



The Last Summer of Chairman Mao

1976

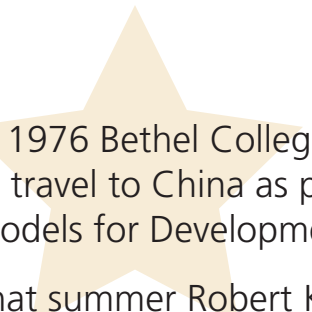


The Last Summer of Chairman Mao

1976

Journal excerpts and images from Robert S. Kreider





In 1976 Bethel College's academic dean invited professor of peace studies Robert Kreider to travel to China as part of preparing to teach the course "China: A Study of Alternative Models for Development" for Bethel's international development program.

That summer Robert Kreider joined a people-to-people tour of China organized by the *Guardian*, a left-leaning newspaper. Participants ranged from age 18 to 60 and included Asian Studies professors, a medical school student "on sabbatical," and the daughter of Norman Thomas, past Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. presidency.

Each day Kreider hand wrote his experiences and musings, usually in the evenings but occasionally during an event or while traveling from one site to another.

Kreider took his Leica camera with Kodachrome 35 mm slide film on the three-week tour and photographed the group's visits to schools, factories, agricultural fields, and cultural sites as well as street scenes during the few times he was able to walk about on his own.

Kreider recorded in his journal that he was aware of Chairman Mao Zedong's failing health. On September 9, five weeks after the tour group returned to the United States, Mao died. The political tide turned and Mao's main supporters, including his wife Jiang Qing, were prosecuted as the "Gang of Four." The last summer of Chairman Mao was the last summer of the Cultural Revolution.





“Came to East-West kindergarten operated by municipality. Directed by young woman who is Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Kindergarten who told us: ‘We teach stories of our heroes.’”

Guangzhou, July 14, 1976



以阶级斗争为纲 把反击右倾翻案风的斗争进行到底

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FOLLOWING A FILM IN HOTEL AUDITORIUM:

“I dozed off several times and awakened several times to find myself in heaven with “golden streets.” But the beauty and joy of it became a little dull. How can one always live in this stylized, positive, exuberant, Great Cultural Revolution level of transcendence? It may be wearisome, because it lacks a story line—a real authentic story of conflict.... Authenticity (or lack of it) of this propaganda disturbs me.”

Guilin, July 16, 1976





“Up at 5:40 to join joggers, shadow boxers, and exercisers. Old men instructing younger groups in shadow boxing with its graceful movements. Two old ladies jogging recognize me from yesterday, when I joined Tai chi practice, and smile.”

Guilin, July 17, 1976



学习好经验 建设新山区



Learn from Good Experience, Build a New Mountain Area

Xuexi hao jingyan jianshe xin shanqu

Shan Xihe (1940–)

1975 3rd edition

AFTER AN EVENING CONCERT BY THE CHANGSHA, HUNAN PROVINCE SINGING & DANCING TROUPE:

“A young man in ethnic dress and with dialect of a minority group sings of transporting a generator into the mountains to bring electricity to the people...”

Changsha, July 18, 1976





DURING A PRESENTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WUHAN:

“It’s now 6:30 and the meeting which began at 2:30 is still going on—save for a ten minute break...Mao and Marx and Engels and Lenin and Stalin looking down on us and through the window the lush green foliage of a hillside.”

Wuhan, July 21, 1976





“Mao—constantly placed in the role of the teacher, the corrector, the encourager, the source of hope & transcendence. Mao—as a dialectician is a process politician. Maoists say ‘not a compromiser.’”

Zhengzhou, July 23, 1976





WOMAN FROM "IRON GIRL TEAM" AT MONG SHANG PUMPING STATION:

“Before Liberation China under Confucianism, women even though clever were subjugated. Could do nothing. After Liberation...we criticized the old ways. We said we could do everything....We worked & armed with Chairman Mao’s ideas we challenged the old ways.”

Zhengzhou, July 23, 1976





DURING VISIT TO SHAOXING COMMUNE:

“We engage in 15 minutes of highly photographed productive labor hoeing cotton...Mao visited in '58 and said 'People's Communes are fine.'”

Zhengzhou, July 24, 1976





A COUPLE FROM THE SHAOXING COMMUNE SPEAK:

“Wife: ‘Before liberation women suffered more than the men. My husband kept me at home. Now I go to meetings I want to go to.’ Wife animated. Amused smile on man. Husband: ‘Yes, sometimes in past I beat my wife; it was in frustration in past. With self criticism that has changed.’”

Zhengzhou, July 24, 1976





“Electric power lines—symbol of new China. China appears completely electrified—that is along the thousands of miles we travelled—main routes. Everywhere electric water pumps.”

Xi'an, July 26, 1976





“Saw P.A. speakers on some electric poles along street. This is a mass media society. Blaring out of news and announcements and music important in holding society together.”

Xi'an, July 26, 1976



第一次全国代表大会之热烈情形

第一次农民代表大会
毛泽东同志到
会商榷联合的问题
农民代表大会开会

毛泽东同志

第一次代表大会
第一次代表大会

第一次代表大会
第一次代表大会



第一次代表大会
第一次代表大会



VISIT TO SHAANXI PROVINCIAL MUSEUM:

“This museum is a large political reeducation instrument. Exhibits interspersed with pictures of bad guys—‘reactionaries’—and good guys—the ‘progressives’...”

Xi'an, July 26, 1976





“In talking politics with a Maoist I have a feeling that there is only one correct way of saying the truth. A paraphrase is not acceptable. Certain words and phrases are important. Like talking with a Freudian or a Fundamentalist—unless we say things the orthodox way, one’s faithfulness, one’s loyalty, one’s legitimacy is somewhat suspect.”

Xi’an, July 26, 1976

指导我们思想的理论基础
是马克思列宁主义。 *毛泽东*

THE THEORETICAL BASIS GUID-
ING OUR THINKING IS MARXISM-
LENINISM.

MAO TSE TUNG





THOUGHTS FROM A TOUR GROUP MEMBER:

“The Chinese, one of them observed, move from the general to the particular—the Americans form the particular and then perhaps to the general. How determined the Chinese are to get their ideological foundations well laid.”

Beijing, July 28, 1976



坚决支持博茨瓦纳人民维护民族独立和国家
FIRM SUPPORT TO THE BOTSWANA PEOPLE IN THEIR JUST STRUGGLE TO SAFEGUARD NATIONAL



“The airport was decorated for the immediate arrival of Seretse Khama of Botswana: banners ‘Firm Support to the Botswana People in their Just Struggle to Safeguard National Independence and State Sovereignty.’ Other billboard-sized signs in and about vacant airport: ‘Serve the People & the World’ ... ‘We have Friends All Over the World.’”

Beijing, July 28, 1976





“Up at 5:30. Sun peeking above the horizons of rooftops. Below could see joggers. Dressed quickly—leaving 3 sleeping roommates. Down street joggers. A few bikes. Crossed street to old racetrack, now a tree covered park and vast review plaza like Tiananmen Square in Peking. Hundreds—thousands of people, little tots to elderly men & women were each doing their morning calisthenics—slow shadow boxing, martial boxing exercises, calisthenics, massaging of thighs, eye exercises, manipulating two tennis size balls in the hand—some of this singly, in pairs, in groups of 6-98-10-100-500. Everywhere on all walking paths and corners. At 5:45 a PA system came on calling out exercises.... Something deeply wholesome about this communal experience—much of which is social. Family groups. Couples. Peer groups. People chatting and exercising and chatting and exercising. Doing it like they enjoyed it. Not like a grim requiem.”

Shanghai, July 30, 1976





“On the bus at 8:15 to Shanghai Industrial Exhibition. Extremely interesting....Especially the Shanghai-built farm equipment: 45 h.p. tractor, 10 H.P. walking tractor, 2 purpose harvester for rice & wheat—also walking, 2-seater rice transplanting machine, machine for uprooting rice shoots, 45 h.p. combine (Model Feng Shan). Mr. Tang told us: ‘Mechanization is the way to increase production....new technology will open up new jobs...This is standing on two legs’—which is Mao’s quote from the 1958 Great Leap Forward speech and in which he urged that all production stand on two legs, the leg of the central government and the leg of local government (e.g., indigenous backyard smelters and the great state steel factories.”

Shanghai, July 30, 1976



狠狠回击右倾翻案风 把巩固无产阶级专政的斗争进行到底



Chinese have a neat set of dichotomies which are very useful in debate.

- 1) The reactionary and revisionist government and the good people.
- 2) The wicked leaders and the good exploited people.
- 3) The bad, unhappy old days and the good, happy productive present.
- 4) The blacks are so black and the whites so white and so little grey.

Shanghai, July 30, 1976





FOLLOWING A VISIT TO A SCHOOL WITH A CLASS ON CONTEMPORARY REVOLUTIONARY OPERA:

“7 year old girl sings from The Red Lantern. Boy of 7 sings intensely and with stylized gestures, dramatic forcefulness, also from Red Lantern. Girl told the group: ‘We learn from heroes of revolution. See movies. We invite in granddads who can tell of suffering of old society. Who help us to understand the ways of old society. We also carry on self-criticism among ourselves.’”

Shanghai, July 31, 1976





AFTER VISIT TO SHUH TANG, NEW WORKERS RESIDENTIAL AREA:

"I am impressed by the high level of competency, articulateness, ideological self-sureness of institutional leadership wherever we go. An able cadre (leadership) has come to the fore in China. With this talent, China is hardly an underdeveloped country."

Shanghai, July 31, 1976





TOUR OF PLANT. SIGNS IN SHOP:

“Every morning try to be a pace setter....Make Progress by Learning from Dazhai....
Maintain the sterling quality of the laboring people....Carry out the struggle of the
Proletariat to the end.”

Shanghai, August 1, 1976





CHINA ENGAGED IN FOUR MODERNIZATIONS:

- 1) Modern agriculture
- 2) Modern industry
- 3) Modern military defense
- 4) Modern scientific technology

Shanghai, August 1, 1976





“Discussed with another tour member whether the China model can be replicated elsewhere. Real problem: China so culturally homogeneous (5000 years of shared experience), and a common discipline and habit of obedience together with respect for authority.

Why is China encouraging US-China friendship—not to build an apparatus of subversion. Rather, I think, to insure having articulate friends when needed in event of a clash of interests with the USSR.”

Shanghai, August 1, 1976





VISIT TO MAY 7 CADRE SCHOOL. VETERAN CADRE SPEAKS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION WHY THEY CAME TO THE SCHOOL:

“How to be servant of the people, not an overlord. In our socialist society impossible to avoid bourgeois rights. From which revisionism springs. So after we arrive here all together, we carry shovels together. We are servants, not overlords. If we have any questions, we ask them. We then raise the political consciousness.”

Shanghai, August 2, 1976





VISIT TO MAY 7 CADRE SCHOOL. QUESTION FROM TOUR GROUP MEMBER:

“Will mechanization take away manual labor so essential to the socialist experience?”

Response from cadre:

“Chairman Mao says manual labor essential—even mechanical work is manual.”

Shanghai, August 2, 1976





VISIT TO MAY 7 CADRE SCHOOL.

“Never have we observed an argument among our informants as to the correct answer. There seems to be a deferment.”

Shanghai, August 2, 1976





VISIT TO MAY 7 CADRE SCHOOL. QUESTION FROM TOUR MEMBER:

“Why should young come to this school?”

Answer from young girl:

“I’m 23. In Old Days we didn’t have such schools. The happy life doesn’t come from the easy way. I decided to develop the whole life, to serve my motherland, to help realize the socialist revolution and to make progress to the communist society. After school I was assigned to work in a clinic. So for first time I have come down to the countryside. I have grown bigger [speaks with emotion]. See peasants working even at night. It’s an inspiration.”

Another girl adds:

“I studied Marxism-Leninism and Mao but [retained] some bourgeois ideas. I was repelled by workers carrying night soil. Then I discovered that night soil is a treasure for agriculture. I never run away now.”

Shanghai, August 2, 1976





“I was to have given our party’s last speech of appreciation which I must write out and send because in the rush of details was wiped out....

- Memories one brings home with us: recalling Chairman Mao’s statement “People’s Communes are Fine” we would say China and her people are fine.
- That China sees the aged, the young, the blind, the deaf, the handicapped not as problems but as resources for the whole people.
- Our visit gives us hope for humanity.”

En route home, August 3, 1976





“Finally, a word of appreciation to each guide and to your families for sharing your time with us—their loss our gain.

Guides:

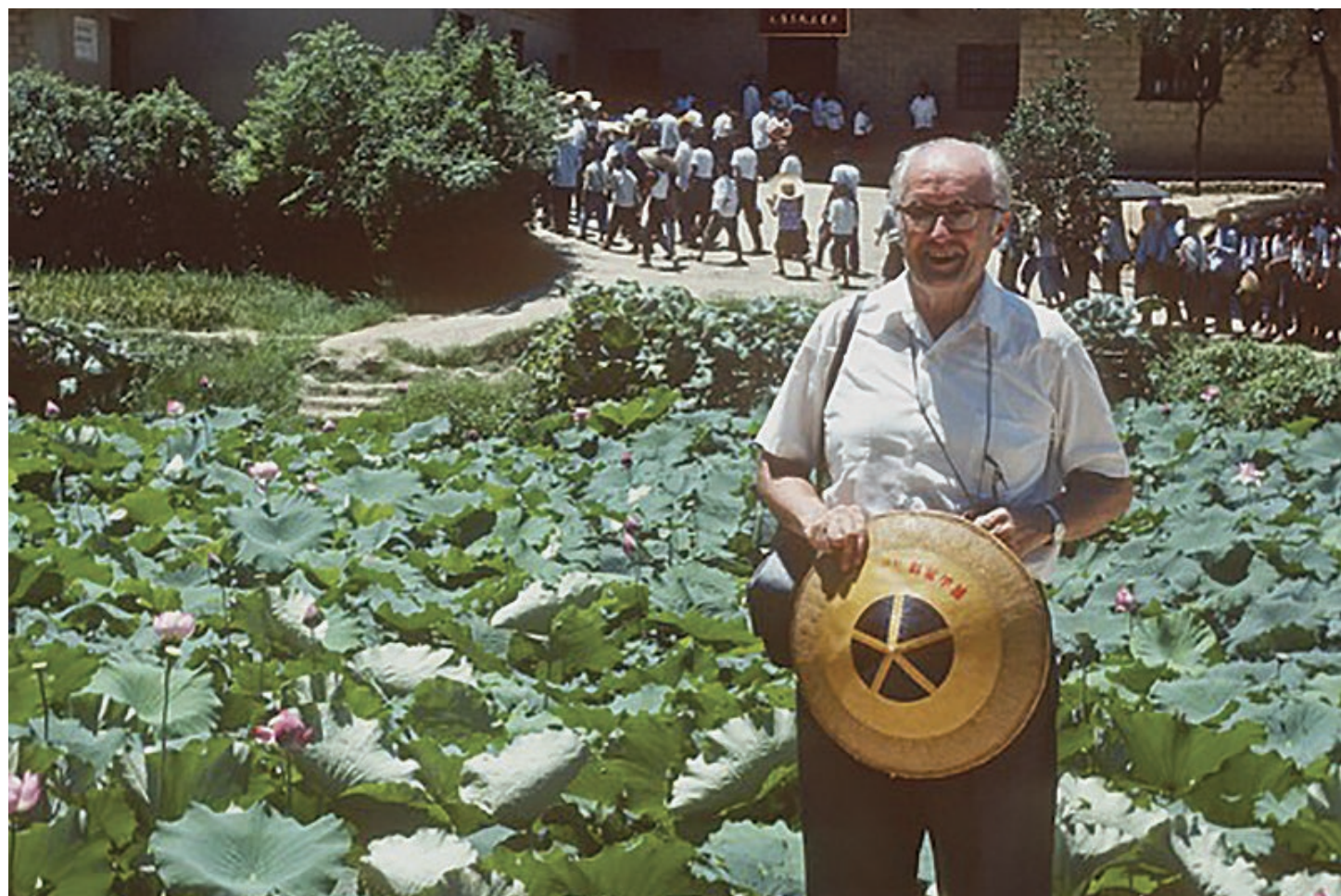
Fu Hsu Shan

Wang Ning

Chang Pei Kuan

China International Travel Service, Peking, PRC”

En route home, August 3, 1976





A copy of Robert Kreider's China journal can be found at the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas (Robert S. Kreider, MS 264, Box 33, Folder 36-1).

Journal excerpts and slides selected by Rachel Pannabecker and designed by Austin Prouty for the exhibition *Campaign for a New China: Looking Back on Posters from the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976*, at Kauffman Museum, February 9-May 19, 2019.

The Last Summer of Chairman Mao, exhibition and public programs are funded by the Kauffman Museum Association and Humanities Kansas, a nonprofit cultural organization connecting communities with history, traditions, and ideas to strengthen civic life.



Kauffman Museum at Bethel College
27th and North Main, North Newton, KS 67117



**HUMANITIES
KANSAS**



