

Pink Star Over China

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My paper begins with an epigraph of famous words uttered by Napoleon I, of all people:

*China ? There lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep! For when he wakes
he will move the world.*

It is no fun dining alone, especially if you can't get Ma li li off your mind. She would enjoy the moment, sipping a glass of wine in this handsome lounge, watching the enigmatic Pearl River ruffling by. We had introduced ourselves while on an outing from Xian with a group of friendly fellow travellers. Trudging up Qiaoshan Mountain, in Shaanxi Province, chatting as strangers do, we were on our way to pay homage to an important Emperor. There was no hurry. The Emperor, of the Tang Dynasty, had been buried on the mountain 1100 years prior to our arrival. Noting my camera, Ma li li asked if I would take a picture of her, for her family. I was more than happy to do so, and thought, as I snapped the shutter, what a lovely soft smile she has. We arranged to meet the next day at a photo shop. After the roll was developed, the proverbial "one thing" came to my assistance - it led to "another." We took a stroll through a delightful park. It ran along the wide moat that adjoined the huge 600 - year- old wall surrounding the old city of Xian, once the eastern terminus of the Silk Road. It was reputedly then the largest city in the world.

Even Xian's ubiquitous haze couldn't diminish the euphoria of the cool, sunny day. Quite spontaneously, I took Ma li li's hand, then, surprised at myself, I waited for her to withdraw it. She didn't. That was encouraging. It stimulated a quite intriguing conversation, despite Ma li li's hesitating English and my total lack of Chinese. As we warmed to the task, Ma li li, with some apparent trepidation, told me she would like to know about "the spirit". Nonplused as I was by this highly unlikely subject, I stumbled through my Christian conception of the holy spirit. Later, as I bid her goodbye, I realized too late that I might have pretended that she meant the *human* spirit. I could have been slightly more fluent with that.

Now, here, 800 miles away, in Guangzhou, in the dimly lit lounge of the White Swan Hotel, perhaps it was the wine or simply my normal instincts, that made me wish intensely that Ma li li was here with me. It was the kind of wishing that makes it seem quite possible that your wish will come true,

that she will suddenly walk into this lounge, looking for me. As some of you know, there is no end to the fantasies that bachelors use to fend off moments of loneliness. Indeed, my wishing became so compelling that I wished into existence an imaginary conversation with Ma li li.

Each of us, as we tip-toe further into this new friendship, wonder what words will best convey our cautious thoughts. Realizing it is not appropriate, and indeed, for me, impossible, I would like to tell her, in *Chinese*, how much I enjoy her smile and her hairdo done up in a bun; to mention that she seemed taller than the typical Chinese woman; and, with my Scottish heritage, how much I enjoy watching her skirts, longer than usual, in their improbable tartan patterns. But I do manage to compliment her, in English, on her soft smile as she struggles to say something beyond the mundane.

We are separated from the river only by a wall of glass. Our misty view of neon -lit pleasure houses on the opposite shore is occasionally intruded by the short, dark shapes of ghosting barges as they labor upstream. Self propelled, barely lit, bulky, but tiny by Ohio River standards, they slide by as we imagine all sorts of piratical conversations going on within their foreboding pilot houses. I comment to Ma li li that the barges look decrepit enough to be the very same barges that were on the Huangpu River at Shanghai which, in 1946, slowly pushed past the U.S.S. Bremerton, CA 130, the heavy cruiser on which I was a member of the Marine Detachment. Ma li li mentions that she has never been in Shanghai.

Quickly, I realize that there might be a way to make my prosaic tour of duty sound noble, if not heroic. But each of my mental gambits seems contrived. I have to be satisfied with telling Ma li li that I had often found myself isolated in a gun tub, high in the cruiser's superstructure, eyes agog at Shanghai's chaotic scenes. The Bremerton was in a file with warships of other nations, slicing the river into two narrow channels and forcing the up-wind sailing traffic to tack twice as many times as usual. Tacking a junk is not easy and the Chinese sailors did it superbly.

The warship file was parallel to one of the most famous sights in all of China, the Bund, a stately row of European- style buildings along a busy boulevard. Just opposite the Bremerton's anchorage, Nanking Road intersected the boulevard at right angles. This famous, or infamous, street was known world - wide as the perdition palace for every kind of vice, debauchery and sin ever indulged in by the human species. In short, it was not to be missed - a thought I didn't bother to share with Ma li li.

Once I had launched the conversation into this fascinating subject of Shanghai's ambiance

in 1946, *sure* to win the heart of even the most giddy female, it suddenly occurs to me that the Bremerton's visit was sixty years ago. I had better be careful or Ma li li will figure out that I am almost old enough to be her father. Nonetheless, I had begun this discussion of Shanghai and, fearful of confusing her by any sudden change of subjects, I feel obliged to continue. I explain to her that it had been the Huangpu River that had brought me back to China - not the river itself, but what I had seen and smelled floating *on* it and *in* it. These inimitable sights, sounds and smells enticed me to return, once as a tourist and four times with some modest teaching responsibilities at Jiatong University in Xian. Those latter pursuits, thank goodness, took me outside the tourist cocoon. And that brush with Chinese life in a crowded city couldn't help but remind me of the teeming life on the Huangpu.

Returning to the anchorage from patrol, the Bremerton was always greeted by a swarm of sampans waiting for shouted negotiations with our executive officer, who finally, noblesse oblige, awarded the ship's garbage to a lucky few. The transaction was consummated through a long canvas chute rigged on the ship's fantail and extending down into the sampans. Nothing remotely edible or useful was allowed to escape, not a scrap. Even more poignant marketing efforts came our way when we were returning from shore leave. Waiting on wharfs along the Bund for gigs to take us out to the anchorage, we were urged by Chinese brothers to buy their little sisters, whose faces were painted like kewpie dolls, as a point of sale come-on. Had the little girls been fifteen years older, I have no doubt that these desperate sellers would have found eager buyers among my fellow Marines. In their besotted state, they would have bought first, and *then* figured out how to enjoy their purchases. As for myself, at nineteen years old, I had been more entranced by the stunning White Russian girls, whose families had escaped to Shanghai during the Russian Revolution. That is another thought I didn't share with Ma li li.

The woof of the cross-river traffic was interwoven with a warp of multi-colored corpses bobbing along, spread eagled on the current. They wove a vivid symbol of the agonizing lives and deaths of millions of Chinese caught up in the aftermath of Japan's brutal invasion and the pending resumption of the civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's right wing Kuomintang and Mao Tse-tung's Communist forces. Joining the bloated bodies on their journey downstream were many black and battered barges signaling their cargo by the ever-so-human stench of "night soil," on its way to fertilize the crops on which China so heavily depended.

I want Ma li li to know that I am sensitive to these appalling times in China. She had told me that, while a part of Mao Tse-tung's rag-tag army on the Long March, her father had noticed a blond peasant girl working in the fields. Being blond in China is attraction enough, but this peasant girl had other attractions as well. She became Ma li li's mother and eventually the family joined millions of other peasant families leaving village farms and moving to the city, looking for

a better life. Similar to demographic movements in our own country, those millions are the force that now enables China to sell vast quantities of goods at very low prices; and those millions are the incubator of a consumer society that promises to be the greatest in the world.

I do my best to explain my thoughts to Ma li li and then I pause to give her a breather. I took another sip from my glass of white wine. I am so pleased with our virtual conversation that this vintage, while appropriately named "Great Wall," doesn't seem half bad, in fact it is quite delightful.

Fortunately for her I suppose, some other thoughts of mine about Chinese history were never launched. Our virtual conversation was interrupted when a young woman, whom I recognized as from the hotel registration desk, entered the lounge and began inquiring for a Mr. Petrie. It turned out that I had a call from my son at home about the death of a partner of mine.

By the time I had responded to this sad news and returned to my table, the spell had been broken. Reality was restored. Mentally, I was back home in Cincinnati. I was once again alone with my prosaic thoughts. There was no lovely and mysterious lady across the table from me. The Pearl River was just dark water flowing by. The room was again an ordinary hotel lounge, sans charm and sans intrigue. The wine actually deserved apologies, if not a refund, and I seemed surrounded by western business types, all too loudly engaged in discussing the details of the day's commerce and various athletic contests. There was nothing to do but go into dinner. I was not looking forward to talking with myself.

After my gratifying two weeks in Xian, I had come south to Guangzhou in search of the Opium Wars. It had occurred to me that I probably shared with many Americans my own gross ignorance about the Far East. My learning, if not the teaching, had been imperfect to say the least. I vaguely remembered hearing something about the cruel practice of binding women's feet, but my teachers for some reason did not explain that the mincing walk it induced also had an enticing effect on the movements of the ladies' buttocks, said to create keen interest among Chinese men. I had also learned along the way that all Chinese men wore pigtails. Nobody had told me that the alien Manchus of the Ch'ing Dynasty had imposed pigtails on native Chinese as a sign of submission; that defiant cutting off of the queues presaged a revolution: that the revolution led to the overthrow of the last Emperor and the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911. Of course, I did learn a few other things not taught by my teachers. I learned the obvious - all Chinese had slanty eyes, and, when I was twelve or thirteen years old, the less obvious, that all Chinese *girls* had secret parts of their anatomy which were also slanty. I learned about Chinese junks and gathered from pictures that they always sailed while the sun was setting.

But the Opium Wars? I had just *assumed that* the *Chinese* had initiated some violent action to facilitate their pushing opium on the rest of the world. Was there no end to the infamy of these mysterious orientals? Thank goodness, later reading had straightened me out on the basics, but left me wondering further about this misunderstood chapter in *Western* infamy. How wrong my initial assumptions had been.

The day after my aborted reverie in the White Swan lounge, I searched along the Pearl River for the former sites of the "hongs", combination warehouse and offices, where much of the trading was focused. Then, satisfied that I had found some traces of the hongs, I hired a car and driver and made my mist-shrouded way to the Opium Wars Museum. It was about 60 kilometers south of Guangzhou, near the Bocca Tigris, nicknamed the "Bogue," a constricted stretch of the Pearl River. This had become the choke point beyond which the foreign trading vessels, heavily laden with their cargoes of illicit opium, were not allowed. The surprising weakness of the Chinese shore batteries at the Bogue was a factor in the shameful story of one of the most profitable trading schemes in world history. It was a scheme which began in the late 18th century and developed from two human addictions: the English addiction to afternoon tea and the Chinese addiction to opium. China was the home of fine green tea. The English purchased opium in India and traded it for tea.

The Emperor had earlier made it known to the "barbarians" from the West that there was no need for China to trade at all. The West had nothing the Chinese wanted. Sadly, opium belied this imperious opinion. Many Chinese soon wanted it so badly that it quickly became the most profitable trading product of the British Empire. This wretched enterprise gradually debilitated millions of Chinese, while at the same time corrupting England in the service of its empire building. There was no dearth of bribe-hungry Chinese middlemen willing to help, regardless of the Emperor's edicts. Gladstone and others were active in exhorting the House of Commons to stop the shameful trade. But shame was no match for profits.

Predictably, violence ensued and in 1842 the first of the Opium *Wars* simply added insult to the injury of the opium trade. The Emperor had finally loosed an incorruptible mandarin, the widely respected, Lin Zexu (Lin Tse- hsu), to stamp out the illegal trade once and for all. Taking the strongest measures possible, Lin was largely successful in confiscating and destroying many tons of opium and slowing the Western trade almost to a halt. But, given their considerable influence in government circles, the English traders mustered a force of fighting ships and ground forces and rather easily defeated the old fashioned defenses of the Emperor.

Having subdued the Chinese forces, the English then demanded - and received - reparations, including the island of Hong Kong and cash specified in the Treaty of Nanking as \$21,000,000, which amounted to 50% of China's annual tax revenue! The opium trade continued

and another war ensued in 1860. In the second War, the English troops, and those of France, which also was involved, ravaged the Emperor's Summer Palace in Peking and plundered it of priceless treasures of Chinese art.

During the drive back to Guangzhou from the Opium Wars Museum, I chatted with my driver, Qi Zhang, about many aspects of Chinese history including the ultimate failure of the draconian measures by Commissioner Lin and the continuation of the illicit trade long after both opium wars were over. I told Qi Zhang that I understood that with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao Tse-tung had launched an effective crackdown on opium use.

Qi Zhang at first made no response and then, out of the blue, suddenly asked, in his heavily accented English, "Mr. Bruce, would you want some?"

"Some what?" I responded.

"Some opium"

Startled, I laughed and began to say, "Of course not," but then, admitting to myself a long-standing curiosity, I questioned his ability to get any opium. "I thought Mao Tse-tung got rid of opium." Qi Zhang quickly answered, "He did, but, hey, - no problem. I can bring some to your room."

Until then, I hadn't really thought of myself as anything but a law abiding citizen. I was, after all, a respectable Cincinnati lawyer, a retired partner in a fine old firm, a widowed family man. I had confined my drug imbibing to readily accessible medications such as scotch and vodka, and, in recent years, to their chaste cousin, white wine. My outright addictions had been limited to coffee and oatmeal raisin cookies. The thought of my indulging in opium was ridiculous. I didn't even know who this Qi Zhang really was. But, not wanting to offend him, I quietly muttered my polite declination-in English, of course.

My trip to the Museum had been tiring and I decided to forego dinner and go to bed early. I had come to some unscheduled time in my itinerary, purposely left open to do other exploring, and as I began to undress I thought about what I wanted to get out of this trip that hadn't yet been accomplished. I had removed one shoe when there was a knock at my door. It was my driver, Qi Zhang, smiling and holding two packages, one long and one short and round, wrapped in newspaper. When I realized what they must contain and said again that I wanted no opium, he claimed to have misunderstood my negative response in the automobile. We talked further. The price for the opium was considerable but the very favorable rate of exchange for the Chinese yuan made it tolerable. He hastened to say that he would throw in the pipe and jar.

Why, after being so adamant, was I now hesitating? I was well aware that our own New

England traders had participated in the 19th century opium trade, buying opium in Turkey and trading into China; that some famous American family fortunes, such as the Cushing's, Delano's and Forbes', were enhanced by this trade, a practice not dissimilar to the ghastly current efforts of *Columbian* drug smugglers and their American network.

Well, that thought was a deterrent, but if I did indulge in a pipe or two, I would, at least, be of a piece with some notable American families. Of course, that would be irrelevant to any judge if got caught, but, more likely, the episode would end simply as a successful fantasy of perverse social climbing, in the best American tradition.

I hope you will understand my state of mind. Old post-1946 ideas about China had come rushing back. I knew that I had developed an *attitude* about U.S. policies toward China and that my attitude needed reviewing. I remembered feeling smug when I had heard that many Far East experts believe that our involvement in Vietnam was attributable to our gross mistakes in China during and after World War II. Regardless of the controversial nature of that opinion, surely I should try to understand *how* our country blunders into such disasters, if blunder we do.

How could I forget that after my discharge from the Marine Corps, finishing my formal education, marrying the love of my life, beginning my practice, Bev and I, as young marrieds, had joined the cocktail circuit. Its essential boredom had been broken only by the occasional spirited discussions on issues of the day, including our China policy. I felt embarrassed at the sparse knowledge I had injected into those long, loud and liquid disagreements. They became especially vociferous as the hysterical McCarthy Era broke over America, with the Senator's wild innuendos and irresponsible accusations that various American foreign service officers, apparently all by themselves, had managed to "lose China." I remembered that in the early 1950's I had been deeply angry at what had seemed to me to be outrageous charges.

Perhaps my brief experiences in China had fostered a romantic view of the Chinese people. But who could fail to be impressed by their incredible capacity to persevere against overwhelming burdens of famine, flood and an endless variety of other disasters, over 5000 years of history and, at the same time, producing exquisite work in the arts and creating major inventions, ranging from paper to the magnetic compass.

And yet, years later, after a new China has appeared, our national propensity to jingoism had already been aimed at China. The press and other commentators were generating belligerent statements, books and articles. Some of our politicians were beginning the process of demonization - our time-honored foreign policy by name-calling. The repressive measures used by the Chinese leadership to suppress criticism by their own people and the star chamber atmosphere of the Chinese legal system certainly should be reported to the world, but it is also seems appropriate, to me at least, that we juxtapose our own shameful record as to slavery, racial

discrimination and the brutal repression of the civil rights of our supposedly free citizens. As a matter of principle, does it really matter that we only killed a handful of students at Kent State while China killed hundreds at Tiananmen Square?

And not many Americans seemed to take into account, as a factor in China's heavy handedness, the size of the Chinese population at almost five times our own. We seemed to be unaware that the *quantitative* differences of China's billion three measured against our millions can result in *qualitative* differences as well. As an analog, consider that school authorities in this country often lose control of classes exceeding 30, much less 150 students. Moreover, we don't seem to know much about the historical Chinese propensity for major disruptive rebellions. It may be reprehensible, but it is not surprising, that incipient uprisings cause repressive attitudes among Chinese leaders.

Regardless of the validity of these thoughts and regardless of U.S. actions or inactions having such an extended ramification as the war in Vietnam, I believed that the idea that in the 1940's we had "lost China" was absurd. China was not ours to win or lose. What we had lost was not "China" but, through a series of blunders, we had lost an opportunity, however thin, to effect a coalition of Mao Tse-tung's Communist forces with Chiang Kai shek's right wing Kuomintang forces and possibly an eventual transition into democracy. Chiang was the titular leader of China but he, as with Mao, had never been elected by the people. Rather, he, like Mao, had essentially seized power. As it happened, the civil war resumed and, as we had been strongly warned by our own foreign service officers, it ended in Chiang's predictable and predicted defeat, followed by his flight to Taiwan. That denouement had left us with another conundrum, which we now ruefully refer to as the Taiwan Issue .

Many of my cocktail party adversaries in the 1950's had known even less than I did about China or the issues it posed to the United States. China was simply the equivalent of the "evil empire." Americans typically reacted to the word, "communists", not by analyzing them but by demonizing them, as if all communists are exactly alike. A natural corollary of this was to lionize Chiang Kai-shek. President Truman, not to mention Tell-It-Like-It-Is General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, finally concluded that Chiang Kai -shek had virtually ignored the Japanese invaders to spare his own troops, confident that the U. S. would win the war for him. With the help of the beautiful Madame Chiang, supported by the China Lobby, Chiang had seduced the U.S. into giving millions of dollars for military purposes, but which ended up in Chiang's and the Soong family's personal coffers. Truman, in his Memoirs, finally had seen the light and didn't hesitate to call the Chiang family outright "thieves." Stilwell's opinion of Chiang is hardly printable.

There was no doubt that our country faced a very complicated situation in China, both before and after the Japanese surrender. President Roosevelt's death had left Harry Truman to face

immense problems involving not only the pending victory over Japan and Russia's role in the Far East, but the forthcoming resolution of the Chinese revolution and civil war.

I had read enough about all this to be thoroughly confused* I needed a way to look at the situation from a Chinese point of view as well as a Western point of view. I needed to expand my thinking and somehow quell my anger about Senator McCarthy who, as far as I was concerned, fundamentally weakened our political effectiveness for many years to come by petrifying American politicians into overwrought actions or inactions for fear that they might appear to constituents as "soft on Communism".

Now, as everyone knows, thanks to Deng Xiaoping and other reform Communist leaders, the Chinese giant has awakened. China is on the capitalist road, a term which was once a very derisive insult, used against any Chinese so inclined. These newly respectable capitalist readers proudly boast about China as the fastest growing economy in the world, pouring inexpensive electronics, textiles and other goods into world markets everywhere. Journalist Tom Friedman has warned that the Geely 7151 CK sedan, just introduced at the Detroit Automobile Show, should be viewed as a new "Sputnik." And, moreover, an impressive and engaging aspect of Chinese creativity has been the outpouring of new expressions in music, literature, cinema, dance, painting, sculpture, and theater - in all the arts.

China, as every other industrializing society, has major problems and setbacks. Not the least of these is extreme damage to the environment, as it was and is in the United States. China has acknowledged and responded with alacrity to many emerging difficulties, but a major and ironic issue is the gobbling up of precious farm land by the inexorable spread of industrial and residential development. This has generated violent reactions in rural China by the peasant farmers, as well it might, given that Mao's communist revolution was founded on the plight of the half-starving peasants, on land reform and the promise of better conditions for the largest segment of the Chinese population.

A host of American businessmen, bless their hearts, seemed less critical of China's tactics, or should I say, more practical, than have the media and hard-line politicians. Business types are more than willing to do business with the Chinese, concerned, of course, that they might miss a market of staggering size or continue to incur costs at occidental rather than oriental rates.

The colossus had tossed and turned through many agonizing episodes. Mao had been overly optimistic in 1949 when he announced the defeat of the Kuomintang and the establishment of the People's Republic of China and then said "China has stood up." Sadly, at that time the long years of oppression were not over. Mao himself was largely responsible for the devastation of the Great Leap Forward and the crushing repressions of the Cultural Revolution. But Napoleon was prescient. China finally did awake, stretched and stood up. The world *is* being moved.

Americans have recognized the economic challenge. But, ironically enough, our unending criticism of Chinese *communism* seems now to have been replaced with criticism of the Chinese version of *capitalism*. How dare they produce huge quantities of textile goods for sale at prices far less than American manufacturers can do it? How dare the Chinese purchase billions of dollars worth of American bonds, lending staggering amounts of capital to fuel our seemingly endless capacity to borrow and spend? How dare they refuse to revalue their currency to suit our policies?

The real question for me was, what does the future hold for our relationship with China? Must we await the dangerous atmosphere of a crisis before we take imaginative steps toward a truly cooperative friendship?

As all this had been racing through my mind, Qi Zhang had waited patiently, evidently enjoying my indecision. I finally got my wallet, and counted out the yuan, about eight of them to the dollar, Qi Zhang put the packages on the table, gave me a few words of instruction and, with a bow and another smile, took the stack of bills and left. So now I had committed a criminal offense by purchasing the opium. Would smoking it be that much worse?

I really didn't like the idea of smoking opium but I knew I needed something to jolt my thinking. What a shame that I had no one here in China with whom to discuss my thoughts. A knowledgeable Chinese historian who spoke English would be a perfect companion for such a conversation. But I knew no such person in Guangzhou. How about simply a thoughtful person, of whatever nationality, who spoke English? But how would I even identify a person in advance, much less meet him or her - and how could I interest such a person in a serious conversation with a stranger?

I was now too wide awake to go to bed and I decided to go down to the hotel lounge, recalling as I went my wish that Ma li li would join me in Guangzhou. At first I had been sure that the wish was prophetic, but it had turned out to be just a fantasy.

I ordered a glass of wine and looked around, hoping to spot a professorial type who happens to hold two or three advanced degrees in Chinese history, is an engaging conversationalist and, it would be even nicer, if such a person just happens to be female, drop-dead beautiful and single. This suddenly reminded me of the premier cartoonist of my youth, Milton Caniff, who created Terry and the Pirates and, *who could forget*, also created the gorgeous Dragon Lady. I didn't recall that the Dragon Lady had any advanced degrees in history, but I could overlook that. The Dragon Lady, or a reasonable facsimile, would suit me just fine, especially if she was just glancing around demurely in search of a lonesome American bachelor with whom she could discuss Chinese history. Regrettably, although the lounge was filling up, no one with my specifications seemed to have entered. Having disposed of academic qualifications, I quickly eliminated intelligence and history from my desired qualities; and did I really care if she was demure or not? But, even with

those modifications, I did not spot anyone looking even conversable, much less resembling the Dragon Lady. I thought momentarily of returning to my imaginary conversation with Ma li li, but I couldn't seem to regain the magic mood that had made it possible.

I was forced to return to the idea of a pipeful of opium. I was pretty sure that it wouldn't infuse me with a euphoria so deep as to match the pleasure of a conversation with a knowledgeable Chinese historian. Although, I *had* heard that sometimes an opium euphoria included flashes of beautiful colors, hardly the stuff of serious discourse with another human being, but not without a certain pleasure.

Moreover, the possible sensation of color might bring back to mind some major points from Edgar Snow's famous book, "Red Star Over China," the outside world's introduction to the Chinese Communists, a good starting point for my review. Also, I had recently attended a wedding in Xian where I had noticed that the bride wore a white gown for the ceremony, and changed afterwards to a red dress, as Chinese custom requires. Come to think of it, colors had seemed important at the wedding, especially as unidentified libations in small glasses began to be served in copious amounts. When that had happened, the bride, and everything else, gradually seemed to turn pink.

As I reviewed my fond memories of the wedding, the thought occurred to me that China itself, now so wildly engaged in capitalistic pursuits, had changed colors - it was no longer a bright Communist red. True, with its persistent oppression of dissent, it hasn't yet changed into a pristine white, as we like to think of our own country. But now China seems to fall somewhere between red and white. I concluded that, since I couldn't find my desired conversationalist, a pipeful of opium after my dinner might bring my thinking up to date -that it would, as to China, have me seeing pink instead of red. For McCarthy, of course, "pink" was a pejorative, a four-letter condemnation of anyone whom he thought was dangerously on the way to red. It occurred to me, that the forthcoming color change was a fitting answer to McCarthy's wild paranoia. China is now pink, not red, and it is turning, and not so gradually, into white..

I glanced around the lounge one more time. The prospects for conversation about all this had not improved. Finally, acknowledging the futility of entertaining such unrealistic wishes, I drained my wine, signed the check, feeling somewhat guilty that I had finally reached a decision to smoke the opium, and rose to go into the dining room for a light dinner.

Dispirited as I was, I almost failed to notice the attractive Chinese woman standing by herself in the lounge entrance. She wasn't the Dragon Lady, but obviously she was looking for someone. She had a soft smile on her face. She was taller than the typical Chinese woman. Her hair was done up in a bun and she was wearing a skirt, longer than usual, in a lovely tartan pattern of pink and white. She smiled and waved. I stopped. I couldn't believe it. As she took my arm, she

spoke quietly, "Mr. Bruce, I am Dr. Qi Yujin, the sister of Qi Zhang, your driver. Zhang said you like to talk about Chinese history. That's my field. Shall we begin with a glass of wine?"

POSTSCRIPT:

Last anniversary, 156th as you will recall,
Close to tears, touching us all,

Our President, quaintly, though ever so erudite,
Implored a change in what *others* write.

He lamented this club as poetry bereft,
Without Norm Levy there would be none left.

So moved was I, I tried my hand,
It seemed a duty - an objective grand.

But could you imagine, China going pink from red
In *verse and rhyme*, as if I'd lost my head.

Thus, with humble mercy I now close.
Thank your pink star, I stuck to prose.

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