

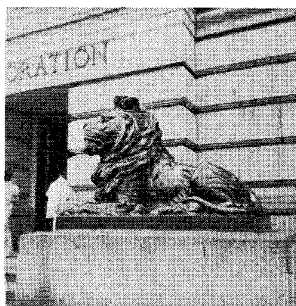
WHO IS HONG KONG?

Twenty-Six People And Their Part In The Life Of The Colony

A Letter from A. Doak Barnett

69-B Robinson Road  
Hong Kong  
August 25, 1954

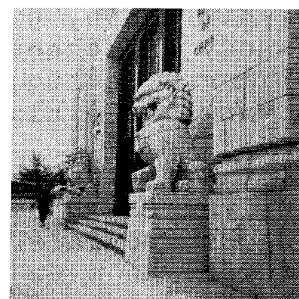
It is relatively easy to give some idea of what Hong Kong is, simply by listing its vital statistics. Clearly, it is:



BRITISH LION  
HK-Shanghai Bank

- (1) A British Crown Colony, consisting of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, and the New Territories, comprising 391 square miles, located on the coast of South China, between 22 degrees 9 minutes and 22 degrees 35 minutes North Latitude--and 113 degrees 50 minutes and 114 degrees 30 minutes East Longitude, 80 miles from Canton;
- (2) A major trading center, gateway to South China, entrepôt for Far Eastern commerce, through which commodities worth HK\$6.6 billion--or well over US\$1 billion--were channeled last year;
- (3) An important refugee center, the population of which almost doubled as a result of the Communist take-over of mainland China and which now totals more than two million.

But facts and figures are cold impersonal things which reveal little about the pulsating life of the place. Who are the people packed together in the mass of humanity on the "trams," in the ferries, and on the streets? Do they live in squatters' huts, Wanchai slums, Kowloon suburbs, or high on The Peak? Are they Cantonese or Northern Chinese, Britishers, or Europeans? What do they think or feel as they pass the bronze British lion in front of the Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank and the stone Chinese lion on the Communists' Bank of China? Where have they come from and where are they going? "Who is Hong Kong?"



COMMUNIST LIONS  
Bank of China

An answer to that question would take a book, because Hong Kong is an incredibly heterogeneous mixture of people. This letter describes briefly, from "A" to "Z", twenty-six persons living in the colony. It may give some idea of the complexity of the human element in Hong Kong, but it can do no more than that. There would have to be over two million individual stories to answer, "Who is Hong Kong?"



#### CENTRAL HONG KONG

Bank of China (left) and Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank (right)

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"A" -- I met "A" last December. He was standing in a line of refugees waiting to receive his ration of boiled rice. There were perhaps 20,000 others like him crowded into the wire-enclosed compound which had been converted into an emergency relief center by the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department. Each of these refugees was a victim of the disastrous Christmas-night fire which gutted forty-five acres of refugee squatters' shacks and left more than 53,000 persons homeless.

I had never seen "A" before; undoubtedly I will never see him again, but I won't forget him. Somehow, in the midst of tragedy and chaos, he managed to smile when I came up and started talking with him. It was a weary and sad smile, but nonetheless it was like a bloom in the desert.

Disaster has become almost a way of life for "A." Five years ago he was a high-school teacher of mathematics in Kwangsi Province. Just before Chinese Communist armies arrived, however, he made the momentous decision to flee to Hong Kong. Like hundreds of thousands of other refugees, he found that he was given sanctuary but that he could barely make ends meet. Living in a one-room shack in the Shek Kip Mei area devastated by the fire, he tried to support two school-age children by making shirts on a sewing machine rented from a local textile factory. Then, last Christmas night, high winds spread the fire so rapidly that "A's" hut was destroyed before he could salvage the

sewing machine or any belongings other than the clothes on his back, He was destitute.

I have no idea where "A" is now, or what he is doing, He may have been allotted one of the concrete-block houses built by the Government for the fire victims, Or he may have moved to some other squatters' area.

There are over 300,000 persons such as "A" in Hong Kong still living in the squatters' shacks which have mushroomed in recent years on hills and in valleys all around the colony's main populated centers. Large numbers are refugees from the mainland. Others are local people who have oozed out into squatters' areas as the huge influx of refugees from China filled up the crowded slums. They make their living by their wits and their muscles. Some do manual labor. Many work in their huts at handicrafts or cottage industries,

Housing these people has become one of the biggest local problems in Hong Kong. So far 35,000 of the Shep Kip Mei victims have been rehoused in quickly-built centers. In the meantime, however, another major squatters' fire has rendered 25,000 more people homeless. There are still, therefore, over 40,000 persons without homes, and thousands more who continue to live in shacks lacking sanitation and all other amenities.

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"B" -- The only man I know in Hong Kong who genuinely supports the institution of old-style absolute monarchy is "B," a European jewel merchant and one-time officer in the Czar's own cavalry. To "B," Sun Yat-sen committed unpardonable lèse-majesté when he led the revolution which overthrew the Mahchu Imperial Throne, and in his opinion China has been on the wrong track ever since.

"B" finds the atmosphere of Hong Kong fairly congenial, however, The colonial administration maintains an orderly and well-run city. Law is administered in the time-honored British tradition, but because Hong Kong is still a Crown Colony there is not much "democratic nonsense" such as representative bodies and universal elections, The hotel where "B" lives is located conveniently in the heart of the Westernized business section of Hong Kong Island; and when "B" gets tired of boiled potatoes he can cross on the ferry to Kowloon and eat a bowl of bortsch (expertly prepared by a Chinese cook from Harbin) in the company of fellow European émigrés from distant places.

"B" also likes Hong Kong because, despite the current trade slump, the colony is still one of the most spectacular world centers for trade in luxury goods -- and diamonds, emeralds, and the like are "B's" stock in trade. Most of these jewels come into Hong Kong because it is a free port, and they eventually find their way elsewhere through the channels of world commerce; therefore, Hong Kong's trade in precious stones is much greater than local demand would justify, This is true

of many other luxury goods too. For example, last year Hong Kong imported almost three million watches -- more than one per capita. Trade in such luxury items makes possible a life of comfortable urbanity for a small cosmopolitan community in Hong Kong.

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"C" -- Most of the flood of refugees now in Hong Kong arrived in the colony just before the Communists took over mainland China, but a smaller flow has continued since 1949. "C" is one of a group of students who emigrated from China for political reasons in the years following the Communist take-over.

Like most of the students who came to Hong Kong between 1949 and 1952, "C" was politically antagonistic to both the Communists and the Kuomintang (Nationalists), and she sympathized with the efforts being made in Hong Kong to develop a "Third Force." Very soon after her arrival she became active in a group which started publishing political tracts, research studies on China, and several magazines.

The group to which "C" belongs has continued writing and publishing; and somehow, over the past four years, its members have maintained their idealism and enthusiasm. But a large proportion of other similar groups which were formed about the same time have succumbed to despair or have been corrupted by the increasingly cynical political atmosphere of Hong Kong. The dream of a real Third Force has, in fact, slowly died during the past two years. Bickering between the individuals and groups who might have coalesced has become increasingly bitter with time; and the group to which "C" belongs has been damaged by rumors -- obviously planted and carefully cultivated -- that it is a sinister tool either of the Americans or, in some subtle way, of the Chinese Communists. The contradiction of these charges has not diminished their effects.

Through the recent lean years of declining hope, "C" and her colleagues have managed to keep up their spirits and their belief that a Chinese democratic movement can grow in time.

All of "C's" family are still on the mainland of China, so she lives in Hong Kong with a young couple who are close friends. She does not have much time for the frivolous diversions of local Hong Kong girls of her age, and despite the fact that she is extremely attractive and feminine she devotes most of her time to work. Her principal diversion is writing poetry, several volumes of which have been published during the past three years.

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"D" -- "D" is a young British officer who lives with his bride in a small Kowloon cottage which might well have been transplanted from a London suburb. He is part of the British defense force in Hong Kong, which far outnumbers all foreign

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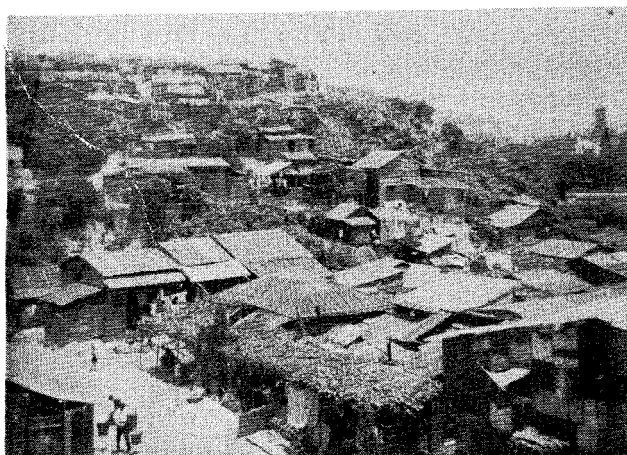
"THE CONTRASTS OF WEALTH AND POVERTY  
ARE PECULIARLY VISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE"



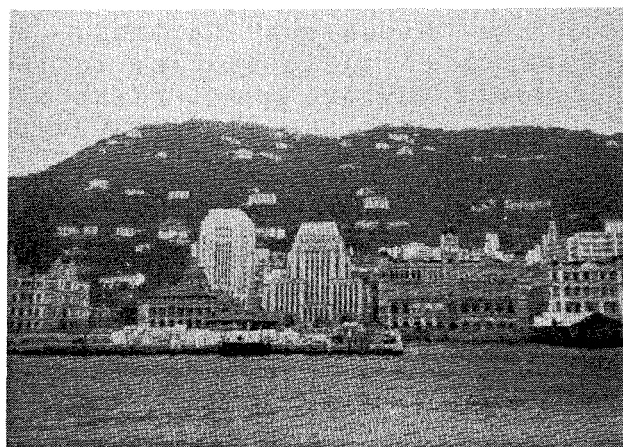
"A one-room shack"



"Large...mansion"



"Squatters' shacks...have  
mushroomed...on hills  
and in valleys"



"Westernized business section"

civilians in the colony. The British have clearly stated that they would fight to defend Hong Kong, if it is attacked, and the troops stationed in the colony are much more than a token force.

Educated in a first-rate British military school, "D" is a cultivated, reserved young man. His main interest is sports, and he is colony champion in one of the field events included in every local track meet. He has plenty of time to pursue his outside interests, because military duties in a garrison post are regularized and undemanding. Every morning "D" commutes by car to his regiment in a rural area of the New Territories, where most enlisted men in the colony live, and in the afternoon he returns to his suburban cottage in Kowloon.

Social life for "D" and his recent bride revolves around the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club and parties with army friends. They are completely isolated from the Chinese community, which makes up 99 per cent of Hong Kong's population. Although the "D's" feel no antagonism or antipathy toward the Chinese, they just do not have any ready-made opportunities for contacts with them, and have no strong incentives to create such opportunities. Consequently, they know virtually nothing of the life of either local residents or refugees. Nor do the "D's" have many contacts with civilian foreigners; they have had close social contacts with only two foreign civilian couples since they came to Hong Kong. Their whole life is insulated and self-contained; for them Hong Kong is just an army post.

"D" is a little self-conscious about the fact that he has never been in combat, because most of the British troops in Hong Kong are veterans of Korea; but he shares the opinion, which seems to be prevalent among the army rank and file in the colony, that the defense force can cope with anything. A great many Hong Kong civilians--both Chinese and foreign--believe, however, that the colony would be swamped if the Chinese Communists attacked with "human sea" tactics. Hong Kong's best protection, in the minds of these people, is the fact that an attack on the colony would involve great risks of general war--a fact which they hope will deter the Chinese Communists from any major action.

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"E" -- Much of Hong Kong's population considers itself transient: about one-half the present population is composed of the flood of postwar refugees; and many of the antediluvian residents used to move constantly back and forth to the mainland and considered their real home to be either in Kwangtung or in Fukien, in China. There is a group of Hong Kong Chinese, however, who have sunk roots in the colony and consider it home. They are a hybrid group, a blend of East and West.

"E" was born in Hong Kong and has lived here all of his life. He was educated in British schools--speaks excellent

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English, and has great admiration for the British and their way of life. In fact, he is in many respects more British than Chinese. The Government-run school system in Hong Kong tries to turn out graduates who accent British values, and in "E's" case they have been eminently successful.

The bond which "E" feels for the British is probably stronger than the one which they feel for him, however. Persons like "E" are very important to the colony's ruling British elite, both in business and administration, but to date only a few of the top-level jobs are open to them. A few make the grade--and three have been knighted by the Queen--but the best prospect for most of them is employment as clerks and assistants to foreigners. Yet in "E's" case this fact does not seem to have caused much resentment. He is proud to be a member of the British Empire.

Although "E" once visited Canton, on the mainland, he has almost no knowledge of China or any real interest in it. He is satisfied to stay and live in Hong Kong. Current developments in China hardly impinge on his life at all, and his level of political consciousness is extremely low. "E" speaks his native Cantonese dialect, but he does not know kuo —, the national language, and he lives in an entirely different world from that inhabited by thousands of refugees in Hong Kong.

Until recently "E" worked as a clerk in a foreign business establishment; but now he is back in a former job, as salesman for a grocery store which caters to the foreign community in Hong Kong.

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"F" -- Before the Communists came to power in China, "F" managed the most heavily-traveled rail line in the country. This was only one of many key administrative posts which he held in a distinguished career--stretching over 20 years--under the Chinese Nationalist Government. "F" was always more than merely an administrator, however. Educated abroad, he had many close friends in China's university and intellectual circles, and his interests lay in the realm of ideas as well as in administration.

"F" somehow escaped being trapped in the morass of Chinese politics. Although he had friends at the top level of the Kuomintang and still maintains friendly contact with many of them in Taiwan (Formosa), he was long disturbed by the failure of democratic institutions to develop in China. When the Communist take-over was imminent, he foresaw more clearly than many of his academic friends the kind of regime which would develop; but he also felt that he did not want to take part in the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan, so he came to Hong Kong.

One of the basic prerequisites for developing democratic Institutions, in "F's" opinion, is a free and fearless press, so he decided after arriving in Hong Kong to publish an independent magazine of political comment and criticism. With

little help he started the publication, and although he established personal contacts with Third Force political groups which sprang up in Hong Kong, he maintained his political independence. But intellectual virtue proved to be financially difficult to sustain, and the magazine soon developed circulatory ailments and died.

With this turn of events, "F" decided to devote himself to a serious independent study of future problems of democratization in China. This, he felt, should start with an attempt to combine the best results of contemporary theory in the fields of philosophy and sociology with his own extensive knowledge of Chinese history, politics, and economics. He is currently devouring all the books he can find on philosophy and sociology,

All of "F's" children are now grown, and the family is scattered, so he is able to support himself by teaching in a small college made up of refugee professors and students and by finding miscellaneous translating jobs. He is not worrying much about the present, however; he does not foresee any change soon on the mainland of China and he does not believe the Kuomintang can regain its past position. He is sustained by the faith that serious study of China's basic problems may somehow make a contribution to the future.

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"G" -- Hong Kong is the principal listening post and point of contact with Communist China for much of the Western world. Consequently, there is constant through-traffic of various VIP's; intelligence agents of all nationalities are active; and the place swarms with diplomats. Some of the consulates in Hong Kong are large; they are in effect Embassies-in-Exile of countries which do not have diplomatic representation in Peking. Even those Western countries which maintain embassies in Peking find Hong Kong an important place to carry out most of their routine study and reporting of political and economic conditions in China.

"G" works in the Hong Kong consulate of a small Western European country. He has had wide experience in Soviet-bloc countries and speaks and reads Chinese. There are quite a number of others like him, and they are constantly arguing, speculating, trading ideas, and swapping impressions over a gimlet at the Parisian Grill or a martini at some cocktail party. They are a serious, hard-working group, genuinely interested in piecing together an accurate picture of developments in China.

The main sources of information for "G" and his colleagues are mainland Chinese newspapers and other publications; it takes long hours to read them and to try to separate fact from fiction. Foreign refugees coming from China are another valuable source of impressions, although individual refugees themselves often do not know much, and the number of them is declining. "G" also has numerous Chinese friends, and through them he tries to contact Chinese refugees from the mainland. It is a difficult



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task to evaluate historic events, as they are taking place, from fragmentary secondhand sources, but the foreign ministries of the Western world rely heavily on the analyses written by "G" and those like him in Hong Kong.

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"H" -- "H" is an extremely affable young man, but the mark of an "operator" shows through his veneer of amiability. He handles public relations for one of the two big labor-union groups in Hong Kong.

The labor situation in the colony is currently quiescent on the surface, and has been for some time, but it is a source of considerable concern to some of the more thoughtful people here. It is one of the main arenas for competing ideologies and probably the most important channel for Communist infiltration in the colony.

A majority of the organized laborers in Hong Kong belongs to unions which have joined two large groups. One of these is the Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), which is Communist-dominated and is closely linked to the powers-that-be on the China mainland. The other is the Trade Union Council, which is tied to the Kuomintang on Formosa. Political aims rather than workers' welfare dominate the leaders of both groups.

The Communist-dominated FTU is by far the more effective of the two major labor groups. Built up in the immediate postwar period by experienced organizers, it is a fairly disciplined organization and, significantly, it includes a large proportion of workers in key utilities and transportation. In the last two years or so, its strength has continued to grow, due to its tactics of moderation and its active support of some measures designed to improve workers' welfare.

The anti-Communist TUC, which "H" represents, is by comparison a very loose conglomeration of organizations, many of which are really old-style guilds rather than modern unions. Although it has more nominal members than the FTU, it is an ineffective, shadowy sort of body.

"H" has done his best to obtain support for the TUC from Hong Kong Government authorities and others, but he has not been able to arouse much enthusiasm. Many persons seriously concerned about the labor situation would like to see strong non-Communist, nonpolitical unions develop in Hong Kong, but the TUC gives little promise of being either strong or nonpolitical. Business leaders in the colony would like to see all labor organizations "kept in their place," and many in the Government share their view.

The steady decline in the TUC's influence worries "H," and the entire labor situation causes some concern to those who realize that the Communist-dominated unions could be a dangerous

weapon of active subversion if Peking decides some time in the future to switch from its present policy to one of disruption from within. The memory of crippling labor strikes in Hong Kong in the early 1920's has not disappeared.

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"I" -- About eight miles from the business district of town, on Hong Kong Island, there is a small fishing village. "I" lives in a Western-style house which stands conspicuously at one end of the village's **single-lane**, shop-lined alley. It is a pleasant spot--looking out of his front window, "I" can see the fishing junks pull anchor and move out to sea in the early morning; in the evening he can see the sails of the returning vessels silhouetted against golden skies and a **background** of the beautiful small islands which dot the South China Seas west of Hong Kong.

"I" is a retired British colonel who spent **many** years in China and was determined to live out his last days there; Hong Kong is his second choice. His life is a leisurely one, centered on three main interests: Chinese folklore, butterflies, and painting. Every Sunday, the leading English-language **newspaper** in Hong Kong carries a column written by "I" on some Chinese festival or custom; and a number of his past columns have been collected and published in book form, with his own illustrations. "I" has also, over the past few years, painted every known butterfly in the colony; his little paintings are expert, and the iridescent colors of his subtropical subjects give the paintings the brilliance of Persian miniatures. He hopes some day that they will be used to illustrate a book on Hong Kong butterflies.

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"J" -- A few evenings ago "J" was reminiscing about a trip he made to Hong Kong in 1927; there was a price of **100,000** Chinese silver dollars on his head at the **time**.

"J" was one of the dozen founders of the Chinese Communist Party, a member of its politburo for many years, and the leading **contender** against Mao Tse-tung for top leadership, until "J" broke with the party in 1938.

The year 1927 was the one in which the Kuomintang and Communists in China split after a **three-year** period of cooperation. "J" was in Central China at the time and took part in the Communist-led Nanchang Uprising (the date of which is now celebrated as **Army Day** by the Chinese Communists). The uprising was rapidly crushed, and "J"--together with a handful of other Communist leaders--made his way through the countryside until he reached a small seacoast village where he and his colleagues managed to hire a fisherman's junk and they took to the sea. Their route cut through pirate-infested waters, but the boatmen hid them in the small hold. Upon reaching Lyenun Pass, the eastern **approach** to Hong Kong, "J" and his companions transferred to a small sampan which took them to a crowded debarkation point. After walking several miles to the center of town, they entered one of the best Chinese hotels

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and asked for a room; the clerk eyed their ragged clothes and demanded prior payment for their stay. Pooling their cash, they had just enough to pay for one night. From the hotel, they went to a store and borrowed money from the owner, who was a party member; they then returned to the hotel to wait for further contact by local party emissaries. A loud knocking woke them late that night, and a Party man told them to come along quickly because Nationalist agents already knew they had reached Hong Kong. They followed him to a Party hideout and went underground.

Ghosts of the past haunt Hong Kong for "J" and many other Chinese personalities who have acted important roles in recent history. Ever since Sun Yat-sen was active in Hong Kong, the colony has been important to leading political refugees from China--for some time it has been an escape hatch; for others it has been a serene sanctuary. To "J" it was an escape hatch in 1927, 'out it is now a sanctuary; he has given up politics and is writing his memoirs.

At present there are not many Communist defectors in Hong Kong, but there are a great many generals and politicians who were prominent in the Nationalist regime. The situation is just the reverse of 1948, when I made my first extended visit to Hong Kong. At that time, the colony was full of politicians who had broken with the Kuomintang and were cooperating with the Communists; most of these men are now in Peking.

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"K" -- One of the most popular diversions of the wealthy in Hong Kong is modern ballroom dancing. It is particularly the rage among a playboy set of Shanghai refugees who left their home one step ahead of the Communists and arrived in Hong Kong determined to eat, drink, and be merry. These young idle rich, together with their local counterparts, spend a good deal of time in Hong Kong's dance halls.

"K" is an attractive girl who works as a dancing partner in one of these halls. She is well-educated and knows how to turn on the charm--playboys and businessmen out for an evening's relaxation expect more than a pretty face. The dance hall where she works is a plush, neon-lighted affair and, like all of the halls, serves only tea or soft drinks. The music, played by a Filipino band, is mostly Western, heavily weighted on the side of rumbas and bop.

The world in which "K" lives is really an Oriental copy of a Grade-B image created by Hollywood. The dancing, the music, the cosmetics, the hairdos, and almost everything else about it are borrowed from the West. "K" herself belongs to a "treaty-port" class of attractive, stylish Chinese women which did not even exist twenty years ago. Their high-collared dresses with seductive side-slits are uniquely Chinese, but they have tried in almost every other way to model themselves on the Rita Hayworths and Betty Grables. Straight hair has been curled, Elizabeth

Arden cosmetics have supplanted old-style rouge pots, and silk slippers have given way to high heels. Even the cult of the bosom has come to Hong Kong, and because the natural configuration of many Chinese women is slim, "falsies" are in vogue.

"K's" principal personal interests are the movies and sports. These, in fact, are the main diversions of most young people in Hong Kong. Hollywood provides the predominant movie fare, but Hong Kong's own film industry--reputed to be the fourth or fifth largest in the world in footage output--does its share too. Horseracing, swimming, soccer, and almost every other known sport also draw large crowds in Hong Kong, and there is no doubt that the colony is one of the most sports-conscious places in the Far East.

In the dance halls, at the movies, and on the race track, the echoes of war and revolution in Asia are so dim that they can hardly be heard.

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"L" -- About three weeks ago "L" had a world scoop on a big story. It happened in the way many such newsbreaks do: a friend was tipped off, he passed the story on to "L," and several hours ahead of all of his competitors, "L" sent a cable to London reporting that the Cathay Pacific Airline plane which crashed off Hainan Island en route to Hong Kong on July 23 had actually been shot down by Chinese Communist aircraft.

Stories of this kind do not come along very often these days, however, for foreign newsmen in Hong Kong. Correspondents in the colony are in the peculiar position of spending most of their time writing about events and situations in Communist China which they cannot see for themselves. In some respects, their task is more of a research job than a typical reporter's assignment.

"L" has had long experience throughout the Far East and in China. Starting from the Antipodes, he followed World War II from the South Pacific to Japan as a war correspondent. After Tokyo he jumped over to China where he traveled widely, working out of Nanking, Shanghai, and Peking. "L" was one of the few correspondents who stayed on to cover the Communist take-over in China, and he left only after it had become clear that non-Communist Western reporters were persona non grata. Since 1949 he has been based in Hong Kong, except for periods when he has covered the Korean War and Southeast Asia, and he has written about China for both British and American newspapers.

"L's" extensive background knowledge of China has been invaluable to him in Hong Kong; it has enabled him to interpret the bits and pieces of news which come across the China border into the colony. Without a good deal of background information, the task of writing about Communist China from Hong Kong is difficult, and the correspondents of major American newspapers and agencies (such as The New York Times and AP) have--like "L"

personal knowledge of China before the Communist take-over.

Most of "L's" time is spent doing roughly the same sort of things which diplomatic reporters such as "G" do--reading Chinese Communist newspapers and interviewing people coming across the border--but of course the time element is more important to "L" as a newsman than to "G" as a political analyst. "L" therefore follows the daily broadcasts of Peking Radio and has arrangements with local Hong Kong reporters to tip him off on story leads they may discover.

For the past four years almost all news about Communist China published in the press of the Western world has filtered through Hong Kong and persons such as "L." That is one reason why so little is known of developments in China. Despite the competency of the reporters, people like "L" would be the first to admit that when a situation must be viewed from the wrong end of a telescope rather than the right end of a microscope there are limits to what even a good correspondent can do.

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"M" -- Hong Kong is a place of many contrasts. Gleaming modern apartment buildings and large colonial-style mansions dot "The Peak," while much of the level space (which is limited) of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula across the bay is packed with a jumble of buildings housing one of the densest and most complicated concentrations of people in the world.

In some of the garish, plush apartments overlooking Repulse Bay, colored lights play on aquaria built into the walls; across the water the grey, grim English-style castle of a Chinese tin-and-rubber magnate from Malaya perches incongruously on the hillside. In the slums of Wanchai as many as three or four families live in single rooms divided into cubicles, and beds are sometimes rented by the hour. The contrasts of wealth and poverty are peculiarly visible to the naked eye.

As in numerous places in the world, some of the worst slums in Hong Kong are owned by inhabitants of the aeries -- these are generally modern Hong Kong businessmen who have adopted Western manners, customs, and values. But in Hong Kong one also finds wealthy businessmen, who own huge apartments on The Peak, and live in ramshackle houses in the slums -- such landlords are mostly conservative, old-fashioned Cantonese men, who are noted for concealing their wealth.

"M" is one of Hong Kong's Westernized business class. He is a charming, urbane person, who lives the good life in the colony and owns blocks of tenements. "M" belongs to an old Hong Kong family, and much of the family money has come from real estate.

Trade and real estate are the two main sources of wealth for old, established families in Hong Kong, and during

recent months as trade has dropped building has boomed, Over 800 new buildings have sprung up in the colony during the past year alone, and more are under construction, because Hong Kong is still one of the most overcrowded places in the world.

Members of old families such as "M's" play a prominent role in Hong Kong's life, They are the Chinese whom the colonial authorities appoint as representatives of the public in government councils and committees, they comprise the boards of philanthropic organizations, and they attend the lawn parties at Government House.

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"N" -- In the small Kowloon office of "N," there are letters from over 15,000 White Russians in China who have written him to ask for help in resettlement abroad. More than 10,000 of these persons are still waiting for assistance.

"N" is a German who went to China as a businessman, became a Lutheran minister, and now--with the help of international church bodies and U.N. refugee authorities--is carrying out a personal crusade to help the hapless White Russians in China.

Typical of the persons who write him is a fifty-year-old Russian, with a wife and daughter, who lives in a large city in Communist China and has been unemployed since 1949. This man tries to live on a monthly budget of U.S.\$24 for food and U.S.\$6 for rent, but he is in debt to his grocer and has not paid his rent since 1952.

Almost all of the White Russians in China, most of whom fled Russia 35 years ago only to be engulfed once again by Communism in 1949, are now trying desperately to emigrate to any country which will take them. In the Age of the Visa, however, it is not easy to become an immigrant. "N" is doing everything he can, through church and U.N. organizations, to obtain visas for them, but it is a slow (and for "N" a heartbreaking) process. Letters continue to arrive with reports that the plight of many of the White Russians in China is going from bad to worse.

Hong Kong has been the main exit point for foreigners who have fled or been expelled from China in the past four years. A mass exodus has taken place. In addition to the White Russians, over 6,000 foreign Christian missionaries have left China during the past three years alone, and the foreign business communities have almost disappeared from mainland cities. But China has not completely rid itself of foreigners; as the missionaries and businessmen have crossed the dusty border from China to Hong Kong at Lowu, Russian advisors and technicians have flowed across the border from Siberia to China at Manchouli. While "N" and others like him in Hong Kong help weary foreign refugees on their journeys to distant homes or new posts, Young Pioneers present banners and flowers to the latest foreign arrivals in China over a thousand miles to the North.

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"O" -- The office of "O" in Alexandra Building, located in the heart of downtown Hong Kong, has a crisp atmosphere of efficiency which compares favorably with the best establishments on Fifth Avenue and contrasts sharply with the lackadaisical air surrounding the offices of old firms in the colony.

"O" is Chinese, but he is not indigenous to Hong Kong; he is a modern industrialist from Shanghai. The class to which he belongs may turn out to be one of the shortest-lived in Chinese social history. It first blossomed less than fifty years ago; it faded during World War II; and it is now withering on the mainland. If, as is possible, the species soon becomes extinct in its native habitat, the remnants now in Hong Kong may prove to be the last survivors.

"O" is a textile manufacturer, and in 1948 he ordered some spindles to add to one of his cotton mills in Shanghai. While the spindles were en route, however, he decided that the Communists were winning the civil war in China, so he short-stopped his new equipment in Hong Kong and built a sleek new mill on the outskirts of Kowloon. His factory was one of the first, but soon other Shanghai manufacturers decided to do the same. Up until then Hong Kong was almost entirely a trading center and lacked modern manufacturing. It was a strange twist of history for "O" and his Shanghai friends to export the industrial revolution from backward, agrarian China to a colony under the flag of industrialized Great Britain, but that is what happened. The "O's" have had a tremendous impact upon Hong Kong, and the industries which they have built have become an important part of the colony's economy.

People like "O" belong to an international class tied together by business interests and wealth, and cutting across all boundaries. He and his wife feel equally at home in New York, London, Shanghai, or Hong Kong, and he moves around the world easily, in search of business opportunities. During the past two years he has investigated possibilities for textile manufacturing in East Africa, Taiwan, and Brazil, and he may try to set up a mill in one of those places.

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"P" -- "P" is a member of the British Colonial Service and an officer of the Hong Kong Government. He has been stationed in the colony for several years now, and has worked his way up to Department head. Although he speaks Chinese, he is not one of the elite group of specially-trained "Hong Kong Cadets" who get the best jobs in the colony administration; so he hopes his next post, after home leave, will be elsewhere. What he would like is a District Officer's job in Borneo.

The Department run by "P" is one of the few in the Hong Kong Government which is actively trying to implement some social reforms. The Government as a whole is a bulwark of conservatism, in the hands of administrators rather than reformers. In Hong Kong,

laissez faire still reigns supreme, despite the profound changes in the social philosophy of Britain's home government in recent years.

The principal aim of the administration is to maintain law and order and provide essential services; private individuals and groups can carry on from there. The interests of conservative British and Chinese businessmen and those of government leaders are so similar that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. In fact, the "taipans" who head firms such as **Jardine, Matheson & Co. Ltd.**, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. have a status in the community on a par with that of top officers in the Colonial Government,

Although persons who believe that government should carry out an active social policy are critical of the standpat attitude of the local authorities, the Hong Kong Government has been remarkably successful in achieving its limited aims in recent years, despite the recurrence of delicate and even explosive political situations in the colony. They have clamped down the lid whenever the pot has started to boil.

"P" himself would like to see the Hong Kong Government do more than at present about housing, refugees, land tenancy in rural areas, and similar problems, but he is one of a minority among the colony's administrators.

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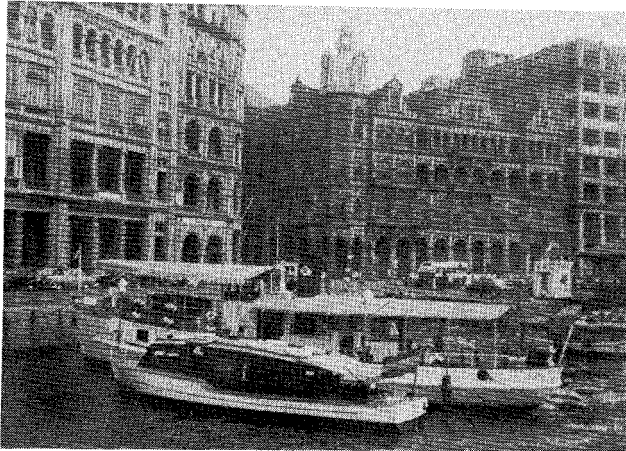
"Q" -- Some time ago, I met "Q" on the street, and he told me that he was working on a trade deal with an Overseas Chinese businessman in Peru. "Q" is himself an Overseas Chinese whose import and export business is almost entirely with far-flung Chinese communities, from the South Seas to the Caribbean. I asked him if the man in Peru was a friend; it turned out that he was not. "Is there any risk in dealing with a man you do not know?" I asked. "Oh no," he answered, "there is a small teahouse in downtown Hong Kong where the people know most of the traders in Peru, and they vouch for the man I am corresponding with."

Hundreds of small import-export firms, shops, and banking establishments in Hong Kong provide the main link between millions of Overseas Chinese, scattered all over the world, and their homeland districts in South China. Hong Kong is the headquarters for much of the trade between Overseas Chinese, and virtually all of the large remittances sent by Overseas Chinese to relatives on the mainland funnel through the colony. If one traced the myriad, mysterious contacts between a single gloomy little office in Hong Kong's West Point district to similar gloomy little offices in distant places, it would probably be an incredible spider web.

Hong Kong is also the center for Overseas Chinese in fields other than trade and finance. The movie industry in the colony turns out most of the Chinese-language films for audiences



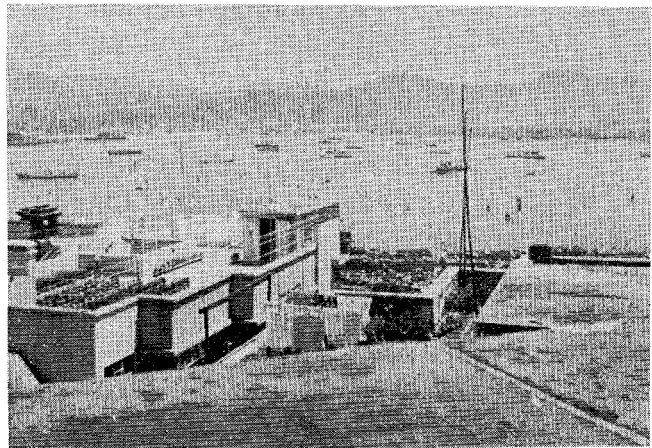
"CHANNEL OF- WORLD COMMERCE"



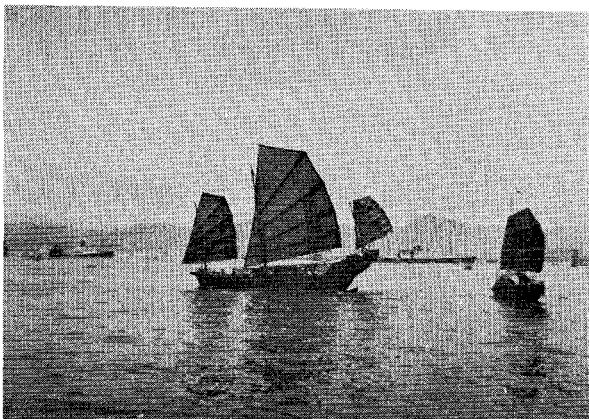
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Shipping companies  
are located on  
the waterfront

The Harbor

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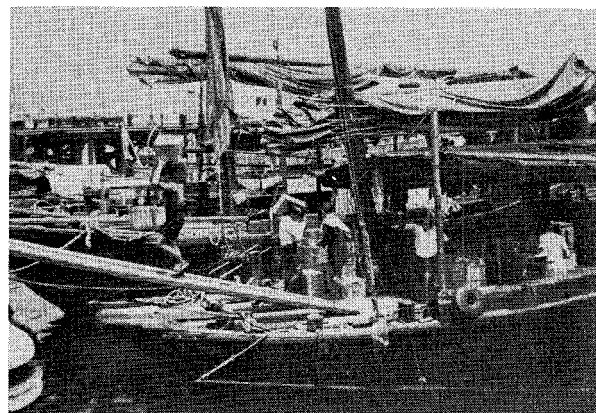


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Large junks are used  
for commerce



Unloading junks

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in Singapore and San Francisco's Chinatown, Hong Kong-produced records are played by Chinese-owned phonographs on Mott Street in New York and in Manila. And a large percentage of the non-Communist books and magazines available to Overseas Chinese everywhere come off the presses of publishers in Hong Kong.

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"R" -- Every year a battle of flags takes place in Hong Kong. On October 1, national day of the present Peking regime, pro-Communist organizations and individuals hang out a five-starred red flag. On October 10, the national day celebrated under the Kuomintang regime, those who are anti-Communist (whether or not they are pro-Kuomintang) hang out flags bearing the Nationalists' 12-pointed star. In 1948 I observed the first of these contests, and the Communists won hands down. During the past two years, it has been just the reverse; only a few Communist flags have been displayed, and ironically the most conspicuous ones have appeared on the large banks in Hong Kong which are Communist controlled.

There has been a tremendous switch in opinion in Hong Kong regarding the Chinese Communist regime; whereas four years ago large numbers of people in the colony seemed prepared to accept and support the Peking regime, there are relatively few pro-Communist people in Hong Kong now.

"R" is one of the few who still do sing the praises of Peking in loud voices. He has good reason to do so, however; as a leading local lawyer he receives fat fees for handling cases involving Communist organizations in the Hong Kong courts. In many respects, "R" is a sort of classic fellow traveler. He is about as bourgeois as a person can be, and his chances of long-term survival under a Communist regime would probably be slim, but he appears to get a great deal of both psychological and financial benefit from standing on the side lines and cheering the Communists on.

"R" is useful to the Chinese Communists, but like all fellow travelers he is probably considered by them to be expendable. The Communists' strength in Hong Kong lies elsewhere. The hard core of disciplined party members is small--only a few thousand--but they keep up the organizational apparatus; and some of them are publicly active, in such activities as publishing the three pro-Communist newspapers in the colony, running a number of bookstores, and putting out the daily releases of the New China News Agency. Their main organized mass support consists of the workers belonging to the party-dominated Federation of Trade Unions, but they also control a few schools and influence a significant number of students. Communist literature circulates widely, and some business groups are manipulated by leading fellow travelers.

But opinion in Hong Kong is predominantly hostile to the Communists, and men such as "R" have seen themselves slip steadily downward in public esteem.

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"S" -- For "S," who is an American, Hong Kong is the best substitute for Peking. Almost twenty years ago "S" first went to Peking on a world tour and, as he says--figuratively speaking, "I never left." The charm of life in China's old traditional capital completely captivated him; so he settled down, learned the language, lived in a Chinese house, and became an expert on Chinese arts and crafts. When the Communists came, "S" stayed on as long as he could, but eventually his export trade in old Chinese furniture became impossible, and he had to leave. He returned to the United States.

Tho pull of China proved too strong for him, however, and before many months had passed he packed up his bags and came out to Hong Kong. After a good deal of effort, he collected a group of Northern Chinese carpenters, set up a small factory, and began producing copies of Ming Dynasty furniture to sell in exclusive decorators' stores in many parts of the United States.

Supervision of his small factory does not occupy a great deal of "S'" time, and he has found it possible in Hong Kong to live a leisurely existence which is a close enough facsimile of his Peking ideal to satisfy him. He owns a small junk and spends a great deal of time on it. Few people in the colony know as much as "S" does about Hong Kong's floating population of over 100,000 who live on junks and are popularly known--for some obscure reason --as the "egg people."

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"T" -- Queen's Road East follows a serpentine route through one of the most crowded areas of Hong Kong. On both sides of the street, buildings jut over the sidewalks to form arcades which provide protection against sun and rain. The ground floor of each building is occupied by shops; above are living quarters. It is a typically-Cantonese street, full of color, noise, and life. Hanging over the thoroughfare are hundreds of multihued signs and placards bearing Chinese characters in every conceivable style of calligraphy; above them flap the drying laundry of the area's thousands of inhabitants. At almost any time of day or night, a swarming mass of humanity pours through the arcades and the street itself; the sound of their swishing slippers or harsh wooden clogs blends with street cries, raucous mahjong games, and honking of horns to form a constant roar of background noise. A peculiar but not unpleasant aroma, formed by the smells of cooking food, incense, sweat, gasoline fumes, and garbage, hangs over the area. And despite the press of so many human beings, the mood of the street is always cheerful, even gay.

In the middle of Queen's Road East there is one interloper, a Northern Chinese restaurateur from Tientsin who specializes in Mongolian food. Practically none of the inhabitants of the street eats there; "T's" clientele is made up of persons who, like himself, left North China when the Communists came to power. The pièce de résistance at "T's" establishment is roasted lamb: paper-thin slices of meat are cooked over an open charcoal

grill, dipped in an individually-mixed sauce which includes a dozen ingredients, and enclosed in a sort of biscuit coated with sesame seeds.

One by-product of revolution in China has been the fact that austerity on the mainland caused a slight of many cooks, from all parts of the country, which has helped to make Hong Kong a gourmet's paradise. The colony now has restaurants serving succulent Peking duck (the specially-fed fowl are shipped from Worth China to Hong Kong), peppery Szechuan food, rich Shanghai dishes, complicated Cantonese food, and almost every other Chinese culinary discovery.

Although "T" is an outsider in Hong Kong, and does not speak the local dialects well, he has managed to make a success of his restaurant, even though mainlanders have found it difficult to compete with the shrewd Cantonese in many other lines of business. As the only exponent of Mongolian food in Hong Kong, "T" does not have any local competitors.

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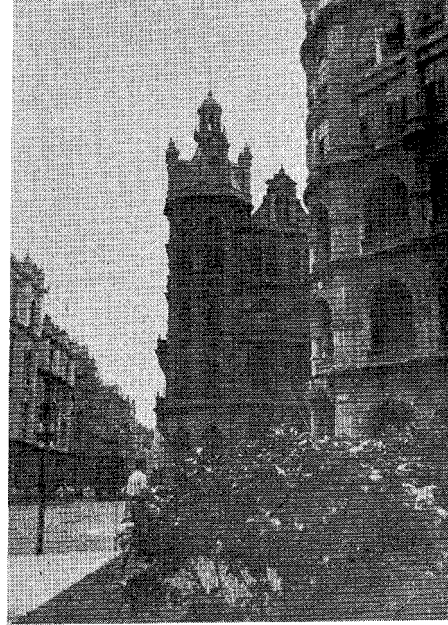
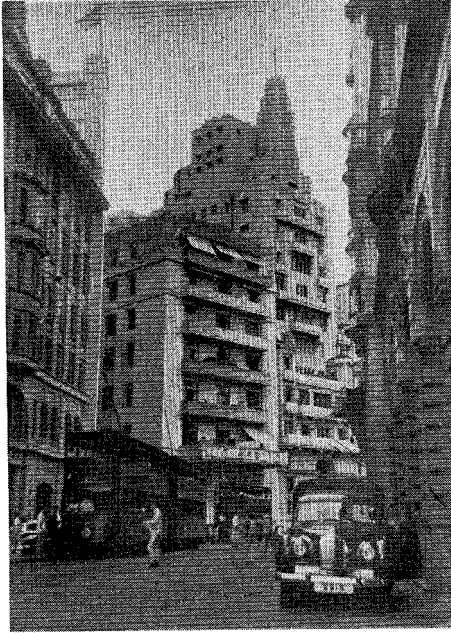
"U" -- The business heart of Hong Kong, located on the colony's main island, close by the commuters' ferry to Kowloon, is made up of several blocks of Westernized office buildings. Some of the structures are tall, modern, and streamlined; others are grey, gingerbread-encrusted buildings which might best be described as "British colonial." "U's" office is in one of the modern buildings.

After over 20 years of service with his British firm, "U" is now manager of the Hong Kong branch--a responsible position which places him near the top of the economic hierarchy in the colony. Although representatives from London periodically visit Hong Kong to check up on things, the home office is so far away that the local manager is given quite a lot of leeway in running his own show.

Like almost all British company managers in Hong Kong, "U" has a staff in which the executive and managerial posts are filled by Britishers, while Chinese occupy the other positions and make up the numerical majority of the payroll. Unlike quite a few of his fellow managers who live in splendid isolation, "U" likes the Chinese and has considerable social contact with Chinese business friends and even--on the tennis court--with some of his employees.

Tennis is a passion with "U," and although he is approaching retirement age he still plays an excellent game. Almost every week end he and his wife, with a half-dozen friends, play mixed doubles and have tea and sandwiches at the Ladies Recreation Club.

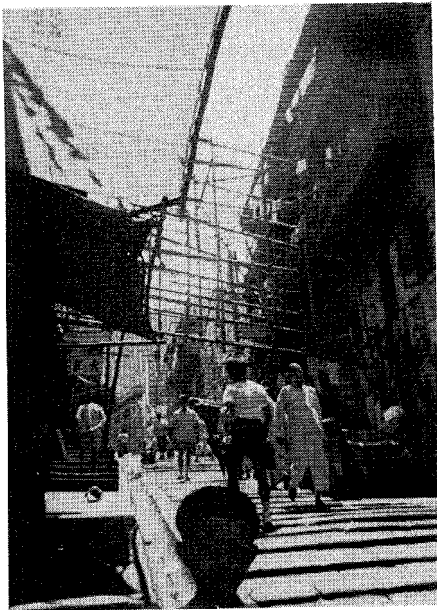
Sports--or rather, "games"--play an important role in the life of the predominantly-business British community in Hong Kong,



WESTERN DOWNTOWN SECTION

"Some are tall  
and streamlined<sup>n</sup>

"Others are **grey**,  
gingerbread-encrusted<sup>n</sup>



"CANTONESE STREET: FULL OF COLOR, LIFE, AND NOISE"  
Step street                      Streetside "café"

Symbolically, the Cricket Club, with its green playing field and lawn tennis courts, occupies one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the colony, almost in the center of the business district. The Yacht Club and the colony's three golf clubs are social as well as athletic centers; and for older men whose sports consist of playing cards, reading a book, or reclining in an overstuffed chair, the ultraconservative Hong Kong Club fills the bill.

"U" and his British colleagues lead much less hectic lives than **their** counterparts in New York. And when they reach retirement age they go home; a large percentage of the British businessmen in Hong Kong are temporary residents, even **if** they live in the colony for 20 or 30 years.

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"V" -- Writers in Hong Kong are among the most prolific in the world. They have to be, because payment is usually on a per-word basis and is so low that a writer must grind out thousands of words a month to earn a living. **Authors'** fees at present range between \$1.50 and \$3.50 for a thousand words, so a fiction or article writer who has a family must produce 40,000 to 50,000 words a month to get along financially.

"V" is a popular newspaper columnist in Hong Kong. He is now turning out six daily columns for six different newspapers, and his output sometimes is close to 10,000 words per day. Since no really practical Chinese typewriter **has** yet been invented, "V" suffers constantly from **writer's** cramp, and occasionally he tries to write by moving the paper under his pen rather than by manipulating the pen itself.

It is not surprising that under the pressure of **hack** writing, very few **authors** in Hong Kong are producing anything but second-rate columns, articles, and novels. Chinese authors in the **colony** operate under another kind of pressure **too**; the public taste demands sensationalism and literary thrills, and careful or serious writing finds only a very small audience. This is particularly distressing to some of the refugee authors from the mainland. They would like to see Hong Kong become a real publishing and literary center for good Chinese **periodicals** and books produced in an atmosphere free from ideofogical controls, but there has been little to nourish their hope to **date**.

A **large** proportion of writing of **all** kinds in Hong Kong is politically inspired, by either **anti-Communist** or **pro-Communist** groups. A great many publications are subsidized, and only a few can pay their own way completely from the receipts of **circulation** and advertising. The **British** authorities have **tried** their best to prevent Hong Kong from becoming a wide-open center for free-for-all propaganda competition between various political groups and ideologies, but they have been far from completely successful.

There is every reason to believe that writers such as "V" will continue to find it necessary to produce reams of **badly-**

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written material and that most of the publications they can write for will continue to serve the sectarian interests of those supporting them.

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"W" -- The principal influence which keeps all extremists--whether they be writers, labor agitators, or political organizers (whatever their ideological color)--within bounds in Hong Kong is the police force. In the view of many people in the colony, in fact, it is the police rather than the other agencies of civil government who really keep Hong Kong operating.

"W" is a British member of the police force, in an investigatory job. He sums up the philosophy of how to cope with the complex problems of law and order in Hong Kong quite simply: give people as much rope as you can, but **if** they go too far, hang them, figuratively speaking. This approach seems to have been remarkably successful, during the past few years, in maintaining order in a period of great change and tension. On the labor front, for example, Communist leaders and organizers have been allowed to operate as long as they have not threatened to **disturb** conditions appreciably; if such a threat has appeared, the persons involved have been quietly and swiftly deported over the border. There is no doubt that the deportations have been contrary to the whole idea of "**due** process of **law**," and they are strongly criticized by some local Britishers for this reason. But equally there is no doubt that they have proved to be a successful method of keeping order and discouraging subversion, and they are strongly supported by many. British colonial rulers have an interesting capacity for flexibility and for adjusting abstract principles and practical considerations into special formulae to meet unique local situations.

The Hong Kong police force, composed of about 3,500 well-trained and smartly-uniformed Chinese under a handful of British officers, is an efficient body which must deal with innumerable complicated problems in addition to the normal headaches of traffic and crime. The political problem is only one of these. Another is narcotics. As a major trade center, Hong Kong is a natural transshipment point for world-wide smuggling networks dealing in opium, heroin, and morphine. The colony probably has the most effective antinarcotics organization in the Far East, and last year 897 opium divans were successfully raided, about 580 pounds of opium and 25,000 grams of heroin and morphine were seized, and drug convictions averaged over 16 a day.

Police officers such as "W" are expected to be versatile, interchangeable parts in the machine which tries to cope with all these problems. At present "W" deals with the political situation; at any time he could be shifted to enforcement of the opium laws, parking problems, or "**chopper**" murders.

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"X" -- The "mid-level" is a residential district in Hong Kong, only halfway up the fashionable "Peak" but above the crowded business areas. In huge mould-covered houses which have wide verandas, and are supported by stone revetments, live many of the old Chinese families of Hong Kong. Some of them are leaders in the community; others are decadent survivals of the past, and time has passed them by.

"X" lives in a house which has gone to seed and is full of memories of bygone days. His family, once wealthy and prominent, has been all but destroyed by war, Japanese occupation, fdlness, and the psychological conflicts between a Western-educated son and an old-fashioned traditional patriarch. When "X" returned from school in the United States and Britain over twenty years ago, he rebelled against his father but did not have the strength to establish his independence. Rebellion poisoned relations between son and father, but "X" still lives on an allowance from the family patriarch; he resolved his psychological problems by becoming a recluse.

For years, "X" has lived in one large cluttered room in the old family home, leaving it only on rare occasions. A corner of the room is piled high with unopened periodicals sent to him by an enterprising propaganda agency in the colony. There is no clock; when "X" wants to know the time he peers out his window at a distant clock on a building far below.

"X" has no vocation. His avocation is writing whimsical little short stories, which have a dreamlike, other-worldly quality about them. So far, none has been published.

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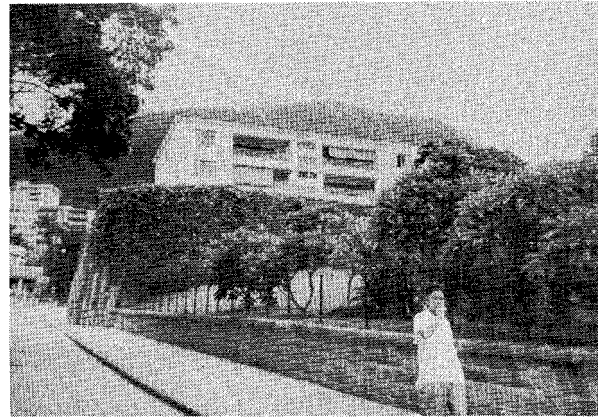
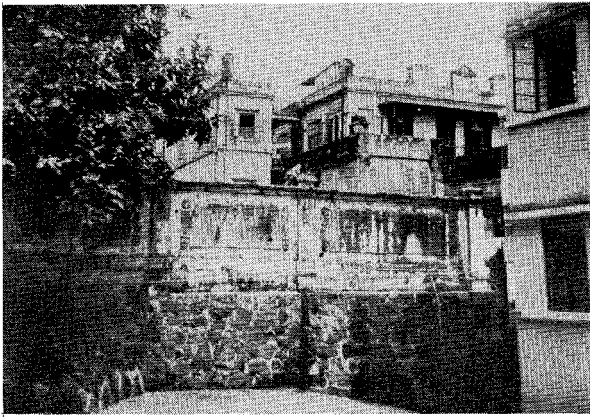
"Y" -- Not long ago I had a conversation with a British businessman who told me that as far as his company is concerned trade is not bad. Immediately thereafter I talked with "Y"; he said trade is terrible.

There are two very different kinds of commercial firms which have engaged in the Hong Kong-China trade. One is the big foreign company, with large capital reserves and world-wide contacts. The other is the small Chinese firm which is operated on a shoestring, relatively speaking, through personal friends and contacts on the mainland. It is the latter type, to which "Y" belongs, that has been hardest hit by restrictions on the China trade and by Communist trading methods.

Before the Korean War, "Y's" firm exported sizable quantities of precision instruments and machines to China. The United Nations restrictions following the War immediately cut off the supply of many of these items. Then the adoption by Chinese state trading agencies of methods involving great risks for small traders made it difficult for "Y's" company to deal even in permissible goods. Whereas some of the big foreign firms met this kind of situation by switching their trade to Indonesia,



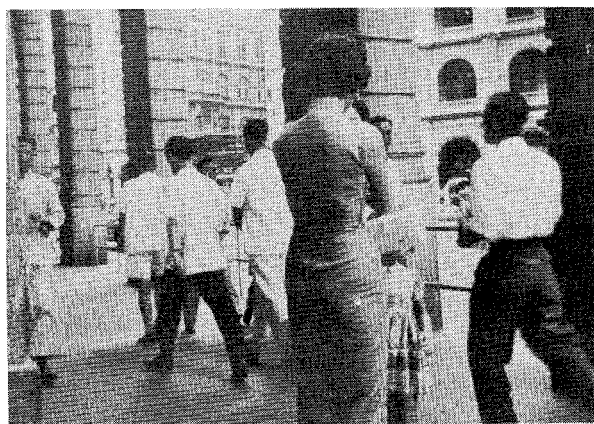
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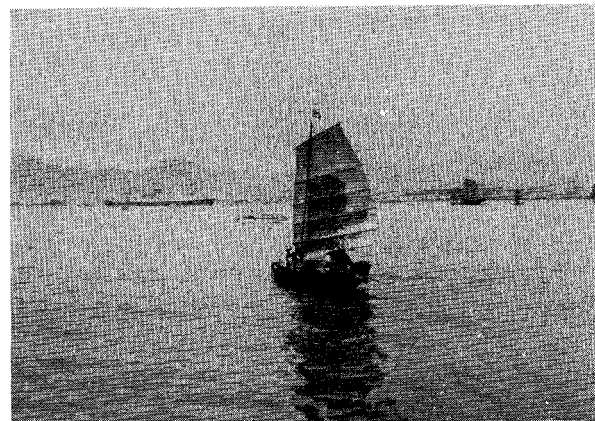
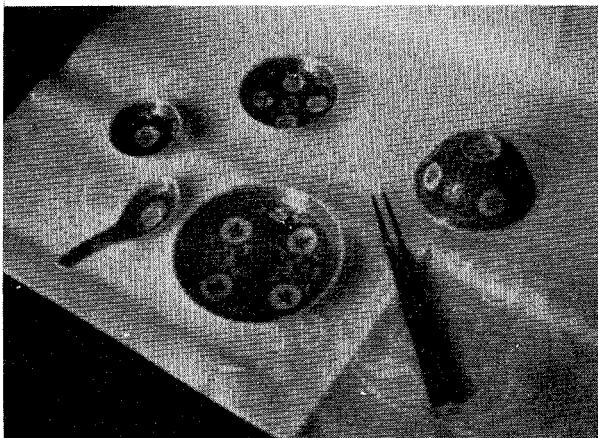
MID-LEVEL

"Huge mould-covered houses"

"Gleaming modern apartment buildings"



"....a class of attractive, stylish, Chinese women"



"Hong Kong..a gourmet's paradise"

"Floating population.., known.. as egg people"

Japan, and elsewhere, "Y" and his colleagues do not have any good personal contacts except in Shanghai. As a result, their business has come almost to a halt.

If the situation changed, "Y" would immediately start exporting to mainland China again, however. He is strongly opposed to Communism, but in his mind politics has nothing to do with trade. Trade is his rice bowl.

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"Z" -- I know of no one more alive to the question of "Who is Hong Kong?" than "Z." Most people in the colony belong to some well-defined group and care little about the others. In many respects Hong Kong is merely a geographical rather than a social entity; there is no universal bond of common outlook or loyalty which unites everyone, and consequently there are dozens of separate groups which function as virtually self-contained communities within the larger community. Cantonese, Britishers, Shanghailanders, boat people, Portuguese, Swatow people, Indians, Northern Chinese, Americans--each of these groups tends to stick together and to separate from the others. But "Z," a British clergyman, is one of those who has a deep concern for people, all people,

"Z" is involved in so many social welfare activities in Hong Kong that it is difficult even to mention them all. Refugee housing, boys' clubs, workers' schools, health clinics, agricultural cooperatives, and many similar projects, receive his active support. He knows intimately people of all strata in the colony, and he is concerned about the bodies and souls of them all.

The cares and problems of Hong Kong's population weigh heavily upon "Z"; they are etched in the lines which crease his friendly face. He views the conflicts, confusion, and suffering around him not with the detached interest of an outside observer but with a sense of personal concern and responsibility. Surrounded by poverty, "Z" lives frugally, almost ascetically. Immersed in an atmosphere of uncertainty, he shares the worries of the great and the small. "Z's" large cathedral of English Gothic is a symbol of the grandeur of the Church, but he himself is a symbol of its humility and its conscience. "Who is Hong Kong?" To "Z," Hong Kong is a microcosm of people everywhere\*

*A. Oak Barnett*