations and groupings, has reflected and been concurrent with, the international inter-party debate so the decision as to which groups to look at has been largely self-selecting.

The Origins and Development of the CPNZ

The history of what 'China' has represented for the small but, at times influential, communist movement in New Zealand is one naturally fraught by particularity and perspective. No one who has had any contact with Marxist debate would be surprised to hear that there has been division over what constitutes the correct line for New Zealand's own trajectory towards socialism and over how other countries' revolutions or projects to build socialism should be interpreted. To some extent the debates, if not the conclusions, have been mirrored throughout the world, specifically amongst those movements who profess a 'national' road to socialism. Yet New Zealand's communist movement has also had particularities that are all its own.

Differences and divisions among Marxist-Leninists in New Zealand have, for the most part, emerged because of differences in how they saw New Zealand and accordingly their understanding of the correct path towards revolution. In this respect, observers who characterise disputes such as the Sino-Soviet split manifesting itself around the world through the creation of 'pro-China' and 'pro-Soviet' groups do a disservice to those engaged in the debates, who saw themselves as debating the issues which led to the CPC and the CPSU disagreeing, rather than following any other group's decisions (see below). However, since they often themselves represented the parties or formations with different opinions as slavish followers of the rival camp it must have proved confusing for observers not au fait with the Marxist-Leninist tradition (as most commentators tended to be).⁴⁴² Yet, such is the nature of the universality and

⁴⁴² The leading texts on this issue for forty years both characterised the internationalisation of the dispute in this way. See William Griffiths, *The Sino-Soviet Rift, Analysed and Documented by William E. Griffiths*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 1964 and Donald Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1962. To a lesser extent, although he does look at the relationship to the Labour Party, so too did Bert Roth writing on the impact of the split on the New Zealand party, Herbert Roth, 'Moscow, Peking and N.Z. Communists', *Politics*, IV, 2, Nov. 1969, 168-185).

particularities of the Marxist-Leninist project, that which is contained within each particular understanding about New Zealand, contingent and specific as it may be, is necessarily a representation about the People's Republic of China.

In keeping with the rest of this thesis, the focus here is on pro-China images – how and why they have been formed and how they have changed over time – amongst communist parties and communist organisations in New Zealand. 'China' has different meanings, even when those meanings are all intended as positive ones, and the formulation of a hegemonic understanding of 'China' and the discourse around what it should constitute has been a contested one.

Although there were groups and individuals outside the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ), from its formation in 1921 until 1966, when the Socialist Unity Party (SUP) was formed, they were small and insignificant. Therefore, from the formation of the PRC until the launch of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), the CPNZ is the sole focus of this study. Of particular interest was the development of its line on the Sino-Soviet split, whereby the CPNZ became the only party in the western world to follow China and the Chinese leader Mao Zedong in criticising Khrushchev and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as 'revisionist'.

The SUP in the 1960s and 70s had little to say about China until the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in the late 1980s.⁴⁴³ Of more relevance was a split from the CPNZ shortly after the formation of the SUP. It was over the GPCR, with a group calling itself the 'Revolutionary Committee of the CPNZ' claiming that it was more in accord with China's programme than the CPNZ itself. Through the 1970s a number of rival groups to the CPNZ were formed. To a large extent these grew from those who had been expelled from the CPNZ around this time but who did not see themselves as no longer being Marxist-Leninists simply because they were outside of the Party. These groups often had, or gradually developed, alternative representations of the PRC and the CPC in accordance with their local and organisational differences.

Beginning in 1978, and through 1979, although it was not a smooth process, the CPNZ came to reject the current trajectory of the socialist project in the PRC, the leadership of the CPC and the Theory of the Three Worlds. It was engaged in sharp dialogue with rival groups who took up the mantle of pro-PRC activities in New Zealand. The positions that groups took reflected a number of different trajectories with respect to representations of the PRC, with some using Mao (or Mao Zedong Thought) to attack the current leadership, others seeking to defend the Chinese

⁴⁴³ This is more interesting because the CPSU was highly critical of the CPC through this period. Although the CPNZ regarded the SUP as 'the Soviet Union Party' (see Ron Smith, *Working Class Son*, R.J. Smith, Wellington, 2002, 137), the Soviet criticisms of the PRC did not make their way into the SUP's literature, in part because the SUP's claim to legitimacy in New Zealand was that it was in tune with New Zealand's workers' needs and not being driven by ultra-leftism coming out of China. Monique Oomen wrote the main focus of the SUP was 'the Party was seen as a means of achieving trade union objectives'. See Monique Ooman, 'The Socialist Unity Party of New Zealand: a study of the incentives, ideology and organisation of a small communist party, MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1981, 58.

revolution against the ‘capitalist roaders’ now leading the CPC, and others supporting the programme of socialist modernisation and the CPC leadership unconditionally. After rejecting China, the CPNZ was aligned to the Albanian Party of Labour (PLA), in 1994, it gave up even its name and become what its critics were increasingly accusing it, by adopting a Trotskyite programme.⁴⁴⁴

Apart from these groups there were a number of others sympathetic to one of the possible Chinas identified above. Specifically there were the representations of China made by the Struggle group, the Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand, the groups that merged to become the Workers’ Communist League (WCL), and the Red Flag Group. Struggle and the Preparatory Committee merged, and become the Organisation for Marxist Unity. Its publication (*Struggle*) continues. In the late 1980s the WCL disbanded, in 1991 the Red Flag Group stopped functioning. In 1993, coincident to the CPNZ liquidating itself, a new formation – to some extent carrying on the tradition of a number of these groups – the Communist Party of Aotearoa (CPA), would be formed. The CPA began with a statement placing its own history in relation to these other formations and in doing so claiming a relationship to these previous ideas about the PRC and about Mao Zedong. The CPA embraced ‘Marxism-Leninism-Maoism’.⁴⁴⁵

The CPNZ’s history began when eighteen delegates from Marxist study circles around the country met in Wellington over Easter 1921 and voted to form the Party and to affiliate to the Communist International. Small though the party was in size and influence, it faced constant opposition. A number of communists were arrested and jailed in the 1920s under the War Regulations Continuance Act, which prohibited printing or import of ‘seditious’ documents. In 1924 the Labour Party expelled six Communist Party members and in 1925 resolved that the CPNZ would not be allowed to affiliate. Unlike the Communist Party of Australia the CPNZ was always engaged in an antagonistic relationship with the social democrats in the Labour Party.⁴⁴⁶

In addition to its relationship to the Labour Party, another factor significant in the future decisions the CPNZ would make was a long tradition of ultra-leftism.⁴⁴⁷ In 1929 most of the party members working in the mining industry left, after the Central Committee ordered them to try to push for an export ban on coal in solidarity with striking miners in Australia. This was far

⁴⁴⁴ The CPNZ became the New Zealand branch of the Socialist Worker Organisation. See Communist Party of Aotearoa, ‘History of the Communist Party’, *Red Flag*, 1, 1, 1993, 4 for the criticism.

⁴⁴⁵ Communist Party of Aotearoa, ‘History’, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Kerry Taylor, ‘Workers’ Vanguard or People’s Voice?: the communist party of New Zealand from origins to 1946’, PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994, 85-86.

⁴⁴⁷ Lisa Sackson describes this as a ‘peculiarity on behalf of the CPNZ’ of ‘the pure, and puritanical, appeal of siding with the more left’ of any two positions on offer. See Lisa Sackson, ‘Expressions of Resistance: Communist Organisations in Aotearoa/New Zealand from the 1960s to the 1990s’, New Historians Conference, 1-2 September 2006, online at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/history/degrees/phd/New%20Historians%20Conference.pdf>.

beyond the level of understanding of the rank and file union members. In 1931 the Central Committee opposed the Seamen's Union's placing of a ban on a low-wage Japanese ship. Instead, they unrealistically called for a general strike on the waterfront to achieve equal rates. This turned the Seamen's leader into a bitter enemy of the party.⁴⁴⁸

An assessment from the Communist International in 1933 summed up the party's shortcomings:

Up to the present, the practice of the Party shows that the Party chiefly limits its activity to a small circle of Communists and, standing apart from the struggle of the workers, criticises the reformists from afar.⁴⁴⁹

While the party failed to maintain a foothold in the basic industries, the rapid growth of unemployment in the early 1930s gave the party a renewed chance to exercise effective mass leadership. The CPNZ, through the Unemployed Workers' Movement, organised relief workers' strikes, marches, demonstrations and deputations. Weak though the Party was, the Liberal government saw them as a major threat to their programme of wage cuts and labour camps for the unemployed. So fierce were the attacks on the Party that there were few months when one of its leaders was not in jail. In 1933 the whole Central Committee was jailed for six months. Yet the party grew strongly. In 1933 the monthly *Red Worker* became the *Workers' Weekly*. By 1935 sales had risen to 7000 and party membership to 350.⁴⁵⁰

According to the 1993 'History' of Communism written by the Communist party of Aotearoa, the Party's success simply renewed its 'left-opportunist' tendencies. The Party contested the 1935 General Election with the slogan: 'Neither Reaction nor Labour', urging workers to cast invalid ballots labelled 'Communist' where no party candidates were standing. They were swept aside by a landslide for what most workers saw as a real socialist party. Electoral support collapsed, paper sales halved and a third of the party's membership quit. The CPNZ reversed its policy in favour of a united front against fascism and recognised 'that under present conditions the Labour Government represents a blow against the forces of reaction'.⁴⁵¹

Outside the electoral arena the Party threw itself into mass work against fascism. In 1936 they organised material aid for the Spanish Republic against the fascists and sent members, like Alex McClure and Tom Spiller, to join the International Brigades. In 1937 the Party organised a boycott of Japanese goods following Japan's invasion of China.⁴⁵² Here was the first representation of China: as a victim of Japanese aggression. An understanding of the revolution led by the Communist Party of China would not come until later, despite the existence of a

⁴⁴⁸ Graeme Hunt, *Black Prince: the biography of Finton Patrick Walsh*, Penguin, Auckland, 2004, 101-104.

⁴⁴⁹ Taylor, 'Workers' Vanguard', 100.

⁴⁵⁰ Taylor, 'Workers' Vanguard', 120.

⁴⁵¹ Communist Party of Aotearoa, 'History', 4.

⁴⁵² This was principally through the Movement Against War and Fascism. Note that Kerry Taylor believes that the Party was not as successful in this regard as other commentators have claimed. See Taylor, 'Workers' Vanguard', 144-145.

number of New Zealanders in China, such as Rewi Alley and Shirley Barton, who were associated with the CPC.

In September 1939, the CPNZ came out in support of the Communist International's line that the war between the British-French alliance and Germany was an imperialist war to be opposed. This was not a popular analysis in the climate of the time, but support continued to grow. On 30 May 1940 the party's weekly, now called the *People's Voice*, was declared illegal, the editor imprisoned, and the party press smashed with sledgehammers and confiscated.⁴⁵³

In 1941, when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, the character of the war changed to an all-out struggle between fascism and democracy and the party mobilised behind the war effort. *In Print*, edited by the poet RAK Mason, emerged as the unofficial paper, with circulation climbing to 14,000, while party membership rocketed to 2,000 by the end of the war.⁴⁵⁴ *In Print* finally covered the Chinese revolution in May of 1945. Information for this was not sourced from the New Zealanders in China but came via the British Communist Party writer Arthur Clegg. His article 'China's Saviours' noted the struggle of the CPC's armies against the Japanese, identified them as the 'main' contributors to tying up Japanese troops and declared that despite this they got no aid from the Nationalist Government, Britain or the United States.⁴⁵⁵

For the CPNZ, forming as it did in the period immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution and developing into a significant party during the war years, the prestige of the Soviet Union was great indeed. The success of the five year plans in transforming Russia into a modern nation, and then the exploits of the Red Army during World War II was followed very closely in New Zealand. The CPNZ saw the 'imperialists' as seeking to create the political conditions to launch a full-scale war against the Soviet Union. It pointed to various factors including McCarthyism in America, massive aid to Chiang Kai-shek, interference in Italian and French elections, the murder of Patrice Lumumba, among others. It saw the main problem in the world as imperialism and the Soviet Union as the bulwark against it. These years also saw the triumph of the revolution in China, embracing a fifth of the human race. The PRC was represented as an addition to the Soviet Union-led communist bloc, thus tipping the balance of power worldwide.⁴⁵⁶

Ironically, given what would happen later, the CPNZ publications in the early 1950s carry very little content about China. That would change though with death of Stalin in 1953 and the subsequent denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev in 1956. This denunciation laid the foundation for the Sino-Soviet split, in which the small CPNZ would be an enthusiastic participant.

⁴⁵³ Flora Gould, interview, Auckland, 9 July 2002. In addition to the closing the Party's press, Taylor cites Justice Department figures for 1940 that recorded 59 charges of subversion, of which 45 brought convictions, 'most frequently against communists' (Taylor, 'Workers' Vanguard', 156).

⁴⁵⁴ Rachel Barrowman, *Mason: the life of RAK Mason*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2002, 282. See also Bert Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook of International Communist Affairs*, Hoover Press, Stanford, 1965, 339.

⁴⁵⁵ Arthur Clegg, 'China's Saviours', *In Print*, May 1945, 23.

⁴⁵⁶ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 123.

The Sino-Soviet Split

In 1956, following Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin, argument raged in the CPNZ on Stalinism and on the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and democratic centralism. Sid Scott and others on the right of the Party resigned over these issues.⁴⁵⁷ The beginning of ideological debate originated at this time, although not over the same issues as the Scott faction split. Steve Hieatt was on the National Committee and spoke of the 'division of the world into two camps: opportunism and the revolutionary wing'. There was, however, no rush to judgement: 'it took a long time for our Party to analyse the issues, a matter of months if not years'.⁴⁵⁸ Flora Gould, who was on the Political Committee at this time, agreed. She said that by 1963 the Party's position had been developed 'over a long time at the National and Political Committee level'.⁴⁵⁹

The issue was debated in ideological terms at the CPNZ's National Conference held at Easter 1960. However, the CPNZ's national leadership had supported China-type views even earlier than this. The *New Zealand Labour Review* (NZLR) in February-March 1957 was full of anti-revisionist material, which closely followed the launching of the 'great polemic' by the CPC. The articles included a reprint from the *Peking Review*: 'A Chinese Appraisal of Stalin' and 'Strategy and the Main Blow' (against capitalism and the Labour Party) written by CPNZ leader Alex Ostler. The CPC was represented in these articles as reflecting an orthodox Marxist position. The next month, in its report in the NZLR of April 1957 on the 64-Party Declaration of 1957, the CPNZ Political Committee closely paralleled the Chinese party's position.⁴⁶⁰

For New Zealand's communists these views were classical Marxism-Leninism: the change from capitalism to socialism is necessarily a revolutionary change; whether or not the transformation is peaceful or not in any country depends on the historical conditions there and ultimately on the ruling class; peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist countries is a state of intense international class struggle where the socialist countries and the people of the world are hopefully strong enough to prevent the imperialist powers from starting war; the danger of war exists as long as imperialism lasts; there is a world crisis of social democracy as Labour parties strive to make capitalism work and save it from socialist revolution.

Accompanying Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, the CPSU promoted the 'three peacefuls', which ideologically constituted the Sino-Soviet split. These were: peaceful coexistence with US imperialism, peaceful competition between the capitalist and socialist camps, and a peaceful transition to socialism. From 1957 to 1963 the CPSU and CPC fought each other ideologically through a proxy war of words by criticising Albania and Yugoslavia respectively. In 1963 the

⁴⁵⁷ Roth, 'Moscow, Peking', 176. See also Sid Scott, *Rebel in a wrong cause*. S.W.Scott, Auckland, 1960, 104.

⁴⁵⁸ Steve Hieatt, interview, Auckland, 10 July 2002.

⁴⁵⁹ Gould, interview.

⁴⁶⁰ '64-Party Declaration', *New Zealand Labour Review*, May 1957, 7.

Chinese issued *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*. It was followed by a series of other documents setting out its differences with the Soviet party.⁴⁶¹

These polemics by the CPC with the CPSU leaders addressed other issues as well, such as the abrupt withdrawal of thousands of Soviet experts from China in 1960, and the support to India in its war with China in 1962. The Chinese understood these as attempts to make China toe the Soviet line. For the CPNZ it was also in these years that the Soviet Union started to consolidate relations within the Soviet camp, positioning itself as the economic centre while Eastern Europe and other countries would serve as the periphery, with 'limited sovereignty'. There was a sense that the CPSU was no longer committed to the values of revolutionary equality.⁴⁶²

Because its line reflected the CPNZ's experiences, the CPC began to replace the CPSU as the party whose analysis the CPNZ would closely follow. The CPNZ's history with respect to its relationship to social democracy and the Labour Party, its understanding of imperialism and its experiences at the hands of the state – under both Labour and Liberal governments – confirmed its understanding of orthodox Marxism-Leninism against what it would label as Soviet 'revisionism'.⁴⁶³ There is no doubt that there were peculiar New Zealand factors too. The CPNZ's independent streak and sense that the CPSU was trying to push it around, compared with a belief that the CPC was treating it as a fraternal and equal party were also significant.⁴⁶⁴

The enormous losses and destruction of lives and property in the all-too-recent World War II had confirmed for party members the nature of imperialism. The delay in opening the second front, the British involvement in the civil war in Greece, the US assistance to Chiang Kaishek from 1945 to 1949 - for the CPNZ these activities all confirmed the nature of imperialism. The wars in Malaysia and Korea further identified for it the real face of imperialist powers.⁴⁶⁵ For the CPNZ, the 'revisionist line' of the CPSU was advocating a collaborative approach to imperialism. For them, the CPC upheld the orthodox Communist position.

Most communist parties probably had little contact with the Chinese party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had always been regarded as the centre or vanguard party, or even as a party with virtual directive powers over all of the others. For the CPNZ the ideological dispute was a challenge to this, and an assertion of the independence and equality of each separate Party. Some proof of the independence of the CPNZ was in Jack Manson's activity at the 1962 Romanian Party Conference, where he refused to go along with the attacks on China and

⁴⁶¹ Communist Party Of China, *Seven Letters Exchanged between the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1964.

⁴⁶² Smith, *Working Class Son*, 124.

⁴⁶³ Don Ross, interview, Whangarei, 17 April 2003.

⁴⁶⁴ Ron Smith refers to these issues. See Smith, *Working Class Son*, 122.

⁴⁶⁵ Ross, interview.

Albania, despite enormous pressure. 'This was because it went against everything that we'd learnt about how parties should relate to each other'.⁴⁶⁶

But the developing drift away from adherence to the Soviet line had another influence too. The CPNZ got to be very close to the Chinese party not just by the independent adoption of a similar Marxist line:

New Zealand, considering her tiny size, had an exceptional number of close links with the Chinese revolution. Foremost among these, of course, was Rewi Alley. Robyn Hyde, James Bertram and Christian missionary Kathleen Hall were others. In the postwar period, more links developed: CORSO aid, the Bailie school, the sending of New Zealand sheep to China, the many individuals and delegations visiting there.⁴⁶⁷

Ron Smith's experience was typical of the members of the CPNZ:

I [had] read a whole series of books on the Chinese Revolution - Agnes Smedley, Anna Louise Strong, James Bertram, Edger Snow, Epstein, *The Scalpel and the Sword* about Dr Norman Bethune, the Canadian doctor in China's revolution, accounts of the epic victories of the People's Liberation Army in 1948 and 1949, and reports of the mass movements on land reform and water conservation. Moreover, though I strongly backed the historic achievements of the USSR and its resistance to western imperialism, I was, of course, greatly perturbed as Stalin's crimes were revealed.⁴⁶⁸

The more interaction that took place, the greater was the respect that the CPNZ leadership developed for what they saw as the CPC's efforts to adhere to Marxism, and correspondingly the less regard for the CPSU's line of peaceful transition, and what they saw as its under-estimation of imperialism.⁴⁶⁹ To this general background of New Zealand contacts with the Chinese revolution was added the extraordinary relationship of Vic Wilcox with the Chinese leadership. At the 81-Party Conference in Moscow in 1960, he talked with the Chinese delegation despite attempts by the Russians to prevent this, and he sided with them in the debate. On his way home from the meeting he stopped over in Beijing and attacked the Soviet Party in a speech there. Soon after, in 1961, he had the first of nine visits to China, meeting four times with Mao Zedong, six times with Zhou Enlai, and four times with Deng Xiaoping.⁴⁷⁰

Wilcox's trip in 1961 was as a member of a CPNZ delegation in part of investigate the CPC position on the dispute.⁴⁷¹ Even before he went some aspects of the Sino-Soviet conflict were well known. However, its scale in terms of the breakdown of the relationship between the two

⁴⁶⁶ Hieatt, interview.

⁴⁶⁷ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 123.

⁴⁶⁸ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 123-124.

⁴⁶⁹ Ross, interview.

⁴⁷⁰ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 123.

⁴⁷¹ Gould, interview. She accompanied the delegation as its secretary.

states was not really known publicly until November 1962, when the Soviet Union started making public attacks on China and Albania at congresses of European communist parties. Significantly, the Wellington district conferences of the Party in 1960, 1961 and 1962 had no references to the Sino-Soviet dispute in their reports or their discussions. Ron Smith reported that 'The extent of the differences the issue generated inside the New Zealand party did not become clear to me until the national leadership started the pre-conference discussion at the beginning of 1963'.⁴⁷² Yet Vic Wilcox's report to the National Conference in 1960 had included the following passage:

how correct is the Chinese Party when it points out that the world Communist Parties should have no silly illusions about easy roads to socialism... Looseness in considering some formulations arising from the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union on this question did not aid our work.⁴⁷³

Also at that Conference, social democratic leaning CPNZ president George Jackson, who would later leave the Party for the Soviet-aligned Socialist Unity Party, was replaced as president by Merv Williams. This change grew out of the ideological dispute that was working its way through the Party leadership.⁴⁷⁴

Alongside the particular features of the New Zealand situation are important ideological questions, especially that related to the question of social-democracy. While some International Relations observers saw the Sino-Soviet dispute as one of inter-State conflict the parties involved were sure that the struggle was ideological. This was also true for the CPNZ who never saw its own position as one of supporting either the Soviet Union line or the Chinese line, it was simply a process of establishing an independent line on the world communist differences. The CPNZ's ability to see the dispute as completely ideological and see itself as 'independent' from the non-ideological features that others were seeing as being involved may have reflected a particular privilege that the Party had. Limited in its power and geographically distant from most of the places that the debate was playing itself out that CPNZ could treat the debate as - simply an ideological one.

It was not, however, the case that this ideological position simply 'fell from the sky'. In New Zealand, 1946-60 was a period of full employment with wartime shortages being gradually overcome. Yet there was a climate of intensifying Cold War and red-baiting. The government had smashed the most militant unions (Carpenters in 1948 - under the Labour Government, Watersiders in 1951). The Party was faced with telephone bugging and infiltration by police agents, and feared the possibility of being made illegal.

⁴⁷² Smith, *Working Class Son*, 134.

⁴⁷³ Vic Wilcox, 'National Conference Report', *New Zealand Communist Review*, May 1960, 12-13.

⁴⁷⁴ According to Steve Heatt, 'The replacement of Jackson by Williams was part of a process of consolidating the revolutionary leadership of the Party' (Heatt, interview).

The consolidation of the Party's position on social democracy had become far earlier. The CPNZ, like most Communist Parties, saw the beginning of WWII as a war between British and German imperialists and accordingly opposed New Zealand's involvement (they would later support New Zealand's involvement in an anti-fascist united front after the invasion of the Soviet Union). New Zealand had a Labour government during these 1939-41 years, yet it seemed to them to behave just like the right-wing parties around the world (Menzies in Australia, Churchill in Britain) and employ the full force of the state against those opposed to the war.

The most obvious formal sanction was arrest and imprisonment. Kerry Taylor cites Justice Department figures for 1940 that recorded 59 charges of subversion, of these 45 brought convictions, most frequently against communists. On 30 May 1940 police entered the *People's Voice* printery in Auckland just as the next issue was coming off the press. They proceeded to dismantle and then break up the printing machinery, literally smashing it with sledgehammers. In addition to this there were a number of cases of violence against CPNZ activists.⁴⁷⁵

On a subjective level, it must have been virtually impossible for the leading figures in the CPNZ, who had been personally victimised by the Labour Government in power, to stomach the 'united front' line being promoted out of Moscow after 1956. More objectively, as they liked to see themselves, the actions confirmed the reactionary nature of 'social fascism'. Merv Williams, CPNZ President, wrote in 1962 of these pre-united front years that: 'New Zealand social democracy showed itself a faithful handmaiden of Capitalism. The state machinery was used against those who showed by their activity that they were opposed'.⁴⁷⁶

Taylor's thesis shows that the relationship between the CPNZ and the Labour Party had never been close. When he cites the CPNZ as adopting a 'sectarian' anti-Labour Party line in 1928 he wrote:

The relationship between the Labour Party and the CPNZ, which had been problematic since the mid-1920s, continued to deteriorate ... it was a reflection of the Labour Party's move towards a less militant centrist political platform. The 1927 Labour Party Conference abandoned the long held policy of the nationalisation of land [the Labour Party of Great Britain still had this clause until the 1990s. This change by Labour provided space for an unequivocal party of the left more sharply distinct from the Labour Party. The CPNZ saw this as an opening and ... they began to more sharply attack the Labour Party.⁴⁷⁷

In the immediate run-up to the decision by the CPNZ, from 1957-1960, there had been a Labour Government in office in New Zealand. This 'reality' of social democratic rule reminded

⁴⁷⁵ Taylor, *Worker's Vanguard?*, 155-6.

⁴⁷⁶ Merv Williams, 'Social Democracy in New Zealand', *New Zealand Labour Review*, January 1962, 3.

⁴⁷⁷ Taylor, *Worker's Vanguard?*, 101.

Communist Party members just what that means for the working-class interests the CPNZ was seeking to advance. For them, this period saw the Labour Government exposed as a lackey of the US internationally. The 'storm centres' of the world were erupting in anti-colonial struggle, and the period was an exciting time for anti-imperialists. Yet for them it was very clear whose side the Labour Party was on with respect to these anti-colonial struggles.

Harry Schwartz observed that the varying alignments of Communist Parties in Eastern Europe towards the Sino-Soviet dispute can each be explained by considering the tactical needs of each Party in the light of the local political scene.⁴⁷⁸ The most plausible theory to account for the behaviour of the CPNZ is one that emerges from a consideration of the tactical or strategic situation. The CPNZ was small. In such a situation, their overriding consideration was to preserve a separate Party identity - to avoid being absorbed by Labour. This was accepted as the key to the dispute by both 'lines' within the CPNZ. As SUP founder Bill Anderson said, 'For me the final straw was when the Chinese delegate [to the 1963 General Conference] said to [Vic] Wilcox, "I see you are standing candidates against the Labour Party. That is good"'.⁴⁷⁹ Yet Alex Galbraith had put the position for the majority within the Party in the *New Zealand Labour Review* as far back as 1959.

When comrades express themselves against the Party standing candidates at the General Elections, it means that they are striving to adapt Communism to the Labour Party. They may not be conscious of this, but that is fundamentally what it means. It would have this result if followed to its entirety - the ideological collapse of the Communist Party and an accession of strength to the purely reformist Labour Party. This means a strengthening and consolidation of capitalism, for the Labour Party is a bulwark of capitalism against the working class.⁴⁸⁰

The key then to rejection of the 'revisionist' line can be seen in the climax to the CPNZ's 1963 discussion document that confirmed its commitment to Maoism: its discussion of social democracy, and in the expanded and published report that followed the conference. The CPSU's overemphasis on peaceful transition 'is lulling revolutionary enthusiasm and is leading to acceptance old social democratic ideas in our own ranks';⁴⁸¹ Krushchev's concept of peaceful coexistence 'opens many loopholes for social democratic revisionism to enter';⁴⁸² 'Yugoslav revisionist theory fundamentally goes right back.. .to social democracy'.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁸ Harry Schwartz, 'The Sino-Soviet Split in Europe', *New York Times, international edition*, 12 May 1964, 3.

⁴⁷⁹ Bill Anderson, Interview, Auckland, 26 June, 2002.

⁴⁸⁰ Alex Galbraith, 'We Must Stand', *NZLR*, July 1959., 15.

⁴⁸¹ Vic Wilcox, 'Report to the Closed Session of the National Conference of the Communist Party of New Zealand: On the International Ideological Differences', CPNZ, April 1963, 6, Bill McAra Archives, University of Auckland.

⁴⁸² Wilcox, Report, 13

⁴⁸³ Vic Wilcox, *New Zealand Party's Firm Stand*, CPNZ, 1964, 45.

The New Zealand Party had developed a very clear line with regard to social democracy. This drew from the CPNZ's long conflict with the Labour Party, its small size and therefore real threat of being swallowed if it had pursued a 'united front' approach, and longstanding Marxist-Leninist analysis on the role of 'revisionism'. In the end, regardless of how anything else had played itself out, the CPNZ was always going to be committed to standing in opposition to the Labour Party. In the circumstances, that had it standing with China.

The Sino-Soviet Dispute Comes to New Zealand

In his report to the 1963 CPNZ National Conference, Wilcox wrote that he saw the Soviet party as dictating to all other parties. The CPSU was pushing a line that the great example of the Soviet Union, rather than the activities of the masses, would win the people to socialism, and that peaceful transition to socialism was not only desirable but possible and inevitable. It was fostering the idea of peaceful imperialism, and of making 'grave mistakes' affecting the struggle for peace, like putting nuclear weapons into Cuba, and signing the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which legitimised the nuclear weapons of the Big Powers. The CPSU also implied that the Bomb changed the basic Marxist views on the social causes of war - that modern war grows out of imperialism. It was spreading 'a lie' that the CPC wanted socialism through a nuclear war. It was downplaying colonial liberation revolutions saying these are useless against the imperialists and their weapons and was blurring the fact that Social Democratic Parties are capitalist parties. Wilcox's conclusion was that 'the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is basically in a revisionist position'.⁴⁸⁴

For the CPNZ, 'China' meant the CPC and it was to be defended: it was increasingly represented as reflecting Marxist-Leninist 'orthodoxy' against the CPSU's 'revisionism'. Yet at the 1963 CPNZ conference there were differences around this position. Two delegates condemned Russia's stand-over tactics and state measures but said it was unwise to use the label 'revisionist'. For them China represented a freedom to take an independent line, but not necessarily the truth of that line. George Goddard thought the criticisms of the Soviet Party were too much ideological and not enough on their actions, like arming India against China. He defended the Chinese state but not necessarily the line.⁴⁸⁵

His report consequently adopted, Vic Wilcox and the Maoist leadership of the CPNZ stepped up their anti-revisionist stance.⁴⁸⁶ A delegation went to Beijing for May Day. Vic Wilcox was Mao's

⁴⁸⁴ The key part of the 1963 conference was its closed session. Vic Wilcox's report to this was not duplicated and only the main headings were distributed publicly. A full transcript of the report was only made available to Party members in August 1964 (Smith, *Working Class Son*, 134).

⁴⁸⁵ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 135.

⁴⁸⁶ According to Ron Smith, who was there, the report was finally endorsed by 39 votes to 6 (Smith, *Working Class Son*, 136). Bert Roth, who wasn't present, reported the vote as 44 to 6 (Roth, 'Moscow, Peking', 173).

guest in Beijing for a week, where he signed a joint statement with him and gave an address to the Higher Party School, both strongly critical of the Soviet line. The New Zealand party opposed and helped to foil the Soviet party's attempt to organise a world conference of communist parties. It backed the Chinese delegates on the World Peace Council in refusing to pay tribute to President Kennedy after his assassination. In November it lauded the revolutionary lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁸⁷

Vic Wilcox later authored a 3,000 word pamphlet, *The New Zealand Party's Firm Stand*, setting out the issues. To the CPNZ, the Soviet Union was increasingly regarded as an actual enemy, with the use of terms like 'Soviet Imperialism', 'a new form of state capitalism' and 'a new bourgeois class' to refer to CPSU.⁴⁸⁸ They also started to resurrect Stalin.⁴⁸⁹ Yet Bill Anderson and George Jackson, who sat on the National Committee, continued to get support from many trade union members for a pro-CPSU position. The Dunedin branch opposed the party line and was expelled. A section of the Christchurch Party resigned. Finally, in January 1966, the Auckland pro-CPSU faction resigned and with the others who had left formed a new party, the Socialist Unity Party.⁴⁹⁰

In 1968 the CPNZ felt justified in its opposition to the Soviet Union when Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia, ending the so-called 'Prague Spring', and it staged protests outside the Soviet Embassy. Later that year its national conference included only foreign delegates and letters of solidarity from parties that shared its line on 'Soviet revisionism'.⁴⁹¹ By doing so it was the first party in the world to take the 'line struggle' in the world communist movement into the organisation of its own national conference.⁴⁹²

When examining why 'other Parties got it wrong', the CPNZ would point to their ideological or political dependence on the Soviet party, developed over some years, and the practice of the CPSU in expecting unquestioning agreement with its line.

It expected subordination of others to its baton. Instead of putting the thinking cap on, and really sweating to examine the international class struggle, the subjective and objective conditions faced by parties prevented this. It was far easier to rely upon the

⁴⁸⁷ Smith, *Working Class Son*, 136.

⁴⁸⁸ Vic Wilcox, *New Zealand Party's Firm Stand*, In Print, Auckland, 1964. It was also printed for international distribution by the Chinese as Vic Wilcox, *New Zealand Party's Firm Stand: world Communist differences*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965.

⁴⁸⁹ Ray Nunes, 'Life Substantiating Stalin's 'Theses on Inter-Imperialist Contradictions'', *New Zealand Communist Review*, January-February 1965, 2.

⁴⁹⁰ This is detailed by Bert Roth. See Roth, 'Moscow, Peking', 182. See also Smith, *Working Class Son*, 135-137.

⁴⁹¹ The Communist Party of China (CPC), the Albanian Party of Labour (PLA), The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) and the organisation which had broken away from the Communist Party of Australia under the leadership of Ted Hill and was calling itself the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) (CPA(ML)).

⁴⁹² Note that the Socialist Unity Party invited only pro-CPSU parties to its founding conference. Roth suggests that those attending were funded by the CPSU, although he is not critical of this. See Roth, 'Moscow, Peking', 183.

reports of the CPSU for their lead. This easy way out does not help the training of members, who can think, investigate and study. When a crisis comes, they get 'lost'.⁴⁹³

In contrast to the subordination it claimed was expected of pro-Soviet parties, (and it would claim was the position of the SUP), members of the CPNZ saw their lining up with the CPC not as support for the Chinese party, but rather as an ideological unity around a common understanding on the world situation and an application of Marxism-Leninism to that understanding. As Wilcox wrote, "There is no such thing as "Chinese Communism". The mighty Communist Party of China is basing its programme of building a socialist China on Marxism-Leninism".⁴⁹⁴ However, following the massacre of communists in Indonesia in 1965, the CPNZ decided to create a secret parallel organisation within the party. Inner-party democracy was suspended. There were no conferences and no elections. The procedures by which a common understanding on ideological questions could be pursued became increasingly difficult to carry out.⁴⁹⁵ For the CPA, looking back in 1993, it would be this practice that ultimately tore the Party apart, 'With an increasingly isolated leadership, party positions became increasingly erratic'.⁴⁹⁶

China became more than a fraternal party in the struggle against revisionism. The CPNZ gained international attention because of its status in the dispute with the Soviet Union and a privileged standing amongst the pro-CPC parties.⁴⁹⁷ The CPC purchased thousands of copies of the *People's Voice* and *Communist Review*, more than were sold in New Zealand, and thereby provided financial support to the small New Zealand party.⁴⁹⁸ The CPC's line on everything was followed very closely with articles such as 'Why It Is Vital To Study Mao Tse-tung'.⁴⁹⁹ As the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution unfolded the CPNZ seemed even to replace its understanding of the situation in New Zealand with that existing, or purported to exist, in China.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹³ Ross, interview.

⁴⁹⁴ Vic Wilcox, 'The Soviet Union the World Crisis and New Zealand', *New Zealand Communist Review*, May 1964, 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Don Ross regarded this as a 'leftist error' that would ultimately lead to an ultra-left takeover of the party around the embracing of Hoxha's criticisms of Mao in the late 1970s. He contrasted the lack of discussion around this issue, due to the secrecy structures, with the full and open debate around 'Soviet revisionism' in the early 1960s. Ross, interview.

⁴⁹⁶ Communist Party of Aotearoa, 'History', 4.

⁴⁹⁷ For example, Vic Wilcox shared the rostrum with Mao Zedong on the PRC's National Day in 1964. According to Jan McLeod, who lived in Beijing 1964-67, when CPNZ cadre visited China they always got to meet leaders of the CPC (Jan McLeod, interview, 2009). See also 'NZrs (sic) meet Mao and Lin', *People's Voice*, 3 May 1967, 8 and Valerie Bloom, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, Hoover Press, Stanford, 1972, 562. The CPC publications also gave credit to the CPNZ's stand. See 'NZ Article Drawn to Notice of World's Revolutionaries, NCNS [Xinhua] quotes "NZCR"', *People's Voice*, 24 June 1970, 3.

⁴⁹⁸ The exact details were a closely guarded secret but knowledgeable insiders agree that around 15,000 copies of the *People's Voice* were purchased each week for sale in the PRC. Sales in New Zealand at this time were around 2000 per week (Herbert Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 1974, 517). Students in the 1970s Study NZUSA Tours reported seeing it on sale and that those English-speaking Chinese they met were familiar with the paper and 'knew of Vic Wilcox, who they thought was an important person in New Zealand' (Richard Sharpe, interview, 15 November 2003).

⁴⁹⁹ 'Why It Is Vital To Study Mao Tse-tung', *People's Voice*, 13 August 1969, 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Vic Wilcox's reports to the CPC of the political situation in New Zealand included a map of New Zealand with red flags in it, identifying sites of 'red activity' and 'liberated zones' where the CPNZ exercised limited state power. (Robert Reid, interview, Wellington, 2006).

In the late 1960s, in place of political work with miners, factory workers and on the waterfront, the leadership extolled anything 'youth' engaged in, from anti-war demonstrations to trivial issues, like the 'liberation of Albert Park'. Trade union officials and trade union work was denounced as 'bureaucratic'. In 1969 the party effectively denounced the whole Seaman's Union, perhaps New Zealand's most class-conscious, as sell-outs. In the early 1970s the *People's Voice* featured ultra-left headlines such as 'We ARE in revolutionary times HERE' and 'WHY BEG FOR WAGE INCREASES? Workers have the strength to seize what they want'.⁵⁰¹

There were splits under the impact of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as the CPNZ tried to respond to the rapidly changing situation in China.⁵⁰² First, in 1968, a tiny group in Auckland was expelled for opposing participation in parliamentary elections and trade unions. They continued to operate under the name 'the Revolutionary Committee of the CPNZ'. These were local representations of the CPC's position that 'revolution is the main trend' and placed China's interpretation about the world ahead of what even a highly subjective interpretation of the situation in New Zealand would have revealed.⁵⁰³

In 1972 the CPNZ refused to take part in the elections because

with revolution the main trend in the world today, with struggle for both immediate gains and revolutionary policy growing every day in New Zealand, it is apparent that all our forces must be used to strengthen these developments outside the parliamentary circus.⁵⁰⁴

Any suggestion that the Labour Party was better than the governing National Party was 'a step towards revisionism'. The CPNZ together with the Progressive Youth Movement, anarchists, and other militant groups promoted a 'Radical Election Campaign' – or REC (pronounced

⁵⁰¹ 'We ARE in revolutionary times HERE', *People's Voice*, 28 April 1971, 7.

⁵⁰² Writing of these splits, Bert Roth identified these as being as a result of 'attempting to carry out the GPCR in NZ' (Herbert Roth, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 1969, 628).

⁵⁰³ Note the similarity to what Nick Knight identifies in his analysis of the CPA(ML). The 'pro-Mao Tse-tung Thought' Australian party, he says, 'failed' because of its 'call for armed struggle... in the context of a society... which has comparatively little history of political violence' and 'the willingness of [the party] to change course as the political line in China altered made its nationalistic appeals for an independent Australia sound increasingly hollow' (Nick Knight, 'The Theory and Tactics of the Communist Party of Australia (M-L)', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 28, 2, 1998, 233).

⁵⁰⁴ 'Revolution Main Trend in World Today', and 'CP Will Not Stand Candidates for 1972 Election', *People's Voice*, 1 March 1972, 1. In the second of these articles, Wilcox referred to the decision not to stand candidates being influenced by discussions on the issue he had with Mao Zedong. See also 'National Report', *New Zealand Communist Review*, 1972, 1. This was a complete reversal of the position in 1966. At that time, the proposal to stand candidates *against* the Labour Party in the 1966 New Zealand general election had been 'the final straw' that led to the formation of the SUP (Bill Anderson, interview, Auckland, 2005). These vacillations in position were also a problem for other movements seeking to interpret events in the PRC. This is detailed in Max Elbaum's history of the 'New Left' movements in the United States (Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, Verso, New York, 2002, 111-144). Malaysians trying to do similarly say that they found it harder, 'because [they] could read Chinese' and did not have the benefit of delays caused by the need to translate documents. Such delays, for non-Chinese readers, tended to mean some of the wild swings in line could be ignored, as the original position was restored, whereas the Chinese reading followers had to change their position twice, 'from A to B and then back to A again' (Tian Chua, interview, Kuala Lumpur, 26-27 October 2005).

‘wreck’) – with the object of disrupting political meetings. Their main slogan was ‘Parliament is a fraud, elections are a farce’.⁵⁰⁵

The CPNZ and its associated Progressive Youth Movement gave uncritical support to China and Albania.⁵⁰⁶ From 1970, the expelled Wellington District of the CPNZ also supported Chinese policies, and its members worked in the Wellington Branch of the NZCFS, whose national leadership in Auckland was closely linked with the CPNZ.⁵⁰⁷ According to Bert Roth’s annual survey of communist groups in New Zealand, when Rewi Alley visited his homeland in October 1971 there was speculation that he had been sent to evaluate the rival communist groups, but he unhesitatingly supported the Wilcox leadership, and commended the part it had played in the inner-party struggle.⁵⁰⁸

However as the 1970s went on, CPNZ publications began to give an increasing amount of space to material from Albania. Reporting after his return from the congress of Albanian trade unions as a CPNZ delegate in May 1972, B. J. Holmes mentioned that that he had sat next to a delegate from Ceylon ‘where thousands of young people were slaughtered by savage state forces’.⁵⁰⁹ The Chinese government had supported these ‘savage state forces’ and some commentators claimed to have seen signs of a growing estrangement between the CPNZ and China, and realignment towards Albania, because of alleged dissatisfaction with Mao’s rapprochement with the United States.⁵¹⁰

Yet in May Day greetings from the CPNZ to both China and Albania, the Communist Party of China was described as ‘the proletarian headquarters of the world’s revolutionary peoples’, and Mao as ‘the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our times’, providing ‘inspiration and guidance’ to New Zealand.⁵¹¹ The CPNZ welcomed US President Nixon’s visit to Beijing.⁵¹² When Ted Hill, of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist Leninist), visited Auckland in August for discussions with the CPNZ, both parties ‘welcomed the growing development towards revolutionary struggle on both sides of the Tasman and stressed this can only be successful with the Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse-tung revolutionary line and activity’.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁵ ‘Build Struggle Outside the Circus of Parliament: why the Communist Party will stand no candidates’, *People’s Voice* 30 August 1972, 1.

⁵⁰⁶ The Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) in Auckland was dominated by the CPNZ. This wasn’t true of other areas: the Wellington PYM was close to non-CPNZ Marxist-Leninist parties, the Christchurch PYM was mostly anarchist in orientation. See Toby Boreman, ‘The New Left in New Zealand’, in Pat Moloney & Kerry Taylor (eds.), *On the Left: Essays on the History of Socialism in New Zealand*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2002, 198.

⁵⁰⁷ Most obviously through Roy Evans and Jack Ewan, National President and National Secretary respectively.

⁵⁰⁸ Bert Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook of International Communist Affairs*, Hoover Press, Stanford, 1973, 530. This is repeated in Anne-Marie Brady, *Friend of China: the Myth of Rewi Alley*, Routledge, New York, 2002, 94. See though the discussion in chapter 7.

⁵⁰⁹ Basil Holmes, ‘Which Class Holds State Power is the Central Question in Politics: Report on Albanian Trade Union Congress’, *People’s Voice*, 7 June 1972, 3.

⁵¹⁰ Herbert Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1973, 530.

⁵¹¹ ‘CPNZ Sends May Day Greetings’, *People’s Voice*, 26 April 1972, 2.

⁵¹² Robert Friend, ‘Why Some Feared Nixon Visit’, *People’s Voice*, 15 March 1972, 8.

⁵¹³ ‘Australian Leader Holds Talks in NZ’, *People’s Voice*, 30 August 1972, 1.

The close adherence to what seemed to it to be the appropriate way to follow the Chinese line meant the CPNZ sometimes stood in opposition to seemingly progressive mass movements in New Zealand. When a widespread protest movement developed against French nuclear testing at Mururoa, the New Zealand Federation of Labour, in conjunction with Australian and Fijian trade unions, imposed a boycott of French aircraft, shipping, trade, and communications for the duration of the tests. The SUP, which wielded influence in the trade unions, gave its full support to the protests, while the CPNZ and the Wellington Marxist-Leninists denounced them as a manoeuvre inspired by the two super-powers whose main objective was “laying the ground for objections to testing and developing nuclear capability by the People’s Republic of China”.⁵¹⁴

The major international development of 1973 followed the December 1972 decision by the Labour government to recognise the People’s Republic of China. The exchange of ambassadors was followed by a stream of delegations, official and non-official, in both directions. The CPNZ could have expected to profit from this new-found interest in things Chinese, but it had to face the rivalry of the Wellington Marxist-Leninist Group, which dominated the Wellington branch of the NZCFS and influenced the composition of the official New Zealand university students’ delegation to China. Nevertheless, the Chinese leaders did not waver from their recognition of the CPNZ. Wilcox visited China in March together with Ron Wolf. They were guests of honour at a banquet put on by Zhou Enlai and other leaders. On the day before Zhou met the official mission of the New Zealand government.⁵¹⁵ China had become an opportunity for reflected glory. Being close to China meant something locally and there was a contest for this status.

Differences began to emerge in the way that the CPNZ saw New Zealand and these differences were at the heart of the matter for the party. In 1966 the CPNZ had confirmed its support for the Chinese position with respect to the ideological dispute with the CPSU. It also described New Zealand as a semi-colony and the anti-imperialist struggle as the first stage in the fight for a socialist revolution. This policy relied upon analysis of the ownership of the means of production in New Zealand. The CPNZ concluded that the vast majority of big businesses were foreign owned, and this ownership was moving from British to American institutions.⁵¹⁶

Yet in 1968 Ray Nunes, a leading figure in the Party, wrote an article in the New Zealand Communist Review (NZCR), the theoretical journal of the CPNZ,⁵¹⁷ in which he described New Zealand as ‘fully capitalist’ and stated that the task facing the working class was therefore ‘accomplishing the socialist revolution directly, not through an intermediate stage of a bourgeois or national democratic revolution’.⁵¹⁸ This ideological struggle between a one-stage or a two-stage revolution can be seen to be at the heart of some of the splits, expulsions and divisions that

⁵¹⁴ ‘Protests Misguided’, *The Paper*, August, 1973, 1.

⁵¹⁵ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1974, 534.

⁵¹⁶ William McAra, *Laws of the New Zealand Revolution*, Waihi, 1980, 66.

⁵¹⁷ Ray Nunes, ‘N.Z.’s place is Among the “Cities” Not the “Countryside”’, *New Zealand Communist Review*, May 1968, 6.

⁵¹⁸ McAra, *NZ Revolution*, 65.

occurred during these years. At the centre of this debate was the nature of New Zealand society, yet the lines of the debate each contain images of China within them.

In March 1974 the CPNZ announced the expulsion of Bill McAra, for a long time the foremost figure in the CPNZ next to Wilcox. The charges brought against him were ‘big-shotism, intrigues, self-interest, and refusal to practice democratic centralism’. However it was clear later that it was a result of a political difference over whether New Zealand is a junior imperialist partner of Britain and the United States, or whether it is itself a ‘neo-colony of imperialism’ (as maintained by McAra).⁵¹⁹ For Bert Roth, long-time observer and commentator of communism in New Zealand, this question would dominate not just the party’s internal debates but also its relations with other parties with which it had formerly had close relations:

On this question of imperialism the current policy of the CPNZ was at odds with that of its nearest ideological partner, the CPA (ML). In 1973 inner-party distribution of material that had been provided by the CPA (ML) was restricted by the CPNZ.⁵²⁰

In October 1976 the CPNZ announced the expulsion of another of its leading members, Steve Hieatt, who had been a member for more than 35 years and had served on the National and Political Committees. Hieatt was denounced as a ‘capitalist roader’ and a ‘revisionist’ as well as an informer for the Security Intelligence Service.⁵²¹ Hieatt and the party members who left with him formed the South Auckland Marxist-Leninist Group. They continued to support the CPC and claimed to have no political differences with the CPNZ.

The Theory of the Three Worlds

In his first appearance at the United Nations in April 1974, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping had drawn world-wide attention with his speech differentiating the three political forces in international politics. The subsequently famous ‘Three Worlds’ theory, though accredited to Mao Zedong by the Chinese leaders, was first most clearly presented by Deng in this UN speech.⁵²² The concept postulated that the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union,

⁵¹⁹ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1975, 393.

⁵²⁰ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1975, 394. Note that the CPA(ML) had sent material to the CPNZ that it wanted circulated to CPNZ members and that this was restricted by resolution of the CPNZ Standing Committee. It is most likely that this intervention by the CPA(ML) was at the behest of Wilcox and related to a dispute that he was engaged in with other members of the Standing Committee. The dispute would ultimately result in Wilcox being expelled from the CPNZ whereupon the CPA(ML) would again intervene in CPNZ internal politics, on the side of Wilcox, this time with a contribution from the CPC as well.

⁵²¹ ‘Party Strengthened By Removal of Revisionist’, *People’s Voice*, 4 October 1976, 2.

⁵²² Deng’s speech was made on 9 April 1974 at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly. Deng was the Chair of the Chinese delegation. The full text of his speech was published in a Supplement to *Peking Review*, No. 3, 12 April 1974. The Chinese leadership asserted that it was Mao who first formulated the Three Worlds Theory in his talk with the leader of a Third World country in February 1974. The unidentified leader is generally understood and most likely to have been Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, who had an interview with Mao on the afternoon of 22 February 1974.

constituted the First World; the developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions together formed the Third World; and the developed countries between the two made up the Second World.⁵²³ China belonged to the Third World. This view of 'the present situation in the world' subsequently became standard rhetoric in China's foreign policy statements. On 1 November 1977 the newspaper *Renmin Ribao* published a lengthy document entitled 'Chairman Mao's theory of the differentiation of the Three Worlds is a major contribution to Marxism-Leninism' and vowed to uphold Mao's revolutionary line in foreign policy.⁵²⁴ The document reaffirmed Mao's Theory of the Three Worlds as first articulated by Deng three-and-a-half years earlier and stressed in particular the strategic dimension of the concept.

Although the theory had its genesis with Mao, Deng's version had considerable differences. The question of authorship was to have significant ramifications later. Chinese claims that the Theory had originated with Mao did not convince all China watchers, especially as China's foreign policy seemed to drift away from support for revolution.⁵²⁵ The obtuse claims to its origin, for example not naming the person to whom it was first introduced, didn't help.⁵²⁶ When *Renmin Ribao* first used the title 'Mao Zedong's Theory' they made a claim as to Mao's authorship but did not provide clarity. This came when the 'whateverists' were in power meant that anything anyone wanted to do needed a claim as to it having been authored by Mao.⁵²⁷ Hua Guofeng's own authority depended on his claim to carrying Mao's mantle and his proclamations almost invariably contained a reference to them being in accordance with Mao's instructions.

Central to the Theory of the Three Worlds concept was the united front strategy. The CPC, under Mao in the 1940s, persevered in a political line of 'developing the progressive forces, winning over the middle forces, and isolating the diehard forces'. The anti-Chiang Kai-shek united front constituted workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. The last

⁵²³ The Socialist countries in Europe were not identified as being in any category at this stage. Later, the 'proletariat' of the socialist countries and the 'oppressed peoples' of the developing countries were said to belong to the Third World (see Editorial Department of *Renmin Ribao*, *Chairman Mao's theory of the differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1977).

⁵²⁴ *Renmin Ribao* devoted the whole issue (six pages) of 1 November 1977 to the document, unprecedented in China's foreign policy statements. The English version of it was published in *Peking Review*, 45, 4 November 1977, 1.

⁵²⁵ The Albanian Party of Labour had this position, so too the CPNZ after 1980. See also Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 213-214.

⁵²⁶ In Communist Party of China material it is obliquely 'an African leader'.

⁵²⁷ 'The Two Whatevers' refers to the statement that 'We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave'. This was contained in a joint editorial, entitled 'Study the Documents Well and Grasp the Key Link', printed on February 7, 1977 in *Renmin Ribao*, *Hongqi* and *Jiefangjun Bao*. This was a policy of then Communist Party of China chairman Hua Guofeng, Mao's successor, who had earlier ended the Cultural Revolution and arrested the Gang of Four. However, this policy proved unpopular with other party leaders advocating market reform, such as Deng Xiaoping, and led eventually to Hua being ousted from the party leadership in 1980. The coalition of Hua's political supporters, bearing the name of 'the whatever faction', also lost power: Wang Dongxing, Ji Dengkui, Wu De, and Chen Xilian ('the little Gang of Four') were relieved of all party and state posts during the 5th Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPC, 23-29 February 1980. See Henry Yuhuai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People's Republic of China*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2001, 240 and Spence, 1991, 676.

two categories, although intended to be liquidated after the civil war, were regarded by Mao as essential elements of the coalition front.⁵²⁸

Mao's division of China's social and political forces in his united front strategy was first applied to the international situation in his conversation with American correspondent Anna Louise Strong in 1946. Mao stated that United States 'reactionaries' were striving to dominate the world but that their world was halted by the Soviet Union, the 'progressive' socialist state and a 'defender of world peace'. The United States and the Soviet Union were separated by a vast zone which included many capitalist, colonial and semicolonial countries in Europe, Africa and Asia – including China. Before the United States had subjugated these 'middle zone' countries, Mao stressed, an attack on the Soviet Union was out of the question.⁵²⁹ Eighteen years later, Mao modified his view of the world order. Then he divided the middle forces into two categories: a first middle zone, comprising the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and a second middle zone made up of the developed countries from Western Europe plus Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.⁵³⁰ Mao's two-middle zone concept was the forerunner of the Theory of the Three Worlds, the first middle zone became the Third World, the second middle zone became the Second World, and the two contending superpowers the First World.

By 1974 the Soviet Union was being labelled as a 'social imperialist' state and had replaced the United States as the main threat to world peace. The essence of the Theory of the Three Worlds was now to unite the 'progressive' Third World states, to win over the 'middle' Second World and to isolate the two 'reactionary' superpowers. By identifying China as a member of the Third World that formed the strategic base of the united front, the CPC had assigned itself a leadership role in the forefront of 'defence' against superpower expansion. The Chinese leaders differentiated the world's political forces to meet the PRC's strategic requirements of the time, and these in turn were determined by Chinese perception and analysis of the overall situation in the global system. In essence, the Theory of the Three Worlds was a dynamic concept which could be modified and adapted to new situations by changing or shifting the composition of political forces in the 'three worlds'.⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ For a detailed account of the origin and evolution of Mao's united front strategy see J.D. Armstrong, *Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine*, University of California Press, San Francisco, 1977). See also 'The Question of Independence and Initiative Within the United Front', 5 November 1938, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, II, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1975, 213.

⁵²⁹ 'Talk with the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong', August 1946, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, IV, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1975, 97.

⁵³⁰ *Long Live Mao Zedong's Thought*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1969, 514. This publication was released during the Cultural Revolution and was made available outside of China via Taiwan. It is generally regarded as authentic by China scholars (see for example Stuart Shram, 'Mao Zedong: A Self-Portrait', *China Quarterly*, 57, Jan/March 1974, 156-65. On 21 January 1964 *Renmin Ribao* published an editorial dividing the intermediate zone into two zones, similar to that postulated by Mao six months later.

⁵³¹ The Chinese identified the Soviet Union as the expanding superpower and as it was the latest to enter the contest for world hegemony it was the most aggressive and the most dangerous. Under Deng the theory necessitated alliances against the Soviet Union that could, and did, involve China forming diplomatic relationships with not only the United States but also regimes such as the military junta in Chile.

Herbert S. Yee identified three phases of development since the theory's inception in 1974: first, asserting Mao's revolutionary line in foreign policy; second, uniting all anti-Soviet forces including the United States; and third, emphasising a self-reliance strategy. Roughly the first phase lasted from 1974 to 1978, the second began in late 1978 and endured for slightly more than one year, and the third phase began to take shape in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵³²

In his 1974 UN speech, Deng Xiaoping declared that 'history develops in struggle, and the world advances amidst turbulence... Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution – this is the irresistible trend of history'. The Chinese leaders maintained through the rest of the decade that the PRC, being a communist state, would support 'the revolutionary struggles of the communist parties of all countries'.⁵³³ China also repeatedly pointed out, however, that revolution could not be exported and that all communist parties were independent and should make their own decisions. This 'revolutionary' basis was then reaffirmed as the official policy line in the 1977 publication on the Three Worlds.

The change of government following the election defeat of the Labour Party in November 1975 brought a sharp turn to the right in New Zealand politics. Muldoon proclaimed the USSR the main external threat to New Zealand, and the SUP the major enemy within. With China, on the other hand, the new government was anxious to establish friendly relations, so the New Zealand Prime Minister visited the PRC and praised Mao Zedong. The CPNZ no doubt found it embarrassing that Hua Guofeng urged the New Zealand Prime Minister to maintain the military alliance with the United States and Australia, but in line with Chinese policy, the CPNZ regarded the USSR not just as a country where capitalism has been restored but as an imperialist power – moreover, the 'major world imperialism' and the 'major threat of world war'.⁵³⁴ In New Zealand, on the other hand, the party believes 'whilst capitalism remains – an irreversible trend towards fascism with little or no possible return to bourgeois democracy'.⁵³⁵ The CPNZ maintained its unquestioning support for the Chinese leadership, sent messages of congratulations and condolence when appropriate, and denounced the 'vile crimes' of both Deng Xiaoping and the Gang of Four.

Vic Wilcox was removed from all posts of responsibility in March 1977. This demotion was kept secret even from party members as the National Committee hoped to 'solve the contradiction in a nonantagonistic manner'.⁵³⁶ The decision was however, communicated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Rumours filtered back through visitors to China,

⁵³² Herbert Yee, 'The Three Worlds Theory and post-Mao China's global strategy, *International Affairs*, 59, 2, 1983, 242-244.

⁵³³ Hua Guofeng's Political Report to the 11th National Congress on 18 August 1977. Cited in Yee, 'Three Worlds Theory', 242.

⁵³⁴ 'National Conference Report', *New Zealand Communist Review*, April 1976, 3.

⁵³⁵ 'The Corporate State', *New Zealand Communist Review*, November 1976, 23.

⁵³⁶ 'CP Strengthened by removal of a small group of splitters', *People's Voice*, June 12 1978, p.1.

but the first hard news to those outside the central leadership of the party was an article entitled 'Unite all Marxist-Leninists in Oceania', which appeared on 2 March 1978 in *Vanguard*, the organ of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). It stressed that support for Mao's theory differentiating the three worlds was the touchstone of true Marxist-Leninists and denounced 'all those who in the name of communism oppose the revolutionary essence of communism, either by silence, attempted suppression of comrades like comrade Wilcox, lies, slanders, intrigues and conspiracies'.⁵³⁷ In reply the CPNZ claimed that Wilcox was 'not suppressed' but 'under criticism' over questions of principle 'dating back over several years' and totally unconnected with the Three Worlds Theory. As regards the latter, the party would resolve its attitude 'in its own time'.⁵³⁸

On 7 April *Peking Review* reprinted excerpts from the *Vanguard* article, a clear sign that it had Chinese approval.⁵³⁹ The CPNZ cabled a protest to Peking, which was ignored, and another *Vanguard* article commenting on New Zealand affairs followed on 27 April. At about this time the Chinese party cancelled its orders for the *People's Voice* and the *New Zealand Communist Review*. Since such substantial quantities were involved, as speculated upon above, the CPNZ characterised this action as 'a deliberate blow at the economics of the *People's Voice* and hence at our Party'.⁵⁴⁰

The CPNZ National Committee next issued a statement setting out its differences with the CPA(ML). As Bert Roth had correctly identified above, this came down to the nature of the New Zealand economy and in particular its relationship to imperialism:

The basic contradiction in New Zealand, a developed capitalist country, is that between the working class and the capitalist class headed by the monopoly section. Consequently the working class faces a directly socialist revolution. Any attempt to insert an intermediate stage between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat is opportunism and revisionism.⁵⁴¹

Although not yet stated, this was a rejection of the applicability of the programme of the Theory of the Three Worlds to the domestic situation in New Zealand. Whatever China continued to represent to the CPNZ, it was no longer the source of an analysis to be applied directly to New Zealand conditions.

The great majority of members and all but two out of a dozen branches rallied around the party leadership.⁵⁴² On 23 May Wilcox and three other members (one of them a member of the CPNZ

⁵³⁷ 'Unite all Marxist-Leninists in Oceania', *Vanguard*, 2 March 1978, 1.

⁵³⁸ 'Communist Party refutes *Vanguard's* Scurrilous Attack', *People's Voice*, 3 April 1978, 1.

⁵³⁹ Herbert Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1979, 275.

⁵⁴⁰ CPNZ's *Firm Stand Against the New Revisionism*, In Print, Auckland, 1978, 28.

⁵⁴¹ 'Communist Party Reaffirms Basic Line and Policy', *People's Voice*, 22 May 1978, 1.

⁵⁴² Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1978, 276.

National Committee, another the national president of the New Zealand-China Friendship Society) announced the setting up of a Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist-Leninist).⁵⁴³ They stressed their support for the three worlds theory and for cooperation with the CPA(ML). On 24 June, in Auckland, they held an enlarged initial meeting of the committee but decided to postpone the setting up of a new party until they gained wider support.⁵⁴⁴

The Preparatory Committee would soon merge with the Struggle group and *Struggle* became their theoretical journal. 'China' had a number of meanings for this new formation.⁵⁴⁵ At the heart of them, at this stage, was China as the place where Mao had developed his theories:

Struggle was founded with a bias: that Mao Tsetung Thought is the highest development of Marxist-Leninism. It believes that every previous conclusion on whatever aspect of New Zealand life should be deeply studied in the light of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought; and in that light, be reaffirmed or modified and replaced.⁵⁴⁶

While *Struggle* found it easy to nail Mao to its theoretical flagpole, following the positions taken by the CPC was more difficult. In 1976 *Struggle* welcomed the campaign against Deng Xiaoping as 'shattering defeat for the Soviet revisionists and their vain hopes of a capitalist restoration in China' but in early 1977 'warmly congratulate[d]' the CPC on its decision to 'restore Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping to all posts from which he had been unjustly removed'.⁵⁴⁷

Such vacillations in position would have been shrugged away as insignificant even by China-watching New Zealand communists. It was the line rather than the personnel that was important and the line-struggle meant that sometimes the information coming out of China had been distorted. Yet other aspects of what China represented were of much greater significance. For the *Struggle* group, and later the Preparatory Committee, the Theory of the Three Worlds was understood as 'a question central to the ideological struggle for the defence of Marxism-Leninism'.⁵⁴⁸

The CPNZ also held an extended plenum of its National Committee on 2-3 September and published the full text of the resolution adopted there with the title *CPNZ's Firm Stand Against the New Revisionism*. The CPNZ convened a national conference and at it denounced the 'three

⁵⁴³ This nomenclature for a communist party had its heritage in the Sino-Soviet split, when pro-China parties formed out of parties that were aligned with the CPSU (which was what happened in most, especially Western, countries) named themselves 'ML' thereby claiming Marxism-Leninism orthodoxy against Soviet 'revisionism'. Here the 'ML' descriptor was being used not as an anti-revisionist label but against the 'ultra-leftism' of the CPNZ. In both circumstances 'ML' meant aligned with the Communist Party of China.

⁵⁴⁴ 'Wilcox Sacked from CPNZ', *Struggle*, 11, June 1978, 55.

⁵⁴⁵ Naturally enough, they did not regard their line as being new – it was a continuation of the line since the formation of the CPNZ in 1921. It was just that the majority of the CPNZ had deviated from that line and their formation had needed to be brought into being in order to maintain the historical trajectory of the former CPNZ.

⁵⁴⁶ 'Two Chinese Resolutions Mark New Victories of the Proletarian Dictatorship', *Struggle*, 3, 1976, 1.

⁵⁴⁷ 'Warmly Congratulate Communist Party and People on July Victories', *Struggle*, 7, Sept. 1977, 51.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Where We Stand', *Bulletin*, 1, 1977, 1.

worlds' theory as incorrect and non-Marxist.⁵⁴⁹ According to the Wilcox-led Preparatory Committee, the leadership of the CPNZ was now in the hands of an 'Albanian Gang of Three'.⁵⁵⁰

The CPNZ was rejecting China's current political line, but in doing so, they continued to hold aloft a representation of a China from the not-too-distant past. For the CPNZ, the fault of the CPC's current leadership was that they were changing the project from that which the CPNZ continued to support. Accordingly, they refused to completely support the Albanian Party's criticisms of the CPC.⁵⁵¹ While they rejected the Theory of the Three Worlds, this was because they believed it was not Maoist, not, as the Albanians were now claiming, because there was anything wrong with Mao. The CPNZ continued to hold onto the correctness of what it regarded as the trajectory of the Chinese revolution up until Mao's death in 1976.

The NZCFS, which used to be closely aligned with the CPNZ, was now viewed by the CPNZ as 'no longer a body for promoting friendship between the people of China and New Zealand but an agency for pushing China's great power chauvinist policy centering on the theory of the three worlds'. The CPNZ saw 'the petty-bourgeois elements who had collected in the China Society' as the main base of support of Wilcox and his Preparatory Committee.⁵⁵² Bert Roth's report on communism in New Zealand for 1980 noted that, although in 1978 'the CPNZ broke with China and declared its support for Albania' as 'the socialist fatherland'. By the end of 1979 the Albanian link was 'also severed', and 'the CPNZ is truly non-aligned'.⁵⁵³

According to the CPNZ publication *People's Voice*, the party's national conference

[gave a] resounding rebuff to the local followers of the new revisionist leaders of the Chinese party and all other revisionists and opportunists who have tried to disrupt and divert the CPNZ from its Marxist-Leninist line and make it collaborate with the class enemies of the New Zealand working people – the imperialists and social-imperialists who all collude and contend for world control and plunder.⁵⁵⁴

There were now four Maoist groups operating in addition to the CPNZ: the Wellington-based Marxist Leninist Organisation (MLO), the Northern Communist Organisation (NCO), Struggle, and the Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist-Leninist). They held talks during 1979 aimed at establishing a combined party. All four agreed on a joint letter to the government and people of Kampuchea and on joint statements on

⁵⁴⁹ 'Communist Party United Stand on Major World Questions: Wilcox and Hill now stooges of imperialism', *People's Voice*, 11 September 1978, 1 and 'To Side With Yugoslavia is Still to Betray Marxism-Leninism: Chinese leaders reverse Mao's stand', *People's Voice*, 18 September 1978, 2.

⁵⁵⁰ Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1978, 373.

⁵⁵¹ Which included a rejection of Mao himself as a 'bourgeois nationalist and not Marxist-Leninist' and a claim that the CPC had been pursuing an incorrect line in international affairs for some time.

⁵⁵² 'CPNZ's Firm Stand', 8.

⁵⁵³ Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1979, 287.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Conference Report', *People's Voice*, 5 February 1980, 2.

the ‘Chinese counterattack against Vietnam’s incursions on Chinese territory’ and on ‘Soviet social-imperialism’.⁵⁵⁵

In November 1978 the CPNZ had hailed the ‘steadfastness, courage and resolution’ of the Albanian Party of Labour as ‘an example and inspiration for Marxist-Leninists everywhere’.⁵⁵⁶ Yet just a year later Albania was no longer mentioned. The breach seemed to have been caused by Enver Hoxha’s characterisation of Mao Zedong as a longtime revisionist. Without mentioning Hoxha or Albania, an anonymous writer in the *NZ Communist Review* dismissed as subjective ‘dogmatic assertions, unsupported by facts, that Mao was a lifelong revisionist who opened the Party to bourgeois factions and supported the bourgeoisie in the Party and state’.⁵⁵⁷

The question of the correctness of the CPC position and line became a question of authenticity for the various groupings in New Zealand. For *Struggle* ‘all that Hua Guofeng and other current Chinese leaders are saying and doing is clearly totally in line with what Mao Tsetung set out’. They attacked the CPNZ which, they preciently predicted, would soon ‘attack mighty China, great bastion of socialism and world revolution’, and declared that ‘in 1979 it is a vital task of Marxist-Leninists to defend socialist China from the lying attacks made on it’.⁵⁵⁸

Such disputes soon ventured beyond the pages of the groups’ publications. In March 1979, the CPNZ used the occasion of the visit of Chinese Vice-Premier Chen Muhua to stage demonstrations with participants carrying placards reading ‘Communist party of NZ condemns China’s invasion of Vietnam! Oppose US-China-Soviet imperialist wars!’⁵⁵⁹ The divisions in New Zealand were being replicated around the world. The Preparatory Committee published a list of ‘fraternal parties’ – those who also offered support for the Theory of the Three Worlds. Its line, they declared

will be based on the integration of the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought with the concrete conditions of the class struggle in New Zealand. This includes the study and application of the Theory of the Three Worlds [which provides] the strategy and tactics for the victory of the peoples.⁵⁶⁰

In August 1979 a CPNZ delegation, consisting of Ray Nunes and Nat Gould, went to Albania to discuss ideological differences. After its return, the Political Committee adopted a pro-Mao resolution, and articles in the *New Zealand Communist Review* reflected this independent stand. In November 1979 the *Communist Review* began a two-part series entitled ‘What Mao Really Said’. The article was a veiled critique of the Albanians. ‘Let the critics of Mao try, if they can, to base

⁵⁵⁵ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1980, 185.

⁵⁵⁶ ‘Message to Albanian Comrades’ *People’s Voice*, 13 November 1978, 1.

⁵⁵⁷ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1980, 187.

⁵⁵⁸ ‘In Whose Interests Are the Attacks on China From the “Super-Left”?’ *Struggle*, 17, May 1979, 28.

⁵⁵⁹ Roth, ‘New Zealand’, *Yearbook*, 1980, 187.

⁵⁶⁰ ‘Fraternal Parties Support the Theory of the Three Worlds’, *Bulletin*, 2, October 1978, 3.

themselves on the *facts* of Mao's struggle... on what he actually said, and not on misquotations or statements taken out of context'. The article attacked the current 'Chinese revisionists' but also 'another trend evident in some counties which is to declare that Mao was always a revisionist'. The article contained extracts of Mao's works, linking notes and brief comment. Although the second part was included in the December issue in draft, the article was withdrawn at the last minute.⁵⁶¹ In February 1980, a Central Committee meeting returned to the pro-Albanian line, which avered that Mao was not a Marxist-Leninist and the communist victory in China in 1949 was not the result of a socialist but merely a bourgeois democratic revolution. The members of the delegation were both expelled.

The CPNZ began 1979 in the unique position that it had been aligned first with the Soviet Union, then with China and since 1978 with Albania. The CPNZ maintained that Mao Zedong Thought was a dangerous form of revisionism that was 'most harmful to the working class because it replaces the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism with a hodge-podge of idealism and pseudo-Marxism'. The Communist Party of China, the New Zealand party now revealed, 'never treated the the CPNZ in the manner of a fraternal Party with correct internationalist attitudes and actions'. Albania, on the other hand, is recognised as a socialist country, in fact 'the only socialist country remaining', and the CPNZ therefore intends to 'give particular weight to the opinions and views of the Albanian Party of Labour'.⁵⁶² Nunes, Gould and other supporters of a Maoist or pro-Mao position left the CPNZ. This included the entire Wellington branch.

During 1980 the pro-Chinese groups consolidated their forces in a series of mergers that reduced their number from five to two. The Wellington Marxist-Leninist Organisation and the Northern Communist Organisation combined in January to form the Workers Communist League, which in July absorbed the small Marxist-Leninist Workers Party.⁵⁶³ In February the groups around the theoretical journal *Struggle* joined the Preparatory Committee, which was led by Vic Wilcox. Four representatives of the Preparatory Committee visited China in March at the invitation of the CPC.

On their return, the report of the Preparatory Committee delegation confirmed the correctness of their view. China was not selling out socialism, in fact 'China is going in one direction only – it is getting redder again after a terrible setback'. 'Their modernisation will be socialist modernisation. Their modernisation will strengthen socialism'.⁵⁶⁴ As with earlier commentary, their understanding of China was of universal significance and groups that failed to share that understanding were taking themselves out of the socialist movement. 'China is the bulwark against world reaction and is in the forefront of building socialism... Those who do not

⁵⁶¹ Contributed, 'What Mao Really Said', *New Zealand Communist Review*, November 1979, 2. The mock-up December (with 'withdrawn' written across it) and the published December version are both in the Red Flag Group archive.

⁵⁶² 'More on the Struggle Against Revisionism', *New Zealand Communist Review*, July 1980, 2.

⁵⁶³ Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1980, 187.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Preparatory Committee and Struggle to Merge', *Struggle*, 21, Jan-Feb 1980, 1.

recognise this cannot today be regarded as Marxists'. Yet at the same time the Preparatory Committee was starting to introduce an anti-utopian perspective that hadn't been obvious in much of its previous analysis. They declared that China's decisions were based on 'seeing China as it is ... not as some might like it to be'.⁵⁶⁵

Bert Roth's annual summary of the state of the communist groups in New Zealand suggested that further consolidations of the pro-China groupings were unlikely. Noting that the aim of both the WCL and the Preparatory Committee was to establish a revolutionary party based on Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong-Thought, he observed that 'while the PC is fully in accord with current Chinese policies, the WCL has some reservations concerning China's foreign relations'. In addition, they had different views regarding the course of the revolution in New Zealand.⁵⁶⁶

Under the work plans adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee in December 1978, 'China made a 'major adjustment of its foreign policy'. Accordingly the CPC 'corrected its Leftist principles'. Its targets to contacts broadened away from communist and left-wing political parties to 'all parties ready to have contacts with the CPC'.⁵⁶⁷ While the Workers' Communist League welcomed this change and contact with the CPC despite having differences with the Preparatory Committee, which 'held the China franchise', for domestic reasons it did not wish to appear as a 'China-line' party. Increasingly left groups in New Zealand and around the world were becoming worried that the PRC was slowing support for revolutionary organisations in favour of parties in power.⁵⁶⁸

1980 saw a further group being formed out of those expelled from the CPNZ. It was organised around Nat Gould, one of the delegation expelled over the Albanian report, and his wife, Flora Gould, a long time Political Committee representative.. Like the CPNZ, the Red Flag Group rejected the current Chinese leadership but their measure was not the Albanian criticisms of Mao but an adherence to a representation of an earlier China. They declared their support for 'Maoism' and for the Gang of Four (which they referred to as the 'Gang of Five').⁵⁶⁹

The Red Flag Group was part of an international grouping of parties that declared themselves 'Maoist'. Its statement of its formation and its criticism of the CPNZ was published in the journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party USA. It also condemned China's 'back to capitalism'. It condemned the break up of communes, support for the establishment of private businesses, and conspicuous consumption by CPC officials. There was a pro-China image within

⁵⁶⁵ 'China's Decisions', *Bulletin*, May 1980, 7.

⁵⁶⁶ Roth, 'New Zealand', *Yearbook*, 1980, 187.

⁵⁶⁷ Communist Party of China, *CPC Seeks New Relations With Foreign Political Parties*, New Star Publishers, 1997.

⁵⁶⁸ 'Report of WCL Delegation to China', December 1982, personal possession. The WCL was particularly concerned at what the change in Chinese policy, although it had opened up opportunity for them, would mean for the revolutionary movement in the Philippines. See also Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 213-214.

⁵⁶⁹ 'Defend Mao Zedong', *Red Flag*, 1, 1980, 1. The *Red Flag* of the Communist Party of Aotearoa (CPA) took its name from the publication of the Red Flag Group although the latter had been dormant for twenty-four months when the CPA was launched.

these criticisms. All that was currently bad in China was because of the rejection of Mao and the Cultural Revolution which the Red Flag Group valorised. They also had support for a future China, declaring that 'organised new forces inside of China' were forming and would initiate a new process of revolution.⁵⁷⁰

Mirroring the arguments between the CPNZ and the Preparatory Committee, and in particular the language of the latter, the Red Flag Group avowed that its position on China was of vital significance to New Zealand. They declared that 'upholding the leadership of Mao and the Communist Party of China and the historic lessons of the Chinese revolution, means to defend the interests of the proletarian socialist revolution in New Zealand'. Mao and the Cultural Revolution were equated with the 'orthodoxy' of Marx and Lenin and the current leadership of the CPC was identified with 'revisionism'.⁵⁷¹

As the CPC itself started to reject claims itself of universal aspects of its path to communism and declare its path as one of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' so too did its New Zealand allies tone down their rhetoric. *Struggle* suggested that

So long as any of us indulge in agonising, viz over whether China is doing this or that wrong, we are diverted from our real tasks in our own country... The proper focus for New Zealand Marxists is New Zealand. The habit of foolishly idolising other countries' socialist successes was never more than a substitute for lack of faith in the revolutionary potential of the still dormant New Zealand working class.⁵⁷²

This lack of universal applicability of Chinese lessons went further and *Struggle* no longer carried a description of itself on its cover as applying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.⁵⁷³ In a self-critical moment it noted that for some New Zealand Marxist-Leninists

[the] tendency had been to rely on the particular ways of the Chinese Communist Party. And that made the 'Cultural Revolution' deadly for the CPNZ... Yet strangely, it helped us to think about integrating the general propositions with the concrete conditions of the New Zealand revolution.⁵⁷⁴

Yet the Preparatory Committee still reported favourably about China. Its newspaper *Advance* reported in 1984 that 'Socialist China's production rose sharply again in the last financial year, in sharp contrast to the more or less stagnant economies of the capitalist world'.⁵⁷⁵ It still made a claim for the Marxist orthodoxy operating in China when it defended the introduction of the new

⁵⁷⁰ 'Mao Zedong Defendants', *Red Flag*, 4, May 1981, 1.

⁵⁷¹ *Red Flag*, 4, May 1981, 1.

⁵⁷² 'The Way Forward', *Struggle*, 17, May 1979, 28.

⁵⁷³ 'Cultural Revolution', *Struggle*, 40, December 1984, 24-25.

⁵⁷⁴ Ross, interview. Note that the (self)criticism is almost exactly the same as the criticism of those parties which supported the Soviet Union (or rather the CPSU) in the Sino-Soviet conflict.

⁵⁷⁵ 'China's Production Up', *Advance*, 5, 4, June 1984, 3.

'responsibility system' in 1985 as reflecting wages based on Marx's theory of 'For each according to their work' and equating China's 'socialist modernisation' as equivalent to Lenin's New Economic Programme. With approval it recalled that 'some "concessions", towards capitalism, Lenin wrote, "need not frighten us"'. There was no doubt for them that China represented socialist practice. 'Progressive people in New Zealand, as everywhere, take a lively interest in how socialism is faring where it is being built. Nowhere attracts such favourable interest as socialist China'.⁵⁷⁶ Where there were criticisms, and the acknowledgment of problems in China the Preparatory Committee would still accept the official Chinese line on them. So although it noted that through the mid-1980s rampant corruption meant that China's 'outstanding reputation for integrity and honesty has been somewhat tarnished' *Advance* was happy to report that 'achievements outweigh problems'.⁵⁷⁷

In contrast, the Red Flag Group interpreted news of crime and corruption coming out of China as proof that China had rejected the socialist road. 'True friends of the Chinese people' they wrote, 'will remember Mao's China when honesty, incorruptibility and selflessness was a byword'. Their China, reflected in Mao's teachings, was still universal, as 'Mao's contributions', remained 'imperishable and a living guide to the future'. Instead of what they saw as a retreat to particularism, *Red Flag* declared its support for universalisms: 'Without Marxism-Leninism-Maoism there can be no revolutionary change, no socialist revolution'. This had application in New Zealand since 'it is the duty of all true revolutionaries and progressive people to preserve and uphold Mao's legacy and combat his detractors wherever they may be'.⁵⁷⁸

The Preparatory Committee renamed itself the 'Organisation for Marxist Unity' and *Struggle's* masthead was now 'A Marxist approach to New Zealand problems – especially the need to break the domination of the multinationals'. Although there was no mention of Mao Zedong Thought, there was still a reference to a staged approach to revolution and the analysis had an unstated commitment to the Theory of the Three Worlds and the Chinese approach to revolution.⁵⁷⁹ This understated support for China became more open when the Tiananmen crisis exploded across the world's media in May and June of 1989. The June issue of *Struggle* was produced as the students gathered but before the violence began. *Struggle* was full of hope for China and saw the students as representing 'socialist democracy in action'. 'Unlike 1981 in NZ, they are NOT being bashed by the police... *Struggle* hopes they will [advance] socialism, and socialist democracy, in China'.⁵⁸⁰

Three months later, in its next issue, the publication tried to understand the events in terms of the Marxist theory of democracy and the state. They identified the protests as being supportive

⁵⁷⁶ 'Socialist Modernisation Forges Ahead', *Advance*, 9, 5, 5 October 1984, 1.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Socialist China is 38', *Advance*, 7, 11, 4 December 1984, 5.

⁵⁷⁸ 'Uphold Mao's Teachings', *Red Flag*, 44, June 1988, 1-4.

⁵⁷⁹ 'Report from China', *Struggle*, 53, June 1989, 2.

⁵⁸⁰ 'Marx's Theory of the State', *Struggle*, 54, September 1989, 4.

of the revolution, by opposing 'the return of pre-liberation social ills and crimes that have come with reform and opening up'. Yet the media coverage had not been accurate. 'Enemies of socialism and the Murdoch press had used the opportunity to inflame the situation and attempt to discredit socialism'. In addition to this analysis they published a 'Summary of Chinese accounts of Tiananmen' and excerpts of an interview with Han Suyin declaring that 'we cannot have judgment by media'.⁵⁸¹

At the same time, however, *Struggle* revealed that they had been expressing concerns about developments in China to their contacts there. For example, they 'had been concerned that *Beijing Review* seemed at cross purposes with the basic truths of Marxism' and had met with editorial staff to discuss this.⁵⁸² Now, in the aftermath of Tiananmen, they were happy to report that they were '...very much at ease with reports examining weakness of ideological work as the internal cause of the students justifiable demands'. Yet events in China needed to be put into another context too:

As for our own work in New Zealand, its thrust is for political achievements in New Zealand. Whatever may happen in a socialist country will not divert us from that. But the recent events in China should not be allowed to be used against socialism and as propaganda for capitalism.⁵⁸³

For the Red Flag Group the issue was far easier to comprehend. The 'Deng revisionists' had exposed their colours. They lauded the demands of the 'heroic students and workers', declaring that the 'massacre' was the 'product of twelve years of revisionist rule' and that 'the last word' on the Chinese revolution would belong to workers and peasants 'who will never forget Mao and his teachings'. 'Revisionism', they proclaimed, 'has no future'.⁵⁸⁴

The CPNZ also attacked the CPC as presiding over 'fascist terror, with mass killings and witch-hunts'. However its ideological position was also enunciated. For the CPNZ, the 'Chinese Ruling class, was the 'imperialist descendents of the Maoist enemies of communism'. For the CPNZ, things that happened in the PRC were mostly seen as opportunities to distance itself from other left-wing parties. The article's title was 'SUP Support for Chinese Government'. It attacked the SUP over the latter's support for China's market socialism and suggestions there were 'counter-revolutionary' elements present amongst the demonstrators. The CPNZ also joined conservative groups in New Zealand in calling for the New Zealand government to bestow refugee status on all Chinese students who requested it.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸¹ 'A Summary of the Chinese Accounts of the Tiananmen Square Events', *Struggle*, 54, September 1989, 6.

⁵⁸² 'Developments in China', *Struggle*, 55 December 1989, 3.

⁵⁸³ 'Chinese Experiment Has Important Lessons', *Struggle*, 61, June 1991, 34-35.

⁵⁸⁴ 'Deng Revisionists Expose Their True Colours', *Red Flag*, 50, June 1989, 3 and 11.

⁵⁸⁵ 'SUP Support For Chinese Government', *People's Voice*, 26 June 1989, 11-12.

Perhaps it was because of the complexities involved in trying to understand activities in China, but *Struggle's* editors claimed to be less interested in discussing them. 'In our view', they wrote, the practice of giving opinions on correctness of different parties or socialist states 'is not helpful to creating unity within the New Zealand movement, nor is it based on respecting the efforts of the working class concerned to correct mistakes'.⁵⁸⁶

Yet, in the very next issue they would do just that:

Today, new China is in the first stage of building a modern socialist country, led by working class and based on the worker farmer alliance. The system of democratic centralism prevails within the state, Party and public institutions, providing the basis for the further development of socialist democracy.⁵⁸⁷

In the early 1990s those who had consistently supported China since the mid-1960s became more equivocal about events there and those who claimed that their line was consistent with 'Mao Zedong Thought' became quieter and quieter. However, in line with the improved relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China during the former's last days, the 'revisionists' of the Socialist Unity Party began to show an interest in China themselves. *New Zealand Tribune* reported favourably on a Labour Party delegation that went to China in 1991 which reported that the 'standard of health' was 'amazing' as was the commitment amongst the young people 'to do something for [their] country'. They also reported that China was not, as they'd been led to believe, 'a one-party state' and praised China's 'democratic' features such as the multi-party system.⁵⁸⁸

Through the early 1990s, the most significant coverage that *Struggle* gave to China-related themes was to acknowledge the centenary of Mao Zedong's birth. He was recommended as 'the most outstanding' of the 'many competent Marxists' who emerged through the Chinese revolution.⁵⁸⁹ This theme was covered again in the next issue and was accompanied by a reading list of suggested Mao writings. The list became a regular feature in the publication. Apart from this, there was criticism of the Dalai Lama to accompany his visit to New Zealand in 1991 and a short article noting the successes in the 'building of socialism' in 1992.⁵⁹⁰

Struggle was increasingly silent about activities within China, especially during the period of Jiang Zemin.⁵⁹¹ The publication's answer to its worries about China was generally not to say anything. When it published an article critical of labour relations in the PRC and referred obliquely to 'the

⁵⁸⁶ 'Events in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe', *Struggle*, 62, September 1991, 40-41.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Chinese Persist in Building Socialism', *Struggle*, 63, December 1991, 40-41.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Labour Party Delegation to China', *New Zealand Tribune*, 8 August 1991, 4-5.

⁵⁸⁹ 'Chinese Experiment Has Important Lesson', *Struggle*, 61, June 1991, 34-35.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Dalai Lama', *Struggle*, 63, December 1991, 7 and 'Can Socialism Be Efficient', *Struggle*, 66, September 1992, 43.

⁵⁹¹ Jiang Zemin was General Secretary of the Communist Party of China from 1989 to 2002. Don Ross said that he was particularly troubled by a photograph of Jiang and US President Bush shaking hands and referring to one-another as 'very good friends' as the cover story in the 19 October 2001 issue of *Beijing Review* (Ross, Interview).

restoration of capitalism’, it drew a sharp response from a long-time subscriber.⁵⁹² Instead it reverted to articles on China’s international activities, where China could be presented as different from other big powers. Sino-Latin American and Sino-African relations were feted as offering a superior choice to imperialist relations. While China wasn’t being talked about as a bastion of socialism and offering a path towards communism, it was still an alternative model to capitalism. The contrast to this was in articles that referred to the People’s Republic of China’s history – and the earlier the period being discussed, the clearer the line seemed to be able to be.

It was left to the Socialist Party of Aotearoa (SPA), which had succeeded the Socialist Unity Party after the collapse of Eastern Europe, to be more upbeat about contemporary China. In fact its reports were almost the same as those at the beginning of this study. Its publication reported that ‘socialist state[s] ... are mostly building socialist market economies. China’s rapid development has been particularly marked’.⁵⁹³ Not only was China firmly in the socialist camp, it was providing a model to the rest. For the SPA, in 2003, ‘China’s socialist system proved itself, making giant strides in living standards and industry and reuniting Hong Kong and Macau with the motherland’.⁵⁹⁴

Conclusions

There were some particular features that go partly to explain why New Zealand communists were so attracted to a revolution that took place 10,000 kilometres away. Not the least of these was New Zealand’s own racial composition, and the country’s smallness in relation to the large imperialist powers. The fact that it was ‘a paradise of the second international’, meant that those with a radical Marxist ambition must have seemed less likely to succeed with those ambitions which made having a connection with one that seemed to embody their own aspirations even more attractive.⁵⁹⁵

In addition, the CPNZ had a series of peculiarly close connections to the Chinese revolution. This was in part personal, through figures such as Rewi Alley and Shirley Barton, but also through Vic Wilcox’s elevation in international communist circles as a result of the CPNZ’s role given the position it took in the Sino-Soviet split. Ultimately though, what took the CPNZ into its intimate relationship with the CPC was ideological factors, in particular its understanding of

⁵⁹² Don Ross, personal communication, 13 November 2004. The complaint came from Ray Gough, who had also criticised the NZCFS for its position criticising the CPC and the PRC over Tiananmen in 1989. See chapter 6.

⁵⁹³ ‘International Report’, *Red Flag*, March 2001, 12. (Note that *Red Flag* is the publication of the Socialist Party of Aotearoa (SPA). It formed from a split from the Socialist Unity Party in 1990. The Red Flag Group ceased functioning about the same time, leaving the name of the publication for the SPA to pick up - although the groups were not closely related ideologically.)

⁵⁹⁴ ‘Dramatic Times’, *Red Flag*, March 2003, 6.

⁵⁹⁵ The phrase is attributed to Lenin, see Peter Franks, ‘No Left Turn: The Distortion of New Zealand’s History by Greed, Bigotry and Right-Wing Politics’ [Book Review], *Labour History*, 94, May 2008, 191-192.

the role and nature of social democracy, itself born out of the long relationship the CPNZ had with the New Zealand Labour Party.

This chapter though is less about the factors that took the CPNZ to China than the changing ways in which a changing PRC was represented in New Zealand communist discourse. The Party did not only have directly presented images of the PRC. Such is the interconnectiveness of the communist message that representations of domestic New Zealand conditions also involved features that can be interpreted as an ideological representation of the PRC. This was particularly so during the late 1960s when cultural revolution politics saw themselves being played out in New Zealand, and during the early and late 1970s when questions of the PRC's international politics were transplanted to New Zealand – with ultimately disastrous results for the unity of the CPNZ.

For reasons detailed here, the CPNZ traveled a path that saw it grow increasingly close of the CPC. As it did so it transformed the image it had of itself. The parties grew together because of their shared belief in Marxist orthodoxy, the further united in the revolutionary transformative project of the cultural revolution – and although this was a Chinese project that the CPNZ could only truly cheer on from afar, it still had a profound influence on the CPNZ.

The change in Chinese policies that followed the end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao broke the links between the CPC and the CPNZ, although new parties were formed in New Zealand to maintain the links that had been forged from the late 1950s. Even for these parties though China was different; and for some their ongoing links were with the memory of Mao's China rather than with the ongoing activities of Deng's. It is no small irony that by the end of the period examined here, the only party seemingly committed to support for current Chinese politics was effectively the SUP - the one that broke with the CPNZ over the latter's support for Mao's revolution.

In part these changes can be explained as resulting from the particular process of truth telling that the various communist groups engaged with about the PRC and New Zealand. Marxist truth has a deep commitment to accuracy, but what accuracy means is deeply influenced by ideological questions, in particular by the commitment to a socially transformative project that makes some truths important and others irrelevant.

Chapter 5: The Imagination of China by NZ Student Activists in the 1970s.

This chapter focuses on the NZUSA Study Tours to China that took place primarily in the 1970s and the image of China that the participants on the tour projected on their return. The New Zealand University Students' Association organised tours in 1971 and thereafter each year from 1973 until 1978. After looking at student tours which pre-dated the NZUSA ones, I focus in particular on the student tours of 1971 and 1974. A close examination of these two tours, although separated by just three years, is revealing of a changing China. This is both in the way that the PRC represented itself and, drawing on Badiou, in the way the New Zealand students were subjectively positioned – that is became subjects – as they engaged with the PRC. I interviewed participants from across the student tours of the 1970s and collected data through a brief survey. In addition, for the two tours on which I focus, I organised reunions, (re)viewings of films that tour participants had shot on the tours, digitalised slide collections and transcribed diary accounts.

These student tours were a distinctive kind of experience, different from the Cultural Revolution events they witnessed because they did not involve the struggle for power, but also different from 'normal' tourism. The kinds of subject-object relationships that are found in this kind of travel experience are different from those found in political events where people are part of an ongoing community, where they are related to durable relationships, rather than moments of intensity distinguished by their shortness. This does not negate the transformative importance of such travel, and may even heighten it. As identified in chapter 2, the predominant framework such travel has been examined within has been one of deception but the key issue here is not so much whether the students experienced a truth about China, but rather whether or not they experienced their own subjective realities differently as a result of their China experiences. As such it has a relationship with Orientalist travel in that it is about the travelling subject rather than the world they are travelling in, but instead of based on differences it is based on the idea of a shared humanity in which the politically engaged traveller assumes an engagement with the society in which they are travelling. Yet this sense of participation is the illusion, they are always able to leave, and the realities of being a leftist, oppositional, student in New Zealand was very different from having an oppositional stance in the PRC when it was in the thralls of the Cultural Revolution.

The student tours in 1971 and 1974 corresponded with two highly publicised accounts of other visits to the PRC. In May of 1971 representatives from the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS) travelled from the United States to the PRC. This trip resulted in the publication *China! Inside the People's Republic*.⁵⁹⁶ The CCAS tour left China a week before the NZUSA tour arrived. In 1974, as part of their engagement with Maoism, several Telquelians

⁵⁹⁶ Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *China! Inside the People's Republic*, Bantam, New York, 1972.

decided to arrange a trip to China.⁵⁹⁷ On the trip were Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Marcelin Pleynet, Philippe Sollers, and Francois Wahl. The trip was organised in part by Maria-Antoinetta Macciocchi, an Italian Communist whose book *De La Chine* (On China) had sparked interest in the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁹⁸ Jacques Lacan, who had originally been scheduled to go with the group, pulled out at the last moment. The group left Paris on April 11 and returned on May 3, having spent three weeks travelling around China. The return to Paris produced a flurry of texts: not only Kristeva's book *About Chinese Women*, but also articles by Barthes and Wahl in the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*, and a *Tel quel* special issue called 'In China'.⁵⁹⁹ The texts by the members of the editorial committee (Sollers, Pleynet, and Kristeva) praised the Cultural Revolution as the future of Marxism, and named China the potential catalyst for world revolution. Barthes and Wahl were more reserved. Like the NZUSA tours, comparing the CCAS group's report of the PRC with that of *Tel Quel* illustrates a changing China; the differences between 1971 and 1974 over these two visits bears a remarkable correlation to the differences between the two NZUSA-organised tours of the same years.

The New Zealand students differ from the other groups in significant ways: the Tel Quel group seems to have been interested predominately in Mao's China as an aesthetic and philosophical other. It is also fair to say that China was a fleeting intellectual fashion. The New Zealand students were activists, and rather than their point of reference being imaginative structures, signs, civilisational otherness, they were the student movement, trades unions and the protect activities they were involved with. For the most part they also differed from the CCAS scholars who were professional analysts of Asian societies.

Utopia and Dystopia

For those on the study tours throughout this period, China initially represented an unexplored 'other', of which the tour participants had an overwhelmingly favourable impression. As the tours – and China's self-image – developed, this quickly progressed into a utopian revolutionary vision – in part, as the basis for the selection of the tour participants changed from 'selling' China to developing and consolidating student activists. Later, like other national representations of the 'New Left Movement', New Zealand's 'Maoists' traded in their pro-China vision for solidarity on the basis of anti-revisionism and anti-Sovietism and began to look to less problematic loci for their utopian images.

⁵⁹⁷ 'Telquelians': those associated with the French avant-garde literary journal *Tel Quel* ('As Is'). See Patrick Ffrench, *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel (1960-1983)*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995.

⁵⁹⁸ Maria-Antoinetta Macciocchi, *De La Chine* ('From China'), published in English as *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973.

⁵⁹⁹ Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, Boyars, London 1977.

By 'utopian' I am referring not just to a literary tradition that dates to More's book of 1516 but to a notion which emerged from an exchange between Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch in the mid-1960s.⁶⁰⁰ Adorno declared 'inwardly, everyone knows, whether they admit it or not, that things could be otherwise. People could live without hunger and probably without fear, but as free-beings'. Bloch did not dissent. For Perry Anderson, commenting on this exchange, 'the spur to utopian longing came from the bare words heard in *Mabogany*: "something is missing". They contained no promise of anything better, only a desire'.⁶⁰¹ This sense of lack in what their own societies offered increasingly inspired student interest in China. Yet while some saw their trips as discovery, others would reject the imperialist connotations of such an approach.

This hope for something better – or noticing that the existing situation is not perfect – needs something more to become a utopian longing. Ian Buchanan, in commenting on the rich contribution of Fredric Jameson to the study of utopia, suggests that utopia requires performativity to come into being:

The Utopian utterance performs Utopia even when and where it does not actually state it. So it is as a performative, the nature of which we are yet to specify, that Utopia is finally to be reckoned. But what kind of performative is it? Fortunately, the list of options is relatively short, and there is only one that fits the bill, and that is the act of promising. When you promise something you create an expectation, but do not fulfil it – except at a cost of extinguishing the promise itself, and that is their whole point.⁶⁰²

For Buchanan utopia 'takes the form of a promise, or a better promising-machine', which he notes, quoting Derrida, owes its possibility to 'the ordeal of undecidability' [it does not deliver anything].⁶⁰³ This notion of the performance underpins the retreat from fascination with China in the late 1970s and the focus on the material notions of well-being in the first years of that decade. While the PRC seemed to be delivering better living standards, its performance in terms of creating the new person and transforming gender relations were harder to see in practice.

Utopia has more substance than this, though. From his exhaustive study of literary utopias, Jameson notes that they have always come in two dimensions – existential and institutional. As Perry Anderson interprets: 'visions of another human nature or an alternative civic order' and historically four 'commanding themes':

⁶⁰⁰ *Utopia*, written by Sir Thomas More, depicts a fictional island with its own unique religion and customs. Sir Thomas More's work introduces readers into the concept of a perfect society with utopian, or perfect, ideas and beliefs. This timeless classic, originally written in 1516, was itself heavily influenced by Plato's *Republic*. Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch, published in *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates Between Bloch, Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno*, Verso, London, 1980.

⁶⁰¹ Perry Anderson, 'The River of Time', *New Left Review*, 26 March-April 2004, 75. His reference is to Bertolt Brecht's parable of greed and indifference *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany* (Arcade Publishing, New York, 1995).

⁶⁰² Ian Buchanan, 'Metacommentary on Utopia, or Jameson's dialectic of hope', *Utopian Studies*, Spring 1998, 21.

⁶⁰³ Buchanan, 'Metacommentary', 22.

First there was property – the topic More took from Plato, at the very origin of Western political thought. Then came work-play-art, conceived as a single continuum or interchange, from Schiller to Morris. After that arrived sexuality and its consequences: Diderot, Fourier and their decedents. Finally, nature as conquest or companion, Trotsky against Benjamin.⁶⁰⁴

In particular, images such as those of being able to advance limitless aspirations merely through applying the correct ideology are clearly utopian, although not generally a feature of the Western utopian canon. This inability to clearly articulate what is or is not utopia is at the heart of the concept. Again returning to Jameson, Peter Fitting suggests that

[the] most fruitful and troubling intervention lies in his proposal that the literary utopia should not be seen as the representation of an ideal society, but as a reflection on ‘our own incapacity to conceive [utopia] in the first place’.⁶⁰⁵

Yet if as Richard Rorty suggests, ‘Utopias are [simply] maps of the imagination... that offer directions to guide our projects of social engineering and personal transformation’ then it becomes easy to reconcile hope and utopia. For Rorty, ‘Hope, on the other hand, hold[s] a promise beyond reason and planning... I would prefer to use the word “utopia”, referring simply to a future in which some particular hopes are fulfilled’.⁶⁰⁶

For the purpose of this examination I treat as utopian all imaginaries or reportage that deals with aspirations and hopes that at their heart are transformative – of human beings, societies or the environment. Those where such hope is unsatisfied or crushed, I treat as dystopian. In this I follow Anderson for whom dystopia is more than anti-utopia. Commenting on the ancient utopian theme of science, he notes that in modern utopian literature, instead of hope, science represents the nightmare ‘of technological domination: the corruption of what is most essentially human by malignant use of the powers of science’. Dystopia, then, is intimately connected to utopia, it is that in which there was hope proving otherwise.⁶⁰⁷ The shift from a utopia of hope, to one which requires performativity (that it largely failed), to a sense of the PRC as dystopia, overlays both the NZUSA and Tel Quelian shifts through this period.

NZUSA Study Tours

Since its founding on 1 October 1949 the PRC has engaged in what it refers to as ‘people-to-people diplomacy’, whereby quasi-official organisations have promoted China's national image

⁶⁰⁴ Perry Anderson, ‘The River of Time’, 71.

⁶⁰⁵ Peter Fitting, ‘The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson’, *Utopian Studies*, Spring 1998, 9. See Fredric Jameson, *The Prison House of Language*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, 230.

⁶⁰⁶ Richard Rorty, ‘Hope and the Future’, *Peace Review* 14, 2, 2002, 149.

⁶⁰⁷ Anderson, ‘The River of Time’, 73

through study tours exchanges and foreign language publications. NZUSA's Study Tours to China were an example of this 'people-to-people' contact. They were organised initially via the New Zealand China Friendship Society, although after New Zealand government recognition of the PRC in 1972 and due to particular political differences amongst New Zealand-based left-wing organisations, they were organised directly by NZUSA with the PRC embassy in Wellington.⁶⁰⁸

The first NZ students to go on an organised 'study tour' actually went to China in 1967 and 1968, through joining an Australasian contingent organised by the Australian Union of Students.⁶⁰⁹ The first of these was led by Stephen Fitzgerald.⁶¹⁰ New Zealander Kent Pearson wrote two articles for the *Dominion Sunday Star Times* as a result of his time in China in 1967. In an attempt to explain the Cultural Revolution in terms New Zealanders would understand he described the Red Guards as really very much 'like Boy Scouts' and the GPCR itself as 'much like a jamboree'.⁶¹¹

This trip was not arranged by NZUSA, although Pearson himself was in regular contact with then NZUSA President Ross Mountain⁶¹². Unlike subsequent tours the participants were neither briefed by NZUSA nor seen as representing NZ students. There were no criteria for selection and the application process was simply a case 'filling out a form and agreeing to pay the money'.⁶¹³

Peter Woolley who went on the 1968 trip, like Pearson, had not come to his interest in the PRC through the radical politics that would dominate subsequent tours⁶¹⁴. Yet, to a large extent, the features of the later tours were present in these earlier ones. Woolley's own image of the PRC was undoubtedly utopian:

⁶⁰⁸ According to David Cuthbert, NZUSA President in 1971 and involved with selecting participants for subsequent tours as head of NZUSA's tour company (Student Travel Bureau), NZUSA wanted to get away from the internal politics of the New Zealand China Society. He noted that the NZCFS was dominated by the Communist Party of New Zealand, although some branches – and increasingly NZUSA itself via the Workers Communist League – were influenced by Marxist-inspired groups outside of the CPNZ, or even who had been expelled from the CPNZ. A number of issues are themselves raised by the notion of 'guided tourism' a categorisation that these tours certainly fall under. It is an issue explored, albeit only briefly, in chapter 1.

⁶⁰⁹ Note that although New Zealanders often regard their relationship with the PRC as being in advance of that of their cross-Tasman cousins, this preceding of NZ-China contacts by Australia-China ones was not unusual. It was not just student tours. China Society tours started in Australia before New Zealand, the Australian Government recognized China before New Zealand did, and Communist Party of Australia cadre were training in China through the 1950s and 1960s with nothing comparative being offered to New Zealand members. Even Vic Wilcox's very close contact with Mao Zedong was dwarfed by that of Ted Hill, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), whom Mao once referred to as a 'very good friend' in contrast to other foreigners who were simply 'good friends'.

⁶¹⁰ He would later be the first Australian ambassador to the PRC, serving in Beijing from 1973 to 1976.

⁶¹¹ Kent Pearson, 'Red Guards More Like Boy Scouts', *Dominion Sunday Times*, 7 May 1967, 11.

⁶¹² Mountain was also very interested in international affairs. He 'graduated' from NZUSA to work for the International Union of Students and followed this with a long and illustrious career in human rights work for the United Nations. In 2003, he was a special representative to Iraq for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2004.

⁶¹³ Peter Woolley, interview, Auckland, 25 November 2003.

⁶¹⁴ He said he simply saw the advertisement and was interested in China through his study and as a place that not many others had got to go to. Since his flatmate was also interested, they decided to sign up.

I really thought in those days that they were engaged in a reconstruction of the country that could actually work. I was extremely sceptical about our way of life in New Zealand as it was a reflection of ... materialistic values ... I thought it lacked meaning and I thought that the Chinese were engaged in a project to reconstruct life for society as a whole ... I didn't see that there was a lot of meaning in the alienated life that people lived in their little nuclear families in New Zealand and ... that [the Chinese] were attempting social change on a huge scale... they would evolve a different system that wouldn't be so materialistic and would be more inclusive.⁶¹⁵

Even though he was not connected to groups seeking to change New Zealand society, like subsequent tour participants, Woolley still saw his opportunity to visit China in terms of wanting to change New Zealand. He hoped that 'if it works there then it could work here.'⁶¹⁶ Yet Woolley's experience would not convince him of either the exportability or the success he sought for the China model.

Like those on subsequent tours he took to wandering away from the official party in order to experience a 'real China' away from the 'stage-managed experience' of which he was part.⁶¹⁷ On one such trip he met an English-speaking local who wouldn't talk with him. 'Timid rather than shy', he felt. Another time he was (falsely) accused of insulting Mao Zedong.⁶¹⁸ Woolley, who would eventually become a senior lawyer with Hesketh Henry was horrified by the arbitrary nature of the accusation and an experience at complete variance with his sense of justice, in particular the tense and frightening atmosphere that dominated the proceedings. He left uncertain that the claimed aspirations of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which he largely supported, were likely to be achieved.

I think one of the disappointing factors [was that] if ... the process [I was looking for] was going on and I certainly left China not at all certain that it was, then there certainly wasn't a lot of evidence that it was working... I think I was taken by that incident in the park when that guy who came up to us seemed scared... Maybe even if it was a revolution with high humanitarian values in mind then maybe the outcome of it was either highly uncertain or dysfunctional.

⁶¹⁵ Woolley, interview. 1968 was perhaps the height of the Cultural Revolution. Woolley's memory of his hope at the time reflects the imaginary of the mid-1970s, when campaigns of a similar intensity had returned to Chinese daily life.

⁶¹⁶ Woolley, interview.

⁶¹⁷ Woolley, interview. He noted his search for a China succeeding in its enormous social project was compromised by the strait-jacketed experience: 'The fact that everything was so stage-managed made it seem that it wasn't so'.

⁶¹⁸ The party had visited Mao's childhood home in Shaoshan, itself a pilgrimage site for Chinese Red Guards, some of whom partially buried pictures of the Chairman in the ground. Woolley thinks he (or another tall blond white person) may have accidentally stood on one of these while straining to see something their guides had been pointing out in the room. The intensity of the accusation had been increased by a discovery the previous evening of a Mao picture that had been defaced – by the drawing on it of a moustache. Woolley explained that he in fact had a great deal of respect for Mao and what he had achieved and indeed for the entire Chinese nation and had not been involved in either of these slights. In the end the Chinese said that they had 'accepted his apology, and that the matter was closed' (Woolley, interview).

Woolley's story was not sought after in the same way as the students who followed him. In part this was because there was no NZUSA supporting the process by organising press conferences and getting NZPA accreditation for him and other tour participants, although the Australians weren't feted either. In addition though, Woolley did not return immediately to New Zealand. He went directly from the tour to take a position in the Australian High Commission to Papua New Guinea.⁶¹⁹

Unlike subsequent tours there was virtually no coverage of these student trips. Pearson had two articles in the *Dominion Sunday Times* and John Christie, who would lead the 1974 Tour, remembered attending a talk by Ray Caird, Woolley's flatmate companion on the 1968 trip, at the University of Canterbury Students' Association in the early 1970s. It seems remarkable, but there was very little coverage of the Cultural Revolution in the New Zealand student press at all. Of the millions of Chinese students swarming out to the countryside and assembling in Tian'anmen Square the papers were silent. At Victoria, the campus with the most developed political consciousness of any in NZ, this was in part because the student paper *Salient* was controlled by Trotskyists who provided readers with extensive coverage of US student activity, and of the resistance to American and New Zealand involvement in Vietnam⁶²⁰ but no apparent interest in the 'deformed worker state' of the People's Republic of China.⁶²¹

In fact the only coverage of these earlier trips was in the context of the NZUSA-organised trips beginning:

New Zealand students most recently visited the PRC in 1968 when four NZrs (sic) were part of a forty-strong party organised by the Australian Union of Students. The PRC was undergoing a Cultural Revolution at that time, but equally important, so far as student visits were concerned, some members of the Australasian party made uncomplimentary comments about Chairman Mao Tsetung, in the hearing of their Chinese hosts. As a result, invitations ceased forthwith.⁶²²

⁶¹⁹ Perhaps as another indication of the changes that took place so quickly at this time he reported that another of the students on his tour turned up in Port Moresby asking if she, 'and her friend', could meet with him. 'Are you working for ASIO [Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation]?' he asked. 'Yes' she admitted. They went to dinner, the 'friend' asked if Woolley had come to PNG with any 'revolutionary intentions' and his denial appears to have been accepted. At least he reported that he heard no more about it (all from Woolley, interview). Somewhat in contrast Pat McCabe, who went on the 1974 NZUSA Tour to China and had been involved in progressive student activities was recruited to Foreign Affairs in New Zealand and immediately went onto the China desk – as a recognition that by going on the tour he had direct and useful experience with the PRC.

⁶²⁰ According to Richard Sharpe, who went on the 1971 tour (and then subsequently to Taiwan), the general context in 1971 was: 'The Vietnam war was on. We had been subject to ballot for Compulsory Military Service on our 20th birthdays, and there had been the fear that we, like the Australian conscripts, might be sent to Vietnam. The majority of students were against the Vietnam War. Students were politically active'. This coverage was important as many students came to have an interest in China through campaigning against the war in Vietnam and then saw in China a home for their anti-imperialist beliefs (Sharpe, interview, Wellington, 15 November 2004).

⁶²¹ Bill Logan, formerly a member of the Young Nationals but by 1968 a leader with the Trotskyite 'Spartacist League', was editor of *Salient*.

⁶²² 'Trip to China', *Salient*, 24, 12, 16 June 1971, 1.

China Fades Away

The NZUSA tours, which started in 1971 and were annual from 1973 to 1978, eventually petered out due to a combination of lack of interest by New Zealand students and changes in the practice of China's people-to-people diplomacy. In addition, links with the revolutionary movement in the Philippines were developed by the radical groups that dominated student activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Subsequently, despite the continued dominance of the New Zealand student movement by avowedly pro-China groups, New Zealand students were to replace the PRC as their symbolic touchstone long before the events of May and June 1989.⁶²³

1978 was the last tour. This seems to have been because of a lack of interest on both sides. The tours became increasingly expensive as Chinese subsidies were withdrawn. In addition, the tours were under-subscribed in 1977 and 1978, meaning that there was no opportunity to 'select' the most appropriate delegates. This also meant that the tour parties had too many non-revolutionaries (ie 'ordinary students') to enable the previous aim of consolidating the politics of 'progressives' towards the radical left. Yet those with an overtly anti-Chinese disposition would still have been outside the published criteria of being open to learn about China. In addition the conflict between China and Vietnam shattered the image of China for many of those who had come to an interest in China via opposition to the Vietnam War, despite the efforts of the NZCFS. Students, and ex-students, given their identification with opposition to the War, were particularly susceptible to this sense of loss. There was also clearly declining interest on the China side. It seems that foreign students had run their course as leading participants in supporting China's revolution, and that included the promotion of it to the outside world. The early 1980s would see a new vehicle emerge: the 'prominent person's tour'.

However, for an inspirational model New Zealand radical students were drifting away from the practice of socialism in the PRC towards the promise offered by the revolutionary movement in places such as the Philippines, untarnished as they were by the compromises that might be required in the exercise of state power. For tours that would consolidate New Zealand student activists towards a radical position, the countryside of Central Luzon was replacing Dazhai and the Northwest Textile Factory Number 1 near Xian.

...people going off to [New People's Army] areas, so-called 'Red Tourism'. I guess they were looking for a revolution in that same way as, what would they do now, Nepal I guess. It's always more exciting to get involved with people who are waging a war of

⁶²³ Students who had been on these tours in fact reported that quite a number participated in demonstrations against the Chinese state's activities in Tiananmen square on June 4, 1989 – albeit with 'great reluctance' and with a sense of betrayal (George Rosenberg, interview, 20 December 2003, Stubbs, interview, Wellington, 18 November 2003).

liberation than the nuts and bolts of making the drains work, etc. They were looking to find something more romantic.⁶²⁴

There was another problem for the New Zealand student groups. Try as they might to interact with the Chinese it was the Communist Party of New Zealand that held the Chinese 'franchise'. When the Mao-inspired groups that dominated the student scene discovered that there was a living revolution in the Philippines, they could associate with it also meant that they did not need to manage the relationship with the CPNZ in order to advance it.

The Philippines was easy to associate with and incredibly exciting. It was closer to us than Nicaragua. More importantly it was ours – we had the franchise and were not competing with anyone else for that...⁶²⁵

So from 1980 to 1986 there is virtually no coverage in student media about China – despite that this was a period when the Workers' Communist League (WCL) dominated the NZ student-activist landscape, and student newspapers. The WCL officially described itself as pro-Mao Zedong Thought. However one insider admitted that they didn't really understand what was going on in China and that rather than 'shitting on an old friend' they just kept silent.⁶²⁶ But they became increasingly distant from the PRC and when student activists of the same political tradition visited the PRC in 1986 they were far more sceptical of what they saw. In addition, they felt no overwhelming desire to share their experiences with the rest of the student community.⁶²⁷

The 1971 NZUSA Trip

That was very much different from the situation in 1971 when, after negotiations between NZUSA and the China Friendship Society, word came that '20 visas had been approved' for a delegation of New Zealand students to travel to the PRC.⁶²⁸ This was a hugely significant trip. At the time very few New Zealanders had been to the PRC, other than Communist Party members and China Society 'fellow travellers'. The trip was seen as an opportunity for New Zealanders to get an objective image of the PRC, and would, according to then NZUSA

⁶²⁴ Murray Horton, interview.

⁶²⁵ Robert Reid, interview.

⁶²⁶ Former WCL cadre, interview, Wellington, 2004.

⁶²⁷ Bruce Cronin, e-Interview, 2006. Cronin was involved with the Workers' Communist League although this was about to disband when he was selected to be an NZUSA representative on a New Zealand youth delegation to Beijing. He did not expect to see socialism in practice, although was impressed with some of what he saw. He wrote a report for NZUSA but not for widespread distribution to the student media. Coverage of the trip in student papers focussed on a dispute within the delegation on the situation of women in New Zealand society, with the non-NZUSA delegates objecting to the suggestion that there was widespread sexism and violence against women in New Zealand. Amidst this, there was very little comment about China at all.

⁶²⁸ This construction of the communication to NZUSA was strikingly similar to that reported by the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars: 'pick up your visa in two days, prepare to travel in two weeks' (see *Inside the People's Republic*, 7).

President David Cuthbert, 'change the way that New Zealanders saw China'.⁶²⁹ Cuthbert argued that it was a way of 'promoting the "truth about China" in a way that was going to have more credibility amongst ordinary people than CPNZ or NZCFS tours could do'.⁶³⁰

The Chinese themselves argued that it was the students themselves, rather than the audience that awaited them on their return were their selected targets:

During the tour, when we asked the guides why the Chinese Government had invited a group of students [rather than another sector of society] as the first delegation from NZ to visit China, they said that it was because China was a young country which was developing rapidly, and that they thought that our age group would understand best what they were trying to do. They noted that it would be a good investment in future relationships with New Zealand through our lives.⁶³¹

The process from the announcement of the trip to its departure was significant news in New Zealand, with editorials in daily newspapers commenting on it and condemnation in conservative publications such as *New Zealand Tablet*.

The findings that will be brought back to New Zealand by the 20-strong delegation the New Zealand University Students Association is sending to Communist China are a foregone conclusion.

They will return spouting the praises of Chairman Mao and ... signal an acceleration of the drive to get New Zealand and Peking into each other's arms.⁶³²

When announced, the composition of the group was also not without some criticism. A Political Science lecturer from the University of Otago, Stuart Greif, complained that none of his students who were studying contemporary China at MA level were chosen. He objected that the tour party was made of just 'student leaders' and selected precisely because they didn't know about China.⁶³³ *Tablet* had picked up on these criticisms:

... applicants were vetted to see that those who were favourably disposed to China got the nod... students who knew something about China from their studies were passed over...⁶³⁴

⁶²⁹ NZUSA media release, quoted in 'Forgone Conclusion', *New Zealand Tablet*, XCVIII, 27, 7 July 1971, 2.

⁶³⁰ David Cuthbert, interview, Wellington, 3 November 2003.

⁶³¹ Richard Sharpe, response to survey.

⁶³² An article in *New Zealand Tablet* claimed that the students would be pre-selected to present a laudatory account of their time and the society they visited and that the offer to visit a communist country should have been refused. It also described the NZCFS as 'a communist front group' and said that 'the NZUSA has already come out strongly for Red China'. See 'Foregone conclusion', *New Zealand Tablet*, 2.

⁶³³ Stuart Greif, Letter to the editor, *Otago Daily Times*, NZUSA records, Beaglehole Room, Victoria University of Wellington.

⁶³⁴ 'Foregone conclusion', *New Zealand Tablet*, 2.

Yet others were selected who satisfied Greif's criteria, most obviously Graeme Clarke, who had just completed an honours degree in Asian Studies and Phillip Morrison, a masters student in Geography, whose research was on agricultural development and had already undertaken fieldwork in Malaysia that would serve as a useful comparison. In addition, the tour party included Ah Fo Wong, a Malaysian student who spoke Mandarin, Cantonese and Shanghaiese, as well as local Chinese dialects.⁶³⁵ As NZUSA President Cuthbert pointed out, although around a quarter of the delegation were student leaders this was because the delegation was representing New Zealand students and this would have been an expectation on the part of the Chinese hosts.⁶³⁶

The selectors, despite limited time, chose what they regarded as a 'balanced' tour party, representing each campus and a variety of political perspectives.⁶³⁷ There was a clear agenda to ensure that their findings would not be written off as those of the already converted.

People were chosen because they had access to speaking and writing about experiences. But there was a real cross-section of views. Perhaps as proof of this, the party had a big negotiation amongst ourselves about going to the Great Wall. One faction believed that going to the Great Wall was frivolous, it would be being tourists. Other faction said we're here, let's see it. Not all went. Don't know what Chinese made of it.⁶³⁸

For selector David Cuthbert the balance meant 'credibility within the student movement and credibility amongst general society at large'. The context that he saw the students operating in was that the trip was certain to get a lot of exposure and accordingly one of the considerations was that people were articulate and credible, that they were 'coming from a different range of viewpoints' since 'if they had a coherence then they would have been able to have been written off'.⁶³⁹ Another selector, Jack Shallcrass, said that the panel were not looking for people necessarily 'sympathetic to China', but those that were 'open to the possibilities that China had'.⁶⁴⁰ For David Caygill, the tour deputy leader, these aims were achieved:

I didn't get the sense that any were sceptical, they were impressed, grateful for the opportunity. All were interested in how the Chinese organised their economy, in what

⁶³⁵ Interview, Ah Fo Wong, Melbourne, 5 July 2005. Graeme Clarke reported that Ah Fo could communicate with local people somewhat better even than their official translators, who were all from Beijing (Graeme Clarke, interview, Wellington, 7 November 2003).

⁶³⁶ None were actually NZUSA office holders or employees as there was NZUSA policy restricting their participation in overseas delegations.

⁶³⁷ There were however fifteen men and just three women. Tour leader Grocott's report to NZUSA subsequent to the tour calls for more geographical balance but lends no attention to the question of gender participation. See Paul Grocott, Report to the NZUSA National Executive on the NZUSA China Delegation, NZUSA Box 51, Beaglehole Room, VUW.

⁶³⁸ David Caygill, interview, Wellington, 21 November 2003.

⁶³⁹ Interview Cuthbert.

⁶⁴⁰ Jack Shallcrass, interview, Wellington, 20 November 2003. Shallcrass was a senior lecturer at the Wellington College of Education. Known as someone with left-wing sympathies he was included as someone both sympathetic to the PRC and who would also lend some academic credibility to the exercise.

running a commune meant. What we captured though was at a human level. The people and the nature of their lives more than about communism. I had no sense that some were keener on what they saw than others.⁶⁴¹

As the first delegation to represent students to the PRC, the participants clearly saw their role as an important one. Their diary accounts are testament to their desire to note everything that they were told and the reportage that they produced on their return and testament to their desire to faithfully represent China's views to the world.⁶⁴²

The delegates were wide-eyed and imagined themselves entering into the unknown.⁶⁴³ Their impressions consist of overwhelmingly positive images of China and were interspersed with comments as to how strange they were themselves regarded, especially those drawn from the NZ radical political scene with their afros and straggly beards. While some observations directly remark on what was lacking in New Zealand society, such as the that noted by Kitty Hayward that the Chinese were 'just involved...totally involved, and we aren't. That's just it... They had a future which is something... out of fashion in our society, I think. You live for today'.⁶⁴⁴ Others dealt with more concrete aspirations, 'the idea of dealing with poverty through redistribution of resources was quite appealing'.⁶⁴⁵

Graeme Clarke admitted that his recollection was able to be presented more coherently now than it would have been then but insisted that the impression was unchanged by the passage of time:

My image of it was as a poor third world country where people had got rid of imperialism and had taken over control of economic development and were making tremendous advances economically and were daring to think about new ways of organising society and trying to grapple with problems of socialism that they hadn't got to grips with in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴⁶

This notion that China represented 'socialism', and a better form of socialism than that of the Soviet Union, was a recurring theme. So too was the notion that China was different from New Zealand, such as that embodied in Clarke's 'a poor third world country' above, and that the choices China had made were right for it, but not necessarily of any further application.

the Chinese are not interested in the export of the Chinese Revolution... and the reason is very straight-forward and simple. The Chinese revolution is a Chinese revolution and

⁶⁴¹ Caygill, interview.

⁶⁴² I had made available to me the diaries of Graeme Clarke, John Robson and David Caygill. They are strikingly similar to one another. The articles that the delegates wrote on their return are mostly collected in the NZUSA archives, VUW library. In addition David Caygill made a copy of the New Zealand newspaper articles he had collected relating to the trip.

⁶⁴³ David Caygill and Richard Sharpe echoed Peter Woolley's comment that friends had expressed concern to them that if they went to China they might not be permitted to leave (Caygill, interview, Sharpe, interview).

⁶⁴⁴ Bob Wellington, 'China Through Students' Eyes', published in *Salient*, 5 July 1972, 7.

⁶⁴⁵ Phillip Morrison, interview, Wellington, 5 November 2003.

⁶⁴⁶ Graeme Clarke, interview.

it will not have application in India or Indo-China or in New Zealand... Their model is totally applicable only to the Chinese situation and the emphatic way I am presenting this is simply the emphatic way it was presented to us.⁶⁴⁷

For a number of the tour party the highlight was their visit to Dazhai.⁶⁴⁸ They understood it as the epitome of self-reliance and over-coming adversity. In contrast to common suggestions that the students were shown the best and told that the rest of the country was all like that, Phillip Morrison said that they were 'very conscious that Dazhai was unusual and was being held up as an icon'. They were aware that for the Chinese as well as them, Dazhai's importance was symbolic.

[It was]... well known that what was happening in Dazhai was not what was happening all over China. In fact people from Dazhai travelled all over China to promote what they were doing and to some extent we were part of that too.⁶⁴⁹

In addition the students were aware that part of their mission, and the context they were part of, was to do with dispelling what they understood as myths about the PRC. For Graeme Clarke a key feature of this was that

I was able to go out with Ah Fo Wong and talk with people and that made a tremendous impression. We were able to go out. One of the things you used to read about in New Zealand was that during the Cultural Revolution there were bodies floating down the Yangtse river. So the first night we went out, in Guangzhou, we found a group of kids sitting there and we asked them about it. They ended up giving us a copy of the Little Red Book and we talked about these things. So just from the point of view of being able to challenge the bullshit that we were being told in New Zealand it was important that we were able to get out and talk to ordinary people.⁶⁵⁰

What this exchange seems to suggest, in the face of the known violence in Guangdong during the Cultural Revolution, was that Clarke is perfectly sincere in his belief and the fact that his engagement involved children, with a presumption of innocence that involves, lends itself to suggesting his sincerity is well-placed. His description may not be historically accurate but is an accurate depiction of his knowledge of that particular moment on the tour.

⁶⁴⁷ Paul Grocott, interviewed in 'China Through Student Eyes'.

⁶⁴⁸ Dazhai is the name of a mountainous North China village of several hundred farmers in Xiyang, Shanxi. In 1964, Mao Zedong published his statement, 'Learn from Dazhai in agriculture' and set up Dazhai as a national agricultural model. Daily, some 20,000 visitors passed through Dazhai to study this model of self-reliance. See Xin-An Lu, 'Dazhai: Imagistic Rhetoric as a Cultural Instrument', *American Communication Journal*, 5,1, Fall 2001. For the New Zealand students the importance of Dazhai was most dramatically represented in the film shot on the tour by Piri Sciascia. Of the 31 minutes of film, some 11 minutes, around a third of the total, is of their time in Dazhai. "I was fascinated by it", he recalled.

⁶⁴⁹ Phillip Morrison, interview.

⁶⁵⁰ Graeme Clarke, interview.

Caygill too referred to their ability to use Wong to test their interpreters work and to independently investigate questions of their own choosing. For him this was crucial to their ability to come back and speak with authority and to be convincing in their account. 'It would have been much harder to do that without Wong having been with us',⁶⁵¹ Paul Grocott, who led the tour, made this same point in his report, accompanied by a recommendation that preferably three Chinese speakers be included in a tour party of twenty people.⁶⁵² This recommendation was not pursued.

In his interview, Caygill dwelt on the question of being able to convince New Zealanders as to the veracity of the delegation's findings at some length. He was sure that even without a knowledge of Chinese, simply by being there and witnessing the body language and being able to gauge what was happening alongside the words that made up conversations he was part of, he could be sure that they were getting at the truth.

I remember at one place we asked about divorce. It took some time for the question to be made clear by our translators. 'Divorce'. Was a pause, not because he didn't want to answer, but because clearly it was difficult to answer. Eventually it came. 'Yes'... a pause... 'a divorce, we had one of those'. The answer really was that divorce didn't happen very often, that a couple couldn't easily just split up, and that they would be counselled by the rest of the group. That was a really interesting exchange. It didn't matter that it took place in a foreign language, I watched it happen, and when I got back to New Zealand I was able to translate or relay that incident for its reality.⁶⁵³

In China the students met with Guo Moruo who NZUSA claimed, with the removal of Liu Shaoqi, was nominally the leader of the Chinese state.⁶⁵⁴ A number of the participants were accredited by the New Zealand Press Association while in China. They were briefed and debriefed by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and gave a full day press conference on their return. Two of the delegates each recalled undertaking as many as sixty public meetings on their experiences in China. Piri Sciascia showed his super-8 film on dozens of occasions, and Phillip Morrison prepared his slide set as an educational resource for the Department of Education.

NZUSA President David Cuthbert understood where the tour stood in relation to bigger issues:

The context was also about taking into account the way that world events were moving. I had been to a presentation at a school by someone who had been on a China Friendship Tour and they were saying positive things about China. What they were

⁶⁵¹ David Caygill, interview.

⁶⁵² Paul Grocott, Report on the NZUSA China Delegation.

⁶⁵³ David Caygill, interview.

⁶⁵⁴ Although this may have been how the students understood things to be, it was not the case. Guo was the equivalent of Speaker of the House of Representatives so certainly a senior leading figure, albeit of a body which had little real authority in China, certainly at that time. Liu Shaoqi had been formally replaced in an acting capacity with Dong Biwu and Song Qingling sharing the position – so they were the nominal heads of the Chinese State.

putting across, it was so at odds with what the popular media was putting out that it seemed to me that a group of well-informed and by-and-large articulate young New Zealanders would have real influence on the way that New Zealanders understood these questions. I think it fuelled the support for recognition that was already there in the Labour Party and the non-SUP dominated Labour movement. So it was part of the shift in history.⁶⁵⁵

The recognition question was not the only contextual issue with respect to New Zealand-China relations. There were important individuals involved too. Not only Rewi Alley, whom the students met, but the man who was the most well-known New Zealander in China at the time, Vic Wilcox. Wilcox was head of the Communist Party of New Zealand whose paper, the *People's Voice*, was the only English language newspaper available in China through much of the 'Cultural Revolution Decade'.⁶⁵⁶

On a number of occasions, it was assumed that we knew who Vic Wilcox was – who stood beside Chairman Mao representing New Zealand solidarity on the dais for the October 1st National Day parades. I had never heard of him, but soon learnt that he was the head of the New Zealand Communist Party. Some Chinese clearly thought that he was a famous person in New Zealand.⁶⁵⁷

The students, however, were engaged in changing the contact that China had with New Zealanders – from those with Communist Party links to a more broadly representative group of New Zealanders.

The delegation was told the 'Cultural Revolution was over' and it was talked about as having been, that is in the past tense, a huge success.⁶⁵⁸ This is consistent with the report above, announcing the tour, which contrasted 1971 with 1968, since 'the PRC was undergoing a Cultural Revolution at that time'. The next tour, two years later, was told that they were in the middle of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as were subsequent tour parties until 1976, when the tour took place whilst the anti-Deng Xiaoping campaign was at its height. Certainly 1971 saw a

⁶⁵⁵ David Cuthbert, interview.

⁶⁵⁶ As virtually the only western communist party supporting the CPC's line with respect to the polemic against the CPSU, the CPNZ were accorded a number of privileges, one was that some 15,000 copies of the *People's Voice* were purchased for sale in China each week – far more than were sold in New Zealand. According to Robert Reid 'the joke going around the non-CPNZ left scene in New Zealand at the time was that the *People's Voice* was that reason that people in China's English was so bad'.

⁶⁵⁷ Richard Sharpe, interview.

⁶⁵⁸ Chinese material from the time, and the account of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, see below, talk of the start of the GPCR as in the past tense but not necessarily the event itself as having been completed, although also of the need for 'more Cultural Revolutions in the future'. *China! Inside the People's Republic* notes the Cultural Revolution as 'winding down'. There are different end dates for the Cultural Revolution. The Ninth Party Congress proclaimed the Cultural Revolution finished in 1969 (See Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, Free Press 1986, 365 and 397). The fall of the Lin Biao led to a revival of Cultural Revolution rhetoric, especially when the Gang of Four were in charge, which probably accounts for what was being told to the participants in the later tour. The notion that the Cultural Revolution lasted for ten years was something constructed by the post-Mao leadership.

China that was engaged, albeit temporarily, in more moderate mobilisation activities than it had during 1966-68 and would see again later in the decade.

Two students came home and wrote introductory textbooks for secondary school students studying China. Stuart Hadfield's one for geography students proclaimed that

in 1949 the exhausted, ill-fed and disillusioned people refused to support the corrupt rule of Chiang Kai-shek any longer...The peasants welcomed [the Communists] as liberators; Chiang fled to Taiwan and in 1949 the People's Republic of China was formed.⁶⁵⁹

Although mostly guarded in its language, it reports on the Great Leap Forward, communes and the Cultural Revolution in terms only of their stated objectives and as if those objectives had all been accomplished. On the pamphlet's last page Hadfield wrote 'political meetings are one of the main driving forces in the Chinese economy' and that Mao's goal is not just to create prosperity but a new society 'first in China and then in the rest of the world... [the] remoulding of man is one of the most fundamental and important aims in the New China'.⁶⁶⁰

There was no tour in 1972. Although given internal policy debates in the PRC at this time it is really impossible to speculate as to why, NZUSA officials took the view that the absence of invitations was due to the outrage that followed the visit to Taiwan by two of the 1971 delegation members, Richard Sharpe and David Caygill. They chose to visit Taiwan along with others, including future Labour Prime Minister Michael Moore and Rosemary Young.⁶⁶¹ The Chinese did object, and NZUSA passed a resolution declaring Caygill, then a member of the NZUSA national executive by virtue of being President of the University of Canterbury Students' Association, a 'non-person' whose name was to never again be mentioned at an NZUSA meeting. They needn't have been quite so concerned. Caygill and Sharpe were both far more impressed with what they had seen on the mainland than America's 'floating aircraft carrier' and were quite turned off by the Taiwanese propaganda in part because of the contrast to the 'management' that they had experienced in the PRC.

Caygill believed in the one-China policy and as far as he was concerned he was simply going to 'another part of China' and that the two would eventually re-unite. Significantly for him, aside from the propaganda that they were fed when he talked to 'ordinary people':

⁶⁵⁹ Stuart Hadfield, 'China', *Looking At Asian Geography: Revolution, Evolution and Progress*, Department of Education, Wellington, 1972, 32.

⁶⁶⁰ Hadfield, 'China', 48.

⁶⁶¹ Sharpe reported that he wasn't initially asked but Cora Davies pulled out after some pressure was placed on her to do so. Sharpe was President of the University of Canterbury Engineering Society and seems to have been regarded by some of his peers as quite conservative, although he disputes this (Sharpe, interview). However, the Taiwanese organisers must have thought he would have been sympathetic to their anti-communist message. Until a few months earlier, Caygill had been a member of the Young Nationals, Michael Moore, although in the Labour Party, was regarded as conservative. Rosemary Young was the daughter of Bill Young, a National Party Cabinet Minister at the time (Caygill, interview).

[they] talked in terms of material possessions, not in terms of freeing oppression. So I was interested in disparity in standards of living [between Taiwan and what I had seen on the mainland] and my sense was, from looking at the economic figures, what struck me was that the standards of living were not that different.⁶⁶²

Sharpe saw the two tours as being linked. He wrote that:

The open aim of the visit was to counter the publicity the student delegation to China had received in New Zealand... We were taken to an event for the World Anti-Communist Youth League... and were individually introduced as honoured guests to the 40,000 strong crowd to huge acclamation... I think we were all very embarrassed at this con job, and the political motivation for our trip was becoming clear.⁶⁶³

On another occasion the New Zealanders were taken to a government agency charged with monitoring the PRC and shown films supposedly taken six months before, roughly the same time as the delegation to the PRC had also been there. These films showed terrible human rights on the mainland. Sharpe recalls being shown a movie of 'children in a cage' on a pedalled tri-shaw in Shanghai.

I think officials around us had tears in their eyes. I scoffed at this, explaining that I had been there 6 months before, and that I had seen these common, normal modes of transport for children going to school.⁶⁶⁴

For these two, the only ones to have visited both Taiwan and the PRC, the experience on the mainland far outshone that on the island. As Sharpe recounted:

The Taiwan ambassador [kept trying] to convince me with statistics that life in Taiwan was much better than in China. Typical statistics were the number of TVs per 1000 people. He didn't seem to be able to understand that I considered such indicators completely irrelevant. [He] clearly did not get his value for money from the investment in me. Inadvertently, everything on the Taiwan trip reinforced my enthusiasm for what I had seen in China.⁶⁶⁵

Caygill too mocked the Taiwanese as being blinkered by their ideological outlook through a revealing anecdote:

As I was waiting to collect my baggage I tried to make small-talk with my young woman interpreter and mentioned I had been in the PRC six-months earlier. She asked what it

⁶⁶² Caygill, interview.

⁶⁶³ Sharpe, interview.

⁶⁶⁴ Sharpe, interview.

⁶⁶⁵ Sharpe, interview.

had been like and I remarked that the people had seemed happy. 'I can't believe that!' she declared.⁶⁶⁶

This story was included in a feature article by Caygill published in the Christchurch Press, and accompanying a double-page photo-essay. In another article, Caygill wrote that 'Taiwan [is] still unable to accept realities', noting that the initiatives being implemented by those in authority in the PRC were popular there.⁶⁶⁷

The points that both Sharpe and Caygill make about material conditions is interesting in the context, as it fits with a broader opposition to consumerism that also existed in this period amongst people influenced by the politics of the 1960s. New Zealanders inspired by Maoist China tended to be rather puritan in their views of consumption. In addition the propaganda of the Taiwan authorities at this time tended to stress order and discipline and restrictions on freedom – points unlikely to appeal to left-wing New Zealanders. There was also a lot of information available regarding the violence of the security services that were US client states and much less knowledge of the Chinese system.

The 1974 Tours

In 1971 and 1973 there had been a lot of conflict amongst the members of the tour parties themselves, between those who regarded themselves as activists and those who were 'tourists'. In part as a result of this, in 1974 the group was essentially all activists. As with subsequent years this also meant that there would be less of a regional balance as it was dominated by students from Victoria University of Wellington, the centre of student activism. In addition, it had been identified that one of the features of the first two tours had been the under-representation of women. As the PRC increasingly represented itself as having 'answered' 'the woman question' participation by women increased. The under-representation by women in the 1973 tour had been identified as a reason for that group not bonding very well. The 1974 tour, in marked contrast to the 1971 one, included 13 women and 7 men.⁶⁶⁸

The focus on who got to be part of the tour shifting away from 'student representatives' towards those who reflected the 'student movement' didn't mean that there was less conflict on the tours. The focus on activism meant that at another level, there was even more conflict:

⁶⁶⁶ Caygill, interview.

⁶⁶⁷ David Caygill, 'Taiwan Unable to Accept Realities', *Dominion*, 9 May 1972, 5. Caygill's point is accurate, the PRC regime did have domestic popularity, it was also successful diplomatically with a number of states switching their support way from the ROC to the PRC around this time.

⁶⁶⁸ Christine Dann provided this explanation for the increased number of women on the 1974 tour, however those on the 1973 tour I spoke with didn't recall any conflict (Christine Dann, interview, Wellington, 19 November 2003; Murray Horton, interview, Christchurch, 23 May 2004). The male/female breakdown for the 1971, 1973 and 1974 tours was 15/5, 12/8 and 7/13.

I think I was chosen to be leader because of left-wing sectarian politics basically. There were three groups who were rivals, the Wellington group who had been expelled from the Communist party, the Auckland group who were aligned to the Communist party and Trotskyists up and down the country.⁶⁶⁹

Students applied on the basis of how many left-wing activities they had been involved in. These included the October Club, the Socialist Club, the Progressive Youth Movement, *The Paper* collective, the Committee on Vietnam, the Feminist Collective, or the 'Tenants' Collective. Some, who were not selected, objected subsequently that some activities were valued over other ones. This was especially true for applicants from Victoria University (VUW) from where around half the applicants were drawn.⁶⁷⁰ In truth, those complaining were involved in the same activities as those who went, but there were so many applicants from VUW that the positions were heavily contested. Students from other campuses were selected for reasons of geographical balance despite being, on the face of it, less compelling cases for inclusion. In addition, there were complaints that people who were not 'proper' students were chosen to go. It was true that some tour members had enrolled in a single paper in order to be eligible. Clare Donovan was a Teachers' College student and not a member of NZUSA. A compounding accusation of impropriety was that she was married to the previous year's NZUSA President, David Cuthbert. Cuthbert, who had himself gone to China in 1973, was involved in the selection process by virtue of being head of the Student Travel Service.⁶⁷¹ In addition, the promotion of women, given the patriarchal nature of much of the left movement, meant that some men felt that they were overlooked for younger, less experienced, women.⁶⁷²

What students took on tour reflected more than just an increasingly active student movement in New Zealand. The students drew on anti-Vietnam War activities and the second-wave feminists

⁶⁶⁹ John Christie, interview, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

⁶⁷⁰ Robert Reid moved from Lincoln to Victoria, ostensibly to study sociology as it wasn't offered at either Otago or Lincoln and a student needed to justify not studying at their local university to qualify for a bursary. In reality it was because Wellington was 'more politically active' – and not bourgeois parliamentary politics. Reid, who had established an organisation to campaign against compulsory military service and a national secondary schools' students' organisation while resident in Dunedin, had been elected International Vice President of NZUSA. The position didn't require being located in Wellington but that was 'where things were happening' (Robert Reid, interview, Wellington, 13 January 2004). Mike Law, who had been President of the Auckland University Students' Association also shifted to Wellington to continue his political activities, most noticeably with the organization to Halt All Racist Tours (HART).

⁶⁷¹ In contrast to these accusations, the evidence clearly shows that Cuthbert behaved appropriately in all respects in the appointment process. He was not directly or indirectly involved in Donovan's selection. She was a leader in various movements, a very competent writer and a forceful personality in her own right. In addition NZUSA had approved a policy that it should include Teachers' College students in its activities in general and, until the Student Teachers' Organisation could organize its own tour – which it did in 1976 – in the China Tours in particular.

⁶⁷² The applications are available in the NZUSA archives, Beaglehole Room, VUW. Neil Pearce was one who made this complaint. He was involved in many of the groups with which those who were chosen were also involved (although not the Marxist-Leninist Organisation) and never got to go. He was particularly put out that, by his reckoning, some 'non-students' went in his stead. Terry Auld was enrolled for a single paper. He was the ideological leader of the Wellington Marxist-Leninist Organisation (MLO – which would later become the Workers' Communist League). MiLO, as it was known, was widely regarded as dominating NZUSA at the time. In his favour as a candidate, Auld edited *The Paper* and played an important role in many of the student-dominated groups that made up the New Left and from which the other applicants were applying.

amongst them were newly emboldened by a tour by Australian feminist Germane Greer. They also took with them what the PRC meant in this context.

The China that I was shown, the China that I saw, was very political. It was part of the same political trip that I was on. It was also strangely intimate. The language that was used was full of political slogans. It was clear for [we communists] that the bourgeoisie had taken over the Soviet Union: why hadn't the same forces, as a result of the cultural drag, taken over in China? It's not an uncommon position now that ideology permeates every single thing that you do. This was part of the currency of the Chinese revolution and it explained a lot for us about feminism. The idea that the personal is political. It was a China in struggle against bourgeois ideology that I went to see.⁶⁷³

Michael Dutton makes a similar point: for enthusiasts for the Chinese revolution it is the politicisation of everything that is critical, as this is translated into a critique of power relations in all aspects of life.⁶⁷⁴ There may have been a mistranslation here. For foreigners the seemingly highly charged atmosphere of the campaigns against Lin Biao and Confucius were the tail of the Maoist project, and were to be followed by what Wang Hui regards as China's deradicalisation, and the consolidation of the party-state. Yet what the slogans meant in their Chinese context may have been less important for the New Zealand student radicals than their potential to incite a radical project at home. It is not then that the students had a total misreading of China. There is a misreading but it is not total. Something of what was going on was grasped but the messages about 'politics' that the students read into the Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao Campaign were different than the Chinese audience. For those challenging attempts to depoliticise power relations, Maoism stands as one of the most powerful rhetorical invocations of the centrality of politics. Yet for many Chinese people in the 1970s the politicisation of everything was exhausting.

It was as activists that *Tel quel* were also drawn to China. Their main published response to the trip, the autumn 1974 issue titled 'In China', has a total of five articles, two unsigned, three signed by Phillippe Sollers on their time in the PRC. These articles all express a sense of China's continuing relevance and importance to the desired revolution. Beginning with an unsigned editorial whose final line asks, 'ARE YOU GOING TO REVOLT? YES OR NO?' *Tel quel* stresses the Maoist obligation: 'The study of Mao is in this case the number one imperative'. In one of these essays, titled 'La Chine sans Confucius' (China without Confucius), Sollers writes:

⁶⁷³ Angela Belich, interview, Wellington, 10 November 2003.

⁶⁷⁴ Dutton, *Policing Chinese Politics*, 308-309.

‘From my point of view, I would say that the religious and idealistic worldview that has always been that of all exploiters currently has only one serious enemy: China’.⁶⁷⁵

In order to ‘prepare’ delegates appropriately for the NZUSA tour a compulsory weekend workshop was introduced. The delegation about to go was briefed by past delegates on the vagaries and correctness of the current campaigns and watched Chinese propaganda films.

The delegation was still chosen from far more applicants than there were places, but since the message was different, those chosen were also different from those previously selected. Recognition was achieved. China did not necessarily need to be explained in a way that ordinary people could understand – although there was certainly still space for those whose jobs or contacts meant that they could gain wide exposure for their findings.⁶⁷⁶ Instead of ‘leaders’ of the formal students’ organisations and a ‘balance’ of political perspectives, the tour party was drawn from the student movement, that is to say activists, with little concern for including conservative perspectives. Intending delegates’ applications were mostly about how they wanted to ‘view socialism in action’ and ‘to be able to draw upon the lessons of China in order to advance the struggle for socialism in New Zealand’. Activists understood a different China; China was an alternative, a mirror in which to find New Zealand’s faults. The ideological features were crucial, and instead of jotting hundreds of pages regarding production levels and every word they were told they wrote about how the adventure that they were on made them *feel*.

Reflecting this change in the context in which the tours took place, the representation of China as a utopian revolutionary project became more and more exaggerated. While some presented articles for mainstream publications and wrote them to accommodate the audience, the student publications, themselves convinced of the revolutionary potential of New Zealand students, were unabashed in their enthusiasm. Badiou might identify recognition as a ‘truth event’ – it changed the way that the PRC could then be seen, and in doing so it also changed the subject-students and their image of China. This imaginary of the PRC, and importantly its representation, no longer needed to be filtered in order to achieve what was considered to be the particularised greater need.

In an overall sense, the 1974 students were incredibly sympathetic to what they saw. In addition, they believed they were witnessing something really significant. As David Buxton wrote, ‘Whatever one’s attitude towards China, no-one can deny that what is occurring is a social experiment, a historical movement of profound importance’.⁶⁷⁷ The constantly made positive

⁶⁷⁵ Unsigned editorial, ‘In China’, *Tel quel*, Autumn 1974, 3, Philippe Sollers, ‘La Chine sans Confucius’, in ‘In China’, *Tel quel*, Autumn, 1974, 14.

⁶⁷⁶ The 1974 tour party included Christine Kraus, a student who moon-lighted as a journalist for the *Dominion Sunday Times*, and Neil Rennie, a Massey student who was also a staff writer for *NZ Farmer* magazine.

⁶⁷⁷ David Buxton, ‘Industry: Fighting Bureaucracy’, *Salient*, October, 1975, 12.

comparisons to New Zealand. Christine Dann, for example, was excited about what she saw in Chinese schools:

What I liked was that the practical stuff they were teaching had an economic value; compared with the useless art and crafty stuff that New Zealand kids make... The practical really was practical, and useful.⁶⁷⁸

This reflected a change in how China was understood generally. *Tel quel's* sense was that fear and repression motivated Europe's lack of interest in China. In response, as Eric Hayot notes '*Tel quel* again and again offers China as the only alternative – ideological, political, sexual, poetic – to Western thought and civilisation'.⁶⁷⁹

Although undoubtedly not mindful of one another, the 1974 New Zealand student tourists and *Tel Quel* represent their interest in China's Cultural Revolution remarkably similarly. As Rey Chow has noted, writing on Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*, this was typical of a certain moment in Western intellectual history:

The Orientalist has a special sibling whom I will, in order to highlight her significance as a kind of representational agency, call the Maoist... Typically, the Maoist is a cultural critic who lives in a capitalist society but who is fed up with capitalism – a cultural critic, in other words, who wants a social order opposed to the one that is supporting her own undertaking... What she wants is always located in the other, resulting in an identification with a valorisation of that which she is not/does not have.⁶⁸⁰

Rejecting entirely Grocott's line that what was happening in China was of significance for China alone, virtually all student accounts from the 1974 tour contained a New Zealand 'tail'. After enthusing about what they saw in the PRC, a deprecating comment about New Zealand would follow.

The Chinese have a sense of purpose – everybody knows what they are doing – they're building a strong socialist China. And if sacrifices of individual desires are necessary to achieve this end, this is quite a reasonable price to pay. New Zealand as a country, has I feel largely lost a sense of purpose; most of the trees are cut down and replaced with grass, and its difficult to work up much spirit of self-sacrifice over acquiring a second colour TV or car...⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁸ Christine Dann, interview.

⁶⁷⁹ Eric Hayot, *The Dream of China: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2004, 110.

⁶⁸⁰ Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1991, 19.

⁶⁸¹ Neil Rennie, 'Mao's China: Impressions', *Chaff*, 4 October 1974, 12-13. Neil Rennie was a staff writer for NZ Farmer and wrote a series of articles about China for that publication on his return. This example, however, was from the Massey University student publication *Chaff*. This is probably reflected in its despondency about New Zealand.

At the heart of what excited these young people was the sense of purpose, the vitality, the sense that an ideology they themselves were attracted to could provide answers to life's questions ('Ideology is terribly important') and the sense that they were privileged to be connected and caught up with something exciting: 'Not only is the Chinese factory worker part of a national movement, he is a part of a major social experiment in international importance'.⁶⁸²

Regardless of the particularity of the activity that the students reported on, a dominant theme came through – that the project being implemented in the PRC existed as an alternative to capitalist society in New Zealand (and in other capitalist countries that the bourgeois leaders at home looked to for their inspiration).

The clinics I visited were not reserved, as in Hong Kong or America, for those who were able to pay the substantial fee demanded. They were for everybody... Everyone I saw was well clothed...I found the atmosphere a happy one... A sense of purpose and contentment... There is a feeling of unity – everyone's contribution is valuable and their skill needed to build a better China. A China that benefits the Chinese people not the British, American or Australian investor as in New Zealand.⁶⁸³

This was an emerging way of situating the Chinese revolution. Prior to the 1974 tour the comparison was not with New Zealand or the West. Compare the above with this typical example, written by Geoff Mason, a 1973 tour participant. It is also about health care but the referent is pre-Liberation China and the 'non-West':

Before Liberation in 1949 China was racked with famine and disease... Today the Chinese eat well and stay healthy, while in most other Asian countries the available health care remains as wretched as ever... [Because] in 1949 a People's Government took power.⁶⁸⁴

To some extent, the audience being written for would determine the depiction of not just how utopian the PRC would be presented but also how New Zealand society would be deprecated. In the quasi-Maoist publication *The Paper*, for example, Terry Auld wrote:

In Fengsheng the people say they are the masters of their country, and they act on that mastery. For someone from New Zealand, where real power lies with the handful of capitalists and where democracy is more illusory than real, what is most striking in China is the genuine freedom and control over their lives which the people enjoy. Everywhere

⁶⁸² Christine Kraus, 'Inside China Today', *Sunday Times*, 1 September 1974, 9-11.

⁶⁸³ David Turner, 'China: A Good Place to Bring Up Kids', *Nexus*, NZUSA Series B box 23.

⁶⁸⁴ Geoff Mason, 'Where Medical Services Actually Work', *Salient*, 29 August 1973, 8.

in China there is a concerted effort to involve the people in running society, just as they do in Fengsheng.⁶⁸⁵

In the same publication, Auld showed that even without expressly making the comparison with New Zealand, a commentary on New Zealand society could still be obvious in its implication. Discussing air raid tunnels they had been shown, he wrote, ‘The tunnels were built on the principle of self-reliance by mobilising [the masses] to dig them voluntarily, without pay and in their spare time’.⁶⁸⁶ For other tourists and writers, just what China offered was made crystal clear: ‘The trip [has] caused me to question those values in our own society that I had previously accepted without thinking. For those disillusioned seeking a viable alternative, I recommend the Chinese example’.⁶⁸⁷

Note that while utopian in their projection of China and what they had witnessed there, the students did not necessarily embrace the PRC’s own utopian claims where they did not make sense to them – or where they could not be translated in such a way so as to make sense to a reader. For example, while reporting on Chinese medicine such as operations using acupuncture as an anaesthetic with some astonishment, there was no replicating of claims that were considered really incredible. For example, although the students visited schools for deaf mutes, it was only in *China Reconstructs* that ideology was claimed as a solution to physical disability:

Thanks to our great leader Chairman Mao... Today deaf-mutes regain their speaking power...and work under the guidance of Mao Tsetung Thought... [S]ome so-called ‘authorities’... had simply pronounced this disease ‘incurable’... [yet] the road of the revolution is long and the search for truth endless.⁶⁸⁸

Although they did not report on such fantastical representation, being presented with such ideas did not necessarily detract from the image that the students obtained, or from their experience.⁶⁸⁹ They were simply put aside and they concentrated on the ideas that did seem to make sense. As Murray Horton noted, ‘We were there to learn’.⁶⁹⁰ The willingness of New Zealand sympathisers to put aside these aspects and to concentrate on what made sense to them may have led them to overlook things that might otherwise have pointed to dysfunction in the system.

⁶⁸⁵ Terry Auld, *The Paper*, Sept 1974, Issue 14. NZUSA Series B box 23. Many of the successful applicants for the student tours were part-time writers for *The Paper*. Auld was on the editorial staff. *The Paper* was typical of ‘new left’ papers of the day: outside the official Communist Party, enthusiastic about the PRC, dominated by student activists. Ideologically it drew from Maoism and anarchism. See Toby Boraman, ‘The New Left in New Zealand’, in Pat Moloney and Kerry Taylor, *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2007.

⁶⁸⁶ Terry Auld, ‘Dig Tunnels Deep’, *The Paper*, Sept 1974, Issue 14, 3.

⁶⁸⁷ David Turner, ‘We Have Much to Learn’, *Nexus*, NZUSA Series B box 23.

⁶⁸⁸ No author, ‘The Mutes Regain Their Speech’, *China Reconstructs*, February, 1972, 7-10.

⁶⁸⁹ Badiou suggests this is an unfair characterisation of this image. Mao’s work, he writes, was a guide ‘not, as the puppets say, in the service of a dogmatic catechism, but on the contrary, so that we can clarify and invent new behaviours in all sorts of disparate situations that were unfamiliar to us (Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, Verso, London, 2007, 292). Mao’s suggestions that all problems could be overcome created space for innovation, and former study tour participants said to me that such images excited them, although they now regarded them somewhat jadedly. All the time they clearly did not know how to report it back to their peers at it does not appear in reports from this period.

⁶⁹⁰ Murray Horton, interview, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

The twin themes that the students were being exposed to: that China was undertaking a path towards providing people with fulfilment in their lives – in contrast to life at home – and that there was something here that it was exciting to be connected with resonated again and again:

What impresses me as a young person, like nearly everyone else who has visited China, is the tremendous drive to achieve a common goal which gives people meaning for their lives – something worthwhile and important that they can strive for.... There is always the danger of their revolution being nullified, negated. So the journey of transition is exciting, dangerous; people consciously creating history.⁶⁹¹

At the core of the image being propagated by the PRC at this time was the idea that the Revolution was creating a new person. The 'New Socialist Man' (*shehuizhuyi xin ren*) was a frequently invoked concept. New socialist men (and women) refer to those who work hard for the interests of the people, put the interests of the masses before their own, defend the honour of the socialist motherland, and dedicate themselves to the future of the socialist project. The student study tourists naturally picked up on this idea too.⁶⁹²

This utopian person was presented in a number of consistent forms. Crucially, from 1974 on, the Chinese traits of selflessness were valorised in comparison to those of New Zealanders:

China is rather like a cold shower – invigorating, but at the same time a fair sort of shock to the system. The trouble is that everybody is so good. Everybody works hard, puts the community good above individual desires, exercises daily, studies hard, stays virginal until marriage – in fact everything that we decadent, individualistic, selfish bourgeois Kiwis are not.⁶⁹³

Again, the Puritanism of New Zealanders who were enthusiastic about China is clear. Indeed, the valorised idea of the Chinese person was extended to all, including children, where the inculcated values of working for one-another and self-reliance were able to overcome material disadvantages:

We went to a school and arrived just as they were taking their break. Within five minutes the kids had arranged themselves into four basketball teams – two lots of two teams... The court was beaten earth, rickety poles, no nets and a spongy old ball. I go to Kaiapoi High School in Christchurch and they have an asphalt court, with perfectly painted lines, a beautiful ball. They come out for the break. They argue... kick the ball about, half-way

⁶⁹¹ David Buxton, 'Industry: Fighting Bureaucracy', *Salient*, 10 October 1975, 12.

⁶⁹² See Henry Yuhuai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People's Republic of China*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2001, 400-401.

⁶⁹³ Neil Rennie, 'Mao's China: Impressions', *Chaff*, 4 October, 1974, 12-13.

through the break they still haven't started a game... what is wrong with them? And the kids are fat!⁶⁹⁴

Prior to 1974 these ideas of the 'New Man' had already been present. They had been part of the CPC's political discourse for decades. The idea was presented to the 1971 tour party too, although it does not appear in the writing they did immediately on their return. In 1973 though, looking back on his trip and keenly aware of developments in the PRC, Graeme Clarke wrote on the topic. The differences are still clear. Note how his reference is solely Chinese: there is no representation of universality of the alternative of China. Instead the referent is for Chinese choosing between alternatives in their own history, in particular a lesson from their own revolution.⁶⁹⁵

The Chinese are ... trying to change their ideology, their internalised values, from that of a fatalistic and oppressed person to those of a guerrilla fighter from Yenan. This movement was called the Cultural Revolution; it culminated with the victory of Mao's line and a return to the guerrilla ethic.

The continuity of the revolution is easily discerned. In fact the Chinese admit to trying to live by them and to 're-mould their world outlook' so that they become internalised values.⁶⁹⁶

Although clearly intended as generally informative and even of universal interest, the idea of universal applicability is not expressed, keeping Clarke's account within the ideological constraints that directly reflect his experiences from his tour in 1971.

As noted already, one of the features of the 1974 tour, in contrast to its predecessors, was the presence of women. This was reflected not only in how the group worked but also in the representations that the group as a whole made on their return. The women on the tour, who understood themselves as representing a developing feminist movement in New Zealand, were greatly moved by the position of Chinese women. In 1971, in marked contrast, there was no discussion about Chinese women as a group and the extent to which the revolution had touched their lives. In 1974 it permeates throughout the accounts. The women, when gathered together in a reunion in 2004, recounted being struck, in particular, by the image of female Chinese militia wielding guns. There were differences in how this was now interpreted, and the position of Chinese women in general, reflecting in part how the tour participants' lives had diverged since their experiences in the PRC thirty years earlier.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁴ Christine Dann, interview.

⁶⁹⁵ He had become an enthusiastic participant in the New Zealand China Friendship Society, as well as being drawn into other 'left of Labour' political activities, Clarke, Interview, Wellington, date.

⁶⁹⁶ Graeme Clarke, 'China: Nothing Could Hold the People Back', *Salient*, July 5, 1973, 4-6.

⁶⁹⁷ Lisa Sacksen, Angela Belich, Christine Dann, Moira-Clare Donovan, collective interview, Wellington, date, 2004.

As it was for the New Zealanders, the question of women was central to *Tel quel's* interest in the PRC, and to what they found there. In 'Quelques theses' (A few theses), Sollers writes that the first question of the petit-bourgeois is always, 'What about sexual life in China?' As in all other aspects of life, women in China represent an 'other' system, have an 'other' relation to sexuality and culture to that of western women (Kristeva's later two articles confirm this reading). For Sollers, Chinese women, like the rest of China, work best as a challenge to Western thinking.

Although the women recounted that their hopes and expectations were that China had 'solved the women question', their recounting of the position of women in China immediately on their return was quite muted:

One specific example I remember was at a factory, when we asked one worker what changes the anti-Confucian campaign had made for him personally, and he said, 'Before I criticised Confucius, I would do housework willingly when my wife asked me to do so. But now I realise I must take my share of organising and initiating the housework.'

Thus, although we saw many small things that represented an inequality (and the Chinese freely admit that there is not yet sexual equality), the important thing to examine is that there is progressive movement and what achievements the women's movement is maintaining, within the framework of the continuing socialist revolution.⁶⁹⁸

Yet the representation that China was better than New Zealand, and that reporting on the trip was an opportunity to criticise New Zealand society, still comes through:

What we saw was women who had been liberated and were being treated with respect by their colleagues. We saw women who were doctors and professors. We saw them being further ahead than New Zealand in terms of opportunity. In terms of variety of employment and pay levels they were ahead of New Zealand. Women were able to breast-feed at work, so that was miles ahead of New Zealand.⁶⁹⁹

When it was published, Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* was taken as a major document of theoretical feminism.⁷⁰⁰ In it, she attempts through an analysis of the conditions of Chinese women to discover and describe an economy of gender and power wholly other from the Western psyche. Thirty years later it has become the exemplar of a particular kind of bad relationship to one's cultural other. This is in part due to an essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame', which finds in Kristeva's confrontation the expression of a typically self-centred western interest in the face of the rest of the world. Spivak says that Kristeva's concern with her own identity in the face of the cultural other typifies a

⁶⁹⁸ Bryony Hales, 'Breaking Down Male Supremacy', *Salient*, March 1975, 6.

⁶⁹⁹ Christine Dann, interview. Dann would later write a history of the New Zealand feminist movement (*Up From Under*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1985).

⁷⁰⁰ Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 101.

certain kind of western interest in the east: 'In spite of their occasional interest in touching the other of the East... their repeated question is self-centred: if we are not what official history and philosophy say that we are, who then are we (not), how are we (not)?'.⁷⁰¹

If women went from New Zealand hoping to find out about themselves then for some what they found was disappointing. For at least one, it was the place of women in the PRC that began the questioning that would eventually lead them away from Marxism:

I went to China because I thought that it had solved 'the woman question', I thought it would be wonderful. But I remember talking to a woman about who made the evening meal. She told me that everything was equal and it was whoever was home first, but I asked who that tended to be and she said that it was her. And then I established that meant that she left the field earlier and therefore got fewer work points. And then I saw that breaking rocks, which was a job that men did, got more work points than the work that women did. And I thought, 'this is not equal' and I found that very disappointing.⁷⁰²

In addition to the expectations not being met, the achievement of some of the demands that women were fighting for in New Zealand were not seen as being so rosy when they were seen in practice:

In many cases [the treatment of women] was good. On the other hand, another place we went to was a textile factory and it was awful. They went on about how the women were liberated and provided with childcare and able to work but I couldn't help feeling it would have been nicer to have been at home with the kids – if they'd been able to afford that, and they couldn't because they needed everyone to work.⁷⁰³

As a group of students, it was natural that a focus of the tours would be on education in China, especially as their reporting back would be to a student audience. This was particularly true given that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had impacted so dramatically upon education and young people. The projections, consistent with what the material produced by the Chinese Party-state was saying about its achievements, were enthusiastic – but they were also consistent with the changing representations that have been established above. In 1974 China was presented as an alternative utopia, with New Zealand as the point of comparison. An article by Terry Auld in *Salient* made that explicit. It was entitled 'Chinese Education: Compare this to our system' and

⁷⁰¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*. Routledge, London, 1988, 137.

⁷⁰² Moira-Clare Donovan, interview, Wellington, 13 November 2007. Donovan noted that when she returned to New Zealand she wrote for the *Dominion* and made no mention of these nagging doubts, as she wanted to show her support for the PRC and gratitude for the trip that she had been on. She also said that when she had expressed her concerns to other members of the delegation (and her political party) they had told her that she needed to read more Marxism-Leninism to understand, but she recalled that no theoretical framework could turn what was *in fact inequality* into an imagined equality.

⁷⁰³ Christine Dann, interview.

simultaneously lauded what had happened in the PRC and criticised the system, and lecturers in particular, in New Zealand:

Once the Cultural Revolution reached education tremendous changes occurred...Teaching methods have been drastically reformed... With teachers now realising that their purpose was to serve the people... Moreover, 'through the campaign to criticise Lin Piao and Confucius, students are criticising the theory of the "absolute authority of the teacher"'... Unlike the practice in New Zealand universities, teachers are expected to be intelligible in China...

First by combining theory with practice... the Chinese education system has destroyed the abstract education which we receive and which Chinese students used to receive... China is producing a young generation which is dedicated to serving the interests of the overwhelming majority of society instead of selfish individual interests...⁷⁰⁴

In 1971, in contrast to this and consistent with what I have shown elsewhere, the marker for the success of the PRC was pre-liberation China, or at least pre-Cultural Revolution China:

If Tsinghua University is at all typical of the post-Cultural Revolution University in China, there is every reason to hope that China has forever abolished the risk of creating a new class of privileged bureaucrats, who by their education reach standards of living, and positions of power unattainable to the ordinary worker or peasant in that society.⁷⁰⁵

Note too the power of the experiential in dispelling any reservations regarding what was going on in the People's Republic of China. As Christine Kraus wrote in the *Sunday Times*: 'If we did have the occasional flicker of doubt about methods we saw in China, it was largely dispelled by these groups of happy and energetic kids...'. As we have seen, this requirement to justify the interpretations that the students were coming to was less of a feature in the 1974 tour than the 1971 one, as the students tended to be speaking to a more receptive audience – or at least they were less concerned in winning over doubters. This article, however, was in a mainstream newspaper rather than a student or left-wing publication, so was appropriately 'pitched' with that context in mind.⁷⁰⁶

Education, the question of women, and the 'new person' created under socialism could all have been expected as themes. Yet how these were discussed represented significant changes from to the dominant themes of the 1971 tour which focussed elsewhere – most significantly on food production and self-reliance. There was another issue that dominated not just the images of the

⁷⁰⁴ Terry Auld, 'Chinese Education: Compare this to our system?' *Salient*, 11 September 1974, 22.

⁷⁰⁵ George Rosenberg, 'Chinese Universities', *Nexus*, 2 May 1972, 7.

⁷⁰⁶ Christine Kraus, 'Now We Are Ten, and a Member of the Little Red Guard: Education in China – devious or a brave new system?' *Sunday Times*, 8 September, 1974, 15-17.

PRC but indeed how the PRC was understood – theatre. Consistent with this, Hayot identifies theatre as a vitally important theme in examination of *Tel quel's* experiences in the PRC.

In 1971, although they encountered Chinese revolutionary theatre, the students did not write about it except to laud the capabilities of child performers. Rosenberg recalled that they had attended a theatre and the crowd had applauded *them*, and how someone had turned around to them and warned them not to believe what they were shown, 'I chose to ignore him', but it was these ancillary events that attracted attention at this stage. In 1971 China's utopian location was Dazhai, and producing material abundance; in 1974 it was Xiaojinzhuang, and creating a new person infused not just with selflessness but also with revolutionary culture. The utopian belief about conquering nature was being replaced by the emancipatory potential of theatre.⁷⁰⁷

Chinese theatre was understood enthusiastically and as saying something about New Zealand theatre:

The enthusiasm, the conviction and the absolute finesse of Chinese revolutionary drama makes us only too painfully aware of the absence of lifeblood in our own professional theatre.⁷⁰⁸

What it spoke to was not just theatre, though, for art reflected society:

Anyone who has spent a few months in London, as I have done, cannot but realise that the plays in its theatres are dominated by negative characters: sadists, decadents, lunatics, swindlers, gangsters, murderers, neurotic intellectuals and homosexuals.

The general reasons for the differences between bourgeois drama and Chinese drama are not difficult to find. All artistic works are ideological products of the human brain reflecting a given society. Bourgeois art reflects the life, psychology and morals of the bourgeois class, whether in a capitalist or socialist society...⁷⁰⁹

For activists, what was happening in Chinese theatre was informative of the complete turning over of society that was needed in New Zealand:

⁷⁰⁷ In June 1974, Jiang Qing visited Xiaojinzhuang, situated to the north of Tianjin and the southeast of Beijing, and declared it her own model village. The village challenged the 'pure production' standpoint and emphasized the benefits in the realms of consciousness and culture that the Cultural Revolution had brought. This took the form of praising the 'ten new things' that had emerged: 'starting a political night school, building up a team of poor and lower-middle peasants versed in Marxism and anti-Confucian history, singing revolutionary model operas, establishing an art propaganda team, writing poems, opening a library, telling revolutionary stories, developing sports activities, and transforming social traditions, destroying the old and establishing the new'. Attacking and promoting the models became a proxy war during and after the Cultural Revolution. With the fall of the Cultural Revolution Group and Jiang Qing in particular the models were all discredited, Xiaojinzhuang for diverting resources from production, Dazhai for over-stating figures and depending upon subsidised labour from a local PLA unit.

⁷⁰⁸ Chris Kraus, 'Theatre, for whom? The Chinese Answer', *Salient*, 28 August 1974, 13.

⁷⁰⁹ Terry Auld, 'Part of the Proletarian Cause: China's Revolutionary Drama', *New Argot*, September/October 1974, 18.

Peking Opera is no longer about princes and concubines – now it concerns itself with portraying the working people of China. Its audience being the working people of China, there is a shared experience between actor and audience...

What is happening in Chinese theatre is of relevance to New Zealand theatre because the Chinese have asked of their art 'For whom?' Most New Zealand theatre people haven't got round to doing this yet. But of even greater importance is the movement afoot that is asking of the whole society 'For whom?' The two countries are poles apart but this question is valid in both.⁷¹⁰

Conclusions

Although enthusiastic, the representations of the PRC from the 1971 NZUSA Study Tour were not utopian. They were moderated to fit within the role that the delegation was charged with and took upon itself. The students gained enormous amounts of publicity for their venture and they faithfully represented the material they were given in China back to their New Zealand audiences. The representations took into account the context that the messages were being presented into, in particular that many New Zealanders had little or only inaccurate images of the PRC.⁷¹¹

The students were by no means entirely uniform in their assessments. Grocott obliquely criticised some when his report referred to 'two groups' amongst the delegation 'some who had come to look and some who had come to learn'. But these differences did not emerge in the reporting back to the New Zealand public.⁷¹²

On the whole the delegates across the political spectrum understood 'China' as 'socialist'. For the most part they reported back that socialism was good for China. While some thought that socialism might be good for New Zealand their representation of that point of view was muted. Instead they noted China's pragmatic achievements and that whatever China was doing it seemed to be working.

For some though, who tended to be the most radical of the delegation to begin with, the trip proved dystopic. Tim Groser, who noted his fond recall of the trip as occurring 'during [his] radical activist days', had looked forward to witnessing a China 'engaged in a radical and historic exercise to refashion society away from self-centred profit-seeking behaviour and opposition to interventionist expansionist foreign policy'. Instead he said his

⁷¹⁰ Harold Merriman, 'Keeping Politics in Command', *Salient*, 11 August 1975, 10.

⁷¹¹ David Caygill's speech notes, for example began with 'Answering questions that I know that you have: is there political indoctrination in the PRC (no), is there no individuality in Communist China (no), does China really have a desire for peace (yes)'.

⁷¹² Grocott, Report on the NZUSA China Delegation, August 1971, 3.

preconceptions were *reversed* by the trip. I left China with an intuitive understanding that this was a deeply repressive society more in tune with George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and fascism than my preconceived idealism.⁷¹³

George Rosenberg, also part of the Afro-wearing radical faction, had a similar experience. For Groser and Rosenberg, China also stood for socialism and their rejection of China also meant a rejection of socialism. For Groser this was a drift right-wards towards neo-liberalism, for Rosenberg a rejection of party politics. As noted above in Clare Donovan's account, for some of the students the 1974 trip to China, although reported upon very favourably, left nagging doubts in the utopian imaginary that would eventually take them away from interest in the model presented by the PRC.

This was true also for *Tel quel*. The Fall 1974 'In China' issue was to prove the high-water mark of *Tel quel's* interest in China and Maoism. As time passed, political China faded from *Tel quel's* table of contents. In the winter 1976 issue, the following note appeared on the journal's last page, under the heading 'About "Maoism"':

Information continues to appear, here and there, on *Tel quel's* 'Maoism'. Let's make it clear that if *Tel quel* did, for a time, attempt to affect opinions about China... it cannot but continue to do the same today. For a while, in fact, our journal has been the object of attacks by the 'real Maoists'. We cheerfully grant them the title. The events currently in progress in Beijing can only open the most hesitant eyes to what one must call the 'Marxist structure', whose sordid manipulations of power and information can now be verified... Myths must be finished with; all myths.⁷¹⁴

This conflation of the Soviet Union and China reflected a rejection of the Chinese political project in its entirety, since it was an imagining of China in opposition to the Soviet Union which had drawn *Tel quel* to China in the first place. In fact *Tel quel* was to reject not only China but politics altogether, embarking on a search for aesthetic utopia and by the early 1980s finding that in the United States. According to Peter Dews, disillusionment with China led to 'political pluralism', an enthusiastic treble-issue on the United States, where, we learn, 'the state is free of repressive structures'. In 1978, the discovery that Christianity and literature (ideally combined in Solzhenitsyn) are the true bastions against totalitarianism and the 'political view of the world'. 'In many respects', Dews writes, '*Tel quel* is now a reactionary publication (Philippe Sollers, its editor, has announced to *Le Monde* that "capitalism is ten times less repressive than socialism")', or at least one that "has no enemies on the right".⁷¹⁵

⁷¹³ Tim Groser, personal communication (in response to circulated survey questions in the absence of an interview), 4 December 2004.

⁷¹⁴ *Tel Quel*, Winter, 1976, 104. It appears on the journal's last page, under the heading 'About Maoism'.

⁷¹⁵ Peter Dews, 'The *Nouvelle Philosophie* and Foucault', *Economy and Society*, 8, 1979, 127-171.

Although *Tel quel* lost interest in the political project represented by the PRC they did not lose interest in the idea of transforming society – even if it was to take a completely different trajectory. In this respect they again reflected the New Zealand student tourists of the 1974 generation and are in contrast with those from 1971. From the 1971 tour, George Rosenberg and Tim Groser both reported that since for their group China represented applied socialism that as they lost interest in China they also lost interest in radical politics. In contrast, the 1974 tourists Malcolm Lewthwaite and Clare Donovan turned to other opportunities for transformational politics when they began to lose interest in China, both embracing Christianity.

As I look back I can see how naïve and unsophisticated I was... these guys have the correct objectives of social justice – but they are not radical enough... the only really deeply satisfying description of [alienation's] causes is that offered by the Judaeo-Christina theology. I continue with a deep impulse for social reform... Real compassion and genuine concern and action springs from the power, love of life and people that Jesus Christ continues to bring⁷¹⁶

These positions were not universal. For Angela Belich, for example, China no longer standing for what she had been drawn to made little difference to her political standpoint. She was still interested in the same things; they were simply no longer represented by China:

If you come to things from the political understanding that I have, you don't actually become disillusioned with the country. The interest is with the politics and they continue, just no longer represented by the country. One of the reasons I stopped going to China Society meetings was that people like George and Nancy were with China no matter what.⁷¹⁷

Others simply rearranged their expectations, keeping faith with the PRC by no longer demanding so much from it. This became an emerging theme later in the 1970s:

A point which we were constantly reminded of by the people we spoke to, was that China is not a perfect society and it is too idealist to expect that changes such as complete abolition of exams, should constructively advance the revolution.⁷¹⁸

In part these re-appraisements of self simply reflected the politics that the individuals developed – or the way that they sought to explain their current positions in terms of the past. Stephen Franks, for example, came under criticism during the battle for leader of the ACT party for having been to Mao's China in the 1970s. 'He must have been a Maoist' wrote one pro-Rodney

⁷¹⁶ Malcolm Lewthwaite, letter to John Christie, papers on 1974 Reunion, NZUSA Papers, Beaglehole Room, VUW. Clare Donovan similarly said, 'I was searching for social justice, I still am. Maoism did not deliver it. Now I am a born-again Christian, still looking for the same thing I was back then' (Donovan, interview).

⁷¹⁷ Angela Belich, interview.

⁷¹⁸ Rod Prosser, 'Education for Self-Reliance', *Salient*, 29 August 1977, 11.

Hide blogger. Although Franks was involved in the Committee on Vietnam, and had been an 'idealistic member of Young Labour'⁷¹⁹ he was never very close to the hard-left groups who dominated anti-Vietnam War activities. In fact, an attempt to consolidate his politics was undoubtedly why he was selected to go on the tour. On his own website, somewhat *post-facto* he explained it thus:

I realised during a long trip through Mao Tse Tung's China in 1976, that the people were terrified, that Mao's ideology, writing and poetry were every bit as war glorifying and imperialistic as say Rudyard Kipling's. Rewi Alley, with whom I spent many hours in Beijing, was scrabbling to believe his life work was worthwhile. I and my anti-Vietnam war friends had scoffed at the Readers' Digest view of communism, as Yankee propaganda. Finding it true made me sceptical, rather than immediately right wing.⁷²⁰

Karl du Fresne wrote an article in 2008 that amounts to a celebratory biography of former left-wingers who have, in du Fresne's eyes 'seen the light'. With respect to Franks he writes that the trip to China '...marked the start of a radical political conversion that saw Stephen (who has now shifted to the National Party) become a champion of free enterprise and hands-off government'.⁷²¹

To a large extent, the 1971 NZUSA tour was almost exactly like that of the CCAS and their accounts are strikingly similar to that in *China! Inside the People's Republic* – even though their starting point was far less informed.⁷²² In particular the NZUSA delegates filled their notebooks with detailed notes as to the production of each factory they visited, absolutely certain that this thing they were engaging in was incredibly significant. As Sharpe said, 'I still have my detailed diary of the visit, pedantically written every night. I knew at the time it was important to do this'.⁷²³

Academic Stephen Fitzgerald, who had himself led one of the Australian university student tours to China in 1968, reviewed the CCAS publication. In his review he noted that since the US State

⁷¹⁹ Karl du Fresne, 'Left or Right, the Goal's the Same', *Nelson Daily Mail*, 23 July 2008. Accessed at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/nelsonmail/4628300a23815.html>.

⁷²⁰ http://www.stephenfranks.co.nz/?page_id=5. Last accessed 11 January 2008. Note that the remarkable similarity between Franks and Groser's re-remembered accounts of their experiences, which each stand in stark contrast to other accounts they made. Groser, in an email, 'fondly remembered the trip... which was during [his] revolutionary socialist days', (personal communication). Franks told Marian Hobbs that 'Riverside wasn't a real commune, *he* had been to a real commune in Mao's China in the 1970s', (recalled from Wellington candidates forum, Wellington Town Hall, October 2005). The sense from both of these earlier accounts was not of an event that they had been disturbed by but as an exciting moment in what were then their young lives.

⁷²¹ Karl du Fresne, 'Left or Right, the Goal's the Same'. Note that this is very close to Tim Groser's account of his post-trip transformation, reflecting perhaps that Groser and Franks are now both members of the same political party and provided with the same advice on managing such issues in the media.

⁷²² The CCAS delegation were all academics or senior students of Chinese or China Studies, most were fluent in at least one Chinese language. Both of these factors were only true for a minority of the NZUSA delegation. The tours traversed the same path, over the same time frame. For example, they both visited Northwest Textile Factory Number 1 near Xian.

⁷²³ Sharpe, interview. David Caygill, George Rosenberg, Graeme Clarke and John Robson all made the same point. At one stage they considered producing a publication based on these collected notes (albeit each almost word-for-word similar to each other) but this did not develop beyond the conceptual stage.

Department refused passports to those Americans wishing to visit China, there had been virtually no U.S. eye-witness accounts of the People's Republic for decades. Therefore, he contended, it is 'probably important for Sino-American relations that there should be this cathartic outpouring'. Yet he condemned the poor writing and the way it consisted of essentially parroting what the visitors had been told. He added that there would surely be some 'relief' when there were sufficient accounts available to enable the publishers to discern between them on the basis that some reports were 'distinguished by excellence of writing or unusually penetrating insights'.⁷²⁴ This mirrors the New Zealand accounts and the apparent desire to publish the 'impartial accounts' that the students prepared. Virtually everything they wrote or otherwise presented for publication was printed, in full, on the basis that it was all, by virtue of its newness, interesting. Caygill, for example, recounted how the *Christchurch Press* published a two-page spread of his 'not great' photographs.⁷²⁵

The two tours followed the same itinerary and duration. What Fitzgerald notes as an 'episode of a kind which foreigners had not previously witnessed or experienced – for example, a visit to a "May Seventh Cadre School" where Chinese bureaucrats go for self-examination, reform and physical labour' – was common to them both. In addition, Fitzgerald notes as an interesting aspect of the CCAS publication the way that 'the authors have made a concerted and largely successful effort to ... weav[e] their own observations into a broader context of recent Chinese history and the politics of China under Mao'. The NZUSA party do exactly the same in their diaries, which are verbatim notes of the material offered by their hosts. The broader context was a feature of the presentation that the delegations received. They would not simply be told that a factory had increased its output, that achievement would be related to the particular campaigns and political movements that had run in conjunction with the changing figures. This was explained, most likely with some justification, as having been a causal relationship. So what Fitzgerald regards as a matter of the style of the writers was simply a reflection of substance of the story that the tourists to the PRC were being told at that time.

Finally, there is what Fitzgerald calls 'the point of view'.

The authors are of that generation of Chinese scholars which finds it perfectly natural to accept Chinese Communist points of view as having their own validity, and Chinese explanations of what is going on in China. Their view is sympathetic to the Chinese Government, and they present a pretty strong case.⁷²⁶

It is pretty clear that the NZUSA delegation saw their role similarly. They went to China to find out how the Chinese saw China and then to represent that back to the New Zealand public.

⁷²⁴ Stephen FitzGerald, Review (untitled), *Pacific Affairs*, 46, 1, Spring, 1973, 126-128.

⁷²⁵ Caygill, interview. Clarke interview.

⁷²⁶ Fitzgerald, Review, 126.

Their accounts are very matter-of-fact and, for the most part, simply consist of repetition of what they were told. In this respect the 1971 accounts have a similar feature to what Fitzgerald notes, as did *Salient*, about *China!*:

The serious weakness of the book, however, is that it is dull, sometimes boring... Anyone can recount the statistics, the history of political struggles, the change in economic circumstances and the social revolution.⁷²⁷

Similarly, for the most part, the NZUSA delegation struggled to express the state of mind of the Chinese people and the way in which this is reflected in Chinese society. They saw a mood of confidence, security and purpose and a sense of freedom, dignity and happiness. But they merely cite that such existed without transmitting a real sense of it. Where it is revealed it is in interview and anecdote, not in the articles they themselves penned, as if when putting their remembrances to paper they were weighed down with the historical responsibility of their mission.

After recognition was achieved the purpose of the tours changed slightly. Gone was the desire to select 'leaders' of students' associations in order to give the delegation authority, although leaders of the student movement (who wouldn't necessarily hold official positions in students' associations) were definitely still selected. There was no longer the same need for presenting a 'balanced' view about China. The selection criteria still included the capacity to get material about China published but NZUSA was clearly more interested in promoting revolutionary images of China and choosing participants accordingly. This was especially true from the campuses where there were a large number of applications, and where the activist movement was strong, since there was still an attempt to get representatives from throughout the country.

In addition, there was the model represented by first tour participant Graeme Clarke, later to be International Vice President of NZUSA. Clarke had had an academic interest in the PRC although also a sympathy for its revolution before he went there. Through the committed activist contacts he made on the tour, on his return he was drawn deeply into their political activities and became a solid 'left of Labour' political activist himself. Each tour from now on would include others who might be similarly 'recruited' into the struggle at home.

If the desire was to consolidate my politics then it was incredibly successful. I don't know where I would have ended up if I hadn't gone but I came back with incredible support for Marxist thinkers like Mao and Zhou and tremendous sense of support for their revolution.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ Fitzgerald, Review, 127.

⁷²⁸ Henry Stubbs, interview, Wellington, 18 November 2003. Stubbs had come to prominence in student activities as a right-leaning law student who opposed a proposal by the executive of the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association to send \$20,000 in relief funds to Vietnam. The process radicalised him and he ended up supporting the resolution that he had organised a meeting to oppose. After the trip to China he became very close politically to those

There was also significantly less interest from the broader New Zealand population in the NZUSA tours. When recognition was granted the particular purpose of the 1971 delegation was achieved. In addition NZCFS tours started going to the PRC in 1972, and explaining the PRC to people who were broadly supportive could be done in that way. The left-groups who dominated the students' organisations were not just sympathetic to the PRC's aims from the relationship, they had their own goals⁷²⁹ and the PRC was a means to their ends, not an end in itself

who had instigated the Vietnam resolution, became a bus driver, headed the Tramways Union and went on to a career as a trade unionist.

⁷²⁹ David Cuthbert claimed that one reason for the NZUSA tours was to 'get ourselves separated from the internal machinations of the China Society and its reflections of splits and expulsions from the CPNZ'. They believed that freeing the tours from the CPNZ also meant that those groups dominating student activism could pursue their own goals from a relationship with the PRC (Cuthbert, interview).

Chapter 6: NZCFS 1976-2002: Keeping Up With a Changing China.

This chapter traces the important changes in the NZCFS as it sought to maintain a fidelity to a China that changed fundamentally from the immediate post-Mao period until the Society celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2002. In 1977, it became incorporated and changed its name from the New Zealand China Society to the New Zealand China Friendship Society.⁷³⁰ Yet of this change in its organisational form Society members saw no great significance. It was simply a cosmetic name change that was forced upon them by their desire to limit the financial risk to members of their ever-expanding business of organising tours to China. In contrast, it was external changes, specifically changes in the politics and activities of the People's Republic of China, which would force real change on the Society through the next quarter century.

The most obvious of these changes in China is the enormous growth of the market economy, together with a much more extensive set of interchanges between Chinese people and people from other countries in this era, including a much larger number of New Zealanders living in China. From the late 1980s onwards there was also a substantial community of New Zealanders born or raised in the PRC. The NZCFS had significantly less claim to be the most knowledgeable about China, especially since their claim to such was based on experiential factors. Further, there was an overall shift on the part of the CPC from an emphasis on revolutionary culture to an emphasis on national culture, and on nationalism.

In the years immediately after 1976, tours were running at four or five a year and they were the main source for instructing particular individuals about China. The images they collected on these tours would then be propagated to the wider New Zealand population. A feature of the tours of the time was access to senior Chinese officials and in Rewi Alley an acknowledged expert interpreter of the PRC. This access gave further authority to Society members' claims to expertise. The activities of supporting China included engaging in public activities in New Zealand that would assist the PRC. It was the official China that the NZCFS had a connection with. To be friendly with the PRC meant supporting and agreeing with the choices that the Chinese leaders had made, and accepting that those leaders were acting in the interests of the Chinese masses.

Three decades later, what the People's Republic of China meant for the New Zealand China Friendship Society had been completely transformed, and with this the Society itself was transformed. By 2002, China had all but completely ceased to reflect a politicised image, and for many members their interest in China was 'cultural'. Reflecting this, the Society had constitutionally changed its goal of correcting misstatements about China and at times would even claim to not have a position on contemporary Chinese affairs at all. Instead of taking

⁷³⁰ It was not allowed to incorporate under the name New Zealand China Society (NZCS) as the Registrar thought the name too close to the New Zealand Chinese Association (NZCA), and that organisation would not give its permission.

direction, inspiration and income from China, the Society raised funds for aid work there and provided expert assistance in different fields. Its travel business competed with other tourist operations and was basically a commercial one. Those who presented at NZCFS meetings were increasingly representing the PRC from a very limited engagement with China. Primarily this was through having been on short tours or having had brief teaching experience. 'Experts' who spoke at Society meetings, with very few exceptions, tended to be from outside the Society.

In the 1970s, sympathetic New Zealanders went to China to see a place that was 'ahead': where one went to see the future. After the modernisation narrative replaced the revolutionary one, China came to be considered 'behind', since the parameters were material and the measures were in terms of technology. In part this is a reflection of the way that the PRC is identified more with long-term historical continuities, rather than abrupt social change. Increasingly then, the accuracy of a view about China is assessed on how much of the language and culture the commentator knows. In the 1970s such knowledge was less important since what was happening in China was simply the application of a universal (Marxist) project. Particularly since the 1990s, people with thoughtful insights into Chinese realities, but without the 'expertise' can be dismissed as amateurs. The professionalization of knowledge about China during this period saw the NZCFS shift from being the experts about China to being amateurs.

The NZCFS had been organising study tours to the People's Republic of China since 1972 although the first 'delegation' effectively represented the then embryonic China Society in 1952. For ordinary New Zealanders, there was no other way to get to the PRC.⁷³¹ The parties were mostly, although not exclusively, political sympathisers and were given comprehensive briefings as to what to expect and how they should behave before they left New Zealand.⁷³² The tours were supported by the Chinese authorities and internal costs were discounted by the China International Travel Service that acted as hosts. In 1976 the tour cost \$1300 per person.⁷³³

Yet the Study Tours were not simply for 'ordinary' New Zealanders. As well as for members of the Society, who of course were self-selecting, they were organised for particular sub-sections of New Zealand society for whom it was thought an engagement with China would be of some use. Groups who were influential in attracting others to the cause of friendship (and revolution) were targeted. This focus fluctuated, reflecting in New Zealand the groups kinds of understood as being at the centre of the political processes underway in the PRC. In 1976, at the height of questions about education in China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, there were five tours

⁷³¹ There were other avenues: for Members of Parliament, government officials etc. Although NZUSA ran a Study Tour for students this was really an off-shoot of the NZCFS ones. Barbara Spencer led a tour in 1977. In her account, although she herself was a member of the Society, she notes that the Society's tours were the 'only way to get to China'. See Barbara Spencer, *China 30 Years On*, B. Spencer, Whangarei, 1979, 83.

⁷³² 'How to behave' did not extend to having to support or to be uncritical. In fact the Chinese hosts were very keen to hear criticisms of how things were presented or how people from western backgrounds understood the PRC. See the brief discussion about this in chapter 1.

⁷³³ Tour advertisement, enclosed as an insert with *New Zealand China News*, Feb 1976. NZCFS Archive.

organised for the following year, each of around 20 people: two tours for members, one for teachers, one for high school students and one for 'Maori Women Teachers'.⁷³⁴

For many of those involved in the Society, priority was given to the lessons that China presented for changing New Zealand, rather than merely 'friendship with China'. The leader of the Society's autumn tour reported back:

Much of the writings of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung became reality for some of our members, when they were confronted with the concrete conditions of the building of a Socialist Society.⁷³⁵

The analytical lens for viewing China then was Marxism and the relationship one of tutelage – New Zealanders learning about Marxism, in practice, from Chinese. Further, these New Zealanders were learning in order to better understand their own society in terms of the universal truths of Marxism, and to be encouraged to work to change New Zealand society along the path charted by the CPC.

The Society's tours not only helped develop the revolution in New Zealand, they were also big business. The Society reported that its virtually exclusive travel agency rights to China meant that the two years ended 31 March 1977 had seen more than \$200,000 flow through its books, with some \$20,000 in surplus that was able to subsidise other operations.⁷³⁶ The Annual General Meeting agreed to incorporate the Society. Previous resistance to this move was overcome by the reality that the Society's officers needed protection given the increasing amount of money involved.⁷³⁷

A reduction in Chinese financial support was accompanied by a recognition of the fact that demand could sustain an increase in price. This meant that despite the absence of inflation in China the cost of the tours increased rapidly. In 1977 there were four tours: two for members and one each for teachers and workers. They cost participants approximately \$1700 per person (\$8600 in 2002 dollars).

The increase in price would change the type of person who went on the tours. Increasingly they were drawn from middle-class backgrounds and as the numbers grew they were also increasingly drawn from further afield from the Society, and accordingly less schooled in the Society's understandings of what China meant. For tax reasons, all of those who went on the tours became members of the Society, and a large proportion remained members. The changed nature of tour

⁷³⁴ Jack Ewan, Report of the National Secretary to the 1975 National Conference of the New Zealand China Society. Ewan Papers, (1970s General), NZCFS Archive.

⁷³⁵ 'Report on the Society Tour 1976', National Council Papers, September 1976, NZCFS Archive.

⁷³⁶ 'Annual Report', 1977, included in the papers of the 1977 National Conference, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷³⁷ National President Ron Howell said he 'was opposed but now supported. It has become necessary'. Previous opposition in the Society had been driven by the requirement to provide 'the State' with a membership list. See minutes of the NZCS National Conference, June 1977. NZCFS Archive.

party members, more middle class, less drawn from left-wing organisations, would accordingly also change the composition of the membership of the Society and the nature of the Society itself.

Following Events in the PRC

NZCFS activities closely followed what was happening in China. The branch newsletters were at the forefront of keeping members up-to-date with events and reminding them of how much could be learned from the experiment taking place there. Reflecting the interest in Chinese politics and the Society's support of the cultural revolution, in January 1976 the Society issued a statement of 'Condolences' on the death of Kang Sheng and lauding his contribution to the Chinese revolution including to the GPCR.⁷³⁸ Contrasting the relationship between bourgeois art and revolutionary art, members were advised about a display of Chinese 'crafts' visiting New Zealand and sponsored by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The crafts had been produced in China 'for the pleasure of the ordinary masses of the people'.⁷³⁹ Often, over a range of categories, China was presented as superior to New Zealand. While post oil shock inflation ravaged the New Zealand economy it was reported that there was no inflation in China and in March Hone Tuwhare spoke to the Wellington Branch on 'National Minorities in China and New Zealand', noting the achievements that China had made with respect to national minorities and criticising race relations in New Zealand.⁷⁴⁰

For the PRC, 1976 was a year of enormous political turbulence. Acting President Zhu De, Premier Zhou Enlai and Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong all died. A campaign against the 'number one capitalist roader' Vice-President Deng Xiaoping was launched. Then the Gang of Four, including Mao's wife Jiang Qing, was exposed as attempting to organise a coup and they were all arrested. By the end of the year the criticisms of Deng had been repudiated and he was returned to power.⁷⁴¹

The Society closely followed the events and offered its support to the dominant line as each succeeded the last. In May a number of the branches reprinted an article condemning the

⁷³⁸ Kang Sheng had been involved with the Communist Party of China since the early days of the Party. He was trained in Moscow in the 1930s and subsequently became head of the PRC's security and intelligence apparatus. When he died he was probably one of the most important four or five people in China. He was subsequently accused, along with the Gang of Four, of being responsible for persecutions during the Cultural Revolution and was posthumously expelled from the CPC in 1980. The 1976 mention in the NZCFS newsletter was the last mention of him in any Society publication.

⁷³⁹ 'Chinese Crafts', Wellington Branch Newsletter 14 Feb 1976, 1, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁴⁰ 'Hone Tuwhare on National Minorities in China', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 14 March 1976, 1, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive. Tuwhare had visited the PRC in 1973 as part of a Maori Workers' Delegation organised by the CPNZ. His visit is detailed in chapter 3.

⁷⁴¹ See Jonathon Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, Norton, New York, 1991, 609-619.

‘Counter-revolutionary Political Incident at Tiananmen Square’ from *Xinhua*.⁷⁴² This article reflected the line of what would come to be known as the Gang of Four. In November branch newsletters published a speech from Beijing Mayor Wu De, in which he called for a campaign to ‘thoroughly expose the anti-party clique (Gang of Four)... continue to criticise Deng Xiaoping and repulse right deviationist attempt to reverse correct verdicts, consolidate and develop the victories of the great proletarian cultural revolution...’.⁷⁴³ Yet within a year the solid support the Society had shown to the Cultural Revolution and those who headed it was to be turned on its head. The new line was revealed in Rewi Alley’s message to the Biennial National Conference in 1977:

[1976] ended with a great victory for the people, in the unmasking of the counter-revolutionary ‘Gang of Four’ and their followers, so restoring to the people their revolutionary dynamism and making them more and more determined to carry their lead forward.⁷⁴⁴

For the Society’s activists the various outcomes of the political struggles had no detrimental effect on the overall image of China. In September 1976 the Workers’ Tour and the NZUSA Student Tour had both been in China. The Workers’ tour included Don Franks, younger brother of Wellington Branch Chairperson Peter. On his return he wrote a pamphlet titled ‘As We Saw It’ which was reproduced in the Society’s publication *New Zealand China News*. Despite everything going on, Don Franks reported, ‘We were able to see... that the Chinese people had set their hearts on maintaining China’s political colour’, commending in particular how when they had observed students engaged in an anti-Gang of Four protest – framed as ‘wanting to see the revolution continue’. When the students had been approached by police officers the officers had unfurled their own banner to join in the protest – which was reported as having been much to the shock of a North American observer.⁷⁴⁵ However, for those on the periphery of the Society – or at least to Party-based connections to China’s revolution – events in China were harder to comprehend. Audrey Young was a student teacher and went on the 1976 Student Study Tour. Her experience was in contrast to Franks’ optimism that each change in direction of the Chinese leadership represented the correct one. She said that being in China during the ‘Criticise Deng Xiaoping’ campaign and then hearing he had come to power almost as her tour landed back in

⁷⁴² ‘Counter-revolutionary Political Incident at Tiananmen Square’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, May 1976, 2, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive. *Xinhua* is the New China News Agency, the Chinese equivalent of Agence France-Press or the British Broadcasting Corporation. All are officially commercial businesses, in reportage officially independent of the government, but subject to considerable oversight through the way that they are structured and funded.

⁷⁴³ ‘Counter-revolutionary Political Incident at Tiananmen Square’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, November, 1976, 3. Wellington Branch papers. NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁴⁴ Rewi Alley letter to NZCFS. Inwards correspondence. Jack Ewan papers, 1970s. NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁴⁵ Don Franks, ‘As We Saw It’, *New Zealand China News*, New Zealand China Society, November 1976, 3.

New Zealand had been impossible to reconcile, and she had drifted away from involvement with the NZCFS.⁷⁴⁶

As the official Chinese line changed towards the repudiation of all things that could be associated with the Gang of Four the Society followed suit. Early 1977, as part of the post-Mao authorities campaign against of Gang of Four, saw the screening of *The East is Red*, and *Red Detachment of Women*. *The East is Red* had been banned since 1966. *The Red Detachment of Women* existed as two films, one made in 1961 and another reworked as part of the *yangbanxi* or 'eight model works, under the sponsorship of Jiang Qing. NZCFS was showing the earlier one. Although most Society members in New Zealand would have simply thought they were seeing a movie, the screening of these two films was in fact part of the break with the cultural revolution. In Wellington however the connection was made in the newsletter. The advertisement for the screening of the films in Wellington carried the statement that 'the showing of such a fine film was suppressed by the Gang of Four, they barred the broad masses... from seeing this film'.⁷⁴⁷

Reflecting the political nature of the time, speakers at NZCFS meetings had to prove through their political credentials that they could speak with authority on 'People's China'. When Ted Bull, President of the Australian China Friendship Society, visited he spoke not just as a 'friend of China' but as someone with 'a lifetime of valuable experience in the day-to-day working class movement behind him'.⁷⁴⁸

The late 1970s were also complicated in terms of the internal politics of the Society because of the influence of divisions that occurred with the CPNZ. The splits in the communist movement in New Zealand meant that there were now a series of organisations alongside the CPNZ that were supportive of China but otherwise engaged in ideological conflict with one another. Ultimately, those Marxist-Leninists who stayed with the Society would leave the CPNZ. Some, such as the mostly Wellington-based members of the Marxist Leninist Organisation, were already outside of it. New parties (or more correctly, pre-parties) formed around this time. They included the *Struggle* group and the Preparatory Committee for the Establishment of a CPNZ (Marxist-Leninist). Alec Ostler and Ray Gough, long time members of the Society, were in the former. Jack Ewan, National President of the Society, and former CPNZ General Secretary Vic Wilcox, were in the latter. Ewan and Wilcox had been expelled from the CPNZ in 1978.⁷⁴⁹ Later that year the CPNZ would withdraw from the Society altogether causing havoc at branch level as many

⁷⁴⁶ Audrey Young, personal communication, 26 October 2003.

⁷⁴⁷ 'The East is Red: A Song and Dance Pageant', Wellington Branch newsletter, 9 May 1977, 1.

⁷⁴⁸ 'Monthly Meeting Speaker: Ted Bull', Christchurch Branch newsletter, March 1977, Willmott papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁴⁹ These machinations of the CPNZ and its various off-shots are explained, so some extent, in chapter 4.

long-serving committee members, also members of the Party, made themselves unavailable for re-election.⁷⁵⁰

These divisions in the late 1970s were around a range of matters, but, as detailed in chapter four, were principally organised around a debate regarding the significance of the Theory of the Three Worlds. The NZCFS had lengthy discussions about whether to and how to promote the Theory. This culminated in 1977 when the Society, over National President Jack Ewan's signature, issued a statement supporting the Theory of the Three Worlds and called upon members to study it as 'it tells the truth about the world at present'.⁷⁵¹ The Auckland Branch, which included Ewan but was dominated by the CPNZ (the CPNZ was at the time withholding judgement on the Theory), criticised the decision to promote it.⁷⁵² In the end, the National Executive had only agreed to include the material about the Theory, which had been written by CPNZ and Society member Joan Donley, in its newsletter if it was published with a covering note from the President. In the note NZCFS President Jack Ewan made his position clear. The Theory meant China's identification with the third world, and this was simply a continuation of the China with which they had always been friends:

Herself a product of revolution, China identifies with those forces in the world that oppose imperialism and colonialism... she offers a fraternal hand to those who seek to break with colonial rule.⁷⁵³

The Society subsequently arranged for a workshop, held as part of its National Conference, on how to achieve 'The Popularisation of China's Foreign Policy, Including "Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds"'. The report of the workshop noted that there was considerable debate about China's foreign policy, the Gang of Four and the Theory of the Three Worlds, although it reported that some of the confusion was manufactured,

some people have been confused by the nonsense of the capitalist press which calls the present Chinese leadership 'moderates' and the disgraced 'gang of four' 'radicals'.⁷⁵⁴

The workshop report acknowledged that there was much work to do. However, even in the branches that were dominated by a conservative climate it was decided that there was room for a 'gradual slow-but-sure approach to the popularisation of China's foreign policies'. All members had a responsibility to study China's foreign policy and to be 'well-informed as to the situation'

⁷⁵⁰ Bill Willmott reported that in 1977 over half of the Christchurch Branch executive made themselves unavailable and a very inexperienced committee was elected. Since he had relatively recently arrived from Canada he had had no idea what was going on. Willmott, interview Christchurch, 22 May 2004.

⁷⁵¹ 'Introduction' to NZCFS pamphlet 'The Theory of the Three Worlds'. Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁵² The criticism was not just over the Theory itself. Some in the communist movement who supported the Theory of the Three Worlds, believed that as it was a contribution to Marxist-Leninist Theory, it should be the Party's job to promote it. The NZCFS's job, they believed, was to support the PRC itself in the things it did (albeit they may have been based in an application of the Theory (Don Ross, interview, Whangarei, 17 April 2003).

⁷⁵³ NZCFS pamphlet 'The Theory of the Three Worlds', Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁵⁴ 'Report on promoting "The Theory of the Three Worlds"'.

and, as Jack Ewan was reported to have ‘correctly’ pointed out, ‘The Theory of the Three Worlds must be discussed. It is a clear statement of the present situation in the world’.⁷⁵⁵

For the most part, the Society consolidated around China’s new line, represented it as a continuation of Mao’s, and rejected the Gang of Four’s ‘ultraleftism’. In particular the fall of the Gang of Four had little influence. Even Flora and Nat Gould, who would establish the pro-Gang of Four ‘Red Flag Group’ in 1981, left with the CPNZ in 1978 and only seem to have publicly promoted a pro-GPCR and Gang of Four position after they were expelled from the CPNZ – for criticising Albania – in 1979. The CPNZ itself followed the Albanian line, at this time not supportive of the cultural revolution and soon to evolve into a rejection of Mao altogether. Although, as reported below, Graeme Clarke said that in 1980 Jock Hoe had made pro-cultural revolution comments, Hoe had long drifted away from the Society by this stage and had lived outside of New Zealand for much of the intervening period.

Despite the differences within the Society and the withdrawal of members of the CPNZ, the NZCFS remained very political in its work, even with respect to questions that were not immediately about China. It called upon members to oppose the Security Intelligence Service Bill.⁷⁵⁶ On 1 January 1977 it issued a statement calling for the ‘broadest international front to smash the two superpowers’ hegemonism and war policies’.⁷⁵⁷

The Society’s efforts had become very much focussed on ‘explaining’ China to New Zealanders. With the CPNZ now openly opposed to China’s current policies this task had become one of defending China from both anti-communists and those it described as ultra-leftists (who were mostly former members).⁷⁵⁸ Its activities in this regard included the leaflet ‘China and the Nuclear Question’, and undertaking 81 screenings of its various films, to a total audience of over 3000. *Learner in China*, Willis Airey’s biography of Rewi Alley was reprinted to celebrate the Society’s 25th anniversary.⁷⁵⁹ Increasing debate over China’s foreign policy (especially vis-a-vis the USSR’s foreign policy) resulted in the distribution of a pamphlet titled ‘Background to China’s Foreign Policy’ by Terry Auld and Alick Shaw.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁵ ‘Report on promoting “The Theory of the Three Worlds”’.

⁷⁵⁶ This was partly on the grounds that the SIS had been caught bugging the home of former National President (and CPNZ member) Ron Howell. The Minister in charge of the SIS (Prime Minister Rob Muldoon) refused to confirm or deny whether or not being a member of the Society was grounds for being considered a security threat to New Zealand. Minutes of NZCFS National Executive Meeting, 1 November 1978, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁵⁷ Report on Branch AGM, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 4 January 1977.

⁷⁵⁸ In turn would CPNZ describe the Society as being a home for petit-bourgeois Chinese nationalists. See *CPNZ’s Firm Stand Against the New Revisionism*, In Print, Auckland, 1978, 6.

⁷⁵⁹ National President’s Report to the NZCFS National Conference, June 1980, Jack Ewan Papers, (1980s General), NZCFS Archives.

⁷⁶⁰ Terry Auld and Alick Shaw, *Background to China’s foreign policy today*, Wellington Branch New Zealand China Society, Wellington, 1976. The publication consisted of two papers presented at a public meeting held by the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand China Society on 23 March 1976: ‘The struggle between the two superpowers’ by Terry Auld and ‘Never seek hegemony’ by Alick Shaw.

At its Annual General Meeting in 1977 the Society (now formerly the NZCFS Incorporated) adopted as its first goal ‘To foster interest in and promote the study of China, its history, culture, political and social structure past and present’. This replaced the goal of recognition, which had been achieved. ‘Goal (c)’ now read: ‘To oppose and correct misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the policies and actions of the Chinese Government and people’.⁷⁶¹

These changes were intended to respond to changes in the New Zealand situation, and to cement the centrality of politics to the life of the Society, as that was central to how members saw their organisation. NZCFS members saw their organisation as simply continuing what it had been doing, and that China was unchanged. As Jack Ewan’s report to the National Conference noted ‘Hua Guofeng is carrying forward the political line of Mao and, in particular... exposing and defeating the attempts of the Gang of Four to subvert the work of Comrade Mao’.⁷⁶² However, changes in China would have enormous impact on the Society. China was changing dramatically as its resurrected leadership looked towards ‘modernisation’ and ‘opening up’. Over the next 25 years these changes would not just affect the image of China that the Society represented, but all aspects of the operations of the NZCFS.

Friendship of a New Type

Accompanying the modernisation process at the end of the 1970s, there was a reconsideration of all of the activities led by the Communist Party of China, and naturally this extended into the people-to-people activities.⁷⁶³ The International Section of the CPC would call its new practices ‘new-type inter-party relations’.⁷⁶⁴ Their activities meant that they chose now to interact with ‘various political parties... proceeding from state strategic interests, instead of ‘supporting Leftists and combating revisionism’.⁷⁶⁵ The activities that the New Zealand China Friendship Society was engaged in with the PRC, through *Youxie* would also be affected by these changes.⁷⁶⁶

China’s interest in foreign exchange, in part to contribute to its modernisation drive, had led to an increase in the numbers of tours. This meant that more and more New Zealanders were

⁷⁶¹ Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, NZCFS National Conference, Auckland, 14-15 May 1977, Jack Ewan papers, (1970s General), NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁶² ‘National President’s Report to the NZCFS National Conference’, Auckland, 14-15 May 1977, Jack Ewan papers, (1970s General), NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁶³ This is consistent with the periodisation process discussed in chapter 1. The CPC refers to the process as ‘To fit in with the developing domestic and international situation, China made a major adjustment of its foreign policy’, see Communist Party of China, *CPC Seeks New Relations with Foreign Political Parties*, New Star Publishers, Beijing, 1998, 2.

⁷⁶⁴ CPC, *CPC Seeks New Relations*, 2.

⁷⁶⁵ CPC, *CPC Seeks New Relations*, 3. Note the consistency with Wang Hui’s analysis that the CPC and PRC state became rigidified (Wang Hui, ‘Depoliticised Politics, From East to West’, *New Left Review*, 41, September-October 2006, 29).

⁷⁶⁶ While current *Youxie* representatives spoke freely of the current relationship between themselves and foreign groups, and dated the start of these activities to the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s, they would not talk of the period before then, merely to assert that what they were doing now was correct. However, retired former *Youxie* workers I talked to made a distinct link between changes in people-to-people practices and changes in the ideological outlook of the leading organs of the CPC.

having direct contact with China and they did not necessarily share the values of longer-standing members of the Society. Accordingly, NZCFS's opening up of China to all and sundry created a problem with 'letting in the flies'.⁷⁶⁷ The Society could less and less maintain a consolidated ideological line supporting China revolutionary trajectory. Some of these new study tour participants thought China should adopt bourgeois democratic practices,⁷⁶⁸ were enamoured by the Dalai Lama and questioned the Chinese Government's position on Tibet,⁷⁶⁹ were critical of 'backwardness' in China and attributed this to socialist planning,⁷⁷⁰ or even felt that 'the people were terrified, [and] that Mao's ideology, writing and poetry were every bit as war glorifying and imperialistic as say Rudyard Kipling's'.⁷⁷¹ Yet they often joined the Society after their experience of travelling to the PRC.

In addition, the careful screening of who could be an expert on China was also becoming harder to control. A number of New Zealanders were now going to work in China, answering China's call for 'foreign experts', a call that increasingly put 'expertise' ahead of an ideological connection with the Chinese revolution.⁷⁷² The first New Zealanders to go and work in post-liberation China were those with political ties to left movements such as the CPNZ. Over time, however, such political ties became less significant.⁷⁷³ Jock Hoe, who taught history in Shanghai, had been involved with the Society for many years so fitted the earlier requirements. When Graeme Clarke visited Hoe in 1980, Hoe was still defending the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁷⁴ Other observers have considered that the fact that some foreigners became too politically engaged, especially from the

⁷⁶⁷ Deng Xiaoping would use the term later to refer to China's reform process giving greater access to foreign ideas and that some bad things would come in with the good things. See Jonathon Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, Norton, New York, 1990, 696.

⁷⁶⁸ John Meldrum, NZCFS Tours Committee Report, September 2008, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁶⁹ Yvonne Brown, a member of the Society's Teachers' Tour in 1976, personal communication, Hokitika, Christmas, 2003.

⁷⁷⁰ Tom Mills, NZCFS Tours Committee Chairperson, personal communication, June 2008.

⁷⁷¹ Stephen Franks. See http://www.stephenfranks.co.nz/?page_id=5.

⁷⁷² This, in accordance with Deng Xiaoping's famous quote that 'It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white so long as it catches mice', meant that as long as people were native speakers of English they could teach in China, regardless of their views of the type of society the Communist Party of China was seeking to build, or the methods it used.

⁷⁷³ Examples of the politically engaged foreigners to go to the PRC were Jack Ewan or the Lake family. Ewan has been discussed above. Doug Lake was trained as a journalist and worked for the *Christchurch Star-Sun*. He joined the army in 1940 and became at one time a clerk to General Freyberg. After being demobbed, he joined the Department of External Affairs and was posted to the New Zealand embassy in Moscow. He served as a typist, then, after learning Russian, was appointed to the Diplomatic Staff. He served in Moscow till 1949. He was criticised in the Department for being overly sympathetic to the Soviet Union and left External Affairs in 1954. He and his wife Ruth, who met while both were working for the legation in Moscow, then got involved in various left causes such as the Wellington branch of the Communist Party, and the Society for Closer Relations with Russia. After working in the Parliamentary Press gallery the Lakes went to Peking in 1962. Doug and Ruth both worked in the Foreign Languages Institute, 'polishing' English language publications. Their daughters went to school in China and were 'Red Guards' during the early years of the Cultural Revolution. On returning to New Zealand in 1969 Doug Lake became active in the NZCFS. Sally became a leader in the Wellington branch of the Progressive Youth Movement (Murray Horton, interview with Doug and Sarah (Sally) Lake, transcript supplied by Horton, the article was published in *Canta*, in 1972 when Horton was *Canta* editor).

⁷⁷⁴ Graeme Clarke, interview, Wellington, 7 November 2003. Clarke met Hoe in Shanghai, on Clarke's second trip to China (he had been on the first NZUSA trip to China in 1971).

left of the political spectrum, was a factor in the later preference for those who were ‘simply teachers’.⁷⁷⁵

As the seventies became the 1980s people only recently connected with Chinese friendship were invited to China to teach. Gwen Ryan was much less political than her predecessors, although sympathetic, but at the first NZCFS meeting that she attended, she was invited to teach in China. Don and Lorna Simpson, are another example. They had not even been members of the Society when they started to explore the possibility of teaching in China. They became interested in China through participating in a commercial (not an NZCFS) tour in 1976. Mary and Vincent Gray fitted the new mould. He was a scientist, she a language teacher.⁷⁷⁶

The concept of what constituted a ‘friend of China’ can be seen to have changed from the highly political concept of friendship at the heart of Michael Dutton’s analysis as introduced in chapter 1. For Dutton a politics of commitment constitutes a binary divide between friend and enemy and is a key element in the revolutionary period. Post-Mao, friendship has become an apolitical form of any connection between two people. ‘Friend’ is the same word but is contextually completely different.

In 1978 and 1979, the NZCFS’s objective to ‘correct misrepresentations about China’ was tested by the conflict with Vietnam and the tension this created for those members active in anti-Vietnam War activities.⁷⁷⁷ This was especially true since many of the Society’s student members, who dominated branches such as that in Wellington, had been drawn to China because of its symbolic status in anti-imperialist discourse. Throughout 1978 the Society produced and re-produced Chinese material criticising Vietnam. The PRC Government ‘Statement on Vietnam

⁷⁷⁵ See Anne-Marie Brady *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People’s Republic of China*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, 2003. Tom Grunfeld is also of this opinion (private conversation, Singapore, 2003). Michael Crook (Interview, Beijing, 18 April 2003) said that he’d noticed a preference in the PRC for foreigners with no political interest in China as they wouldn’t be interested in commenting on how things were going. Gwen Ryan described herself as merely a ‘humble teacher of English’ as the reason she could not propose solutions to China’s problems, see Tom Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 1995, 192.

⁷⁷⁶ Retired teachers, Don and Lorna Simpson enquired about teaching in China through the Society. They discovered the Society because they ‘bumped’ into an NZCFS Tour in China. They had been unaware of it before then. They were assigned to Jilin University in Changchun, in the PRC’s far northeast. On return to New Zealand Don Simpson founded the Wairarapa Branch of the NZCFS, and was influential in arranging a Sister-City relationship between Masterton and Changchun. The Gray’s attended a lecture at the DSIR in Lower Hutt on coal usage in China, whereupon Vincent Gray, who was about to retire as a coal scientist, enquired about working in China. He was offered a position at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. Mary Gray had been Head of Languages at the Correspondence School and was also offered a visiting professorship in the Foreign Languages Department. They too joined the NZCFS on their return, Mary becoming National President in 1994-1996 and Vincent serving on the Wellington Branch committee for many years. (These stories are all contained in Tom Newnham’s *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 1995).

⁷⁷⁷ On February 15, 1979 the PRC publicly announced its intention to strike at Vietnam and PRC snipers killed a Vietnamese soldier that they claimed had violated the Chinese-Vietnam border. Some 200,000 Chinese troops subsequently invaded the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and occupied about forty kilometres of Vietnamese territory, as far south as the city of Lang Son. They then claimed the gate to Hanoi was open, declared their punitive mission achieved, and withdrew. The reason cited for the counter strike was the mistreatment of Vietnam’s ethnic Chinese minority and the Vietnamese occupation of the Spratly Islands. Western observers put the attack down to the Vietnamese invasion of the Democratic People’s Republic of Kampuchea, regarded as China’s ally. See Zhang Xiaoming ‘China’s 1979 War with Vietnam: A Reassessment’, *China Quarterly*, 184, December 2005, 851-874.

Expelling Chinese Residents' was reproduced in Branch Newsletters in May. The National President's article 'Support for China's Just Stand' was published in early June. Yet the fact that many NZCFS members had positive images of Vietnam meant that the pronouncements needed to be guarded. The Society call was for 'continued friendship' and for the Vietnamese government to 'take responsibility for unwarranted measures'.⁷⁷⁸ Note that the Sino-Vietnamese conflict was explained in terms of national politics rather than ideological ones, reflecting the post-Mao depoliticisation process. It was precisely this that prompted Benedict Anderson's interest in exploring the large global politics of the nation and nationalism (instead of simply class).

The following year the Society admitted it had lost members over the issue.⁷⁷⁹ At first it defended China from what it identified as encircling Soviet hegemonism and then its publicity became more aggressive. It produced a pamphlet written by Wellington Branch Chairman Peter Franks entitled *Why Did China and Vietnam Go To War?* 'History', the Franks pamphlet claimed, 'and the response of the world's peoples will show solid justification for China's counter-attack against Vietnamese border incursions over a long period'.⁷⁸⁰ The pamphlet was essentially a verbatim transcription of a conversation Franks had had with PRC Foreign Affairs officials while on the NZCFS leaders' tour the previous year.⁷⁸¹

As always the Society closely followed events – even the language – that was topical in China. In July 1978, Peter Franks revisited the publishing of the *New China Review* article 'Counter Revolutionary Political Incident at Tiananmen Square' in mid-1976. He said that he had now 'come to the conclusion' that the earlier article was 'a pack of lies'. This was a 'negative example', he wrote, 'to prove the correctness of China's current strategy to "Seek Truth from Facts"'.⁷⁸² The 'pragmatic' approach of the PRC's new leaders to China's particularities also infused the reports of the Society's leaders returning from a 'Leaders Tour' that same year. Crucially, so too did the claim to legitimacy of the new leadership in representing any 'new' policies as being a continuation of the old:

Ideologues abroad may find China less exciting today than in those heady days of the Cultural Revolution when all authority was being challenged and the emergence of socialist consciousness on a grand scale seemed imminent. A visit today will convince

⁷⁷⁸ 'Support for China's Just Stand', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 25 May 1978, 3, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁷⁹ 'National President Report', NZCFS Annual General Meeting, Christchurch, 5-6 May 1979, Jack Ewan papers, (1970s General), NZCFS Archives.

⁷⁸⁰ Peter Franks, *Why Did China and Vietnam Go To War?* New Zealand China Friendship Society, Auckland, 1979. The address given by Franks to the Wellington branch was on 21 March 1979. The pamphlet was circulated to all members of the Society and sold at meetings and stalls to members of the public. It included an introduction by Dick Anderson.

⁷⁸¹ Peter Franks, interview, Wellington, 24 January 2004.

⁷⁸² All quotes from Wellington Branch Newsletter, July 1978. "Seek truth from facts" was a slogan in the People's Republic of China referring to pragmatism. Beginning in 1978, it was promoted by Deng Xiaoping, the phrase means to look for economic and political solutions that have practical application rather than those based on political ideology (such as that of Mao Zedong – although the particular words were actually attributed to Mao).

them that the Chinese are still on the revolutionary road that began with the Long March, even if that road is a little longer and more winding than they thought it would be a decade ago. In its unique approach to economic development, China continues to provide a challenging model to the Third World, and in its patterns of social organisation it challenges us all.⁷⁸³

At the same time the Society recognised that some of the people who used to be entranced with the People's Republic no longer were. Peter Franks Chairman's Report to the Wellington Branch for the 1978 year referred to this in some depth:

It is a fact that there are quite a lot of people these days who have had some sort of involvement in China friendship activities who think that China has deviated from Chairman Mao's principles and is now on the capitalist path. This is something our Society has to face up to and try to deal with... There is one weekly newspaper which devotes much of its time these days to spreading outright lies and distortions about the situation in China. I'm not referring to the newspaper 'Truth' but to the 'People's Voice'.⁷⁸⁴

The May to June programme of the Society was dominated by discussion and explanation of the new Chinese programme of the Four Modernisations. Jack Ewan's Presidential address to the Annual General Meeting covered the 'importance of the Four Modernisations and the Theory of the differentiation of the Three Worlds', while acknowledging that the policies 'have led to debate within and without the society'. Admitting that there was debate was not intended to open the possibility of the Society rejecting the Chinese position. Ewan's intention was to manage the debate and to make sure that the official position was discussed until it was understood by everyone:

I believe we are on the surest ground when we aim to encompass all who are interested in being genuine friends with China, on whatever basis... If some of our friends are uncertain or confused about events in China, shouldn't this be an opportunity for a branch meeting, a study group, an article?⁷⁸⁵

The Society endorsed the opening-up strategy through its activities. The 1979 'China Week' in Wellington exemplified the approach. It offered 'as varied a programme as possible' and included kite flying and a Chinese cooking demonstration, alongside discussion on the Four

⁷⁸³ Bill Willmott, 'Professor Bill Willmott's Report', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 1 August 1978, 2. It is reproduced from Christchurch newsletter, Wellington branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁸⁴ Peter Franks, 'Chairman's Report to the Wellington Branch AGM', 1 January 1979, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁸⁵ Nancy Goddard, 'Report on AGM and President's Report', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 14 May 1979. The statement was made by National President Jack Ewan and was quoted from his report.

Modernisations and a screening of the movie based on the revolutionary opera *The East is Red*.⁷⁸⁶ Tours also reflected this search for those with eclectic interests in China. Alongside the study tours offered in 1980 for members, teachers and students, there was one for those interested in China's arts and crafts. Tours were now double the 1977 price at \$2600.⁷⁸⁷

While the Society was attempting to draw in new members, and mould them to the Society's perspective on China, for existing members it was important that it was still the same 'China'. In November 1979 the Society's branch newsletters reproduced an interview with Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng which emphasised the continuing tradition and thought of Mao Zedong in current practices. The review of activities in 1979 noted that there had been meetings on 'China's self-defensive counter-attack' and that the Society had come to recognise that the Four Modernisations should be understood as a 'New Long March'. Yet the Society was suffering from the loss of Vietnam War activists and the increasing cost of its tours. It was forced to cancel one of two planned teachers' tours and the spring members' tour due to lack of demand. In addition to the political problems the Society had lost its 'monopoly'. Commercial companies were now offering tours alongside the NZCFS ones, reducing the Society's potential customers and meaning that not all visitors to the PRC could be managed and led according to its objectives.⁷⁸⁸

In 1980 the Society supported and joined the PRC's condemnation of Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Although this meant supporting the Western boycott of the Moscow Olympics, it was straightforward compared with attempting to be consistent with both its previously taken positions and the current Chinese line on other issues.⁷⁸⁹ Remembering the Cultural Revolution, for example, was becoming more and more complicated. Although just a short time earlier it had been noting the Cultural Revolution as a good thing, in July it noted, in accordance with the contemporary official line, its opposition to the 'effect... on Chinese workers of the policies of the Gang of Four'. The following month it would begin its move towards a complete rejection of the GPCR when it reproduced an article from *Beijing Review* which used the construction 'ten years of disaster' to describe the years from 1966 to 1976.⁷⁹⁰

Increasingly the Society was finding itself defending the international activities of the PRC from New Zealanders who would previously have been supportive of the Society. In April it published

⁷⁸⁶ 'China Week', Wellington Branch pamphlet, June 1979, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁸⁷ 'NZCFS Study Tours', advertising pamphlet, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁸⁸ Jack Ewan, 'National President (Organisational) Report', May 1980, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archives.

⁷⁸⁹ The China Society was criticised by the Communist Party of Aotearoa for being in collaboration with right-wing countries. In an article entitled 'Bourgeoisie Block Athletes Going to Moscow' it wrote 'It is really lovely to see the[m] in the relaxed company of these dogs', *Aotearoa Communist*, 9 June 1980, 1. The CPA was formed out of a group who split from the CPNZ in 1974. It stopped functioning later in the 1970s and is not related to the CPA that launched in 1993 and is referred to in chapter 4. In 1973 the masthead of newsletter of the Auckland Branch of the NZCFS quoted Mao Zedong, reminding members to consider 'who are our enemies and who are our friends?'

⁷⁹⁰ 'Excerpts from an interview with Chinese Tourist Director Lu Xuzhang', Wellington Branch Newsletters, 23 July 1980, 2. The *Beijing Review* article is 27, July 7, 1980. The 'ten years of disaster' thesis would become official PRC policy the next year (see below) with the publication of the 'Official History on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'.

an article refuting ‘the rumour’ that China was trading with South Korea and South Africa.⁷⁹¹ On the eve of the 1981 Springbok Tour to New Zealand, with many of the student members who had been attracted to friendship with the PRC over the previous decade involved as leaders in the anti-tour movement, the latter was of particular significance.

Yet while this position argued that China remained a bastion of anti-imperialist internationalism, other issues on which the Society reported reflected a drift from the Society’s roots. For instance, in May it reported on ‘Further Economic Advancements: A break with Leftist Thinking’ and in the same issue a ‘Reassessment of Confucius and Confucianism’.⁷⁹²

The reassessment of Confucius was part of a process of stressing the historical continuities between the PRC and previous Chinese regimes. In part this was a return to some of the diplomatic debates with the Taiwan authorities about who represented ‘China’ but was also an assertion of nationalism, which has always had a claim to continuity and antiquity. Further though, the reassessment of Confucius was part of a process of promoting ‘culture’ instead of ‘politics’. Since it is harder to define a cultural rather than a political fact, culture is further from the domain of true and false. In fact culture is often used to problematise facts and truth. Culture then is a neutral ground for framing international exchange, and for depoliticising it.

Wang Hui argues that the reappraisal of the Cultural Revolution meant the end of politics in the People’s Republic of China. He argues that discussions about the 1960s and early 1970s (the ‘Cultural Revolution decade’) in China, have ‘a unique characteristic: complete silence’. Also, since the Cultural Revolution there has seen a backlash against the concept of ‘revolution’. The entire decade has been consigned to oblivion. Wang emphasises two points necessary to an understanding of politics: 1) politics depends on the establishment of political subjectivity; and 2) politics consists of a struggle over who has the right to rule, and over whom. Just as the depoliticization of politics makes politics more independent of what political subjectivity establishes, so the disappearance of ‘revolution’ robs society of the very concept of ‘class’. Under Deng’s pragmatism, debates about political ideology disappeared and an experimentalism emphasizing trial-and-error reforms emerged as the mainstream. ‘Politics’ was thus depoliticised and became about technical aspects of ruling.⁷⁹³

The Society increasingly picked up on a depoliticised vision of the PRC. It promoted the ‘Resolution on CPC History’ and made copies of it available for sale, thereby participating in the condemnation of the period it had previously celebrated. Increasingly, discussion about activities in the PRC revolved around ‘seeking truth from facts’. Discussion on the matters that had

⁷⁹¹ ‘Rumour About China Conducting Trade with South Korea and South Africa Refuted’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, April 20, 1981, 2, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁹² ‘Recent Issues of Beijing Review’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 12 May 1981, 2, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁹³ Wang Hui, ‘Depoliticized Politics, From East To West’, *New Left Review* 41, September-October 2006, 42.

dominated NZCFS interest in the People's Republic of China of yesteryear became conspicuous by their absence. The 1981 'China Week' reflected the new line. The movies on offer were 'The Battle of Shanghai', from the 1938 Japanese War which helpfully avoided any discussion about China since then, and 'The Ancient City of Xian'. Those interested in China were invited not to discuss the commune system or China's industrial or medical advances, but to attend a workshop on 'Chinese Brush Painting'.

While the Society continued to report that China had no inflation and the price of international air travel was falling, the price of the tours the Society ran was \$3070 for 1982.⁷⁹⁴ They had more than doubled in price in five years.⁷⁹⁵ In part this reflected the PRC's hope that tours would become a source of foreign exchange rather than a mechanism to subsidise the travel of pilgrims visiting in order to study and learn from the Chinese social model. In line with reforms that would soon sweep New Zealand, Chinese host organisations such as the China International Travel Service and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (known as CPAFFC or *Youxie*) were expected now to produce a commercial return on certain of their activities.⁷⁹⁶

Participants on the tours the Society organised were changing along the same lines. In 1982 the Society organised the first of a new type tour. It was led by Victoria University of Wellington academic James Bertram, who had played little role in the Society since the mid-1960s, and was comprised of a group of participants called variously 'special', 'important' and 'prominent'.⁷⁹⁷ They included Radio New Zealand journalist Sharon Crosbie, Race Relations Conciliator Hiwi Tauroa and Rod Alley, Rewi's nephew but selected for his role as a VUW academic. The call for this new type of tour had come from the Chinese organisations the Society was paired with. The rejection of the mass line in the PRC was being played out in the NZCFS-organised tours.⁷⁹⁸

Reports that China seemed to be embracing 'market capitalism', for example through articles extolling China's progress by noting the increase in availability of consumer goods and home appliances, saw increased criticism of China from those who formerly claimed friendship with it.⁷⁹⁹ Now, however, the responses defending China were more from groups with party-to-party

⁷⁹⁴ Tours Report to the NZCFS National Executive, 15 September 1982, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁹⁵ Cost of tours 1972 to 1983: 1972, 1300; 1973, 1000; 1974, 1091; 1975, 1200; 1976, 1100; 1977, 1700; 1978, 1750; 1979, 1900; 1980, 2300; 1981, 2560; 1982, 3070; 1983, 3098 (in 1975, the workers' tour was only \$700. It's not clear if this was subsidised by the Society or the host).

⁷⁹⁶ Crook, interview.

⁷⁹⁷ Note that the different names allowed for differences within the Society to be ignored. Those who believed in 'community' could call it a Community Leaders Tour, those who were into elite politics could refer to it as a 'Prominent Person's Tour'. Those involved with the Society were reflecting an increasingly eclectic image of the PRC in an eclectic image of the NZCFS.

⁷⁹⁸ *Youxie* have asked us to put together a tour of "prominent people", for 1982', National Executive minutes, 10 August 1981, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁷⁹⁹ This criticism came most noticeably by the Red Flag Group (see *Red Flag* August 1981, 5 and February 1983, 12, 11 'this is the road back to capitalism and exploitation'). This organisation condemned the 'restoration of capitalism in China'. It was dominated by former CPNZ leaders Flora and Nat Gould. Flora Gould attended the foundation meeting of the NZCFS and Rewi Alley stayed with the Goulds when in Auckland on his trips in 1960 and 1963 and

links with the CPC than from the NZCFS itself. The Preparatory Committee undertook a tour and published *China is Not Selling Out Socialism: the Report of a Delegation that Investigated this Question* in 1982. Peter Franks, Chairman of the Society's Wellington Branch wrote a two-part report for *Unity*, the theoretical magazine of the Wellington Marxist Leninist Organisation. In it he also defended the Chinese 'determination to turn their country into a great, powerful, modern socialist nation' and criticised the 'pompous resolutions of the "Communist" Party of New Zealand' for suggesting China was on 'the capitalist road'.⁸⁰⁰

The introduction given to NZCFS tour participants continued to strongly endorse China as being on the socialist path. The Society's *Helpful Information for Study Tours* noted that

Since these tours of China are essentially study tours, background reading is important. Modern China is a socialist country in the Marxist-Leninist sense under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and following the late Mao Tsetung's teachings.... Furthermore... some reading of Mao's *Theory of the Three Worlds* will certainly be of value.⁸⁰¹

Despite this determined construction, the withdrawal of CPNZ cadre from the Society and the ever-expanding participation in the NZCFS tours led to a more politically diverse membership throughout the 1980s. China began to shift from a political centre to one that represented far more eclectic interests. The Society began to campaign for a New Zealand–China Council to coordinate the activities of all groups connected to the PRC, as had been set up in Australia. Increasingly, its material referred to cooperative activities with the New Zealand–China Trade Association.⁸⁰² The Society had ceased to see itself as able to preserve an image of China through its own unique relationship and increasingly saw its link with the PRC as just one of the many possible and fruitful connections that could be made.

It wasn't just over the tours and image of China that the NZCFS had lost the 'China monopoly'. When Zhao Ziyang became the highest ranking representative from the PRC to visit New Zealand, the Society was left out completely from his official (or unofficial) schedule. The Wellington Newsletter noted that 'As the Premier's programme will be very full, our Society will not be able to meet him personally'. But they organised an airport welcome regardless, displaying

had written a poem to them, Rewi Alley, 'For Flora and Nat', in *Snow Over the Pines*, NZCFS and Progressive Books, Auckland, 1977.

⁸⁰⁰ *China is Not Selling Out Socialism*, Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist Leninist). The Preparatory Committee delegation included NZCFS President Jack Ewan. Peter Franks, 'Socialist China', *Unity*, August and September 1982. See Michel Chossudovsky, *Towards Capitalist Restoration: Chinese Socialism After Mao*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1986 for a detailed analysis of changes in China reflecting the perspective that China was no longer socialist. This was being widely circulated by groups such as the CPNZ and Red Flag Group in New Zealand. See chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of these contesting perspectives from this period.

⁸⁰¹ *Briefing to participants on NZCFS China Tours*, NZCFS, Auckland, 1980, 3 and 4.

⁸⁰² NZCTA set up in 1981 by Victor Percival. See Bruce Kohn, *Kiwi Patberfinder: Opening Mao's China to the West*, Grantham Books, London, 2008 and the NZCTA website <http://www.nzcta.co.nz/english/about/#ourhistory>.

their banner calling for friendship between the people of China and New Zealand as Zhao was rushed between plane and limousine.⁸⁰³

Two years later the National Secretary would admit, while trying to present a positive spin on the situation:

There are so many VIPs and delegations from China these days that the Society seldom has any contact with them. Gone are the days when the NZ-China Society was the only organisation to host and entertain and see to the needs and, at times, even the security of Chinese guests. However, perhaps this position is really a measure of our success, for today, the NZ Government, Education Institutions, Sports bodies and business firms play host to many many Chinese visitors and we have become pioneers in the achievement of friendship between NZ and China.⁸⁰⁴

A decade later the relationship between the visiting Chinese and the Society would have changed further. While important guests would meet with government officials, the Society had been turned into dinner companions for visiting lower-ranked officials from China who wanted to meet real New Zealanders amidst what they had actually come to New Zealand for:

from time to time the Society... hosts groups of Chinese businessmen and other visitors from China... they appreciate the company of New Zealanders and it is an opportunity for us to speak with them... perhaps YOU would care to join us.⁸⁰⁵

Further Changes in the 1980s

Since Liberation, the PRC's aid activity had been feted by the Society as an example of the same internationalism in which members felt that they themselves were engaged. In 1978 the Society purchased a copy of the film *Freedom Railway*, which tells the story of China's aid in the construction of the Zambian-Tanzania railway, and screened it throughout the country. The PRC and its allies have always held the railway up as an example of people-to-people aid, and also as a contrast to aid practices founded in relations based on imperialist, colonial and 'first-world-charitable' relations.⁸⁰⁶

In 1984, the Society reported on the donation of sewing machines to Tanzania by the Chinese Women's Federation as a continuation of the programme of aid that had built the Zambian-Tanzanian railway.⁸⁰⁷ Such contributions had their precedent, in donations by New Zealanders to

⁸⁰³ Branch News', Wellington Branch newsletter, 16 March 1983, 1.

⁸⁰⁴ Nancy Goddard, 'Visitors From China', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 6 November 1986, 2.

⁸⁰⁵ 'Dine With Visiting Delegations', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 14 November 1996, 1.

⁸⁰⁶ See P.K. Sircar, 'The Great Uhuru (Freedom) Railway: China's Link to Africa', *China Report*, 2, 1978, 15-24.

⁸⁰⁷ 'Sewing Machines for Tanzania', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 14 September 1984, 2.

Alley's Gung Ho project and CORSO as well as support by the New Zealand government in the pre-war years. However it was inconsistent with the situation in the intervening years. For thirty-five years since the founding of the PRC, the NZCFS projected a situation where first world New Zealand could take hope and inspiration from the Chinese model and learn about 'correct' relations between states. Under this construction, the third world – but socialist – People's Republic of China needed nothing from first world – and capitalist – New Zealand. But at the end of 1985 it was reporting on China's own request for aid, as a fund was established to solicit money from abroad to help rebuild the 'Great Wall'. Soon enough the Society had its own aid project, collecting funds to re-establish Rewi Alley's school at Shandan. In 1987 the Society sent an entire container to Shandan filled with material donated by members and the Society contributed an English teacher to the school (the Society selected a teacher and paid for their travel from New Zealand to Shandan. The New Zealand government paid the salary of the teacher through the New Zealand overseas aid budget).⁸⁰⁸

Reflecting the cultural China the Society that it was now engaged with, 1985 saw the Society its first Chinese New Year banquets. Such 'Chinese' traditions hadn't been important elements of the PRC that the NZCFS related to before now. This 'cultural turn' was also reflected in the Society's organised film evenings. *The East is Red* and *Red Detachment of Women* had been replaced as representative of the PRC by films about Chinese children in the performing arts, the training of a champion wushu practitioner and a cartoon of a 'traditional' story. Later in 1985, the films were 'Diary of the Chinese Dancer' and a look at painter Li Keran. A further film was on miniature sculpture. The films were now provided by the Chinese embassy, accordingly this change towards 'culture' reflected the PRC's official discourse about itself.⁸⁰⁹

In 1985 three of six tours were cancelled and there were frantic calls in the branch newsletters saying that others would also need more applicants in order to go ahead.⁸¹⁰ However, in March a second tour representing the new target for China's United Front work did go to China. Officially it was a 'Community Leaders Delegation', but internally it was referred to as a delegation of 'Well Known Personages'.⁸¹¹ Nominations included 'prominent people' such as Maori Women's Welfare League President Mira Szasy, judge Peter Mahon, former politician Sir James Henare, and educator Jack Shallcrass. Others were chosen for the links they might bring, not to trade unions but to more established elite organisations: Angus McLeod from the Council of Churches; Laurie Salas from the National Council of Women; and Idi Tawhiwhirangi, a senior policy adviser with the Department of Maori Affairs and a leader in the Kohunga Reo movement.

⁸⁰⁸ 'Shandan Project Huge Success', Christchurch Branch Newsletter, March 1985, 1, NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁰⁹ 'Branch Film Evening', Wellington Branch Newsletter, May 1985, 2, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸¹⁰ 'News on Tours', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 30 July 1985, 2, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸¹¹ 'Community Leaders Delegation Chosen', *New Zealand China News*, 14 March, 1985, 1.

The tours for paying members of the Society were no longer targeted towards members of popular groupings and were no longer called 'Study Tours'. In 1986, instead of a Spring Members' Tour, the Society advertised a 'Springtime Tour'. The other tours on offer were called 'Hunan Landscapes' and the 'Shandong Special'. All tours included Beijing, Shanghai and Xian and the participants were tourists. In 1987 the NZCFS gave up organising the tours itself and joined forces with Thomas Cook Travel to offer commercial tours. They offered ten tours in 1987. These were now designed for the public and reflected a characterisation of China as exotic with no political elements. Tours had titles reflecting this, such as 'China Splendours', 'The Great China Explorer' and 'China Highlights'. Demand was greatly over-estimated. In 1987 three were cancelled and in 1988 the National Secretary reported in May that only twenty-one of the two hundred places had been sold. Only three tours went ahead.⁸¹²

Despite these developments, the Society still sought to explain China and in 1985 the link between contemporary China and the revolutionary past was still being drawn. National President Jack Ewan's annual report testified that the Society needed '... to do more to educate our members and the public at large on China and its present day policies'. The China they needed to educate the public about was 'a developing socialist country pursuing an independent foreign policy'. As proof of the steadfast path China travelled Ewan noted an article from *China Daily* 'Making Money Must Not Be the Ultimate Goal' which compared values under the West's capitalism and China's socialism.⁸¹³

Yet the NZCFS's China was changing and the aspirations of the past now needed to be tempered by Chinese 'realities'. At first this was seen as a continuation of the socialist path – albeit noting that the 'Chinese Road to Socialism' was not necessarily orthodox or for replication, as had been previously stated. In early 1986 the NZCFS reproduced a statement from the *Beijing Review* in which it was claimed that in China '[t]rue revolutionary vision has replaced super-revolutionary grandiloquence. The spirit of seeking truth from facts... is gaining ground. In this lies our hope for the future'. Yet within a few months there was a recognition that China's politics had changed significantly. In particular, the Beijing authorities had repudiated the tradition of mass movements, associating them with the cultural revolution and reflecting Wang Hui's analysis of a depoliticisation process. The NZCFS Wellington Branch Newsletter published an article from *China Daily* explaining that political campaigns were no longer a feature of Chinese daily life:

⁸¹² 'Last Year's Tours Report', Christchurch Branch Newsletter, January, 1987, 2, Christchurch Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸¹³ Jack Ewan, 'President's Report to National Conference 1985', June 1985, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

It's understandable that people abroad misunderstand what we are doing. From lack of accurate information about things going on now, they are likely to judge things by past experience about China's political campaigns!⁸¹⁴

In the mid-1980s, China's internal politics became less comprehensible or even palatable, for China's 'old foreign friends' in the political nature of that term. The focus turned instead to the PRC's foreign policies, within a framework of a China acting as a bulwark against 'US imperialism', and which were thereby easier to understand. This was the reverse of the position at the end of the 1970s. Allies of China's socialist project could point in 1978 – without (much) fear of contradiction – to internal policies; while debate raged over foreign policy – such as the Theory of the Three Worlds and foreign relations – such as that with Vietnam. Even then, the Chinese government pronouncements chosen to be exposed were those that would attract most sympathy from New Zealanders. Those in the Society who still saw it as having New Zealand political objectives were closer to mainstream New Zealand political values than they had been. The PRC's condemnation of South African apartheid and criticism of the super powers over the nuclear question gained exposure. A *Beijing Review* article lauding New Zealand's estrangement from the United States over nuclear ship visits and the breakdown of ANZUS was also reprinted in the Society's newsletters.⁸¹⁵

Sister cities are a globalised system of exchanges, involving links between civic authorities, experts and business leaders. In general the growth of sister city arrangements seems to have followed the outbreak of peace, as a way of promoting links between formerly conflicting people, for example one of the first in Europe after World War Two was between Coventry and Dresden as an act of peace on reconciliation as formerly heavily bombed cities. The movement for sister cities was accelerated after the American sister cities program was initiated in 1956 by President Dwight Eisenhower. Since 1967 the process is supported by the organisation Sister Cities International (SCI).

The first sister-city agreement between a New Zealand and Chinese city was between Hastings and Guilin. The relationship developed entirely outside of the Society and came into being after a research scientist who had worked in Guangxi province, Dr Don McKenzie, identified a number of common areas of interest between the two cities, including horticulture and their rural-urban mix. The Hastings City Council took up the suggestion to establish a sister-city relationship, and

⁸¹⁴ *Beijing Review* 6 Jan (published in New Zealand China News, 25 February 1985), Jack Ewan's report to May 1985 conference, NZCFS Archive, and 'Pretty Clothes won't bring wearer trouble', *China Daily*, 24 January 1986.

⁸¹⁵ 'Australia and New Show Independence', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 11 September 1986, 3. from *Beijing Review* 15 September 1985.

approached the Chinese Embassy in Wellington in October 1978. The Hastings-Guilin sister-city protocol was signed on March 4, 1981.⁸¹⁶

The NZCFS took up the idea of sister-cities, as it looked increasingly for projects that could engage a broad cross-section of New Zealanders, but increasingly elite New Zealanders, with the PRC. The focus was no doubt helped by the fact that the organisation it dealt with in China, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, was also made responsible for sister-cities. *Youxie* wanted to 'make more foreign friends', but not necessarily the friends The PRC used to have. Sister-cities reflected the new linkages that China was seeking: 'One good way to promote economic ties is through sister-cities'.⁸¹⁷ In the early 1980s the NZCFS helped persuade the Wellington City Council to investigate a sister city relationship and a Wellington-Xiamen agreement was signed in 1987. The Chinese authorities had suggested Xiamen as a partner because there were similarities between the two cities (as ports) and Xiamen had recently become a Special Economic Zone in China.

As well as sister-city linkages, the Chinese hosts increasingly put their resources into the new arrangement of 'Prominent Persons' Tours'. Like the student tours of the 1970s, prominent persons need only pay for the international airfare, all internal costs were met by the CPAFFC. Wellington sister-city delegations were accorded 'full red-carpet treatment'. The initial delegation included Allan Levett, a former Vice-Chair of the Wellington Branch but now an educational consultant. He had been included in the latter capacity rather than the former.⁸¹⁸ However, a subsequent delegation included the then NZCFS National Secretary Nancy Goddard, as a member of a kapa haka group.⁸¹⁹

In late 1987 Rewi Alley died and with his death the Society lost its principal interpreter of the People's Republic of China.⁸²⁰ Alley had been crucial to the Society's navigation through changes in Chinese politics, particularly since the 1970s. If he was in Beijing, then all tours would visit him for a discussion on contemporary affairs. In addition, he was in regular correspondence with the national leadership, often penning an open letter to Society members on crucial events, or to sum up a turbulent period. Although memorial meetings through 1988 brought the Society together with renewed focus, Alley's death left the NZCFS at a considerable disadvantage when the cataclysmic events of 1989 needed interpretation. For the decade would be dominated, so far as

⁸¹⁶ In China sister-cities are referred to as 'friendship cities', since in Chinese, relationships between sisters are implicitly unequal because of the respect due to those who are older and the absence of a word meaning simply 'sister'. Since one side of the relationship must be an elder sister, *jiejie*, while the other is a younger sister, *meimei*, to describe China's relations with other countries in 'sisterly' terms would create a hierarchy. A 1988 article in the Friendship Association's magazine explains: 'To fully reflect equality between the two partners, they were called friendship cities instead of sister cities.' The article suggests that this was a suggestion from the late Premier Zhou Enlai. See 'Friendship Cities Bear Fruits', *Voice of Friendship*, 1988, 16.

⁸¹⁷ 'Sister-cities', *China Daily*, 27 April 1994.

⁸¹⁸ Personal communication, 13 May 2008.

⁸¹⁹ Report by Nancy Goddard published in the Wellington Branch Newsletter (which she edited), October 1986.

⁸²⁰ See chapter 7.

China watchers were concerned, by the events which took place in Tiananmen Square in May and June of 1989.

Tiananmen Square, 4 June 1989.

Tiananmen was a watershed for the Society. In the lead up to the events of early morning on June 4th, it sent a letter to the ambassador. Noting that ‘the situation is extremely complicated and that our information comes primarily through Western news sources’, the Society did not want to comment. ‘Rather’ it wrote ‘we would wish to express our warm and fraternal feelings of sympathy and support for all concerned in the negotiation to achieve a settlement’.⁸²¹ Yet immediately after troops moved into the square, the Society issued a media release declaring that it was ‘shocked by the brutal suppression of the demonstration’ and ‘support[ed] the New Zealand government’s condemnation of the army’s actions in Beijing and its opposition to such violent repression’.⁸²²

The events in Beijing would change the nature of the Society dramatically. In a letter by the newly elected President to all members, Bill Willmott declared that the ‘events... have brought agony and anxiety to many of our friends in China and also to our own members’. The NZCFS national conference had been taking place the very same weekend, at the University of Auckland. University staff and students from the Chinese department had been closely following events and a group had even marched upon the conference – where they were admitted. Willmott reported that the conference ‘necessarily became focussed on this question, reinforced by the arrival of about forty Chinese students...’.⁸²³ The students asked the Society once ‘the brutality of the events became inescapable...’ to ‘follow our consciences in making public our opposition to the repression...’.⁸²⁴ The situation was further complicated by the existence of a delegation from the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries at the conference. They were themselves getting mixed messages from home. At first *Youxie* cadres had attended the rallies in Tiananmen Square and joined calls for an end to corruption and a rebirth of socialist practice. They were conspicuously silent in the immediate aftermath and returned quickly to China.⁸²⁵

⁸²¹ Jack Ewan, NZCFS National President, ‘Letter to Chinese Ambassador’, 20 May 1989, Jack Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸²² Bill Willmott, NZCFS National President, ‘Media Statement’, 6 June 1989, Willmott papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸²³ The students had been organised by John Minford, Professor of Chinese in the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Auckland. Minford would later be prominent in the campaign to get the New Zealand government to grant automatic refugee status to all those Chinese students studying in New Zealand who wanted it, on the basis that they might be seen to have supported the ‘democracy movement’ and suffer retribution on their return.

⁸²⁴ Bill Willmott, ‘Letter by NZCFS National President to all members’, June 1989, Bill Willmott papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸²⁵ Willmott, interview.

The decision to condemn the Chinese government was contested. At least two members of the Society's 'old guard' felt that the Society was giving too much weight to Western news sources – and their anti-communist bias – and too little to the official Chinese view. They also considered the decision to have been rushed.

Which benefits from haste – truth or falsehood and rumour? I think truth has suffered. Surely such serious allegations demand careful and comprehensive gathering of facts, before making a decision condemning a government enjoying the support of the majority of the people – the people we are committed to building friendship with.⁸²⁶

The majority view, however, prevailed and it meant a fundamental shift in the Society's relationship with the PRC, in particular its officials. In his letter to members of the Society, Willmott set this out:

For me, being a friend of China has meant that I always gave the Chinese government the benefit of the doubt. So often in the past we were confronted with ...slandorous propaganda in our media that we had to resist... In this case... I also assume that the CIA and other foreign agents were directly involved in fermenting trouble. It would be a first if they weren't! Furthermore, the press reports... have probably been one-sided, since the Western press is not generally favourable to China. But even with these reservations, it is impossible for us to escape the fact that the present leaders... suppressed militarily a demonstration that had wide support... it seems unlikely that the current leaders can remain in power unless they continue to rely on military repression.⁸²⁷

Those in the Society who continued to prefer the official view of the Chinese authorities pointed to United States intelligence agencies and Taiwanese influences amongst the protesters, and distorted coverage by the Western media.⁸²⁸ Yet despite this, and despite also the Society's history of engagement with Chinese government authorities, its official view is that Tiananmen was 'a disaster'.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁶ Letter from a member 'at large' (most likely Ray Gough from Papatoetoe – the South Auckland Branch of the Society having closed in the early 1980s) to NZCFS President Bill Willmott, 4 September 1989. Gough had been a member of the *Struggle* Group in the late 1970s. Alex Ostler (also *Struggle* Group, from Porirua) and Don Ross (a member of the Preparatory Committee for a CPNZ(ML) and *Struggle* editor after the merging of the PC and Struggle organisations, Chair of the Whangarei Branch of the NZCFS) sent similar letters of complaint.

⁸²⁷ Letter to all members of the Society by National President Bill Willmott, June 1989. Willmott papers (copies in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton and Tauranga Branch papers). NZCFS Archives.

⁸²⁸ There is some support for this, in particular regarding the number of deaths. Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream; a moral inquiry*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, 21-22. Madsen does not dispute that there was widespread killing but finds that Chinese government accounts, widely regarded as nonsensical, are 'surprisingly accurate' (23). There was however widespread support for the protests and abhorrence at the actions of the State.

⁸²⁹ In his farewell speech, when he stood down as President of the NZCFS, Bill Willmott repeated this position. It was not challenged by any members or by the visiting delegation from *Youxi* (personal observation, own notes, May 2002).

As Willmott noted, 'this places our Society in a difficult position'. At least partly due to the work of the Society, those friendly towards China could point to 'a situation of growing cordiality between the Chinese government and our own'. Even more importantly, those Society members whose left-wing views meant that they opposed New Zealand government actions, or even the capitalist nature of New Zealand society, had 'been able to offer our full and friendly support to officials from China as the representatives of a basically popular government' [in contrast to their own]. This situation was now over. For the majority of the NZCFS, as represented by the new President, 'our friendship with the Chinese people separates us rather than unites us with Chinese officialdom'. Willmott expressed hope that the Society could continue in its work and that members would 'continue to express your friendship with the Chinese people by supporting our Society with your membership and doing what you can to further its aims'.⁸³⁰

The implications for the Society were significant. While the Society's view had always been that the government and the people of China were as one, and that friendship with the Chinese people meant support for its government, it no longer held that position. It began to play down its constitutional role of 'seeking to explain the policies and actions of the Chinese government'. The report from the conference not only confirmed 'our Society's shock and sadness and deep concern over the violent events in Beijing', it also announced a transformation of the relationship the Society had formerly had with the political entity of the PRC. Now, it claimed, as if it had always been the case, 'Our friendship is for the people of China, not for any particular grouping'. This new depiction came out of an opposition to the Chinese government revealed in the same report where it declared 'now is surely a time when the people of China need our sympathy and support more than ever'.⁸³¹

The Society did circulate material from *Youxie* that explained Tiananmen as the putting down of 'counter-revolutionary elements'. In August it published 'CPAFFC's Open Letter to Foreign Friends and Friendly Organisations' in the *New Zealand China News*. This described the Tiananmen incident as a 'counter-revolutionary rebellion' and argued that the government's actions had been those it was 'compelled to take... in conformity with the fundamental interests of the Chinese people'. *Youxie* pleaded that 'our friends will draw just conclusions from a good understanding of facts.' 'True friendship', they said, 'manifests itself in times of adversity' and they hoped that 'long-standing mutual trust... will be maintained and continue to develop, and

⁸³⁰ Willmott, 'Letter to all Members'. Note that this relationship with the 'Chinese people' instead of China was the formation of a number of friendship groups already. Most noticeably the United States of America organisation, which was not formed until after the Shanghai Communiqué, and had always called itself the US-China People's Friendship Association and the United Kingdom based organisation which called itself the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU) and has always described its goal as 'to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of Britain and China'.

⁸³¹ Willmott letter, now edited as 'Report from Conference', 24 June 1989, Christchurch Branch Newsletter, Christchurch papers, NZCFS Archive.

the sincere friendship between the Chinese people and the peoples of other countries will further grow'.⁸³² But the appeal to historic ties was by no means enough for the Society.⁸³³

Many members resigned and President Bill Willmott claimed subsequently that if the NZCFS had not condemned the Chinese government action then it would have been 'the end of the Society'.⁸³⁴ Some of those who left had been important contributors to branch and national activity. David Wilkie, a Wellington member, had 'organised the sales table for many years'. The branch newsletter had noted his growing contribution over the past decade. In addition he had initiated a project to restore Rewi Alley's cottage in Moeawatea. He resigned almost immediately upon seeing the news coverage and walked away from the Society and anything to do with China. There was no opprobrium from those left in the Society, only understanding, with the Wellington Branch Secretary commenting 'we hope that he will rejoin us one day'.⁸³⁵

In the aftermath of June 4, the Society cancelled the tours that it had planned for later that year. Even in 1990 it also delayed another tour until after a delegation made up of the Society's leadership could investigate the situation. The report from that delegation showed increased scepticism about the image that the Chinese hosts showed them: 'we were not so naïve as to believe that we could get beyond superficial impressions' and 'most of us were uneasy and dubious about the official version'. Divisions within the touring party reflected the debate that had taken place earlier but the new leadership of president Bill Willmott won out over that represented by former president Jack Ewan. The report, penned by Willmott, declared 'we do not serve our aims by simply acting as a mouthpiece for official statements from China or refusing to express critical opinions'. The divisions over Tiananmen went deep and the solution was to depoliticise the Society altogether. According to Willmott, the NZCFS now had 'no official "line" on China'.⁸³⁶

If the principal purpose of the leader's tour was to investigate the truth about Tiananmen, an important secondary motive was to ensure that the Society's commercial tours could go ahead. The tours were vitally important financially to the organisation. The Society had reserves reflecting the accumulated surpluses of tours when the NZCFS held the 'China franchise', but without the return from each year's tour that would be quickly eroded. Members of the NZCFS and members of the public were assured: 'on the surface China appears stable and normal,

⁸³² 'CPAFFC's Open Letter to Foreign Friends and Friendly Organisations', *New Zealand China News*, August 1989, 3.

⁸³³ Note though that organisations whose connection with China was with the Marxist-Leninist project represented by the PRC circulated far more Chinese material than the Society. See chapter 4 for more detail. In addition NZCTA President Vic Percival said that he went immediately to Mike Moore and said that 'this cannot be permitted to change our relationship with China at all'. Percival claimed that this was exactly the position that the New Zealand government ended up taking, that the trade relationship with the PRC went on completely unaffected (Percival, interview, Auckland, 9 July 2002).

⁸³⁴ Willmott, interview. Membership records are incomplete but based on capitation figures paid by branches to the national society as many as one in five members may have not have renewed their membership in 1990.

⁸³⁵ 'Sad News', Wellington Branch Newsletter, 9 November 1989, 2.

⁸³⁶ Bill Willmott, 'Report on the Leadership Delegation to China, May 4-18 1990', Auckland Branch Newsletter, July August 1990, 1-2.

entirely safe for tourism'. China returning to 'normal' was not necessarily the China that many of the members had joined the Society to be in contact with. They had sought an otherness to New Zealand, be it politically in the past or more recently in terms of cultural exoticism. But 'normality' reflected official Chinese discourse. In his speech to a Society function to commemorate National Day in 1990, the Chinese ambassador Ni Zhengjian spoke of 'the many achievements and favourable developments in present-day China where the political and economic situation is daily growing more stable'.⁸³⁷

The 1990s saw the NZCFS looking for a new sort of identity and, as a consequence, to construct a new understanding of China. To a large degree, forced by the fallout from Tiananmen, it dropped its constitutional aim to 'correct misrepresentation ...of the policies and actions of the Chinese Government'. Its basic aims were rewritten as:

- (1) To promote friendship, understanding and goodwill between the peoples of China and New Zealand by promoting visits and exchange of ideas, information, culture and trade between the two countries.
- (2) To foster interest in and promote the study of China, its history, culture, political and social structures past and present.
- (3) To reaffirm the historical significance of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.⁸³⁸

The latter clause was included as a demand by the long-standing and left-leaning members of the Society. They wanted the Society to continue to stand for socialist values and a reference to the revolution and establishment of the People's Republic permitted this to happen.⁸³⁹

Articles distributed to members reflected the Society's desire to avoid political issues and thereby be seen as defenders of China's politics and reflecting the uncertainty over politics were overaken by the force of China's economic development – what was increasingly drawing many new members to an interest in China. Increasingly the principal contact with the Chinese embassy was with its 'Cultural Section'. Throughout early 1990 the Society's offerings to members reflected this desire. There were films or presentations on 'Food and Night Markets', as a way of understanding 'China Today', and explanations and demonstrations of Qingtian Stone Carving and performances by Chinese Acrobats. Other meetings publicised 'Papercuts', Chinese cooking, and films were shown on a farmer's saloon (or agricultural market) and on minority peoples such as 'Ding and Culture' – not to challenge how Maori were treated in New Zealand, but as an

⁸³⁷ 'Ambassador's Message', Auckland Branch Newsletter, October, 1990.

⁸³⁸ The report on the meeting is contained in a full report in *New Zealand China News*, July 1991, 1. The constitutional goals are still those of the NZCFS and are available online from www.comcom.govt.nz although the third of these does not appear in publicity material produced by the Society.

⁸³⁹ Willmott, interview. He said that 'people like Jack Ewan' insisted on such a clause being included, although Ewan himself was convinced that there had not been *any* change to the constitution (Jack Ewan, interview, Auckland, 2001).

exhibition of exoticism.⁸⁴⁰ Articles from *China Daily* that were reprinted in *New Zealand China News* and local newsletters reflected this change too. They tended to cover the items on which the embassy had material, on, or were about the (beautiful) environment, and features people might want to visit in China – such as a coin museum.

Even so, the Society had to respond further to the question of its political past when in 1991 a rival organisation to the NZCFS emerged, promoting itself as a ‘non-political’ opportunity to engage with the PRC. The New Zealand China Friendship Association was founded by Pierre Beutrais and James Stubbs (using the alias Jack Saunders).⁸⁴¹ Beutrais and Stubbs organised a delegation to several Chinese cities and the NZCFS was horrified to hear that ‘they were hosted by officials, a number of whom were misled into believing that the party has been sponsored by our organisation’.⁸⁴² Following representations by the Society addressing its ‘misrepresentation’, the NZCFA agreed to refer to itself as the ‘NZ China Friendship’ Sub-Committee of Vision 20-20. In its exchanges with this rival group, the leadership of the NZCFS made the point that they too were ‘non-political’.⁸⁴³

Tours were also affected by the new, non-political environment and the retreat from Tiananmen. Thomas Cook were undertaking their own, no longer sure that a link with the Society was necessarily commercial beneficial to them. The Society’s tours were targeted to members and were reduced to two or three per year. In 1991 they visited cities that had sister-city relationships with New Zealand, and a Silk Road Tour. In addition, in conjunction with the Australia China Friendship Society (ACFS), ‘New Cultural Tours to China’ were offered. They involved study at a Chinese university, and covered painting, calligraphy or Tai Chi, alongside Chinese language. A major event for the Society was hosting the tour of a couple of Gansu sculptors.⁸⁴⁴

Despite all these changes, there was still pressure for even more change. The report from the National Council in July 1990 claimed that the original objectives of the NZCFS ‘have been achieved’ and that it needed to ‘change to meet the new conditions’. The pursuit of more sister-city relationships ‘should be the focus for the future’.⁸⁴⁵ The Society still looked to remember Rewi Alley through aid projects based at the location of his school in Shandan and to maintain a

⁸⁴⁰ Wellington Branch newsletters 28 March and 9 May 1990. The films were made available to other branches, so were shown in other centres too.

⁸⁴¹ The involvement of the peculiar pair added to the intrigue. At the time Beutrais was a conservative talkback host for Radio Pacific. He left New Zealand a few years later having been struck off the psychologists’ register. He was found guilty of six counts of professional misconduct relating to sexual harassment and inappropriate relationships with clients. He died in Thailand in 2008. In 2004, Stubbs was involved in scheme to smuggle North Korean defectors out of Beijing through the embassy of the Republic of Nauru. Stubbs was the Embassy’s *chargés d’affaires*, under the name Saunders. He claimed links to the CIA, and that wealthy US supporters were bankrolling his plans. Those he named denied his claims. He would later be linked to allegations about the New Zealand Security Intelligence Services were spying on the computers of Maori organizations.

⁸⁴² In Chinese ‘Society’ and ‘Association’ are both translated as 协会 *xié huì*.

⁸⁴³ See Tom Newnham, *50 Years of Friendship*, NZCFS, Auckland, 2002, 26).

⁸⁴⁴ ‘Sculptors from Gansu to Tour’, *New Zealand China News*. March 1990. 1.

⁸⁴⁵ Nancy Goddard, ‘Report from National Council’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 1 July 1990, 1.

sense of socialism, the Society was looking at help for co-operatives, as the International Committee for Chinese Industrial Co-operatives (ICCIC – or Indusco) was re-established.⁸⁴⁶ A new hero emerged too, one without any complications of having represented China to the West or said things that Society members no longer believed about the PRC.⁸⁴⁷ Nurse Kathleen Hall, who had worked in northern China during the 1920s and 30s, was ‘Dr Bethune’s Angel’.⁸⁴⁸

For decades, left-wing New Zealanders had been fascinated about a China they had seen as a model of a better way of organising society. Yet the seemingly neo-liberal policies being adopted in the PRC in the 1980s were exactly the policies that the majority of left-wing members would have opposed in New Zealand. Instead, the break-up of China’s State-Owned Enterprises was reported favourably as an ‘important feature’ of China’s modernisation in the *New Zealand China News*.⁸⁴⁹ Students, who had joined the Society in large numbers during the 1970s and early 1980s and had campaigned extensively against business control over the curriculum in New Zealand would have been horrified to hear that education reform in China was designed to make Chinese students ‘more job-ready’.⁸⁵⁰ A branch newsletter reprinted an article from the *China Daily* which claimed that “Today, China can step up its economic reforms by adopting “capitalist measures”... It is worthwhile to open the window and let in fresh air, though some flies will come in as well? Yes, it is worthwhile’.⁸⁵¹

Increasingly the Society presented itself as being open to members who had diverse ideas about the PRC. In 1978, then-President Jack Ewan had also spoken about diverse opinions, suggesting that they should be elicited and be the subject of discussion, so that the Society’s views could be understood by all its members. Now though, diversity was presented to mean that all who wanted to join the Society could do so, without fear that their ideas would be challenged. All those with an opinion about China, whatever it might be, were welcome in the Society. So in 1992, when the Society celebrated forty years of relations with the PRC, Bill Willmott wrote:

As a Society, we have no set position on issues in China, but encourage discussion on all aspects of its development. Our aims are to foster interest in China, to promote mutual understanding, and to appreciate the historical importance of the Chinese revolution. We try to give material expression to the positive feelings of many New Zealanders towards China. We welcome as members everyone who shares our aims.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁶ ‘Society Looks At Help for Co-ops’, *New Zealand China News*, October 1991, 1.

⁸⁴⁷ For more discussion on this theme see chapter 7.

⁸⁴⁸ ‘Dr. Bethune’s Angel’, *New Zealand China News*, March 1990, 1. Tom Newnham’s *Dr. Bethune’s Angel: The Life of Kathleen Hall* was published in Chinese in 1992 by New World Press. Various English editions have followed, most recently Graphic Productions, Auckland, 2002.

⁸⁴⁹ ‘Iron Rice Bowl Cracking’, *New Zealand China News* October 1991, 6.

⁸⁵⁰ ‘Economic Reforms Forge Ahead’, *New Zealand China News*, October 1991, 8.

⁸⁵¹ ‘China’s Modernisation’, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 12 August 1992. Wellington Branch papers. NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁵² Bill Willmott et al, *The NZCFS 40 Years On*, NZCFS pamphlet, 1992, NZCFS Archive.

The retreat from defending and explaining the PRC led to an absence of belief in a single truth and its replacement with a position that within the Society where almost where all beliefs about the PRC were accepted as subjective and equally valid. The PRC's earlier history as a revolutionary state claimed to have a truth about humankind as a whole made the problem of truth a vital component of understanding it. In the new era the NZCFS this was downplayed and replaced by attracting a variety of people who were simply interested in the country. Individual people who had taught, or even simply been on a tour, had become the new (albeit amateur) experts on China. They were experts based simply on their own experience. Gone were the meetings where a Society leader would be asked to construct an account of a political matter affecting contemporary China and attempt to 'explain it'. Instead, Society members were invited to provide 'entertaining and perceptive accounts of living, travelling and business experiences in China'.⁸⁵³ Speakers Mary and Vincent Gray even spoke at a Wellington branch meeting on their trip to Iran and Europe.

In fact, the mid-1990s were dominated not by the Society celebrating the things happening in the PRC as a model for New Zealand, but condemning the PRC for being inconsistent with New Zealand's progressive values. This was exemplified by the question of the testing of nuclear weapons. In 1973, claiming solidarity with the PRC, the various small communist groups that had dominated the NZCFS had supported France's nuclear testing. China's nuclear tests in the 1990s drew a sharply different response, in part because the Society didn't want to be seen as out-of-step with common New Zealand values, and in particular because it desperately did not want to be seen as a spokesperson for the Chinese authorities and the regime responsible for the disaster of Tiananmen. In 1994 it issued an official letter of protest, and reported in its national newsletter that China's tests had led to cancellations of magazine subscriptions.⁸⁵⁴

The difference of opinion with the official Chinese position was a difficult matter for the Society. The letter put the quandary to the Chinese ambassador:

As members of a Society dedicated to friendship with China and as New Zealanders dedicated to helping the world towards a nuclear-free policy, we find ourselves in an embarrassing and distressing situation.⁸⁵⁵

There were two obvious answers to the problem. The Society could 'understand' the reasons for the tests or China could stop doing them. The Society made its position clear. 'We believe China should immediately terminate its testing programme'. The Ambassador's reply reflected the pre-

⁸⁵³ Report on the April Meeting, Wellington Branch Newsletter, 15 May 1990, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁵⁴ Nancy Goddard, Letter of protest at nuclear test, 8 July 1994, Bill Willmott papers, Correspondence, NZCFS Archive. The report that China's nuclear test had led to cancellations of magazine subscriptions was carried in *New Zealand China News*, July 1994, 1.

⁸⁵⁵ Letter by National Secretary Nancy Goddard to Ambassador of the PRC, 8 July 1996, Willmott papers, Correspondence, NZCFS Archive.

1989 relationship: 'We hope that China's stand on this issue could be understood by our New Zealand friends'. China believed, he said, in a 'comprehensive test-ban treaty' and that '... once this... enters into force, China will stop nuclear tests'.⁸⁵⁶ Although unconvinced, the Society did appreciate the need for communication. Later that year, space in branch newsletters was given over to a full page explanation by the Ambassador.⁸⁵⁷

Return to the PRC

The entire process would be repeated in 1996, but when that year saw the emergence of a new issue, human rights, the Society threw itself into explaining Chinese realities and the truth about China. In March the national publication noted that 'Members will have been aware of... allegations of cruelty' in Chinese orphanages and '... they will have read the reply... from the Embassy.... The national secretary has full statements... replying to those attacks...'.⁸⁵⁸ In addition the Society's publications reprinted an article from *China Daily* in which 'US adoptive parents have challenged reports in the Western media about the so-called abuse of children in Chinese orphanages'.⁸⁵⁹

There was a similar response when Sukhi Turner, the Mayor of Dunedin, 'refused an invitation to visit China because of China's government record on human rights'.⁸⁶⁰ The Society's response was consistent with its approach to dealing with criticisms of the PRC in the 1970s. Professor Bill Willmott, a past President, penned an article entitled 'Human Rights in China' where he explained 'Evidence must be put into context'. 'Given', he noted, the '... stage of industrialisation... China's performance is impressive'. Weighing China's 'social and economic rights' against Britain's, during its industrial revolution, Willmott drew a favourable comparison. The development of women's rights, he stated, 'has been remarkable' and 'impressive progress' is being made with respect to 'even individual freedoms'. The article reminded readers that China had suffered greatly at the hands of Western imperialism and had an anti-democratic history in part as a response to this. It was not quite the same representation as before though, whereby New Zealanders could learn from what was happening in the PRC. For Willmott in 1996, China needed to change to be more consistent with New Zealanders' values and the Society could help. 'Progress can be best fostered by contact... the NZCFS [is] firmly committed to such a programme'.⁸⁶¹ In this analysis, human rights had come, by the 1990s, to be interpreted through

⁸⁵⁶ 'Ambassador Replies', *New Zealand China News*, November 1994, 1. This position was exactly the same as that expressed in the Society's publication *China and the Nuclear Question* in 1974 but clearly no longer something that the Society supported.

⁸⁵⁷ Christchurch branch newsletter, October 1995, Christchurch Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁵⁸ 'Chinese Orphanages – Allegations Refuted', *New Zealand China News*, March 1996, 1.

⁸⁵⁹ 'US families speak out' *New Zealand China News*, March 1996, 6.

⁸⁶⁰ Mary Gray, 'Report of South Island Tour', 22-28 April, 1996.

⁸⁶¹ 'Human Rights in China', *New Zealand China News*, July 1996, 3.

the paradigm of industrial modernisation, thus replacing the Maoist idea that there was an alternative to the feudalism-capitalism-socialism trajectory.

Albeit with this significant difference, Willmott's defence of the People's Republic of China still signalled a return to being celebratory about China. The 1996 National Day celebrations welcomed news from the ambassador that in China 'corruption was being checked as officials hand in gifts'.⁸⁶² This was accompanied by a reminder to members that in pre-liberation China corruption was endemic and that the formation of the PRC had brought about a 'New Society'. The previous month, in contrast to the increasing belief that New Zealand students were self-centred, NZCFS members were told that China's youth were different, and that they were responding to China's problems by taking them into their own hands. An article from *China Daily* was reprinted in branch newsletters, it reported that students in Beijing were spending their free time 'school[ing] migrants on legal rights, the market-orientated economy and related technology'.⁸⁶³

In this reorganisation of the NZCFS there were both similarities and differences with the Society of previous eras. In activities that mirrored the commemoration of the death of Mao Zedong, the Society's publications ran extensive material on the death of Deng Xiaoping. His death, Society President Willmott wrote, was a loss 'not only to the Chinese people but also to the peoples of the whole world who have relations with a modern, stable, strong and prosperous China, of which Deng has been a main architect'.⁸⁶⁴ Deng, though, was remembered for what he had done for China, not any inspiration he might have provided to the world, and while Deng was lauded for having built a 'modern' China there was no mention of his involvement with the utopian ideals that had dominated discourse about China under Mao.

Society members engaging in a political defence of China made a return, as was reflected in the letter by a member challenging the dominant media representation of a local crime story. While the 'Chinese horticultural scientist's attempt to smuggle apple tree cuttings out of NZ was unacceptable... on the other hand, China has had many invaluable plant materials smuggled or taken out [of China]'.⁸⁶⁵ This was a political defence of the PRC, but a different one than the Society once engaged in – not least because its referent to western crimes was not those against the PRC but against some timeless 'China'. The smuggling of plant materials from China referred to silk worms and tea, from around 300AD and the early nineteenth century respectively. In addition, this was a defence of a Chinese person, rather than the PRC, the person rather than the project embodying the object of support.

⁸⁶² 'Corruption Checked as Officials Hand in Gifts', *Wellington Branch Newsletter*, 10 September 1996, 2.

⁸⁶³ 'Officials Recognise Student Volunteers', *Wellington Branch Newsletter*, 12 October 1995, 2. Despite all the changes, note the durability of the 'New China' image and the representation that Chinese are morally better than New Zealanders.

⁸⁶⁴ 'Deng Xiaoping, 1904-1997', *Christchurch Branch Newsletter*, 25 February, 1997, 1.

⁸⁶⁵ 'Nothing New to Plant Thefts', reported in *Hawkes Bay Branch Newsletter*, July 1997, Hawkes Bay papers, NZCFS Archive.

This incident shows the extreme sensitivity to China's external image that animates the discussion of these questions. Crimes committed by nationals from other states are not generally regarded as indications of the moral worth of those societies as a whole in the same way. It tallies though with the increased concern about national prestige that emerged so strongly in the aftermath of the Belgrade bombing.

Reflecting these more muted political times, *New Zealand China News* became a biannual publication, replaced by a 'National Notebook' emailed out by the national President.⁸⁶⁶ The Society's heroes reflected these changes too. The centenary of old hero Rewi Alley's birth was recalled with a tour 'in the footsteps of Rewi Alley' and a public campaign to have a postage stamp produced in his honour. Money was raised towards the restoration of his rooms in Beijing, to serve as a memory of his contributions to the PRC. The Kathleen Hall memorial activities reflected more the new Society. The New Zealand Government was approached to fund the establishment of a clinic in her former base at Songjiazhuang, Hebei. A scholarship, for a nursing student who did community nursing in New Zealand, was created to help keep her memory alive.

In 1998, coordinated by North Island Vice-President Jeremy Dwyer, the Society undertook a major survey of its members' views of the NZCFS. This revealed that for most members the constitutional relevance of the historical founding of the PRC should be played down. In contrast to political engagement and interest, the main reasons for membership were direct contact with China, friendship, branch activity and sister-city relations. The key services members wanted to see were regular newsletters, education and information on China – in particular on its culture. They wanted regular meetings, social activities and opportunities for visits. In a change from the historic understanding of the Society as being connected with China (the political entity of the PRC) rather than things Chinese, members also saw a greater need to incorporate New Zealand Chinese residents.⁸⁶⁷

The survey revealed conflict about many of these points, often manifested in differences between those who had been members for a number of years and those who were newer members. While a handful of members said they had joined because of support for the 'Communist experiment', for others a point of dissatisfaction was the promotion of 'Chinese propaganda' on Tibet and Taiwan through the Society. Another noted that the 'overtly political activities' were hurting the Society.⁸⁶⁸

Despite this, or to convince members of the utility of political engagement with China, the Society was to speak out even more on issues in defence of the PRC over the next few years. In May 1999 it wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade objecting to his granting

⁸⁶⁶ Bill Willmott, 'National Notebook', March 1997.

⁸⁶⁷ '1999 NZCFS Survey', NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁶⁸ 'Survey Results', NZCFS Archive.

diplomatic immunity to trade representatives from Taiwan because it ‘violates NZ’s one-China policy’.⁸⁶⁹ More controversially, later that year the President wrote again to the Minister after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia by NATO planes. The ‘bombing’, he wrote, which caused ‘the death of Chinese diplomatic staff... is a flagrant disregard of international diplomatic convention that deeply disturbs the members of this Society’. Although the link between the PRC and the NZCFS was clearly the catalyst for the complaint, the letter referenced the more politicised Society from the past. ‘We urge you to publicly condemn this act in the strongest possible terms...’ and to ‘call upon [New Zealand’s Western allies] to... stop the illegal bombing of Yugoslavia forthwith’.⁸⁷⁰

The letter was controversial within the Society. But the matter of the NATO bombing of the Chinese Consulate in Belgrade was even more so. For a number of years the Auckland branch had been holding a ‘Mandarin Corner’ where Chinese speakers and those wanting to learn Chinese could gather socially. At one of these events the local Chinese spontaneously decided to march upon the United States Consulate. The NZCFS Auckland branch members, and their banner, went along in support. A report to the National Executive meeting the next month reversed the judgement on the bombing itself and ‘deplored the presence of the Society’s banner at a protest outside the Auckland US Consulate against the inadvertent bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade’. It was agreed that ‘branches could protest on matters affecting China, but there was feeling that opinions on the NATO action in Yugoslavia... were outside the concern of the Society’.⁸⁷¹

While not wanting to be seen as a spokesperson for the Chinese Government, the Society continued to propagate, at least internally, certain positions that were both close to the official Chinese position and different from the dominant understanding outside of China. For example, during the National President’s tour of branches, in early 2002, members were invited to understand that the Falun Gong issue was a lot more complicated than they might have been led to believe. Bill Willmott’s National Notebook the year before had informed readers that:

Falun Dafa has been outlawed because it is a strong secret organisation... Falun Dafa members have demonstrated regularly in Tiananmen Square, culminating in five of them setting themselves alight and one dying.

⁸⁶⁹ Bill Willmott, ‘National Notebook’, May 1999, NZCFS Archive. The issue arose when a staffer at the Taiwanese Trade Office was involved in a hit-and-run incident. The Taiwanese claimed diplomatic immunity for the driver and whisked him away to Taiwan, even though New Zealand and Taiwan do not have formal diplomatic relations and New Zealand was under no obligation to grant such protection from prosecution.

⁸⁷⁰ Letter to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 June 1999, Willmott papers, Correspondence, NZCFS Archive.

⁸⁷¹ ‘Report from National Executive Meeting’, Wellington Branch newsletter, 5 July 1999, 3, Wellington Branch papers, NZCFS Archive.

Remember the Japanese cult with a 'gentle and benign Buddhist leader' who told his followers to release gas in the Tokyo underground?⁸⁷²

In other meetings he informed members that behind the 'Taiwan' issue was United States imperialist designs against China.⁸⁷³ In Wellington branch meetings the Chinese Ambassador Chen Mingming was often in attendance, often 'clarifying' statements made by speakers. In 2002 and 2003 he handed over an annual cheque, on behalf of the Chinese Government, to assist the Society in its activities.

Conclusion

The soul-searching and self-reflection of the previous decade had enabled the Society in the 2000s to be free to construct its own relationship with the PRC. It meant a multi-faceted NZCFS flexible enough to accommodate its different members' tastes. In 2002 the Society organised teachers to go to China, had speakers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asia 2000, the Chinese Embassy and members talking of their own experiences with the PRC – and not just as travellers. It was active in the promotion of Chinese language through films and discussion groups that brought native speakers and New Zealanders learning Mandarin together. It had educational sessions that explained China and Chinese government policies, such as those with regard to population control and the question of Taiwan. It organised a major tour of by a Confucian scholar who was advertised as revealing 'the truth about Confucius'.⁸⁷⁴ This 'truth' was about a timeless contribution to Chinese culture. Of the anti-Confucius campaigns of the 1970s there was no mention. There was likely very little continuity of membership from those who had supported those campaigns, albeit from afar, and the current membership – in particular the leadership – of the NZCFS.

In 2002 the Society commemorated its 50th anniversary and the same soul-searching took place again, as it had each time the Society reflected on its past. This time, however, it found itself confident about where it stood. It had strong links with the CPAFFC, the New Zealand Government, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Chinese Embassy. It worked with sister-cities where they existed, and worked for more relationships between local and Chinese municipalities where they did not. It undertook tours to China for both tourists – 'Majestic China' – and those with a deeper connection to the Society's work – 'Remembering Kathleen Hall'. It had its links with the Bailie School in Shandan and used that as a link to the promotion of cooperatives. That

⁸⁷² Bill Willmott, National Notebook, April 2001, Willmott papers, NZCFS Archives.

⁸⁷³ This issue was naturally raised during discussions on 'China Today' in the National President's tour of branches before the 2002 NZCFS National AGM. It was explained as not simply an issue of religious freedom but also of stability and required an understanding of the activities of the Falun Gong organisation. Wellington and Christchurch branches both had sessions on 'The Taiwan Issue' in early 2002.

⁸⁷⁴ See Zhang Peicheng tour materials, NZCFS Archives.

year it also embarked on a ‘major new thrust for the Society’, poverty alleviation aid and development work in Guangxi province, one of China’s poorest. A strategic planning process led by South Island Vice-President Eric Livingstone found the Society focussed and in good heart.⁸⁷⁵

For members of the Society, the People’s Republic of China in 1976 was about politics – and bringing those politics and the political significance of the Chinese revolution to New Zealand. China was a place from which New Zealanders could take inspiration, but also money – the financial security of the organisation was in part ensured through a monopoly of access to China and sometimes subsidised tours. China represented a lesson and model for those New Zealanders connected to it. The Society saw its role as explaining China to New Zealanders and its members studied China and went on ‘study tours’ to China in order to understand it better. They then constituted the experts who could discuss it in depth. Activities supporting China included protesting and fighting for positions that would assist the PRC, and it was the official China with which they had a connection. To be friendly with the PRC meant supporting and agreeing with the choices that the Chinese leaders had made, and accepting that those leaders were acting in the interests of the Chinese masses.

Three decades later, what the People’s Republic of China meant for the New Zealand China Friendship Society had been transformed. While these changes to a small extent reflected changes in New Zealand, overwhelmingly the New Zealand Society was running to catch up and adjusting its message and activities with changes in the PRC. By the turn of the millennium, China had all but completely ceased to reflect a politicised image. For many members their interest in China was now ‘cultural’. Reflecting this, the Society had constitutionally changed its goal of correcting misstatements about China and at times even claimed to not have a position on contemporary Chinese affairs at all. Instead of taking from the PRC, including its laudatory attempts at self-reliance, the Society raised funds for aid work in poorer parts of China and provided expert assistance in different fields. Its travel business was competing with other tourist operations and was essentially commercial, although drawing on links made through its friendship relationships. Those who presented at NZCFS meetings were increasingly talking of their own limited engagement with China, through short tours or brief teaching experience: the ‘experts’, with very few exceptions, tended to be from outside the Society. The members were drawn from different parts of the New Zealand community than before. The Society’s desire to maintain its fidelity to a China that had changed so much had led to its own remodelling; it was a different sort of person attracted to the truths about China that the NZCFS currently believed in, and accordingly a different Society.

⁸⁷⁵ ‘Report on the NZCFS Strategic Planning Process’, August 2002, Bill Willmott papers, NZCFS Archives.

Chapter 7: Re-remembering the Heroes of the New Zealand–China relationship.

In this chapter I will use the representations of two of the founders of the people-to-people relationship between New Zealand and China in order to explore the ways in which groups in New Zealand give authority to their heroes. This notion is an important one, in particular for the NZCFS and it is not uncommon in this: often, an important aspect of the transmission of the tales of travellers is the construction of the image that is given to the travellers themselves.⁸⁷⁶ This notion suggests that the relationship to heroes give voracity to the Society's history, or can be regarded as 'truth', at least in part through how the hero themselves is remembered.⁸⁷⁷ This is exaggerated because of the significant claim the NZCFS makes for its own legitimacy by an appeal to its own history.⁸⁷⁸

While there were a reasonably large number of New Zealanders engaged in propagating narratives about 1930s and 40s China, for the Friendship Society there were two central characters for whom the construction of their own biography can be explored in this manner: Rewi Alley and Kathleen Hall. Their connection to a pre-Liberation narrative has been a continuing reference point as China's revolutionary trajectory went through its changes over the subsequent period.

Much has been written about Rewi Alley, his formative years, and the sixty years he spent in China from 1927 until his death there in 1987. Kathleen Hall has attracted less attention than Alley, but even these treatments are book length and rather more substantial than the space permitted in this chapter. The focus of this chapter is to re-examine Alley in relationship to the NZCFS and the CPNZ, his role in helping to shape their images of the PRC and their role in shaping the image of him. My particular interest in Hall is in her emergence as a 'hero' for the NZCFS in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in part as an alternative to Alley. As a result of this focus, despite the fact that Alley was a prolific letter-writer and this was an important way by which he propagated his thoughts, I have focussed almost exclusively on published material: for the NZCFS, national and branch newsletters and *New Zealand China News*, for the CPNZ, the *People's Voice* and the *New Zealand Communist Review*. An additional feature of my focus is how these heroes have been understood at particular moments in time and the relationship of that understanding to the ideas explored in the other chapters of this work.

⁸⁷⁶ Witness to this is the prominence given to Alley and Hall by the Society and its efforts to present the NZCFS's current activities in the light of its history – as represented by the two figures (see www.nzchinasociety.org.nz). For a general treatment, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997, 223-230.

⁸⁷⁷ Tim Kendall, *Ways of Seeing China: from Yellow Peril to Shangri-la*, Curtin University Press, Freemantle, 2005. See especially chapter 3, 'Travelling to Mao's Republic', 91.

⁸⁷⁸ For example the Society's website reads 'The New Zealand China Friendship Society has had fifty years experience working with China. This has given us strong connections and good contacts'. www.nzchinasociety.org.nz/chinasociety.html. Accessed 1 Feb 2009.

Although my focus is on the on-going representations of Alley, and later Hall, after the formation of the PRC, a key feature of their authority is their activities in China prior to the formation of the People's Republic. These activities are represented in different ways in texts designed for New Zealanders and for Chinese texts, even those from the same era, each designed to give credibility – in a culturally and politically subjective way – to their subject. It is not only these contested accounts by biographers, and the changing accounts through the publications of the organisations linked to Alley, that have produced differences in the representation of him. There is also a question of representing the historical account in terms of the intended audience and what that audience is assumed to know and assumed to think. There can be important differences in how representations are transmitted according to their intended audience.

Rewi Alley was an important figure in the Society's pre-history and, to a large extent, the Society was formed in order to continue the support that left-wing New Zealanders had been offering him in the civil war period. Kathleen Hall, although involved in the early work of the Society was not, at this stage, also remembered as someone who had been active in China and contributed to the success of the founding of the People's Republic. Since the focus of the Society was on peace work, Alley was seen as a person who was working for peace, and for telling the world about developments in China. Through the 1960s, as the NZCFS and Chinese society became increasingly politicised Alley was too, his credentials as a communist coming to the fore, and he was utilised to shore up support for the CPNZ in its struggle against other communist groups in New Zealand. When the New Zealand government recognised the PRC, Alley's role broadened, and he became someone that all New Zealanders would connect with as part of their connection with China. In the late 1970s as the formerly China-supporting groups splintered, Alley was a useful point of left-wing continuity, and Alley's work was represented as constituting a link showing the continuation of the socialist project. In the late 1980s, this search for continuity became harder to fathom and Kathleen Hall emerged as another hero for the Society whose memory was not cluttered by the twists and turns that Alley had, by necessity, been engaged in. Alley's image became depoliticised and stood alongside Hall and someone who represented support for China, rather than for a revolutionary project to transform humanity.

The NZCFS official account of Rewi Alley's pre-Liberation activities in China is designed to speak to New Zealand conditions and accordingly presents him in a way that that is likely to resonate with contemporary New Zealand readers. The NZCFS website account of Alley's life reveals him as a war hero, through his activities in France during the first great European war, who went to China. In China he saw the terrible conditions facing the Chinese and identified with their struggles. Alley's response included working on flood relief, supporting the Chinese in

the fight against Japan, founding a school – which continues today – and helping to found the Indusco movement, which took place throughout unoccupied China.⁸⁷⁹

The over-whelming image is of Alley as a great international charity worker in much the same mould as Edmund Hillary. He was engaged in the same sorts of activities as Hillary. They both witnessed suffering and then contributed advanced western understanding to solve the problems. This is in the same manner as those charitable activities often promoted on television. As with such charities, there is no discussion as to what societal issues might have caused the suffering and no suggestion that changes to the way society is organised might be the way towards ending the need for such charity. This is a neutered representation of Alley and a new one. The distinction between Hillary and Alley would be clear to the early left-wing supporters of Alley's projects. Alley was political, his projects were designed to change the existing order, and Hillary was not, his projects worked within the existing order, and some might say perpetuated it.⁸⁸⁰

Alley is identified as a war hero through referencing the Great War, rather than his engagement in supporting China's war effort, although this is important for other reasons. His support for 'China' is represented as support for some unified 'Chinese' cause, carefully glossing over the divisions in China at the time and minimising his relationship to the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism. Pointedly the Gung Ho Indusco movement, which he is often referred to in New Zealand material as having initiated, is noted to have operated in areas controlled both by the CPC and the KMT. Alley then, is seen as existing as some sort of bridge between Chinese, and the differences between them are not explored, since New Zealanders in the 1990s were understood to not be interested in them anyway. He is represented as being practically engaged in solutions to the problems that the Chinese found themselves in, without exploring how those problems might have emerged. His image is ultimately that of an educator and charity worker – one who stood aside from the ideological and political discussions in China and got on with helping out as he could.

In China, for similar domestic reasons, Rewi Alley is remembered somewhat differently. He is a 'social activist and internationalist' whose activities in Shanghai revealed to him the oppression of the working class by imperialists and the KMT. In addition, through his engagement in flood

⁸⁷⁹ Indusco, or the International Committee for Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, was a project established to develop village-level industrialisation in China. The small and mobile factories were designed to produce materials which could support the Chinese war effort following the Japanese invasion and occupation of the Eastern seaboard – where China's heavy industry was otherwise almost exclusively based. It is often referred to as Gung Ho (for the derivation of the term see Alfred Moe, 'Gung Ho', *American Speech*, 42, 1, 1967, 19-30). Alley was the chairman of the committee and heavily engaged in publicising its work internationally. Later he transferred his efforts into the related activity of developing schools to produce technicians who could staff the collectives – first at Shuangshipu (Shaanxi) and then at Shandan (Gansu). These schools were called 'Bailie Schools' after the American missionary Joseph Bailie, had enlightened ideas on education, and whom Alley had met in Shanghai. In accordance with Bailie's ideas, the timetable allowed for 'half-work, half-study'.

⁸⁸⁰ For an extensive discussion on questions of such aid, and the non-government organisations who promote it, see James Petras, 'A Marxist Critique of Post-Marxists', *Links*, 9, November 1997–February 1998, 1. Petras argues, for example, that 'NGOs foster a new type of cultural and economic colonialism and dependency'.

relief work he saw the miserable life of Chinese peasants under the landlordism of the GMD.⁸⁸¹ In contrast to New Zealand material, in Chinese material Alley is connected directly with the official Chinese revolutionary tradition, in particular through being personally associated with other foreigners who have been adopted into the revolution, themselves through appropriate association with Chinese. This emerges out of a practice of the distrust of outsiders, foreigners in particular, until they have proved themselves. This has been a feature of the revolutionary tradition of the PRC.⁸⁸²

Alley's involvement in Gung Ho is represented as a way by which he could support the war effort and stand against 'Japanese aggression'.⁸⁸³ Until very recently, when there has been a revising of the degree of involvement in the anti-Japanese war by the KMT, this was understood as being the sole preserve of the CPC and its armies.⁸⁸⁴ Thus, supporting the war effort is understood as meaning supporting the CPC and its activities.

The CPC's claim for political legitimacy in the present is intimately linked to the representation that 'without the Communist Party of China there would be no New China'. Part of the founding myth of 'New China' is that China without the CPC would be subject to foreign domination and would never have thrown off the yoke of European and Japanese imperialism. The struggle between the CPC and the KMT fits into this narrative by connecting the CPC with the Chinese people and the KMT with the interests of imperialists and in its failure to oppose Japanese aggression. In the struggle between the CPC and the KMT there was no middle ground and foreigners (and foreign governments) that tried to steer such a 'middle course' were simply dupes of the GMD and in cahoots with foreign powers.⁸⁸⁵

To fit in with the PRC's revolutionary historiography, the representation of Alley has to conform to a particular image and construction. Part of this relates to what was happening in China and to its understanding in an authoritative version of Chinese history. China has a tradition of authoritative history – that is to say, a deliberately constructed version of history to serve present purposes. As Mao put it, to 'use the past to serve the present'.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸¹ The representations of Alley in China are taken from the entry for Alley in the *Friends of China Directory*, Friends of China Research Foundation, Beijing, 1996. The entry is in Chinese (translated by Mei Sun and Alistair Shaw, 1998). The directory was written around the same time as the material that appears on the NZCFS website, yet, since it is in Chinese, it has been written for a Chinese audience. It represents a Chinese mirror to the people who, in New Zealand, would be interested in foreigners in China. As such it represents a point of comparison for the representations of Alley and Hall to New Zealand and to Chinese.

⁸⁸² There is a link here to Michael Dutton's friend/enemy dichotomy, see also Ralph Crozier, *Koxinga and Chinese Nationalism: History, Myth and the Hero*, Cambridge, Harvard University, 1977, 1-3.

⁸⁸³ Officially, what is known in the West as 'World War Two' is called 'The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression' in the PRC.

⁸⁸⁴ See Joseph W. Esherick, 'Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution', *Modern China*, 21, 1995, 45. Esherick claims that scholarship supportive of the CPC 'painted its rival as a dialectical opposite' but argues that in fact there were significant unities and continuities between the GMD and the CPC.

⁸⁸⁵ See Esherick, 'Ten Theses', for a critique of this.

⁸⁸⁶ This is addressed in each of the chapters in Jonathan Unger (ed), *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1993. In particular see Geremie Barmé, 'History for the

In the official discourse of Communist Party history there was no ‘Chinese’ army or ‘Chinese’ people to be working with. There were Chinese resisting Japanese aggression, the CPC, or Chinese collaborating or acquiescing in Japanese control over China, the KMT. Alley’s revolutionary credentials, the personal activities on which he was able to make claims to stay in China after Liberation, depended on him having recognised that the CPC was to be supported and the KMT to be opposed very early on.⁸⁸⁷

In addition, Alley is not an independent foreigner, he is linked to China’s revolution through appropriate connections. He knew Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yatsen, father of the Chinese revolution, and herself the first Vice-President of the PRC. In addition he is connected with Edgar and Peg Snow, and Agnes Smedley, who had already been legitimated in the eyes of China’s revolutionary discourse because of Edgar Snow’s *Red Star Over China* and Smedley’s journalism from the period. The combination of Song, Snow and Smedley, for those Chinese familiar with the subject, confirms that Alley was connected to the progressive foreigners supporting the revolution and a member of the ‘Marxist-Leninist Study Group’.⁸⁸⁸

Kathleen Hall is the other New Zealand hero whose memory is feted by the NZCFS since the 1990s and for whom there is an entry in the *Friends of China Directory*. In 1922 the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel accepted Hall to undertake missionary work in China. After a number of years in Beijing, she asked to be shifted to smaller cities. In 1934 she set up her own cottage hospital in the mountain village of Songjiazhuang, Hebei.

For the NZCFS, Kathleen Hall is understood as being a nurse who became acquainted with deplorable conditions in China, dealt with hundreds of casualties, passed medicines to the Chinese army, was caught by the Japanese and sent back to New Zealand. She tried to return to the front-line but got sick travelling back to Songjiazhuang so returned to New Zealand.⁸⁸⁹

This conforms to popular New Zealand imagery. She is valued for her self-sacrifice and concern for the poor and her missionary connection gets downplayed. Her lack of strong connection to socialism means that she cannot, in the way that Alley can, get tarred with a claim that she was blind to the human suffering that seems to have gone along with state socialism. She is a heroic figure – as is proven by her attempt to return to Songjiazhuang after being sent away by the

Masses’, 260, where he writes that ‘Every policy shift in recent Chinese history has involved the rehabilitation, re-evaluation and revision of history and historical figures’.

⁸⁸⁷ Note that there has been some moderation in recent years with regard to the KMT not resisting Japan, no doubt in order to strengthen ties with the unificationist lobby in Taiwan.

⁸⁸⁸ The Marxist-Leninist Study Group was established by Hans (or Heinz) Shppe, a Polish communist. Its members would include American writer Agnes Smedley, and Dr. George Hatem. Anne-Marie Brady claims that Alley was not a member of this group but merely of a non-Marxist ‘political study group’, citing Ruth Weiss who claimed to be in the group and Maud Russell’s diary note he had been a member of her discussion group, which was a different one. However, all sources refer to Hatem as being in the group and Hatem says that Alley was a member and in fact Alley introduced Hatem to Marxism. See Edgar A. Porter, *The People’s Doctor*, Hawaii University Press, Honolulu, 1997, 101-102.

⁸⁸⁹ All from the entry on the NZCFS website www.nzchinasociety.org.nz/kathleenhall.

Japanese. Being captured by the Japanese is a reminder that New Zealand was at war with Japan, so she was also seen as supporting the New Zealand war effort. In fact Tom Newnham, who brought the story of Kathleen Hall to the world, represents her as a New Zealand war hero whose activities in North China helped to tie up Japanese forces and prevent those troops from being involved in the intended invasion of New Zealand.⁸⁹⁰

Like Alley, Hall's support for 'the Chinese war effort' is represented as support for some unified 'Chinese' cause, again glossing over the divisions in China at the time. There is no reference to the ideological questions that were dominating the local Chinese scene and were definitely a motivator for Norman Bethune with whom she participated in her activities.⁸⁹¹

In contrast, in China, when Hall's story began to be popularised, her representation focussed on other features. In it she 'used her own salary to pay for medicines', she saw the 'corruption of the Guomindang government and the hope provided by communists'. She was connected with Norman Bethune. She built a transport line to 'transport medical supplies to the 8th Route Army'. She became exhausted treating the sick and wounded and yet persisted. She was eventually removed from China.⁸⁹²

Like Alley, in China's revolutionary historiography Hall's representation has to conform to a particular image and construction. In the Chinese story, Hall doesn't have a distant and charitable approach to the suffering of the Chinese, she recognises that it is the corruption of the Guomindang government that is holding the Chinese people back. Further, she sees clearly that China's hope lies with the Communist Party. As with Alley, Hall's support for China is revealed through her participation in the war effort. Since this war effort is understood as being the sole preserve of the CPC and its armies, supporting the war effort meant supporting the CPC and its activities. Hall's participation in China's struggle towards Liberation is also linked to China's revolution through appropriate connections. In particular, Hall is connected to China's revolution through Norman Bethune. Not only did they meet but Bethune described Hall as 'an angel' who agreed to help him. In the Chinese language material this constituted a 'turning point' in Hall's life – where she realised that to make a difference one needed to take a stand and a side.

The PRC sources seek to play up her connection with the CPC and Bethune and her opposition to the KMT in the same way that the New Zealand depictions of Alley want to play down his connections with socialism. Given that the Chinese language accounts are drawn from English language materials, Hall's CPC connections – in particular to a figure as important as Bethune – would be amplified.

⁸⁹⁰ Tom Newnham, *He Mingqing: the life of Kathleen Hall*, New World Press/Graphic Publications, Beijing, 1992, 3.

⁸⁹¹ All from <http://nzchinasociety.org.nz/kathleen.html>. Accessed 23 March 2009.

⁸⁹² From a translation (Sun Mei and Alistair Shaw) of the entry for Kathleen Hall in *Friends of China Directory*.

In addition, Hall knew and is detailed as having worked in conjunction with Song Qingling, a much loved figure in CPC and PRC history. Song symbolised an unbroken connection between the 1911 revolution that ended the last dynasty and the realisation of the modernist and anti-feudal goals the CPC saw itself as embodying. But Song was more than this. She was the leader of the Revolutionary Committee of the Guomindang. Since she was not a member of the CPC she represented a non-communist connection with the PRC. As Hall was not also a communist, her connection with the revolution has needed to be presented similarly.

Despite the heroism and fortitude that Kathleen Hall showed in the PRC, particularly through her engagement with Dr. Norman Bethune in the late 1930s, she was only ‘discovered’ by the New Zealand China Friendship Society in the late 1980s and her story was not used in any practical way, until the early 1990s. For the Society and the Communist Party of New Zealand, from the founding of the PRC in 1949 until the early 1990s, the focus was on Rewi Alley. Alley’s image, though, has not been constant, just as the image that he was responsible for promoting about the PRC has also not been constant.

Alley for the NZCFS and the CPNZ

Rewi Alley was already famous in New Zealand when the PRC was founded in 1949. His exploits with Indusco and in establishing the Bailie School in Shandan had received widespread coverage in the New Zealand media.⁸⁹³ He was warmly regarded as ‘that man the Chinese affectionately call Tall Nose, the Work-Together man’.⁸⁹⁴ NGO and government money had gone to support the projects with which he was involved.⁸⁹⁵ Additionally, he had built up a network of supporters amongst those who had donated money and those who had worked with him in China and then returned to New Zealand.⁸⁹⁶

One of the few to write about Alley at this time was Barbara Spencer, who went with her husband to staff the medical clinic at Shandan. In her account of three years at the school, July 1947 to mid-1950, she described meeting ‘this famous New Zealander’.⁸⁹⁷ She characterised him as:

⁸⁹³ Shandan is the town (population around 200,000) in Gansu province, where Alley helped to establish a Bailie School. He was acting headmaster of the school in 1949. In the local area ‘Shan’ is pronounced ‘San’ so this is how it is often spelt, although Shandan (山丹, Shāndān) is correct.

⁸⁹⁴ Phillip Mathews, ‘Rewi Alley’, *Challenge*, 1 August 1948, 3.

⁸⁹⁵ Support was primarily through CORSO. Don Ross recalls donating to Alley’s work through a collection at primary school in the mid-1930s (personal communication, 15 March 2005).

⁸⁹⁶ See the discussion in Chapter 3 around the formation of the NZCFS.

⁸⁹⁷ Barbara Spencer, *Desert Hospital in China*, The Anchor Press, London, 1953, 11.

A man with a dynamic and forceful personality, it was due to his untiring energy and sincere love for the Chinese people that the co-operative movement has been such an outstanding success.⁸⁹⁸

Spencer's account of Alley's time in China from 1927-1947 suggests that, in general, the representation of Alley's life prior to Liberation was already well-established.⁸⁹⁹ Spencer recounted Alley enlisting in the Australia-New Zealand Army Corps, being wounded and invalided back to New Zealand. She reported that he then spent several years on a sheep station, before working his way to China where he became Chief Factory Inspector for the Shanghai Municipal Council. According to Spencer this was transformative for Alley. He was:

Appalled at the terrible conditions in the factories, and the maltreated child slave-labour, he became determined to better their living and working conditions. The answer, he felt, lay in the industrialisation of the backward areas, with simple village industries worked and controlled by the country people themselves.⁹⁰⁰

In Spencer's account of Alley there is no mention whatsoever of Marxism or Marxism-Leninism and Alley's connection with this ideology. In addition, and mirrored much later, Alley's activities are represented as being based in a united Chinese opposition to Japanese aggression. As Spencer described it, after the invasion:

Through these grim and bitter years [Alley's Indusco movement] provided a great amount of the equipment needed by the Chinese army. 'Gung Ho' – 'Work Together' – was the co-operative motto, a cry which became famous throughout Free China.⁹⁰¹

In Spencer's account, Alley worked with his colleagues to develop the Bailie schools in order to overcome a deficiency amongst the Chinese. When Alley went with Joseph Needham to Shandan he noticed that the local people were 'dreadfully poor, socially and mentally isolated, and were hopelessly apathetic. Here, he decided, was the ideal place for a co-operative training school'.⁹⁰²

As it was in reach of Japanese bombers, it was decided to move the Shuangshipu Bailie School to Shandan in the winter of 1944. The school principal was the 'gallant and far-sighted Englishman' George Hogg.⁹⁰³ The school was just getting on its feet when Hogg died of tetanus. Rewi became acting headmaster, and took over the care of the four boys Hogg had adopted. Spencer's Alley is reflective of a time when foreigners believed they had the answers to China's problems.⁹⁰⁴

⁸⁹⁸ Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 21.

⁸⁹⁹ See below for discussion about the contested elements in this account of Alley's pre-liberation time in China.

⁹⁰⁰ Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 21.

⁹⁰¹ Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 22.

⁹⁰² Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 23.

⁹⁰³ Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 23.

⁹⁰⁴ To the extent that Spencer's book was partly designed to promote continued support for the aid and development projects Alley had been involved in setting up in pre-Liberation China, this makes some sense. Indeed, after the founding of the PRC, some of the Chinese teachers criticised Alley and the other foreign teachers for setting

Following this introduction, Spencer makes only one other mention of Alley during the three years that she and her husband spent at Shandan.⁹⁰⁵

The link between Alley's image and the successes he had achieved in China in the 1930s and 1940s was important for those wanting to be friends with what they would refer to as 'New China'. The NZCFS was formed out of the relationships Alley and others had already developed through his, and related, activities in China. Alley's supporters were quickly recruited into actively supporting New China. Alley and Shirley Barton, who had been working for CORSO alongside Alley, wrote to their New Zealand supporters suggesting that the way to continue their assistance was to fight for political recognition of the new Chinese regime by way of a friendship organisation. Alley wrote to one such sponsor:

the best way for friends overseas to help the Chinese people is to put all their efforts into maintaining and furthering of these friendly relations... may I venture to suggest that your group form the nucleus of a New Zealand China Friendship Association, with which I should feel honoured to keep in contact and give any help in my power.⁹⁰⁶

Among the key early members of the Society were a number who had direct experience of China through their association with Rewi Alley and his projects, such as Shirley Barton, the Spencers, Max Wilkinson, and Courtney Archer. People who may have been neutral at best shifted quickly to believing that the communists were the best alternative in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was a short step from there for many from a practical concern for the lives of poor people to belief in the need for, and support of, a comprehensive revolution.

Alley was an important link for those wanting to be friends with the PRC. His status and the standing of his activities were quickly tested when New Zealand troops faced off against Chinese soldiers in Korea. His support was seriously eroded by government policies.⁹⁰⁷ The New Zealand government even participated in a campaign to discredit Alley and editors of New Zealand's major newspapers, reflecting an anti-communist era, willingly participated in the campaign.⁹⁰⁸

In addition to the fame that had accompanied coverage of his pre-Liberation activities, Alley was a prolific letter-writer engaged in regular correspondence with groups that had been established to support his work, as well as with a variety of individuals. This would continue after the establishment of the PRC and until his death.⁹⁰⁹ As he had promised, when the NZCFS was

themselves apart as superior. Alley always rejected this, expressing his belief and commitment to the idea that the hope for China lay in the capacity of the Chinese people to liberate themselves.

⁹⁰⁵ This is of Alley taking the British Ambassador and his wife around the school (Spencer, *Desert Hospital*, 113). For the most part Spencer's writing is of her interactions with the local Chinese and that work was clearly independent of Alley.

⁹⁰⁶ Alley to Wolfgang Rosenberg, (Rewi Alley Aid Group), 1 August 1952, Barton papers, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁹⁰⁷ Bill Willmott *NZCFS 40 Years On*, NZCFS pamphlet, 1992. NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁰⁸ Anne-Marie Brady documents this from MFAT archives. See Brady, *Myth*, 66.

⁹⁰⁹ There is a reference to his letter-writing from China to 'many members of the Society' in *New Zealand China News*, March 1985, 1, when Alley had been in China for just under 60 years.

established, Alley continued his contact with a number of individuals who were members of the Society. He contributed regularly to the Society's newsletters. He also wrote a general greeting to members of the Society for the biennial National Conference and on the occasion of the PRC's 'National Day' on the 1st of October.⁹¹⁰ At times these letters would be very important in the interpretation of the changing nature of the PRC.

In addition, Alley made speaking trips to New Zealand in 1960, 1965, 1971 and 1973 where he met hundreds of New Zealand supporters. Thousands attended meetings where he spoke and still more heard his explanations of China's recent history through the media. Each of these trips had a more supportive reception by way of media coverage than the previous one. In 1960 and 1965 his supporters spoke of a 'media blackout' or when journalists did cover his tour, complained of the antagonistic nature of the coverage.⁹¹¹ In 1971, when he was awarded an Honorary Degree from Victoria University of Wellington the *Listener* reported 'Public meetings... have drawn nearly 2000 to hear him... with the knowledge he speaks of China... he holds an audience spellbound'.⁹¹² In this respect, Alley's public image for New Zealanders was closely related to official images of the PRC by the New Zealand government.⁹¹³

Another important role that Alley had was his meeting of virtually every visitor from New Zealand to the PRC through to the end of the 1970s. This was whether the visitors were peace activists, trade unionists, part of a Society delegation or with the CPNZ – although given the intermingling of those groups this is not very surprising. The practice of meeting visitors was established in the 1950s and is detailed in the accounts of Margaret (Peggy) Garland (1952), Harold Kay (1955), James Bertram (1956) and RAK Mason (1957). His joining with visitors, whatever the rubric they were visiting China, would become a time-honoured practice until when visitors to the PRC simply became too numerous.

In her book-length account of her trip to the Peking Peace Conference in 1952, Margaret Garland was much briefer than Barbara Spencer in detailing Alley's place in China's contemporary history. She provides an update of the period since 1949 but does not contradict the earlier description in any way. For her, Alley's longevity is important, so too his service: '[Alley] has lived and worked in China for 25 years. He went to China after fighting and being twice wounded in the first World War'. But other formative elements from his New Zealand experience are ignored. In China his contribution is also condensed:

⁹¹⁰ The PRC's 'National Day' commemorates the founding of the PRC on 1 October (1949). In Taiwan, 10 October is celebrated as 'China's National Day' representing the founding of the Republic of China at the fall of the Qing Dynasty. The existence of these twin 'National' days was a cause of conflict within the Chinese community in New Zealand. In 1973 the national gathering of the Chinese community, comprising mostly sports events, was shifted to Easter in part to avoid this conflict.

⁹¹¹ 'On his last visit the news media almost completely ignored him – except for a brief hostile radio session', 'Rewi Alley is Back!', *People's Voice*, 27 October 1971, 1.

⁹¹² Bruce Wallace, 'At Home in Worlds Apart', *New Zealand Listener*, 13 December 1971.

⁹¹³ Brady notes close monitoring of Alley by New Zealand's Department of Foreign Affairs (later Ministry) and various efforts to control his effect on New Zealand popular opinion (Brady, *Myth*, especially 62-66).

He was chief factory inspector in Shanghai for eleven years and he worked, too, on immigration and flood control. He has made a study of the Chinese language and history and he is familiar with village life. His main work up to the time I met him had been in the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives with which his name will always be linked and for a time he had been headmaster of the Sandan Bailie School.

Alley is acknowledged as 'one of New Zealand's famous men' and on a personal level:

he impressed me as being a friendly man without a trace of personal vanity. His manner was often retiring and always quiet though he could be and often was scathing and impatient. He was obviously a man with no illusions and no nonsense; I thought he hated stupidity even more than he hated cruelty and he had seen plenty of both.⁹¹⁴

A key function for Alley in hosting New Zealanders was the interpretation, alternative translation and perception of expertise about China that he was able to bring to his conversations with the visitors. An example of this is where Garland describes that when Alley accompanying her tour party to an acrobatic performance:

[He] told me how the lives of these people had altered in the last three years. I could see that he was greatly moved... because of his memories and the drama he was witnessing...⁹¹⁵

In 1952, Alley was still warming to his role of interpreting the PRC to foreigners and coming to grips with what they would know and how to present things:

He has a way of [speaking] in an irritated tone of voice, as if you are an awful fool for not knowing... he would mutter to me not to be so damn stupid, but usually when he heard the answers that were given and saw the reaction of the other delegates and myself, he would apologise and tell me he was out of touch with the world outside China and didn't realise how new it all was to us.⁹¹⁶

Alley's new role was exemplified in Harold Kay's reportage from 1955. When Kay asked Rewi Alley why those witnessing the May Day parade seemed so happy and so supportive of the new regime, Alley responded: 'before the Liberation they were hungry, whereas now they are fed and clothed'.⁹¹⁷ As discussed in chapter 3, this was an important part of the representation of New China.

Although Alley was well-remembered in New Zealand for his earlier work, the new status of China in the political consciousness had dramatically changed this. As James Bertram wrote:

⁹¹⁴ Margaret Garland, *Journey to New China*, Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1954, 82.

⁹¹⁵ Garland, *Journey*, 98.

⁹¹⁶ Garland, *Journey*, 50.

⁹¹⁷ Harold Kay, 'May Day in Peking', *Challenge*, June 1955, p.10.

I still got an occasional postcard from Rewi Alley, the remarkable New Zealander who had built up such a reputation during the war years by his work in organising Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. But across those barriers of the Cold War no one seemed to speak the same language. I didn't like the tone of Rewi's books about the New China; everything was black and white, all the key issues seemed over-simplified.⁹¹⁸

Bertram put this to Alley himself:

When are you coming back to New Zealand?

When I can – you know how I'd like to make the trip. But I'm an untouchable these days.

You're a great New Zealander, it's those violent books you write. Why do you have to get so angry?⁹¹⁹

When RAK Mason went to China in 1957, among the other things he wanted to achieve was to begin work on a biography of Alley. It was a project that he would never complete and his work on it was eventually surpassed by that of Willis Airey.⁹²⁰ Mason was one with whom Alley was in regular correspondence with, and the Mason-edited publication of the Labourers' Union publication *Challenge*, was one outlet where Alley's work and his views were propagated, even when it was hard to get Alley's writing on China published. As Shirley Barton wrote, Alley's name was 'banned on the air' in the Cold War of the 1950s.⁹²¹

Yet Alley was far from the only source of information for New Zealanders supportive of the PRC in the 1950s. Shirley Barton returned to China in 1953 and spoke of her experiences. The *People's Voice* covered one of her meetings under the headline 'She Has Seen Two China's – Old and New' and noted her connection to Alley. Barton reported on the 'miracles' she had seen. New China, she said, had 'abolished flood and famine... wiped out exploitation of women... ensured rights of children... granted complete equality between Han and minority peoples... [and] eliminated epidemics'.⁹²² In addition there was regular a interchange of visitors and Chinese publications were widely available in New Zealand.

The *People's Voice* also carried a special supplement on the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference. One article focussed on the conference resolution against the germ warfare that the Chinese claimed the Americans were undertaking in Korea. Another consisted of a photograph of 'New

⁹¹⁸ James Bertram, *Return to China*, Heinemann, London, 1957, 12.

⁹¹⁹ Bertram, *Return to China*, 157. Bertram also disassociated himself from the Society, 'a small struggling body with inevitable left-wing connections' (16), and was a barrier to establishing a branch of the Society in Wellington (NZCFA Minutes, September 1956, Ewan papers, NZCFS Archive), although when one was eventually established he did become Chairman.

⁹²⁰ Airey was Professor of History at the University of Auckland and President of the New Zealand Peace Council.

⁹²¹ Brady, *Myth*, 66.

⁹²² 'She Has Seen Two China's', *People's Voice*, 22 July 1953, 3.

Zealanders Rita Smith and Shirley Barton (with Rewi Alley seated out on the left).⁹²³ Smith and Barton were both members of the CPNZ but there is no reference to Alley being connected to the Party.

Instead, as appears to be the case right up until his trip to New Zealand in 1970, Alley is most commonly represented as being outside of the Party and belonging instead to the whole nation. He was described as ‘New Zealand’s famous son’ and represented as sharing some of the goals of the CPNZ. Even the CPNZ’s possession of Alley’s words is explained as he ‘issued the following statement... on the eve of the peace conference’.⁹²⁴ Alley in fact appears little in the CPNZ’s publications until the mid-1960s, despite the Party’s fascination with the Chinese revolution and increasing contact between the Party leadership and the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

The first article by Alley appeared in the *New Zealand Labour Review* in March 1956. Entitled ‘The Portuguese on the Coast of China’, it was a history of Portuguese imperialism. It was followed three months later by ‘Sunday Afternoon in Sandan’, which had been written in 1954. Articles in the *Labour Review* did not often carry a by-line but Alley’s always did. These articles had been preceded, the previous year, by one of Alley’s colleagues at Sandan, Max Wilkinson. Wilkinson’s father had been a founding member of the CPNZ. Instead of presenting Wilkinson by using his father’s heritage, he was introduced as ‘the writer is a young New Zealander who went to China some years ago with New Zealand sheep for Rewi Alley’s famous school at Sandan’.⁹²⁵ Alley’s fame gave authority to some articles but was far from overused in this respect. More commonly, articles that focussed on issues the Party was campaigning on were sourced from other foreigners in China or from translations from CPC material. In 1956 the CPNZ did not publish anything from Alley in its newspaper, the *People’s Voice*, but rather a number of articles from other foreigners resident in the PRC (Ted Baker, Michael Shapiro and Ralph Winnington).⁹²⁶ However, in July 1957, a large feature announced ‘Rewi Alley May Be Coming Here’, proclaiming that ‘if funds can be raised Mr Rewi Alley (the New Zealander whose work in China has made him famous) will be guest of honour at the 1958 opening of the new Oriental Arts Hall at Canterbury Museum’.⁹²⁷

Alley, at this time, although most likely a member of the CPNZ, was not directly associated with it.⁹²⁸ Instead, eye-witness accounts from China are from others who were able to be open about

⁹²³ ‘27 Scientists and Doctors Denounce Germ War’, *People’s Voice* (Special Supplement), 3 December 1952, 3.

⁹²⁴ ‘To Hopeful Youth, Peace is Life Itself’, *People’s Voice*, 1 October 1952, 3.

⁹²⁵ ‘Nomadic Peoples in the New China’, *New Zealand Labour Review*, May 1955, 28.

⁹²⁶ Ted Baker was a British Trade Unionist based with the All China Federation of Trade Unions. Michael Shapiro lived and worked in China from 1950 until his death in 1986. He was attached to the Xinhua News Agency. Ralph Winnington was the Beijing-based correspondent for the *Daily Worker*, the publication of the American Communist Party.

⁹²⁷ ‘Rewi Alley May Be Coming Here’, *People’s Voice*, 4 July 1956, 3.

⁹²⁸ Jan McLeod said it was ‘most likely’ that Alley had been a member of the CPNZ since the 1940s although ‘it had not been expedient for people to know that’ for much of that time. McLeod, who lived in Beijing 1964–1967 where

their membership of communist parties. These included Vic Wilcox, the General Secretary of the New Zealand party, on communes, industry and child welfare, Alan Whittington for the *Daily Worker* on Tibet and the Great Leap Forward, and Pip Alley, who was introduced to readers as ‘brother of the famous Rewi Alley’. Rewi Alley is reported about from a distance, most often with articles that had been published elsewhere, such as his speech to the Stockholm Peace Conference.⁹²⁹

Alley was still influential, however, particularly on the NZCFS. Their records show numerous visitors to the PRC, all of whom met with Alley. In addition Mason and Barton were now National President and National Secretary and they were both in regular contact with him. Although Alley does not appear in the CPNZ material produced for public consumption, his work increasingly appeared in the *New Zealand Labour Review*, the theoretical journal which was produced internally for the Party. This material, freed from the requirements of the United Front to tone down its stridency, was consistent with the CPNZ’s increased radicalisation around this period.⁹³⁰ Incidentally, reflecting the non-communist aspect of pro-China people-to-people activities at this time, 1958 also saw the first reference of the pre-liberation activities of Kathleen Hall. This noted that she delivered ‘an extremely interesting lecture on her China experience, 1922 – 1940’.⁹³¹

There were no articles by Alley in the *New Zealand Labour Review* in 1960, nor in its renamed successor the *New Zealand Communist Review* in 1961. This reflected Alley’s role with respect to the PRC’s attempts to build support amongst the non-aligned, and this being a feature of his trip ‘home’ in 1960. However, Alley’s authority was invoked when the PRC was involved in a series of fierce polemics around reports of famine at the end of the Great Leap Forward. Alley’s authority amongst supporters in both the Society and the Party meant that he was able to be influential.

There is a lot of pure, unadulterated bilge written in the Western press about China... Finally, perhaps, they come about to believing it, because it is said so often and with such incredible patronising authority.

Of all that is written, that which seeks to discredit China by saying that now famine stalks the land... becomes the most monotonous, so that even I am stirred, despite the

she interacted closely with Alley, was the daughter of CPNZ leader and long-time *People’s Voice* editor Hugh McLeod (Jan McLeod, hone interview, 13 March 2009).

⁹²⁹ Vic Wilcox, ‘Eye-witness in China’, *People’s Voice*, 16 Dec 1959, 7. Alan Whittington, ‘News from Tibet’ and ‘China’s little furnaces light the way’, *People’s Voice*, 16 December 1959, 7 and 8 December 1958, 7. P.J. Alley, ‘An Engineer in China’, *People’s Voice*, 4 June 1958, 4. ‘Rewi Alley’s Speech to the Stockholm Peace Conference’, *People’s Voice*, 3 September 1958, 4.

⁹³⁰ See for example ‘History of Taiwan’, *New Zealand Labour Review*, Vol XIV, 4, April 1960 in which Alley argues that Taiwan was ‘occupied by the American monopoly regime’. This combination of a radical Party, a softer line from the Society, and Alley’s relation to it, is discussed in chapter 1.

⁹³¹ Tom Newnham, *Fifty Years of Friendship; A Short History of the NZ China Friendship Society*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 2002, 9.

summer heat, to sit down and pound out a few thoughts on the typewriter about it all, just for the record and to get it out of my system.⁹³²

Alley's representation of the situation in 1962 was exactly the same as Keith Buchanan's, which is discussed in chapter 2. This is that there was no famine and that China's reforms over the past decade had turned what could have potentially been a disaster into a triumph of socialist development, in particular the commune system. He noted that China's history had always seen long cycles of flood and drought. 'Without communes', he wrote, there would have been 'millions dead'.⁹³³ Instead

The way China has dealt with its grain problem actually is the epic of our age, a triumph in organisation, in self-sacrifice, the whole country coming out of the ordeal immeasurably stronger than they entered it... This year, in Peking, I have never seen so plentiful a supply of vegetables, nor so many varieties. The same goes for other urban centres I have visited.⁹³⁴

Although we know now that there was a famine it seems most likely that Alley did not know at the time and certainly the CPC leadership would have had an interest in keeping such information from him. As discussed in chapter 2, many non-communist experts at the time also believed that the stories of the famine were false.

Apart from this engagement over contemporary China, for the most part Alley's contributions from afar continued to have a sense of distance from New Zealand and the CPNZ. The material that was published largely consisted of speeches, or material he had published elsewhere. It reflected his role as a peace worker and internationalist, for example his speech at the Tokyo Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, and a widely published report on his trip to Cuba in Spring 1962. In Cuba he had met a former US army general and the discussion between them led to a short 'History of the Mexican War'. He travelled to Korea in summer of 1964 and Hanoi, in November of that year.⁹³⁵

However, as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) began, Alley's role as an interpreter and chronicler of developments in the PRC was again pressed into service. There was still a measure of publishing material that was for general distribution, such as his speech to the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference, yet this too had changed. In particular, it had increased in its stridency to reflect the times and, like the CPNZ with whom Alley was increasingly openly

⁹³² Rewi Alley, 'China and the Food Problem', *New Zealand Communist Review*, September, 1962, 13.

⁹³³ Alley, 'Food Problem', 13.

⁹³⁴ Alley, 'Food Problem', 16-17.

⁹³⁵ Rewi Alley, 'Cuba in Spring', *New Zealand Communist Review*, 1962, 29. Alley, 'Speech at Tokyo Conference Against A- and H-bombs', *New Zealand Communist Review*, November 1962, 24. Alley, 'History of the Mexican War', *New Zealand Communist Review*, March 1964, 23. Alley, 'Korea in Summer', *New Zealand Communist Review*, October 1964, 42. Alley, 'The Vietnamese People Will Be Victorious', *New Zealand Communist Review*, January-February 1965, 26.

associated, placed the Chinese revolution at the centre of world revolutionary activity and labelled the Soviet Union as ‘revisionist’.

We must resolutely join in the battle against revisionism which is so indivisible a part of the structure of our common enemy... In this struggle the Chinese people, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, are fighting steadfastly in the vanguard of the revolution.⁹³⁶

Increasingly Alley’s articles spoke directly to the New Zealand readers of CPNZ material. In a series on the importance and influence of Mao Zedong Thought, he noted that ‘I pick up a New Zealand newspaper and find several quotations from [Mao]’.⁹³⁷ He also joined in the Party leadership’s polemics against rival communist groupings

In New Zealand, revisionists... [led] away members of New Zealand Communist Party and tried to overthrow its leadership. By setting up a pro-revisionist party called the ‘Socialist Unity Party’, which engages in scurrilous attacks on China... Against all these plots and counter-plots there stands the great solid fact of the existence of Revolutionary China, burning with the power of the thought of Mao Tse-tung, raising high a banner for all peoples who look for a real way out to follow.⁹³⁸

The Party began to leverage Alley’s connection to the Chinese leadership to give it status in these disputes for working class leadership. An article on the Cultural Revolution, which had been criticised by the Socialist Unity Party, was accompanied on the front page of the *People’s Voice* by a large photograph, the caption to which read, ‘Chairman Mao Tse-tung of China shakes hands with the famous New Zealander, Rewi Alley, at a recent conference of Afro-Asian writers’.⁹³⁹

Alley was still not the only China correspondent for the CPNZ – although with a number of other members in the PRC it no longer had need for material from journalists from outside the Party. Unlike Alley, now openly associated with the CPNZ and for whom there was considerable benefit for both the Party and Alley in such an explicit relationship, other articles tended to obscure the identity of the author.⁹⁴⁰ Articles were listed as ‘from our Peking Correspondent’ or

⁹³⁶ Rewi Alley, ‘Speech to Writers’ Conference’, *New Zealand Communist Review*, September 1966, 18-25.

⁹³⁷ ‘Influence of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought’, August 1966, *New Zealand Communist Review*, 20. ‘On the Thinking of Mao Tse-tung’, *New Zealand Communist Review*, June 1967, 44. The quote is from the latter, 46.

⁹³⁸ ‘Oceania – A Report’, *New Zealand Communist Review*, August 1967, 37 (48).

⁹³⁹ ‘Cultural Revolution means new leap forward’, *People’s Voice*, 21 June 1967, 1.

⁹⁴⁰ There were anti-foreigner aspects to each of the campaigns designed to shift the revolution leftwards and Alley came under criticism in each of them (see Julia Strauss, ‘In Search of PRC History’, in ‘The History of the PRC (1949-1976)’, *China Quarterly*, July 2007, 1-15, for discussion of the serial nature of the CPC’s campaigns since 1949). In the 1960s however, Alley was able to point to his membership of the CPNZ and the CPNZ’s role as perhaps the CPC’s most reliable ally in criticising revisionism. Alley wrote to his brother Pip that ‘Vic Wilcox’s support has been essential’ (Letter Rewi Alley to Pip Alley, 26 November 1968, Box 4, Alley papers, ATL). Apart from Alley and Wilcox, most material, especially in the *People’s Voice*, is anonymous. Even in the *Communist Review* articles were often accompanied only by initials, although some can be worked out such as D.R. (Don Ross), A.O. (Alec Ostler) and H.M. (Hugh McLeod). The CPNZ believed that there would eventually be a crackdown on membership of the Party and that preparation for this was best served by having just a small number of known cadres, such as Wilcox, with others for whom the exact nature of their relationship with the Party was blurred. This also facilitated their United Front work in the face of anti-communism, including that in the NZCFS.

'By a New Zealander Working in Peking'.⁹⁴¹ In 1969 a two-part series entitled 'What is really going on in China today?' described the writer obliquely as someone who 'has been living through the Chinese Cultural Revolution since it started'.⁹⁴²

The other correspondents' representation of the Cultural Revolution was often more enthusiastic than Alley's:

This spirit of 'We can learn what we did not know'... is a potent creative force... This is one basic way China's young graduates use Mao Tse-tung's thought to tackle every problem and solve it, to unite theory and practice, generating inexhaustible energy...⁹⁴³

Alley's articles tended to have a longer view, such as 'Ex-landlords gloating until revolution hit them', and, in particular, were reportage rather than the analysis his contemporaries engaged in. Alley travelled throughout China, and wrote on what he saw. His practice was to interview people and to report their words, rather than to insert his own. In this way the stronger revolutionary words appearing in New Zealand publications tended to be by Alley's fellow New Zealanders in Beijing, or from the mouths of those whom Alley interviewed.⁹⁴⁴ This would be useful later when Alley wanted to have distance from what would later be considered as some the extremes of the Cultural Revolution period. However, he never repudiated the sense of optimism or China's need to overcome bureaucratic barriers put in place by those 'following the Liu Shaoqi line', which were features of the 1966-1969 period.⁹⁴⁵

In addition to naming Alley, the CPNZ gave him a particular status through the description accompanying his by-line, such as 'the Famous New Zealander who has worked in China since 1926'.⁹⁴⁶ These words accompanying his articles would themselves go through changes over the next decade. In 1969, he was described as 'a well-known New Zealander living in Peking [who] meets many Chinese people'.⁹⁴⁷ In 1971 the *People's Voice* had dropped 'famous' and 'well-known' and Alley had become 'the New Zealander who has worked in China for 45 years'.⁹⁴⁸ By the end of 1972 his articles were simply annotated 'by Rewi Alley'.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴¹ 'Victories of the working class cultural revolution', *People's Voice*, 8 March 1968, 7, "'Instant Experts'" or "'Norman Bethunes'", *People's Voice*, 3 May 1968, 3.

⁹⁴² 'What is really going on in China today?', *People's Voice*, February 8 and 15, 1967, each on 7.

⁹⁴³ 'Instant Experts', ('by a New Zealander resident in Peking'), *People's Voice*, 3 May 1968, 3.

⁹⁴⁴ Compare Alley's muted 'people overthrow cruel oppression and build socialism' (*People's Voice*, 17 December 1968 7) with its sense on an ongoing project, with 'our China correspondent' who triumphantly claimed that 'workers prosper in socialist China while the capitalist world is in crisis' (*People's Voice*, 31 January 1969, 4). For the revolutionary slogans emanating from the interviewees, see below.

⁹⁴⁵ Geoff Chapple writes that 'in choosing between the radical line of Mao and the pragmatic line of Liu Shaoqi, it is clear that Alley preferred the radical line'. Geoff Chapple, *Rewi Alley of China*, Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1980, 203.

⁹⁴⁶ See for example the description under 'Ex-landlords gloating until revolution hit them' *People's Voice*, 7 February 1968, 7. Note that although Alley left New Zealand in 1926 on his way to China he arrived in China in April 1927.

⁹⁴⁷ Alley, 'Rewi Alley reports on Chinese people's progress', *People's Voice*, 25 March 1969, 6.

⁹⁴⁸ Alley, 'Remarkable progress in Santung mountainside', *People's Voice*, 10 February 1971, 6.

⁹⁴⁹ Alley, 'Newsletter from China', *People's Voice*, 13 September 1972, 1.

Although Alley's name was prominently displayed in the *People's Voice* from the mid-1960s, it was not until his trip to New Zealand in 1971 that the *People's Voice* actually named Alley as a communist and as a member of the CPNZ. In October 1971, the paper claimed Alley as the 'notable New Zealand communist' declaring that he had '[thrown] his lot in with Communist revolutionary forces and later become a member of the Communist Party of New Zealand'.⁹⁵⁰ During this trip, when he arrived at Wellington airport he was greeted

by members of the Wellington Branch of the CPNZ... [When he] posed with local communists... [this] attracted the attention of other travellers who explained to one another, 'That's Rewi Alley'. Few people in New Zealand do not know the name and deeds of this famous communist.⁹⁵¹

In a report looking back on his trip Alley was quoted predicating a comment with 'as a member of the NZCP...' and even in the publication of the NZCFS Alley was reported as saying that he had come to New Zealand to meet with 'his comrades from the N.Z. Communist Party of which he is proud to be a member...'.⁹⁵² Alley had by this time been reported in a manner consistent with the Party leadership's position on a range of issues for decades and had commented favourably on the CPNZ's internal affairs, for some time. Most recently, in 1970, he had 'commend[ed] the New Zealand Marxist-Leninists... fighting for the correct line against those who would destroy revolutionary working class theory and organisation'.⁹⁵³ This was despite the fact that those just expelled – in particular the former Wellington District of the CPNZ, including some old friends of Alley's such as the Baileys and the Goddards – continued to uphold the same position on China as the CPNZ and were actively engaged in supporting the PRC through the NZCFS.⁹⁵⁴ In reporting about his life in China the CPNZ also reflected its own depiction of the trajectory of China's recent history:

For 40 years and more, Rewi Alley has, sometimes at risk of his life, recorded faithfully events, conditions, life and character developing under feudalism, capitalism, phoney socialism and now the society led by Mao Tse-tung, the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era.⁹⁵⁵

The trip in 1971 was an opportunity to showcase Alley as a member of the CPNZ and as a 'symbol of proletarian internationalism' and was in marked contrast to the absence of any coverage of Alley in the communist literature of ten years earlier. His meetings with university students, Polynesian students and his 'warm welcome in Wellington' were all reported in the

⁹⁵⁰ 'Rewi Alley is back home', *People's Voice*, 27 October 1971, 1.

⁹⁵¹ 'Rewi Alley greeted in Wellington', *People's Voice*, 24 November 1971, 5.

⁹⁵² Jim Wong, 'In New Zealand with Rewi Alley', *New Zealand China News*, April 1972, 2.

⁹⁵³ 'Rewi Alley commends New Zealand Marxist-Leninists against revisionists', *People's Voice*, 11 November 1970, 6.

⁹⁵⁴ See chapter 4 for details as to what lay behind these divisions.

⁹⁵⁵ 'Review of Rewi Alley's "Upsurge"', *People's Voice*, April 23, 1969, 4.

People's Voice.⁹⁵⁶ So too was his visit to the offices of the *People's Voice* itself, and his meeting with Vic Wilcox and the rest of the CPNZ leadership.⁹⁵⁷ His 'speaking for China' was not restricted to explaining the successes of the Cultural Revolution. In a contribution to the debate between New Zealand's increasingly fractured and contentious Marxist-Leninist organisations, he was reported as saying that the 'outstanding role of the NZCP and the leadership of Comrade Vic Wilcox [was] well-recognised and highly appreciated in Peking'.⁹⁵⁸

Representations of Alley were also a key aspect of the NZCFS's publications during the Cultural Revolution period. There were four principle features to this. First, the statements from China for the National Conference and on the occasion of China's National Day were collective, being from 'All the NZers in China'.⁹⁵⁹ For 1966-69 these were Alley, Arthur and Fi Jackson-Thomas, Doug and Ruth Lake and Jim Wong. By 1969 the others had each returned to New Zealand and the practice was no more. Second, the enthusiastic accounts of the Cultural Revolution: 'All have firm confidence in the outcome of the Cultural Revolution',⁹⁶⁰ 'China is a great unity... making giant strides... under the leadership of Mao Tsetung... We see about us tremendous enthusiasm and confidence... new achievements... the road ahead is bright',⁹⁶¹ and

The People's Cultural Revolution is pushing socialist construction forward at a great speed and with tremendous force.... Going from strength-to-strength... In contrast to rising prices in New Zealand... the prices are stable... The thought of Mao Tse-Tung now penetrating into... the entire hinterland.⁹⁶²

Alongside these joint accounts about the situation in the PRC, are the representations of Alley himself through the reviews of his publications. In 1970, 1971 and 1972 his work was proclaimed in the NZCFS newsletter as 'understandable to ordinary people... A further contribution by one who has devoted his life uncompromisingly to the people of China and the world'. This notion that Alley was 'ordinary' was an important part of Alley's image in New Zealand, although often accompanied by his status as 'famous'.⁹⁶³

⁹⁵⁶ 'Polynesian students hear Rewi Alley', *People's Voice*, 8 March 1972, 5. 'Rewi Alley gets warm welcome in Wellington', 1 December 1972, 5.

⁹⁵⁷ 'Rewi Alley visits *People's Voice*', *People's Voice*, 10 November 1972, 1.

⁹⁵⁸ 'Rewi Alley looks back on New Zealand holiday', *People's Voice*, 22 March 1972, 5. See chapter 4 for some discussion as to the reasons for the divisions.

⁹⁵⁹ Emphasis in the original. Rewi Alley, Arthur and Fi Jackson-Thomas, Doug and Ruth Lake, Jim Wong, *Newsletter of the New Zealand China Society*, NZCS, October 1968, 1. Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁶⁰ Editorial Comment, *Newsletter of the New Zealand China Society*, October 1968, 1. Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive. Emphasis in the original.

⁹⁶¹ Rewi Alley, Arthur and Fi Jackson-Thomas, Doug and Ruth Lake, Jim Wong, 'Message to NZCS', *Newsletter of the New Zealand China Society*, NZCS, October 1968, p.2. Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁶² Rewi Alley, Arthur and Fi Jackson-Thomas, Jim Wong, 'Greetings to the Biennial New Zealand China Society Conference', *Newsletter of the New Zealand China Society*, NZCS, 7 March 1969, 4-5. Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁶³ 'New Book by Rewi Alley', *Newsletter of the New Zealand China Society*, NZCFS, April 1972, 2. Joan Donley papers, NZCFS Archive. See also, 'Rewi Alley's book a must', June 1970, and 'Good Reading', December 1977. The representations are consistent.

Finally, the representations about China in material from the Society and the CPNZ are conflated in this period. China is represented consistently to members of the Society and members of the Party as a place of rapid socialist progress where the correct application of the thoughts of Mao Zedong were enabling all obstacles to be overcome. At the same time Alley's messages to the Society reminded members of their particular role in 'correcting misrepresentations' about China, which was somewhat in contrast to the CPNZ's role of promoting its ideological correctness. In 1968, along with his fellow New Zealanders resident in Beijing, he wrote of 'the Society's great role in presenting a more accurate picture of events in China than is available in the daily press in New Zealand'.⁹⁶⁴ After recognition was achieved he commended the Society on its role. Before, he said

to praise anything Chinese was almost to label oneself as a subversive. Today that has changed... the work of the New Zealand China Society, and the return of visitors from China, who have told of what they have seen, have been major factors in this welcome change.⁹⁶⁵

Further, the setting up of proper diplomatic representation should overcome, he thought, 'the evil winds... which did much to distort what is being done in China today and minimise its significance for the people of New Zealand'.⁹⁶⁶ The Society's own reports referred to Alley's role in this activity:

Upon return, all the tour members recall the wonderful evening with Rewi Alley as one of the highlights of their trip... There is no doubt you are recognised as the 'Learner in China' par excellence. Your articles... are a mine of information and we learn a great deal from them.⁹⁶⁷

After recognition, Alley's published articles lost much of their political invective. Increasingly the articles consisted of 'snapshots' of Chinese life, often amongst minority people. While these might include lines such as 'an inspiration to all interested in race relations', or a brigade that is 'now looked up to as... a county going ahead full-steam with the times', they are lacking in detailed political content such as the significance to that region of the most recent political campaign.⁹⁶⁸

Again, however, there was a propaganda crisis and Alley was pressed into service to 'explain' how the changes after Mao's death in fact constituted a return to the revolutionary ethos of Mao

⁹⁶⁴ 'Message to the New Zealand China Society', NZCS Newsletter, October 1968. Joan Donley papers. NZCFS Archives.

⁹⁶⁵ 'Rewi Alley's Farewell Message', NZCS Newsletter, April 1972. Joan Donley papers. NZCFS Archives.

⁹⁶⁶ Untitled, NZCS Newsletter, June/July 1973, 1. Joan Donley papers. NZCFS Archives.

⁹⁶⁷ 'A Red Letter Day', *New Zealand China News*, December 1977, 2.

⁹⁶⁸ Examples of such reprotage by Alley are 'A Korean Brigade', *New Zealand China News*, December 1974, 6 and 'The "Sheh" People', *New Zealand China News*, March 1975, .

himself. Alley's comments on the Gang of Four were important for representing their overthrow as a continuation of the revolutionary line in China.

This came through his statements directly to the Society:

The people turned and smiled at each other... stood and said 'Enough!' for there had risen a small gang of ruthless oppressors, claiming the whole revolution for their own...⁹⁶⁹

It was also evident in his reportage from his travels:

Later things went well until 1974 when the Gang of Four sent in troublemakers to bring chaos... Naturally everyone was overjoyed when news came that the gang's leaders in Peking had been removed from positions they had usurped.⁹⁷⁰

Finally, the same message was conveyed in his other publications which went both directly to members who bought them and were reviewed in the Society's publications. Molly Elliot, the editor of *New Zealand China News*, wrote that his poem 'Thoughts in the New Year 1977', 'voices China's belief in, disillusionment with and discrediting of the Gang of Four, now dismissed and despised'.⁹⁷¹ The representation of Alley employed to give authority to this position drew on his nature as someone who 'told it like it was'. Elliot's review of Alley's poetry collection *A Freshening Breeze* claimed it was 'Blunt and devoid of the sesquipedalian sonorities of much modern verse'.⁹⁷²

Alley's Break with the CPNZ

In March 1978 Alley was quoted in the *People's Voice* as describing the PRC as 'Where workers rule'.⁹⁷³ However, two months later, the CPNZ would announce that it had been 'Strengthened by removal of a small group of splitters', expelling a number of cadre who were personal friends of Alley and supporters of the CPC's ideological position. It claimed that Vic Wilcox, Don Ross, Joyce and Jack Ewan, amongst others, had 'failed in [their] sly... attempt to impose upon the Party Hill's revisionist line of two-stage revolution and collaboration with the local capitalist class'.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁶⁹ 'China and the Clear Road Forward', *New Zealand China News*, December 1976, 1.

⁹⁷⁰ 'Some Shantung Brigades', *New Zealand China News*, June 1977, 5.

⁹⁷¹ 'Good Reading', *New Zealand China News*, December 1977, 9.

⁹⁷² Molly Elliot, 'Rewi Alley's Two Books', *New Zealand China News*, 9.

⁹⁷³ 'Newsletter from China', *People's Voice*, March 20, 1978, 2.

⁹⁷⁴ 'CP Strengthened by removal of a small group of splitters', *People's Voice*, June 12 1978, 1. 'Hill' refers to Ted Hill, leader of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), who, like Wilcox, was highly regarded by the CPC and whose party saw that the CPC's ideological depictions of the correct way towards revolution as directly applicable to Australia. Its disputes with the CPNZ were over the 'two-stage revolution': first national independence, then socialism; rather than 'one-stage', directly to socialism; and 'the Theory of the Three Worlds' which is discussed in chapter 4. The

Alley's reports from China were no longer carried in the *People's Voice*. Instead the Society's publication became the vehicle to put forward his position regarding the restoration of the PRC's to its revolutionary trajectory

Now the around 900 million people of China have come back to the way forward which the revolution planned for them. They take it with new spirit, new enthusiasm.⁹⁷⁵

The CPNZ became increasingly disillusioned with the PRC, eventually even the revolutionary heritage of Mao Zedong, and more members were expelled for not agreeing with this. including Hugh McLeod and Nat Gould.⁹⁷⁶ The Society's newsletter not only defended the PRC and 'Mao Zedong Thought' but also provided a platform for criticising the CPNZ's current leadership. In December 1978 Alley wrote that it was

Curious that there could be any calling themselves progressive who just refuse to understand that Marxism must develop as realities change situations, and that the conception of three worlds so well supplements, but, of course, does not replace the idea of class struggle, which in China continues unabated...⁹⁷⁷

He would formally break with the CPNZ himself in 1980.⁹⁷⁸ Brady claims that Alley's split with the CPNZ shows Alley's commitment to Marxism-Leninism to have been a 'façade', since, 'as a good Marxist-Leninist', he should have supported his Party against the CPC.⁹⁷⁹ This point is a weak one, Alley's main link was with the CPC and if the CPNZ had broken with it then he could hardly stay in the latter. There is no conflict in being a Marxist and not being a member of the CPNZ. Further, the company he kept by leaving the CPNZ (Wilcox, McLeod, Ostler, Ross, Ewan, amongst others), had, like Alley, a strong Marxist-Leninist heritage. Their commitment to Marxism-Leninism as a way of interpreting the world, in order to change it, was both long-standing and would not cease, even as their involvement shifted into new formations.⁹⁸⁰ In addition, Alley's links with the NZCFS remained very strong.

As always, Alley was not the only reporter from the PRC. In 1979, when there was controversy over the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. It also came from the Society's leadership, in particular from

'two-stage' revolution meant building a united front against imperialism, which might include progressive capitalists also opposed to foreign (primarily US and UK) capital's domination of the local economy.

⁹⁷⁵ 'Message from Rewi Alley in Peking', *New Zealand China News*, Sept. 1978. 3.

⁹⁷⁶ Both were officially expelled for not following Party discipline. McLeod for refusing to follow the CPNZ's line attacking the CPC's current policies, Gould for not agreeing with the CPNZ's joining with the Albanian Party of Labour's in attacking Mao's heritage as a Marxist-Leninist (Jan McLeod, interview; Flora Gould, interview, Auckland, 9 July 2002).

⁹⁷⁷ 'Rewi Alley writes', *New Zealand China News*, Dec. 1978, 2

⁹⁷⁸ This was reported in the *People's Voice* as 'Rewi Alley gives the game away', *People's Voice*, 12 May 1980, 1.

⁹⁷⁹ Brady, *Myth*, 94.

⁹⁸⁰ Marx wrote, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it', Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1888. It is available at

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>. For the new formations that Wilcox, and others, moved into see chapter 4.

Wellington Branch Chairperson Peter Franks.⁹⁸¹ Alley travelled to the Vietnamese border and wrote about Vietnamese refugees now living in Guangxi province.⁹⁸² While this work dwells on the mistreatment of Vietnamese with Chinese heritage, Vietnam's repudiation of China's support for it during the war against American occupation, and even some Vietnamese war heroes now living in China, it is silent on the actual conflict, neither exploring its underlying causes nor promoting the PRC's claims of victory.⁹⁸³

In the early 1980s, Alley was recognised as a model of internationalism by Deng Xiaoping-led China and he received honours from Chinese authorities.⁹⁸⁴ The Society sought recognition from the New Zealand government too, as Alley moved into his mid-eighties, calling on members to come up with 'practical and immediate steps to further honour Rewi Alley'.⁹⁸⁵ The New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon refused to countenance such an award. He further refused to meet Alley in private during prime ministerial trips to the PRC, or to be photographed with him. For members of the NZCFS, these activities reminded members of the ongoing political significance of China.⁹⁸⁶ With the election of the Labour government in 1984 things changed. Alley initiated a project to re-establish the Bailie School at Shandan. This project gave the Society a chance to re-promote Alley, to talk again of China as an alternative development model. It was also, as it turned out, an opportunity to criticise New Zealand capitalists.⁹⁸⁷ In 1985 Alley was awarded a Queen's Service Medal for services to the New Zealand China relationship.

Labour in recommending Alley for the QSM was echoing its tradition of active engagement with the PRC begun under the Kirk government. Ironically, in much the same way that the PRC looked to Alley to remind its left-wing New Zealand supporters of its continuity with its earlier incantations, the radically deregulatory Labour Government might have been looking to affirm its own working class activist history through making the connection with Alley as well.

Alley initiated the school project and made an appeal to his supporters around the world to 'set up a new Bailie School... [operating on a] half-study, half-work manner'.⁹⁸⁸ The Society was highly enthusiastic, and its support included promoting competition between branches as to which could contribute the most. Jack Ewan's message at first tied the project to the Society's

⁹⁸¹ Peter Franks, *Why Did China and Vietnam Go To War*, New Zealand China Friendship Society, 1979.

⁹⁸² Rewi Alley, *Refugees from Vietnam in China*, New World Press, 1980.

⁹⁸³ This is in contrast to the Franks' publication. The WCL reported in 1982 they had 'supported China's position through the NZCFS' by way of this publication and other interventions, at some cost to themselves in the New Zealand progressive movement ('Report on WCL delegation to China', December 1982, internal League document, personal possession).

⁹⁸⁴ In 1982 Alley was made an honorary citizen of Beijing, in 1984 he became the first foreign member of Chinese PEN, in 1985 he was appointed honorary president of the Bailie University for Vocational Training in Beijing, and in 1985 he was made an honorary citizen of Gansu Province.

⁹⁸⁵ Jack Ewan, 'President's Report to National Conference', June 1985, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁸⁶ Brady, *Myth*, 94.

⁹⁸⁷ In 'China Traders Slow to Respond', the Society reported that New Zealand businesses had sold \$286 million worth of goods to China but it was 'shocked that some of the giants of industry have declined to respond or sent curt refusal' to the Society's request to contribute to its 'Rewi Alley Appeal'.

⁹⁸⁸ Rewi Alley, 'A New Bailie School', *New Zealand China News*, September, 1.

twin goals of remembering Alley and using Alley's name to express support for the current direction of China's development: 'No project could express more aptly our admiration for Rewi and his work and at the same time contribute positively towards China's massive efforts for modernisation'. The project was promoted exclusively by the Society as a 'Rewi Alley Appeal' with members being stimulated to 'add your bit to this great gesture of goodwill to Rewi Alley and New Zealand China friendship'.⁹⁸⁹

Alley had less exposure in the *New Zealand China News* through the 1980s, with most of the published material being reproduced from Chinese magazines. However, he was still highly regarded and his contribution warmly remembered. In 1984 the Christchurch Branch republished Han Suyin's 'Remembering Rewi Alley', which had been written on the occasion of his receiving his D.Litt from Victoria University of Wellington in 1972 and first published in *New Argot* in 1974. In it she wrote:

Here was a man who really knew... [He has an] extraordinary quality to make people understand... [and] has integrated himself to the cause he believes in and the people among whom he lives.⁹⁹⁰

March 1985 saw the Society claim that Alley's QSM enhanced the award by giving one to 'such a worthy recipient'. Amidst the 'heartfelt congratulations' was a statement about Alley that must have been directed at members worried about China's current trajectory 'Though some events went all the way from cold controversy to heated shooting and caused him suffering, he never lost faith in China, its people, progress and future....'.⁹⁹¹

When Alley died, Jack Ewan described him as a 'great New Zealander, life-long friend of the Chinese people and staunch worker for New Zealand China Friendship'. There was no mention of his Marxism, although Alley's death seemed to become a catalyst to promote the projects he had initiated and that the Society would continue to support.

We of the Society, with whom he was so closely associated, can look back with pride and gratitude on the contribution of this great patriot, and forward with determination to work to achieve what Rewi had not yet completed... I believe Rewi would wish us, as the Chinese say, to 'turn grief into strength'. 'Don't mourn for me – organise' might well have been his message.⁹⁹²

A delegation went to China to attend memorial services for Alley. Bill Willmott was Secretary of the delegation. His report makes no mention of Alley's Marxism-Leninism or China's socialism.

⁹⁸⁹ Jack Ewan, 'Public Appeal for Rewi Alley's New Bailie School at Shandan', *Newsletter*, NZCFS, 27 July 1985, Shandan Bailie School file, Bill Willmott papers. NZCFS Archives.

⁹⁹⁰ 'Han Suyin on Rewi Alley', Christchurch Branch Newsletter, May 1984, NZCFS Archives.

⁹⁹¹ 'Rewi Alley Awarded QSM', *New Zealand China News*, March 1985, 1.

⁹⁹² Jack Ewan, 'Letter to All Branches', 4 January 1988, Dunedin Branch papers, 1988-89, NZCFS Archive.

All [memorial meetings] stressed the importance of continuing Rewi's work in China... [they] had great political significance in China by bringing to the attention of the whole country the work and philosophy of this great New Zealander. Half work/half study schooling, devoting attention to the poorer areas of China, building friendship with New Zealand and other countries for world peace – all Rewi's goals were emphasised...⁹⁹³

Biographies of Alley

There have been three biographies written about Alley. In Willis Airey's *A Learner in China*, published in 1970, Airey allows only one chapter of the sixteen to discuss Rewi Alley's post-Liberation activities.⁹⁹⁴ Instead, the focus is on his life in New Zealand and his early life in China, as Airey attempts to produce a narrative that might explain to a New Zealand audience the gradual awakening of Alley's social conscience and his eventual embrace of Marxism Leninism. Airey describes this as Alley's 'preparation' in New Zealand and his 'working things out in China', quoting Alley: 'I turned to the theoretical study of Marxism-Leninism, and began to see how things fitted together, and what the base of the new society should be'.⁹⁹⁵

Airey's book was distributed very widely amongst NZCFS members and was clearly written both for Alley's supporters to know more about him and to expand the numbers of those who might be drawn into supporting China. It was a long time in gestation, perhaps in part because of the review process it went through to ensure that any contemporary views regarding the twists and turns of Chinese politics could be accounted for retrospectively. Airey interviewed Alley when he was in New Zealand in 1960 and 1963, and on a mission to build wider contacts for the PRC in the face of Soviet hostility, although the book itself was mostly written in the mid-1960s.

Alley contributed to this account through making his papers available and also, with Shirley Barton, reviewing material before the book was published. It is not unusual for authorised biographies to be reviewed in this way – ultimately it remains Airey's work.⁹⁹⁶ The book was published in 1970 but had been mostly written earlier in the 1960s. This explains why it is more muted in terms of representing Alley's 'communism' compared with NZCFS and CPNZ accounts of 1970. Yet the account Airey provides is entirely consistent with all that had been written about Alley already and with what would be written subsequently, such as the outpouring of commentary that accompanied Alley's QSM in 1985 and his death in 1987. It is also consistent with the account in Alley's own biography *At 90: Memoirs of My China Years* and the wide-ranging

⁹⁹³ Bill Willmott, 'Report on Delegation to China to Attend Memorial Services for Rewu Alley, 20 April – 2 May, 1988', Report to National Council Meeting, Hamilton, May 14-15 1988, Dunedin Branch Papers, 1988-89, NZCFS Archive.

⁹⁹⁴ Willis Airey, *A Learner in China*, The Caxton Press and the Monthly Review Society, 1970.

⁹⁹⁵ Airey, 239.

⁹⁹⁶ Anne-Marie Brady dismisses the work on the ground that this involvement of Alley and Barton amounted to 'censorship'. Brady, *Myth*, 5.

collection of first-person remembrances published by New World Press in 1997 - *Rewi Alley: A Collection in Memory*.⁹⁹⁷

Geoff Chapple's *Rewi Alley of China* was published in 1980.⁹⁹⁸ In terms of a representation of Alley's life it is basically the same story as Airey's. However, it is stylistically different. Alley and Chapple travelled together for '10,000 miles' to the places in the PRC that were significant for Alley, and the narrative appears as Alley's recollections and anecdotes along the way. The structure of Chapple's book makes it difficult to follow, in terms of presenting a chronology of Alley's life, but it is revealing of both men as Chapple seeks to explain, to his largely Western audience, what drove Alley.

Alley was somewhat of a celebrity on the left by 1980, and there had been ten years of excitement about China by people on the left, although the CPNZ had recently broken with the CPC. Certainly Chapple was enthusiastic about his subject.

In Chapple's book, Alley is clearly very proud of what had been achieved by the PRC, while at the same time modest of his own contribution, neither does he seek to glorify the role of others. In part this serves to explain why some of the activities he was involved with before the founding of the PRC have been so understated:

Mentions of Madame Sun crop up throughout Rewi's story... 'I don't talk about Madame Sun because she doesn't like being talked about or written about,' says Rewi. He protects all those who have requested a low profile... and his own modesties too are embroiled in a general reluctance to discuss the underground.⁹⁹⁹

While much of the narrative is consistent with Airey's, Alley more clearly states his commitment to Marxism-Leninism than in earlier accounts, in particular noting that while he was motivated by social concern he saw Marxism-Leninism as the answer. Chapple accepts this, but still attempts to present it in a way that might convince an unsympathetic and anti-Marxist audience:

Both Agnes Smedley and Rewi were quicker to form an emotional bond with the oppressed than to analyse the oppression in terms of Marxist theory. Yet the champions of China's oppressed were communists.... He and Agnes Smedley now moved into direct touch with the theory and practice of Communism in China. In 1933, both became foundation members of a Marxist-Leninist study group set up in secret...'.¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹⁷ Rewi Alley, *At 90: Memoirs of My China Years*, New World Press, 1987. This was republished as *Rewi Alley: An Autobiography*, New World Press, 1997. Song Qingling et al, *Rewi Alley: A Collection in Memory*, New World Press, 2nd edition, 1997. Brady describes the latter as 'the quintessential collection of hagiographic writing on Alley' (Brady, 'Who Friend, Who Enemy? Rewi Alley and the Friends of China', *China Quarterly*, September 1997, 614).

⁹⁹⁸ Geoff Chapple, *Rewi Alley of China*, Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1980.

⁹⁹⁹ Chapple, *Rewi Alley*, 62.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Chapple, *Rewi Alley*, 66.

On the Gang of Four, Alley's depictions reflect the period when the book was written. In particular, he was determined to show that China's leaders were still committed to revolution and that the rejection of the Gang of Four had been widely supported by the Chinese population

The group's... claims of a pure socialism were judged merely shrill... Hua Guofeng was quick to oust the group and public support for the move seemed widespread and genuine... Rewi does not compare his own economic philosophies with any of China's leaders, but it is obvious he sides with the Maoist line over that of a more centralist Liu Shaoqi.¹⁰⁰¹

In November 2002 Anne-Marie Brady's *Friend of China: the Myth of Rewi Alley* became the third book on Rewi Alley to be published. A series of reviews followed its publication, responding to Brady's revision of Alley's character and her claims regarding the 'mythology' surrounding his life. The publisher's blurb described Brady's book as a 'radical and controversial analysis of Alley's life and work'. It was enthusiastically reviewed by those who were critical of the PRC from the perspective of anti-communism.¹⁰⁰² Chapple, whose own book was dismissed by Brady, wrote in the *NZ Listener* that its release had given rise to at least one reviewer 'standing astride [the] book and loudly proclaiming his own prejudice'.¹⁰⁰³

One of Brady's key research interests is the place of foreigners in China's diplomatic relations and Alley becomes something of an example. *Friend of China* probes the myth and reality of Alley's life, employing the life partly as an analogy to explore the role of foreigners in China's diplomatic relations and their sensitive place in China after 1949. Brady argues that foreigners are manipulated to serve the needs of the PRC. Central to Brady's thesis are two assertions. Firstly, that Alley was gay. Shanghai and China providing him the freedom to explore his homosexuality in a country and time when this behaviour was not tolerated in New Zealand. Brady's assertion is that this was a key influence in shaping the choices Alley made. Secondly, she argues that Alley's choice to remain in China after the revolution was related to his sexuality and that it resulted in him becoming an uncritical propagandist for the Chinese government. However she presents little in the way of conclusive evidence to support her claims.¹⁰⁰⁴ Chapple's review of the reviews in the *New Zealand Listener* points out some of these failings (although doesn't address Brady's criticisms of his own work).

Brady attempts to dismantle what she calls the myth surrounding Rewi Alley. She questions the integrity of his motives, exposes what she sees as contradictions in how he represented China

¹⁰⁰¹ Chapple, *Rewi Alley*, 202-3. Note that Liu Shaoqi was not yet rehabilitated (which happened in February 1980) but he was no longer being vilified as he had been in the early part of the Cultural Revolution.

¹⁰⁰² See Jonathon Mirsky, 'Review', *Asian Wall St Journal*, 13 November 2002, Nicholas Reid 'Rewi Alley on Sex Mission Too', *Dominion Post*, 30 November 2002 and Neil Birss 'From the Right: Rewi Alley "not a saint"', *Christchurch Press* 23 November 2002.

¹⁰⁰³ Geoff Chapple, 'They Say He Was Gay', *New Zealand Listener*, 1 March 2003, 10.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Chapple, 'They Say He Was Gay', 10, for a contrasting reading of the correspondence Brady relies upon.

and dismisses other biographical work written about him as ‘hagiography’.¹⁰⁰⁵ The book plays on contested images of China, and has enabled some to vent their opposition to the position Alley has been awarded in New Zealand society. Neill Briss in his ‘From the Right’ column in the *Christchurch Press* wrote ‘Our adulation of Rewi Alley could haunt New Zealand when the Chinese shake off the vestiges of communism and reassess the terror it brought’.¹⁰⁰⁶ Jonathon Mirsky, writing for the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, said ‘[Alley] led a comfortable life... aware that this comfort would continue just so long as he performed as cheerleader, flack, and deceiver for the Communist regime’.¹⁰⁰⁷

What China meant for Alley, from the 1930s, through the process of liberation and the establishment of the PRC and its programmes, was also about putting the ideals that had formed for him into practice. At the heart of his commitment, like so many others who believed in the project of socialism and the form by which that was being played out in the PRC, was a commitment to a certain set of ideals. In the period during which Brady is writing, the fall of the Soviet Union and the spectre of Tiananmen provided the immediate context for the work. The ideals that shaped Alley were much less fashionable than they were in the formative period in his life.

Brady notes this context:

I first became interested in the subject of Rewi Alley in the wake of debate... surrounding the Tiananmen massacre of 4 June 1989... After June 4... Alley’s contribution to the New Zealand–China relationship came under attack. Many commentators stated that New Zealand, like other Western countries, had misunderstood the nature of China’s reforms and some blamed Alley for this. They claimed that New Zealand had fallen prey to a romanticised picture of China...¹⁰⁰⁸

However, although she notes it, she takes little account of context in her analysis. In fact, a feature of *The Myth of Rewi Alley* is how it truncates events over different periods and uses them to reinforce one another, despite the complex situations that they each evolve out of. Roland Barthes, who Brady quotes approvingly, refers to such when he writes that myth ‘abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them simplicity of essences... it organises a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth... it establishes a blissful clarity’.¹⁰⁰⁹ In the end,

¹⁰⁰⁵ Brady, *Myth*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Neil Birss, ‘Rewi Alley “not a saint”’.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Jonathon Mirsky, ‘Review’.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Brady, *Myth*, p.ix.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Roland Barthes (selected and translated from the French by Annette Lavers), *Mythologies*, Cape, London, 1972, 143. Former-Hong Kong-based Reuter’s correspondent Derek Round defended Alley in the face of Brady’s book, writing ‘most of what has been written about [Alley] over the years was factual and true... A Myth... is a widely held but false notion. [Alley] was a very real and very human person’ (Derek Round, ‘More truth than fable’, *Christchurch Press*, 14 December 2002). Round is not right on this point. A myth is a socially powerful story – it is neither true nor false. It is however a story that lacks complexity. In this sense Brady does not demolish the ‘myth’ of Alley, she merely constructs a different one.

in Brady's examination of Alley from the perspective of her own contingent and specific values she misses the most important aspect of his life completely. As Michael Crook remarks,

She's talking about these ideals... and she doesn't understand that, so she talks in terms of things that she does understand: crass materialism and deviance. I think it is all a bit sad.¹⁰¹⁰

Brady's book did not 'ring true' for many who knew Alley, although since she began to research it after he had died she was constrained in a similar way to Airey or Chapple in terms of a personal engagement with him.

Whether or not Alley was a committed Marxist in the 1930s remains a matter of controversy. Yet his Indusco project easily mapped against socialist ideas around industrialism and worker democracy and he wrote more and more about Marxism-Leninism as the years unfolded. Certainly, he was quiet about his ideological standpoint in the 1950s, and there is no doubt that the work that he was doing would have been compromised if he had announced it. Others too made this choice. Most obviously Song Qingling, whose efforts to join the Communist Party of China were rebuffed until the last year of her life, as she was much more useful as a representative of China's 'Coalition Government' than she would have been as yet another member of the CPC.¹⁰¹¹

Brady's work is organised around a simple opposition between truth and falsehood (which she calls 'myth'). For her the PRC is a dishonest state that hides the truth and therefore Alley was a 'mythmaker'. At the very least this makes his work in Indusco irrelevant for her, although his enthusiasm and energy for the project is well known. At some level her analysis is part of the depoliticisation process referred to by Wang Hui and Michael Dutton. As class is de-emphasised the dichotomy between Chinese and foreign became the key one, replacing the class distinction between capitalist and proletariat or the friend/enemy distinction between revolutionary and anti-revolutionary. Alley then becomes a 'New Zealander' who lived in 'China' and his political commitment does not matter. Alley himself may have contributed to this. He may well have been one of many people in China who thought that radicalism had not delivered its promise so a more moderate approach was necessary, and his own commitment to a radical agenda in the past was re-written to give emphasis to this. Yet he was also one of the people who saw considerable improvement in people's lives in the 1950s, so he maintained his commitment to the leadership of the CPC.

Brady does not take Alley's Marxism, the context by which he came to it, or the ideals that underpin it very seriously. In her thesis on the practice of China's diplomatic interaction with

¹⁰¹⁰ Michael Crook, interview, Beijing, 18 July 2003.

¹⁰¹¹ See Israel Epstein, *A Woman in World History*, New World Press, Beijing, 1993.

foreigners, such as Alley, she draws on work published by the World Anti-Communist League. She displays a refusal to engage with Marxism-Leninism, despite it being key to Alley's own analysis of himself. For example, Brady's claim, addressed above, regarding Alley's leaving the CPNZ and what it means to be 'a good Marxist-Leninist' – which she interpreted as blinding following the CPNZ's leadership. She downplays the ideological questions and debates that inform the beliefs of members of Marxist-Leninist organisations. She also gives insufficient weight to the climate of anti-communism operating in New Zealand, stoked as it was by official policy, and the influence of this had on Alley's representations to New Zealanders.

The context that gave rise to Brady's text also pervaded the Society's position and prompted a re-examination of Rewi Alley. His activities were constructed in a way to emphasise the less troubling aspects of his life. In doing so most emphasis now fell on his earliest activities in China. His involvement in the 'interpretation of China was explained in terms of the period around Liberation and until recognition.¹⁰¹² In Kathleen Hall a new hero emerged, who had also been involved in pre-Liberation China but without the complications of having represented China to the West or having said things about China that members of the Society no longer believed.

The Emergence of Kathleen Hall

Kathleen Hall returned to New Zealand from Hong Kong in 1951, where she had been working establishing a leper colony and having failed to gain an entry permit to join Rewi Alley's school at Shandan.¹⁰¹³ She immediately became involved in the Society. However, it is not until 1958 that the NZCFS first makes mention of her activities in China, when she is recorded as providing a 'very interesting lecture' in Auckland on 'her time in China 1922-42'.¹⁰¹⁴ She rose quickly into the leadership of the Society, that same year replacing Shirley Barton as a National Conference delegate when Barton was unavailable. When Hall moved to Wellington in 1959, she was involved in helping to establish a branch there. This was a crucial step in the development of the Society into a national organisation.

In late 1957 Song Qingling asked Hall to write a short article about her time in China on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the China Welfare Institute but Hall's response was too late to be included. In May 1958 Hall's letter, accompanying the article, showed that she was engaged in very similar political activities to the others who were involved with the Society at this time. She reported she had been involved in celebrating the anniversary of the PRC with the Society, active

¹⁰¹² See <http://nzchinasociety.org.nz/rewi.html>.

¹⁰¹³ She had hoped to replace the Spencers but anti-foreign sentiment meant many bureaucratic hurdles and the foreigners leaving China at this time were seldom replaced (on this see Newnham, *Dr. Bethune's Angel*, 195).

¹⁰¹⁴ Minutes of the Auckland Branch, Jack Ewan Papers, NZCFS Archive.

trying to ban the bomb with the Peace Council, and ‘working hard to get a change in government’.¹⁰¹⁵

Reflecting the insular nature of the Society at this stage – the Auckland Branch in 1958 had just 51 members – Hall’s familial links were also important. Her brother Peter was a founding member of the Hamilton Branch and her cousin Ruth Lake was to go to China in 1963 to teach English. Lake’s husband Doug, who worked with the Foreign Languages Press, and their three daughters, accompanied Ruth. The Lakes would be key correspondents to their fellow New Zealanders during the Cultural Revolution, trying to articulate the enthusiasm they were experiencing into language that those far away would be able to understand.

When Alley visited New Zealand in 1960 he and Hall met for the first time, and even then, according to Alley, what he remembered was that Hall stayed behind after the meeting to help with the dishes.¹⁰¹⁶ She talked with him a little about her own life in China and asked if she might be able to return to China. He arranged for her to be included in a delegation invited later that year for the PRC’s National Day celebrations. She was able to meet up with old friends Song Qingling and Nie Rongzhen and to scatter some earth on Norman Bethune’s tomb. She returned to again China in 1964, this time hosted as an individual. Freed from the ‘official circuit’ she was able to get back to the villages in the hills where her clinics had operated.¹⁰¹⁷ She died in 1970.

Her death was not noted in the Society’s newsletter. The history of the Society is important to it, as are its ‘heroes’, and it continually found occasion to remember them, but Hall’s name was not mentioned. In 1976 when Muldoon went to China, the Society’s newsletter condemned the New Zealand Prime Minister’s ‘[riding] around China on the back of such people whom he openly despises’ and celebrated ‘unofficial representatives [who] established genuine friendly relations...’.¹⁰¹⁸ Rewi Alley, Jim Bertram, Vic Wilcox, and Shirley Barton are the only ones singled out for mentioning. In Alley’s poetry collection *Snow Over the Pines* where he includes poems commemorating the contribution of NZCFS stalwarts, Barton, Jim Wong, and Nat and Flora Gould have poems dedicated to them, but not Hall.¹⁰¹⁹

Yet despite this omission, Alley was singularly responsible for Hall not being forgotten. In March 1977, seven years after her death, he wrote a substantial article for the Society’s publication *New Zealand China News* entitled ‘Unsung Heroine’.

¹⁰¹⁵ See discussion at the beginning of chapter 3.

¹⁰¹⁶ In fact they spent a full day together in Auckland, although it is likely that the modest Hall did not reveal all of the things she had been involved in. His anecdote about the dishes was designed to emphasise Hall’s commitment to service rather than depreciate her work at other levels.

¹⁰¹⁷ Tom Newnham, *He Mingqing: The Life of Kathleen Hall*, New World Press/Graphic Publications, Beijing, 1992, 168-69.

¹⁰¹⁸ ‘Muldoon Visits the People’s Republic’, *New Zealand China News*, June 1976, 1.

¹⁰¹⁹ Rewi Alley, *Snow Over the Pines*, New World Press, Beijing, 1977.

Unsung, but that's how Kathleen Hall would have wanted it. A modest little woman who practiced service before self, and who, working to help the Eighth Route Army in the War of Resistance, made another link between New Zealand and China.¹⁰²⁰

Alley's account of Hall begins with the story of how he came to know of her because she nursed George Hogg back to life. Hogg was on his way to meet Alley and to start work for Gung Ho. He also recalls how he and Hall had met in China when she 'returned to China on a visit in 1964... [and] scattered... earth over Dr Norman Bethune's grave'.¹⁰²¹

This was actually Hall's second trip to the PRC and she had met Alley on the first as well, in 1960. Alley said that he had not known much of Hall's story, despite having spent time with her in New Zealand and China in 1960.

She did not speak much about herself... We knew that, when she came to Peking to buy medicines for Dr Bethune's hospital, Japanese gendarmes arrested her and sent her to Hong Kong. When given more medicines by the China Defence League, she took them right across China into Shansi province... She returned to New Zealand and was a constant help to China friendship until her death.¹⁰²²

As Alley presented it, it was through others that Hall's story was revealed to him and even then it was incomplete. Dr Guo Qinglan, the Chinese widow of the Indian doctor, Dwarkanath Kotnis, who had also served with the 8th Route Army

asked if I had known her and was glad to hear of her life after her arrest... It turned out Kathleen Hall had recruited Dr Kuo and other medical workers to go to the Eighth Route Army. Kathleen also took her to the mission hospital at An Kuo before going into the hills. Kathleen came and went from Peking to Bethune many times with medicines and supplies and introduced Dr Kuo to Dr Kotnis... I would have liked to have heard more of Kathleen but Dr Kuo did not have time to tell old stories.¹⁰²³

Alley wrote this account of Hall's time in China after the Cultural Revolution, but China's trajectory was being represented at the time as continuing the revolution. Hall, accordingly, was characterised in terms of a 'serve the people' construction. Alley wrote:

She was extremely popular... She nursed guerrilla fighters and was one with the people. My last impression of Kathleen was of her staying behind after a China Society meeting in New Zealand to wash up cups, put things straight. That was like her. Always she

¹⁰²⁰ Rewi Alley, 'Unsung Heroine', *New Zealand China News*, March 1977, 7-9.

¹⁰²¹ Rewi Alley, 'Unsung Heroine', 8.

¹⁰²² Alley, 'Unsung Heroine', 9.

¹⁰²³ Alley, 'Unsung Heroine', p.8. For more on the Indian doctors who worked with the 8th Route Army see Dr B. K. Basu, *Light on China: Call of Yanan - Story of the Indian Medical Mission to China 1938-1943*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2003.

wondered what she could do to serve. The Communist-led Eighth Route Army always remained her ideal in downright and complete devotion to the ordinary Chinese people she grew to love so well.¹⁰²⁴

Despite this recollection from Alley, Hall's story languished again until the arrival of Tom Newnham at Shandan in 1987. Newnham, who was to become Hall's biographer and most important promoter, was working with Alley re-establishing the Shandan Bailie School. Newnham says that on announcing that he wanted to write another Alley biography, Alley sent him to Songjiazhuang to 'talk to the old people there about New Zealand nurse Kathleen Hall', that hers was a story worth writing about and that '[Hall] would have been famous if she'd been a man'.¹⁰²⁵

Others have said that Alley had been telling people for years to make sure that the Society would 'never forget Shirley Barton'.¹⁰²⁶ Indeed in the introduction to his book *New Zealand Women in China*, Newnham reports that Alley said to him 'There needs to be a book written about three New Zealand women in China, Shirley Barton, Barbara Spencer and Kathleen Hall'.¹⁰²⁷ It was Hall on whom Newnham decided to focus.

In 1989 Newnham asked 'why has this remarkable life story remained untold for so long?' He put it down to two reasons: she was a Christian missionary who 'unashamedly sided with the Communists', 'she was a woman. The new regime in China, Newnham claims, conducted a 'sustained propaganda campaign' against missionaries as 'imperialist spies', even as 'monsters and baby killers' and the New Zealand government too was 'not disposed to bestow honour on somebody who, it was said "helped the Communists to power"'.¹⁰²⁸

A significant reason for Hall's lack of exposure in New Zealand was that she spoke so seldom of the activities that she was associated with in China and when she did belittled her own involvement.¹⁰²⁹ She seems to have believed that she had only done what any other would have in the circumstances. Accounts of the men she was closely associated with have also discounted or otherwise adjusted Hall's involvement in order to further elevate their main protagonist's achievements. Some accounts of both Hogg and Bethune have Hall falling in love with them. In the Canadian film, *Dr. Bethune*, Bethune's biographers pursue the lovers' notion despite the fact that Bethune and Hall only met on the one occasion and Bethune's own account of that, endorsed by Hall, cannot possibly be interpreted in favour of any such relationship.¹⁰³⁰ They also

¹⁰²⁴ Alley, 'Unsung Heroine', 9.

¹⁰²⁵ Newnham, *Dr. Bethune's Angel*, 2.

¹⁰²⁶ Jack Ewan, Interview, Auckland, 4 July 2002.

¹⁰²⁷ Tom Newnham, *New Zealand Women in China*, Graphic Publications, Auckland, 1996, 1.

¹⁰²⁸ Tom Newnham, *Dr. Bethune's Angel*, Graphic Publications, 2002. 94.

¹⁰²⁹ Newnham discusses this in *Dr. Bethune's Angel*, 96.

¹⁰³⁰ Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, *Light on China: The Scalpel, the Sword*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 2003, 272-277. Alley too refers to Kathleen Hall's Chinese name as 'Ho Hushi' (nurse Ho) in his autobiography. Hall's biographer Tom Newnham objects to how she is depicted in the Canadian film *Dr. Bethune* (Director Philip Borsos,

give Hall a different Chinese name, 'Miss Ho'. In the recent movie *Children of the Silk Road* Hall is transformed into an Australian with a drug problem.¹⁰³¹

Alongside the issue of why Hall's story was submerged for so long must be the question of why it emerged when it did. It cannot be mere coincidence that interest in popularising the Hall story from China arose in 1957, 1977 and 1987, three moments when the United Front was at its broadest and narrow sectarianism at its weakest. 1957 was after the period of Socialist Construction and before the Great Leap Forward, 1977, after the Cultural Revolution and 1987 during a period of openness when, for example, village-level democratic elections were introduced.¹⁰³² Further, the 1990s, when the NZCFS embraced Hall, having largely ignored her pre-Liberation exploits for forty years, coincides with the Society's post-Tiananmen anxiety and identity crisis – when it was looking for a rationale that did not hinge on support for China's political trajectory over more recent years. Her 'humanitarianism' was 'pure'.

The Society's changed goal of 'acknowledging the significance of the establishment of the People's Republic of China', instead of 'correcting misrepresentations about China' was advanced by Hall's story of heroism in pre-Liberation China and her published work in proclaiming that the PRC was better than the period under the Guomindong. This was coupled with the end of her direct involvement with China before any of the periods that have subsequently become so complicated and contested such as the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the period of Reform and Opening-Up. Her discovery has another corollary too. From the mid-1990s the Society for People's Friendship Studies had been investigating the publishing of English language works about China for China's expanding population of readers of English to learn about China's history through the eyes of foreigners. The series, after some delays, was published in 2002 and 2003. It consists entirely of pre-Liberation accounts of China.

The Society's connection with Kathleen Hall's memory eulogises:

Her work behind the lines in the Sino-Japanese war [which] was secret and extraordinarily courageous... like Alley, her entire focus was on the welfare of the peasants.¹⁰³³

In this way, while also rewriting Alley's memory, she is connected to Alley but her history is also disconnected from him. One aspect of this is the complete absence in the official representations of her history by the Society of George Hogg, and through him, Alley and Gung Ho. Presumably this is in part to set her up as a hero in her own right, uncluttered by Alley's status. Similarly, her

1990) which stars Donald Sutherland as what Sutherland describes as a 'womanising, hard drinking, genius' (CBC News). See Newnham, *Dr. Bethune's Angel*, 240.

¹⁰³¹ Roger Spottiswoode (Director), *Children of the Silk Road* (also released as *Children of Huang Shi*), Australian Film Commission, 2008.

¹⁰³² Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1998, 41-42.

¹⁰³³ Diana Madgin, 'Who Was Kathleen Hall?' at www.nzchinasociety.org.nz. Accessed 23 March 2009.

story ends with her leaving China in 1942. It is just a pre-Liberation story, she was not involved in 'interpreting China' through the 1950s and 1960s until her death, so she did not look like someone who had been a slavish follower of People's China even though she had worked as a 'friend' of China. Significantly, it is the cause of the Chinese nation, rather than socialism, which China's friends are seen as supporting. It is the second united front that sees a united China fighting a Japanese invader, which provides the framework for Hall's activities.

The story also provides an explanation of how Hall, as a Christian, could have come to provide support for the communists.

At first she was wary of Mao's peasant army: her Christian training and philosophy was antagonistic towards communism, and she feared that the communists were killing missionaries. However, word of General Nie Rongzhen's support for local peasants filtered through; in fact, he became Kathleen's close friend. Mao's tactics were to win the trust of the local peasants, then mobilise them into night raiders on Japanese outposts: farmers by day, guerrillas by night. Kathleen realised that the robbery and rape that usually accompanied an army were not part of Mao's ethic; the Eighth Route Army was vigilant in enforcing the honesty and courtesy of its soldiers.¹⁰³⁴

When, having discovered Hall some twenty years after her death, the Society sought some way of memorialising her, they first initiated the Kathleen Hall Memorial Nursing Scholarship. This was for post-graduate community nursing training in New Zealand and was done in 1996, the centennial of Hall's birth. Kathleen Hall was remembered as a community nurse and the scholarship was an opportunity to remember her, and to promote on an annual basis her story to the nursing community through publicity related to the scholarship.

Yet from 2002, when the Society made its shift into undertaking aid work in China, effort gradually went into converting the Kathleen Hall Scholarship into an aid and development project based inside China. The outcome was the He Mingqing Scholarship, inaugurated in 2007, and the withering away of the postgraduate award.¹⁰³⁵ The NZCFS now pays all the costs for student nurses, chosen from impoverished areas in China, to complete their training at a local medical training college with the expectation that they will then return to their area to work. This reflects the Society's interest in aid, which has replaced its interest in publicity about China to New Zealanders, and is linked to the Society's other aid and development activities. The first He Mingqing Scholar was from a national minority village in northern Guangxi province, drawing on connections the Society had with the Guangxi Branch of the All China Women's Federation. In

¹⁰³⁴ Madgin, 'Who Was Kathleen Hall', 2-3. Note that there are no sources provided to justify statements such as that Hall believed that the Eighth Red Army was better than the Japanese, or the KMT, for that matter. Part of her value may be exactly that people know what she did but not what she thought; she is an empty page onto which ideology and belief can be transcribed.

¹⁰³⁵ See Minutes of the National Executive of the NZCFS, February and Jun 2007, and Minutes of the National Conference of the NZCFS, May 2007, held in Masterton. NZCFS Archives.

2008, when a second scholarship began, it was for a student from Qiyang County, Hebei, where Hall herself was active.

Conclusions

The imagining and interpretation of the PRC by its New Zealand viewers has been affected by those who talked about the PRC to New Zealanders and those chosen, by their heroic status, to represent the PRC in New Zealand. The representation of Alley, as someone who told New Zealanders about the PRC, has been transformed as those who viewed the PRC through him have sought to re-position themselves in accordance with a new telling about the PRC. Not only is this interpretation subjective, but the re-positioning is also, and of itself, subjective. Understanding the construction of Alley and Hall in this context is of vital importance.

For the Communist Party of New Zealand, Alley was an important marker of the Party's connection with the Chinese revolution, but out of deference to the needs of the United Front and the particular politics of anti-communism, they did not openly associate either him with them or they with him, as this would involve 'outing' him as a communist. He was, accordingly, not identified to the New Zealand public as a member of the CPNZ until the late 1960s. The CPNZ always had other connections with the PRC and the CPC, in particular through Vic Wilcox – who was perhaps even more well-known and regarded amongst the CPC theoreticians and leading cadre than Alley – but also through access to material written about the PRC by journalists from fraternal and ideologically sympathetic parties who were based in Beijing.

The CPNZ changed the way that it talked about and used Alley's name over the period. As the egalitarianism of the Cultural Revolution reached its zenith the description of him as 'famous' disappeared. Yet he continued to give authority and status to the Party because, with or without the epithet, he *was* famous. In the 1970s, when there were a variety of communist parties in New Zealand, most sympathetic to the project underway in the PRC and the ideological pronouncements of the CPC, Alley 'spoke for China' in recognising the primacy, in the eyes of the CPC, of the CPNZ.

For the Society, Alley was its founder, and patron, and most famous son. While United Front politics waxed and waned and affected its direct engagement with the PRC, Alley remained a constant: his writing of greetings to the Society, his engagement in regular correspondence with particular members, his generous hosting of delegations and individuals in Beijing, and his visiting New Zealand on four occasions as a guest, spokesperson and representative not only of China but also of the Society.

The representation of Alley consistently maps over multiple changes in the representation of the PRC. Following the periodisation identified in chapter 1, the first of these corresponds to the period of the PRC's 'opening up' between 1952 and 1957. It is dominated by ideas about 'peace' and 'culture', and sees relations enabled on a broad basis between the PRC and its New Zealand supporters. Alley in this period was presented as a 'peace worker'. The second period began around the end of the 1950s and ran until the high point of the Cultural Revolution in 1969. This period saw Alley being increasingly radicalised in the literature and the image of him for the Society and the CPNZ becoming conflated into one. A third period, around the recognition of the PRC by the New Zealand government in December 1972, saw Alley being able to be much bolder in his political positioning, although simultaneously less engaged in promoting his political beliefs, as anti-communism falls away and New Zealand sought engagement with the PRC on much wider grounds.

For members of the Society, in the period immediately after recognition, the People's Republic of China in 1976 was about politics, and so too was Alley. His particular role was in celebrating the achievements of the Cultural Revolution, and 'explaining' of China New Zealanders. As the great changes in China from the late 1970s through the 1980s took place, Alley's status was very important in making sure that people in New Zealand understood that China, although changing, still represented the hope and promise of the revolution. When he died, his memory was invoked not just for all he had contributed but in the expectation that what he had begun all those years earlier in Shandan and with Indusco would continue.

For the NZCFS however the truth-event of Tiananmen not only coloured what it believed about the PRC, it also changed the way that it talked about Alley. It reduced its promotion of his contributions to 'telling the truth about China' and emphasised instead his practical contributions during the period leading up to liberation. It even introduced, in Kathleen Hall, a new hero who was uncluttered by the problems that Alley's sixty years of supporting China reflected. By the turn of the millennium, China had all but completely ceased to reflect a politicised image. For many members their interest in China was 'cultural' instead. Alley had to be re-configured, now alongside Hall, in order to fit with this new image.

Conclusion

When the PRC was founded there were no formal links between China and New Zealand and even when the 1957 Nash-led Labour government suggested having them there was considerable pressure put on them from United States and, particularly, United Kingdom authorities not to do so. This was the Cold War, a hot war from 1950-53 when Chinese ‘volunteers’ and New Zealand troops in Korea as part of the United Nations contingent faced off against one another. New Zealand was on the side of the ‘free world’ and China behind the ‘red curtain’. There were few Chinese New Zealanders, and they tended to be close to the politics of KMT. The Republic of China maintained an embassy in Wellington.

It was in this context that the NZCFS was founded and attempted to build people-to-people links between the two countries. This was done by initially utilising the New Zealand-based supporters of Rewi Alley’s work in China, and those who had worked with Alley in China when they began to return home after the PRC was founded. Steadily these supporters expanded to include other left-wing New Zealanders involved in peace and trade union activity, but not significantly beyond this, especially as anti-communism was widespread and the New Zealand media was not disposed towards positive coverage of either China nor Alley.

For the most part the 1960s saw a continuation of the government’s relations towards the PRC and communism, again dominated by war, in this case the conflict in Vietnam. This decade also saw continuous rule by the conservative National Party and a close relationship between New Zealand foreign policy and that of the United States and the United Kingdom. Yet despite the continuity of government policy, New Zealand society was changing, with a considerable growth, especially amongst young people, of interest in counter culture and the search for alternatives to the life they saw around them. For many China offered this alternative. The Communist Party of New Zealand, although small even in proportion to New Zealand’s population, shared a platform with the Communist Party of China through their common opposition to what they saw as Soviet revisionism.

When recognition occurred, essentially coinciding with the election of the Kirk Labour government in 1972, not only was the long-held goal of the NZCFS achieved there was also a blossoming of engagement with China as it became much easier for ordinary New Zealanders to do so. Society tours flourished and were soon complemented by commercial tours as well. In the aftermath of Britain joining the European Union and China’s reform and opening up process New Zealand businesses began to see the PRC more and more as an opportunity. Domestic changes in China saw the commitment that the CPNZ had made to the Chinese revolution lapse and even the groups who maintained some fidelity with an image of China and its revolution differed in terms of what they had a relationship with: a present ‘actual existing socialism’ or a now discarded revolutionary project.

The 1980s saw a continuation of this shift in New Zealand's engagement with the PRC, especially as Chinese politics, or a repudiation of radical politics, saw opportunities for New Zealand 'prominent people' to be introduced to the possibilities the PRC offered. Sister city relationships were formed and the interest in China became genuinely bi-partisan across National and Labour lines. Although the interest in China as an alternative other from disrupted by the Tiananmen event commercial and elite politics interest continued to develop, as did an interest in a 'cultural' China. Immigration changes in the late-1980s saw significant numbers of Chinese New Zealanders who had been born or raised in the PRC for the first time. By the end of the decade, in part due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the deregulatory changes in the PRC, those interested in Marxist politics were smaller in number, and fewer and fewer of those that held to such beliefs saw China as representative of their ideological commitment.

In the 1990s, through to the 50th anniversary of the Society, the interest in a cultural China, including Chinese language, continued to grow and the Society saw many Chinese New Zealanders drawn into the Society's activities. New Zealand businesses increasingly saw the possibilities of the Chinese market, and importing goods from China, as essential for New Zealand's economic development. China was more assertive on the world stage further emphasising the importance of strong connections between the two countries. The Society was seen as important too, as the unbroken links that it had maintained with the PRC since the early years were valued in Beijing, and could be utilised by the New Zealand state.

Although this context is important, this thesis is more a history of an imagined 'China' than a history of China, or indeed a history of the organisations and people whose articulations about the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been its focus of study. As such it is indebted to the work of people such as Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy and Steven Yao whose *Sinographies* has introduced a conceptualisation of something different from a study of China (sinology) – a writing of China.¹⁰³⁶ The writing of China is not fixed. As Hayot writes, 'the West is no more the same every time it interacts than China is when it interacts with the West', so too the individuals and organisations in this study.¹⁰³⁷

This is an attempt to provide a sympathetic reading of a wide range of material and trying to understand what the PRC has meant at different times, in different circumstances and to different people. Although all the accounts have been from those enthusiastic about the PRC and the CPC-led project there have still been changing images. This thesis is a study of beliefs and claims and it is about what people saw happening after 1949, and why they thought what they thought. Such a deep contextualisation involves the re-reading of the texts that have 'written' the PRC for sympathetic New Zealanders. They involve a rhetoric of truth and accuracy and stress

¹⁰³⁶ Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy and Steven Yao, *Sinographies: Writing China*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008.

¹⁰³⁷ Eric Hayot, *The Dream of China: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2004, xix.

the value of personal encounters, but it is also striking that the emphases change as what is being sought changes.

Truth is a highly complicated concept, as has been explored extensively in philosophical literature. The accounts of those who went to the PRC exhibit a range of the different ideas about truth. They were alive to concepts of subjectivity. They also understood that what is true is substantially influenced by the foundational beliefs of the person to whom it is expressed and the status and perceived authority of the person doing the telling. Less complicated than truth, is truthfulness. Bernard Williams reminds us that without denying the contingency of much that we take for granted, truth still needs to be defended as an intellectual objective and a cultural value through a commitment to truthfulness. He identifies two basic virtues, Accuracy and Sincerity, the first of which aims at finding out the truth and the second at telling it.¹⁰³⁸ Taking into account the contextualisation of the accounts examined here, visitors to the PRC overwhelmingly sought out the truth, as they understood it, and attempted to tell it. In addition though, visitors to the PRC were highly conscious that they were engaged in a polemical exercise to promote what they believed to be the successes of the socialist project in China. They accordingly adjusted the image they presented in order to comply with what they were aware would be the reception in New Zealand.

These representations, then, were affected by the reception and perceived reception of the ideas about the PRC in New Zealand. This was itself strongly influenced by government policy. Around the time of official recognition of the PRC by the New Zealand government, things for the supporters of the PRC got considerably easier. Rewi Alley's trips, and his position on the PRC and activities taking place there, were more favourably and more extensively covered in the media and there was an explosion of people-to-people activities. Since Alley was the most important interlocutor between the PRC and New Zealand his image came to reflect, if not embody the changing understanding of people's China. When he also was re-written, after Tiananmen, the New Zealand China Friendship Society (NZCFS) found an additional hero in Kathleen Hall, to stand alongside him, who also permitted the 'reclaiming' of a tradition of the Chinese revolution that it found supportable.¹⁰³⁹ This changing reading of Alley (and in fact the changes in the reading of Hall) is no slight. He needs to be understood in his context. In particular this means in relation to the historically contingent ideas and events that shaped him and the reception of the promotion in New Zealand of the projected he supported in the PRC.

To promote the validity of their accounts, travellers to the PRC have privileged eyewitnessing, claiming that one had to see China to really know it. They made claims as to 'a commitment to

¹⁰³⁸ Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002.

¹⁰³⁹ See Elizabeth Perry's effort to do the same with respect to the 'Anyuan revolutionary tradition, 'Elizabeth Perry, 'Reclaiming the Chinese Revolution', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67, 4, 2008, 1147-1164. In the NZCFS's case they claim the work done before Liberation as reflecting heroic activities towards a highly desirable outcome.

accuracy' which required them to challenge what were dominant ideas in New Zealand, that 'it may seem remarkable but, it was, in my experience absolutely true' or even that 'The Western media lies: China forges ahead'.¹⁰⁴⁰ As Timothy Kendall has identified also happened in Australia, publications had titles such as *Journey to New China*, 'I saw China', *Return to China*, and 'China as we saw it' each of which suggested that the author was not only in a position to reveal the 'truth' or 'reality' of life in the PRC, but also that the authority of their perspective was tied up in the personal authority of their representation.¹⁰⁴¹ Further, the eye-witness accounts were always subject to a moulding and reshaping through a process of guided engagement with the PRC, by guides and translators, experts such as Alley, and those who saw themselves as the interpreters of the PRC who were part of the New Zealand-based organisations. At the same time, there is little doubt that the claim 'seeing is believing' was taken literally by these travellers. Some chroniclers of such travel, unsympathetic to the CPC-led project in the PRC, have claimed that travellers typically failed to question the reality of what they saw, and took their ability to 'see' the truth for granted.¹⁰⁴² Yet a close analysis of the accounts examined here suggests it is possible to give a much more favourable reading than this. That is, the travellers to the PRC were alive to contrary interpretations but believed what they saw.

Reading accounts of a changing China requires a contextualization of the PRC's people-to-people activities. This needs an understanding of the basis of people-to-people diplomacy in Marxist-Leninist theory. In addition, the PRC has been viewed differently at different times by the West, there have been a series of different campaigns that have been undertaken in the PRC, and the Communist Party of China (CPC) has interacted with different strata of society at different moments. Each of these factors should be considered in producing a periodisation of people-to-people activities, against which the New Zealand engagement with the PRC can be examined.

In addition to these macro factors there are specific and particular factors too, that manifest themselves in changing images of the PRC. Different visitors with different agendas wrote a different China. Who was talking, what they wanted to say, and what they wanted to say about New Zealand through China, have all impacted on the representation of the PRC. In addition, what might appear as specific and particular factors, in that they are not about any changes in the PRC *per se*, have come about because of changing ideological and cultural fashion. Amongst other evidence, this is suggested by the two different representations of the New Zealand University Students' Association tours to the PRC in 1971 and 1974 and the consistency those two

¹⁰⁴⁰ James Bertram, *Return to China*, Heinemann, London, 1957, 1. Margaret Garland, *Journey to New China*, The Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1954, 38. Wilcox, 'Western Media lies: China forges ahead', *People's Voice*, 23 September 1967, 1.

¹⁰⁴¹ Timothy Kendall, *Ways of Seeing China: from Yellow Peril to Shangri-la*, Curtin University Press, Freemantle, 2005. Garland, *Journey to New China*. Harold Kay, 'New China As I Saw It', *Challenge*, August 1955, 7. Bertram, *Return to China*. Don Franks, 'As We Saw It', *New Zealand China News*, New Zealand China Society, November 1976, 3.

¹⁰⁴² Note that these alternative interpretations are themselves contextual in that they have only become predominant since those outside (and perhaps inside) the PRC lost faith in the CPC-led Chinese project's emancipatory potential. Elizabeth Perry details this 'repudiation of revolution' which she notes is a 'fairly recent phenomenon'. See Elizabeth Perry, 'Reclaiming the Revolution', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67, 4, 2008, 1147-1164.

representations have with the contemporaneous reports by respectively, the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars and the delegation from *Tel Quel*.

In part these reports are complicated by the problems relating to what travelers, and even non-native residents, think is happening in a society that is not their own. But on another level there is a further complexity in that a Marxist believes that the experiential distortions are just those brought about by a class viewpoint.

The work of Alain Badiou is of considerable relevance to the construction of changing images of the PRC by New Zealanders. The New Zealand-China relationship has seen a series of transformational truth-events, each different depending upon the perspective of the viewer. For all of them, the organisation from which the individual viewers came was consolidated and repositioned took place in relation to a new understanding of the PRC. This analysis suggests that the shifting nature of what is understood as true (as an interpretation of the situation), gives rise to a reconstitution of the subject. Where individuals are gathered into a collective entity then this leads to a reconstitution of the group's collective identity.

Badiou himself, writing about the PRC, identifies the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) as a 'Truth Event' in terms of its failure: its unsuccessful attempt to rupture the form of the party-state. Badiou notes that while it is true that the GPCR was a power struggle, that of course constitutes a revolution is. But what sort of power struggle? For Badiou, the activities within the Cultural Revolution constantly exceeded and threatened the structure of the 'party state' (universities, administration and the army).¹⁰⁴³ But the party-state survived, and Wang Hui suggests the GPCR was followed by a process of depoliticisation to ensure that there would be no more cultural revolutions.¹⁰⁴⁴ In its failure, Badiou regards the Cultural Revolution as having been the 'last revolution'. The implication is that this was the 'last revolution' within the form of the party state and that therefore another form of politics is required.

As Wang Hui has identified, after 1978 there was also a conflation of the state and the party.¹⁰⁴⁵ This 'rigidification' also made its way into Chinese people's organisations just as the CPC changed its independent international activity towards supporting 'various political parties... proceeding from state strategic interests, instead of 'supporting Leftists and combating revisionism'. The GPCR delineates two periods in the representation of the PRC in the material analysed here.

After the Third Plenary of the 11th Party Central Committee in December 1978, the CPC... usher[ed] in a new historical period of reform and opening and the socialist

¹⁰⁴³ Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, Verso, London, 2006, 291.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East To West', *New Left Review* 41, September-October 2006, 29-46, 31.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Wang Hui, 'Depoliticised Politics', 34-35.

modernisation drive. To fit in with the developing domestic and international situation, China made a major adjustment of its foreign policy.¹⁰⁴⁶

This process of re-interpretation of the situation that is part of Marxist-Leninist practice gives Badiou's ideas particular relevance. On both sides of the people-to-people relationship thought was given to the specific practice required in a changed situation.

From China's Liberation in 1949, until the GPCR, the nature of the relationship that the NZCFS had with the PRC strongly corresponded with the particularities of Communist Party of China-led political campaigns. The relationship was dominated by ideas about peace, and by what members of the Society saw as 'combating anti-communism'. Relations slowed and were replaced by Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ)-CPC links as the campaigns in the PRC shifted the Chinese domestic situation leftward and as the Peace Committee closed, as it did in 1966. The Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was also closed 1966-1971.

As suggested, the 'Truth-Event' of the GPCR resulted in a depoliticisation of PRC society, and the rolling up of the Chinese state and party into one. So, although for members of the NZCFS the People's Republic of China in 1976 was about politics – and bringing those politics and the political significance of the Chinese revolution to New Zealand – this was to rapidly change. The death of Mao was the start of a drift away from politics, in part as the politics of the PRC became so difficult to follow. This was especially true for those who had already been intimately involved in supporting the PRC for a period of time.

Further, 'politics' in China became 'national politics' instead of an interest in the revolutionary project. This resulted in a changed view of 'friendship' from one about being on the right (or rather the left) side of a revolutionary dispute to one more common in contemporary English usage and with an expectation of support rather than critical engagement.

It was the Tiananmen crisis, however, that ultimately represented a truth-event for the Society. This transformed the NZCFS and has coloured its identity since. The image of the PRC was reconstructed away from having a benevolent CPC governing in the interest of the people. In so doing, the self-image of the NZCFS was also reconstituted. The Society no longer sought to 'tell the truth about China'. It rejected a role in politics and claimed to have no position on political questions being debated within the PRC. Yet, having worked through a transformation over this period, the Society began to draw members from a broader cross-section of New Zealand society than before. It also got involved in new activities such as aid work in poorer parts of China. The changed image of the PRC changed the Society. Not better or worse, just organised around different truths that were attractive to a different sort of person.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Communist Party of China, *CPC Seek New Relations*, New Star Publishers, 1997, 3.

The CPNZ transformed differently, most clearly as a result of the Sino-Soviet split and the Party's rejection of Soviet 'revisionism' between 1960 and 1966. This was its truth-event in the sense Badiou uses the term. The CPNZ's ideological analysis meant it reimagined itself from being merely a national communist party to an anti-revisionist communist party. There were other implications too. The CPNZ became increasingly sectarian. It also appears, as in Nick Knight's analysis of the CPA (ML), to have followed the CPC line too closely to be useful to changing New Zealand society in the way its goals suggested.¹⁰⁴⁷ From the beginning of the 1970s, each twist and turn in the line that the CPNZ determined was to be pursued in New Zealand, often as a result of a reading of changes in China, resulted in new organisations. Each of these organisations, had a slightly different reading of New Zealand, and each reading contained within it a different image of China.

In the period from 1978-1982, communist parties in New Zealand by-and-large began to follow a line removed from that of the CPC. In part this was because the New Zealand organisations realised that there was little to be gained from holding the 'China franchise'. For the CPNZ, for example, China no longer reflected its ultra-leftism. In addition, the CPC was now engaging with a range of parties. There were other factors too: China wasn't as exciting as other places, such as the Philippines. This was especially true for the Workers' Communist League (WCL) which was far more entwined in the student movement than either the CPNZ or the Preparatory Committee. Secondly, the party that did hold the 'franchise' was the Preparatory Committee and it was small and relatively insignificant in terms of left politics in New Zealand. Accordingly, when a delegation from the WCL went to the PRC in 1982 they saw it as an opportunity not for closer links but for distance:

A lot of people still believe that the League is a 'China-line' Marxist organisation, and we now have the chance to show that we are not, in the sense that we do not (like the old CPNZ and the PC) faithfully follow every twist and turn of Chinese policy'.¹⁰⁴⁸

There is a Christian theme that runs through both the history of New Zealand China relations and through the ideas of truth that underpin this thesis. It reflects that Christianity is a significant part of the dominant culture in New Zealand and part of China's otherness to New Zealanders. The practice of Christianity was what first drew missionaries such as Kathleen Hall to China and the idea of 'godless communism' was part of the climate that the early NZCFS fought to overcome. When the early travellers spoke of the PRC's openness and desire for peace, their ability to attend church was part of the evidence they presented. One of the student groups, in 1976, also challenged their hosts that they wanted to attend mass.¹⁰⁴⁹ Of the 1974 student tourists

¹⁰⁴⁷ Nick Knight, 'The Theory and Tactics of the Communist Party of Australia (M-L)', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 28, 2, 1998.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Workers Communist League Report, December 1982.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Henry Stubbs, interview, Wellington, 18 November 2003.

who did not find the utopia they sought in China, some turned to Christianity as a locus for their faith.

There are theological elements to the study too. It is Christian theologian Soren Kierkegaard through which the idea of subjectivity is introduced. His ideas of truth are that the ideas about the world can be approached objectively but a person's own way of being is necessarily subjective. Later theorists identified that this subjectivity must also affect how supposedly objective truths are considered which takes us through Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida. Badiou takes us beyond subjectivity to a post-foundationalism where objectivity and subjectivity can again exist together, by evoking the Christian mythology of Paul. Ideas of truth-telling that the viewers of the PRC engaged in have also been based in Christian texts. The Bible suggests that seeing is evidence of truth, as John 19:36 claims: 'We know this is true, because it was told by someone who saw it happen. Now you can have faith too'. In such ways eye-witness accounts are privileged. The transmission of the eye-witness accounts to a broader group based on their beliefs in the success of the project they are being told about is also hinted at biblically: from John 20:29, 'the people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are truly blessed'. As contemporary theologian Jack Crabtree points out, this verse is for future generations: it is faith, not sight, that matters.¹⁰⁵⁰

Although the GPCR represents a great divide in China's 20th century history, the New Zealanders who interacted with the PRC seemed slow to adjust. The communist parties were first in coming to terms with the fact that there was now a multiplicity of ways to engage with different Chinas. The NZCFS came later. Yet this process of awakening has been fruitful, ultimately, to the New Zealand-China people-to-people relationship. If a dreamed China is like a library, then, at the end of this study, those who seek an engagement with the PRC now can choose from a much larger collection. Each reading, like each writing, contains a different 'China'. These texts are not equal though ultimately each one has a situated perspective, an ideological understanding, and is enlivened by the question asked since time immemorial: 'who rules, over whom?'

¹⁰⁵⁰ Note that while many manuscripts read John 20:31 as 'these are written so that you will come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God', possibly implying a missionary purpose for John's gospel, a small number of quite early ones read 'continue to believe', suggesting that the audience consists of Christians whose faith is to be deepened by the book. See also John 19:35 which uses the same formation. See biblegateway.com.

Abbreviations

ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
CPAFFC	Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, previously known as the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (CPACRFC), also known as <i>Youxie</i>
CCAS	Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars
CORSO	Council of Organisations for Relief Service Overseas
CPA	Communist Party of Aotearoa
CPA (ML)	Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPNZ	Communist Party of New Zealand
GMD	Guomindong (Nationalist Party)
GPCR	Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
NZLR	New Zealand Labour Review
NZCFS	New Zealand China Friendship Society, at first called the New Zealand China Friendship Association and then New Zealand China Society, sometimes referred to as 'the Society'
NZCR	New Zealand Communist Review
NZUSA	New Zealand University Students' Association
PC	The Preparatory Committee for the formation of a Communist Party of New Zealand (Marxist-Leninist), also referred to as 'the Preparatory Committee'
PLA	Albanian Party of Labour
PRC	People's Republic of China
SPA	Socialist Party of Aotearoa
SUP	Socialist Unity Party
WCL	Workers' Communist League

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Interviews:

Except where indicated, all the interviews were taped and the tapes are in my possession. None have been transcribed, except as notes.

Bill Anderson, Auckland, 8 July 2002.

Angela Belich, Wellington, 10 November 2003.

David Caygill, Wellington, 21 November 2003.

Graeme Clarke, Wellington, 7 November 2003.

John Christie, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

Tian Chua, Kuala Lumpur, 26-27 October 2005.

Michael Crook, Beijing, 18 April 2003.

David Cuthbert, Wellington, 3 November 2003.

Christine Dann, Wellington, 19 November 2003.

Moira-Clare Donovan, Wellington, 13 November 2007.

Israel Epstein, Beijing, 19 July 2003.

Jack Ewan, Auckland, 4 July 2002.

Fei Ya Fu, Lanzhou, 30 July 2003.

Cecil Fowler, Auckland, 5 July 2002.

Don Franks, Wellington, 23 October 2003.

Peter Franks, Wellington, 24 January 2004.

Nancy Goddard, Wellington, 22 June 2002.

Flora Gould, Auckland, 9 July 2002.

Matthew Griffith, Auckland, 9 July 2002.

Tim Groser, by email (Geneva), 4 December 2004.

Ramai Hayward, Auckland, 5 July 2002.

Steve Hieatt, 10 July 2002.

Jock Hoe, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

Murray Horton, Christchurch, 23 May 2004.

Li Xiaolin, Beijing, 24 July 2003.

Liang Zhihong and Ji Derong, Beijing, 8 August 2003.

Ling Ting, Beijing, 6 August 2003.

Lu Wanru, Beijing, 20 July and 24 July 2003.

Jan McLeod, phone interview (Auckland), 13 March 2009.

Alan Monteith, Auckland, 8 July 2002.

Phillip Morrison, Wellington, 5 November 2003.

David Murray, Wellington, 16 November 2003.

Tom Newnham, Auckland, 9 July 2002.

Victor Percival, Auckland 9 July 2002.

Robert Reid, Wellington, 13 January 2004.

George Rosenberg, by email (London), 20 December 2003.

Don Ross, Whangarei, 17 April 2003.

Jack Shallcrass, Wellington, 20 November 2003.

Richard Sharpe, Wellington, 15 November 2004.

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Pat and Hiwi Tauroa, Kaeo, 16 April, 2003.

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Red Flag, Auckland.

Struggle, Porirua.

Unity, Wellington.

Archives

The principal source of archive material is that of the New Zealand China Friendship Society. I have been collecting the archive alongside this project. At present it consists of a series of collections from people (eg. Jack Ewan, Joan Donley) and branches of the Society (eg. Christchurch, Wellington, Taranaki). At the completion of this thesis it will be housed at the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, in Wellington. Until they catalogue it there is no coding system for the records. I have referred to material by title, date and in terms of the sub-archive it is part of. Where it is in a named folder, then I have also referred to that folder.

Also:

Bill McAra archive, University of Auckland.

Flora Gould papers, personal possession.

R.A.K. Mason archive, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

New Zealand University Students' Association archive, Beaglehole Room, Victoria University of Wellington.

Don Ross archive, Beaglehole Room, Victoria University of Wellington.

Vic Wilcox Archive, University of Auckland.