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# REPORTAGE: RIBOUD

CHINA  
PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXT  
MARC RIBOUD

Marc Riboud and his companion, the journalist K. S. Karol, travelled throughout China, except for Peking and Shanghai, on their own with an interpreter always present. They were able to visit both favorable and unfavorable areas and conditions of China and witness the second-rate enterprises as well.

They visited 20 communes each with 20,000 to 35,000 inhabitants, from the banks of the Sungari, where the Siberian wind blows, to the deep tropical south on the Burmese border. This trip encompassed 16,000 miles, from Harbin border to Nanning, close to North Vietnam and crossed twelve of the eighteen Chinese provinces.

In June of 1965 Riboud returned from his four-month journey and in 1957 spent the same length of time there. With his own explanatory text and captions and his most perceptive eye he portrays China, its people and its land and most of all China today.

"The best, and possibly the only way of discovering China is to look at it. In every other country, human contacts help. In Algiers, Warsaw, San Francisco, Cuba, Moscow, etc., innumerable exchanges and discussions with students, members of labour unions, and artists help one to complete and add definition to visual impressions. This is not possible in China. For the foreigner, even if he speaks Chinese, direct and spontaneous communication is practically non-existent. It is not only the language and the customs which are dif-

ferent. The thought process and the very reasons for living constitute additional screens masking the oriental façade. The replies you hear through the medium of the interpreter are usually ready-made formulas, recitals of the official viewpoint and the "correct attitude," and they are always dictated by the desire to follow the party line. One gets the impression that one could learn as much by translating *Jenmin Jihpao*, the Peking People's Daily. Dialogue as we know it, in which the personality of those talking comes across, is almost unknown. What do the Chinese think? What are their innermost concerns? How do they see the regime? We were told by some foreigners that even after several years of residence they could not answer these questions. The way officials try to vaunt the regime and extol its results sometimes ends in antagonizing the most sympathetic visitor. "Before the liberation," "After the liberation" become slogans as tedious as anything invented by Madison Avenue.

Thus, it is better to see, to look than to listen. A walk through the streets of Peking, across the rice paddies of Kwangsi, or the loess terraces of Shensi, able to record visually the unstudied gesture, the unguarded expression, was worth more than a dozen "explanations".

MARC RIBOUD

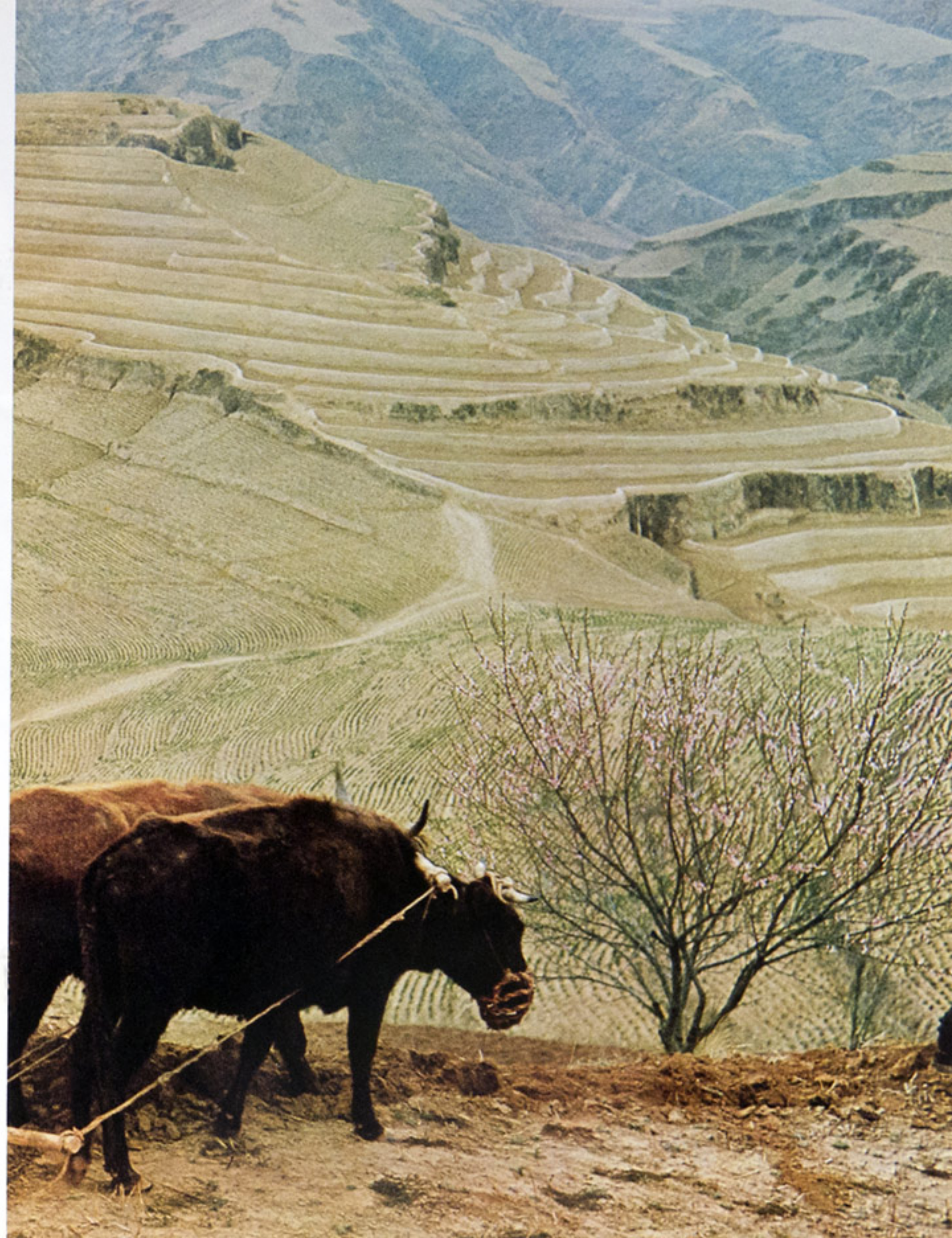
The text and photographs are taken from the book *THE THREE BANNERS OF CHINA*, published by The Macmillan Company, New York, and Collier Macmillan Canada Ltd., Toronto, Ontario.



























**Cover** To increase productivity, the names and portraits of deserving workers are posted up at the factory gates. The authorities have largely abolished the profit motive, trying to replace it with 'socialist emulation'. However, bonuses are sometimes awarded, although they are small and form less than 10 per cent of the pay check.

**P. 5** Overlooked by Tien An Men, the gateway to the old imperial palace, these houses in old Peking are only one story high. They were not permitted to be higher than the walls of the 'Forbidden City'. All that was picturesque and all the poverty in old China used to spread through these narrow alleys.

**P. 6** With its seven million inhabitants, Shanghai is the third largest city in the world. On Sunday the inhabitants like to go for strolls in the streets. The stores remain open. Everywhere, on the walls, there are educational slogans. The one in the background says: 'Get in the habit of not spitting on the ground at random.'

**P. 7** In Harbin, in the north, four female students spend their afternoon on the banks of the Sungari, a tributary of the Amur. They still wear pigtails, but there is a growing trend amongst youngsters in favour of short hair. 'It takes us too long to plait them every morning', they say.

**P. 8-9** All the way along the Yellow River, the loess, which is a very good soil for wheat, is cut into terraces. Each year, 12 million more Chinese must be fed and, in order to obtain arable land, the peasants make new terraces in these mountains every year, sometimes on the edge of great precipices.

**P. 10** In order to protect themselves against the frequent heavy downpours of this region, the schoolchildren of Kwangsi carry enormous straw hats on their backs. They are carefully handed down from generation to generation and will serve the boys and girls throughout their lives.

**P. 11** The People's Communes have brought enormous changes in the life of the Chinese peasants. But they have not altered, and possibly will not alter for some time, the basic movements or age-old implements of these two peasant women from the south.

**P. 12** Pupils' pails and towels in the corner of a secondary school dormitory. This poverty is not only dictated by economic circumstances: it is part of the educational discipline imposed upon young Chinese, who are constantly being reminded of the hard life of the young Mao.

**P. 13** In old Manchuria, the Anshan steelworks are China's Ruhr, its greatest industrial complex. Some of the 15,000 workers leave work.

**P. 14** 1,440 miles separate Peking (Beijin) from Canton (Guangzhou). Beijing and Guangzhou are the romanized Chinese phonetic transcriptions of the characters. It takes forty-six hours for the express (Tekual) to link the two cities. Staff sell travellers tea bags and regularly top up glasses and cups with hot water. The trains are slow but punctual, and very clean.

**P. 15** An unusual sight, which you could no longer see today. On a Peking street, an aristocrat, wrapped in her indifference, passes like a stranger through a world which she no longer recognizes. This picture was taken in 1957.

**P. 16** This female agricultural labourer works on a state farm. With her chopsticks still in her hand, she is leaving the canteen and is reading China Youth. The big headline reads: 'Successful explosion of second Chinese atomic bomb.' The second headline reads: 'Three million demonstrators parade in support of the Dominican Republic.' In order to read a newspaper, you need to know 3,000-4,000 characters.