

Negotiators from all parts of the world at the Textile Hall. In the foreground are buyers from Sweden.



## Biggest

# Export Fair at Canton

ISRAEL EPSTEIN

**I**N the sunny compound of the Fair stood powerful excavator-cranes and bulldozers which China herself had to import only a few years ago but which she now supplies to Asian and African countries building their own roads and industries. In the swift, silent elevators of the 10-story Fair building, hurrying businessmen from over 50 countries and regions of both East and West relaxed in the cool fragrance of small electric fans blowing through sprigs of fresh jasmine. These, my first impressions of the Spring 1965 Chinese Export Commodities Fair in Canton, aptly symbolized China's rapidly-growing socialist economic strength, her constantly widening foreign trade contacts and the traditional grace of her hospitality.

The semi-annual Fair, the 17th since its beginning in 1957 on the eve of the Great Leap Forward, was also the biggest yet. Export contracts numbered over 26,000, and the volume of transactions some 20 times that of the first. Other records were the number of export items shown (over 24,000, including 3,000 never before offered), of commercial visitors (over 5,000 as compared with a thousand or so in 1957) and of the countries and regions they represented.

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Past autumn fairs, with heavy agricultural sales after the harvest, were busier than those held in the spring. But this spring the sales of agricultural goods topped all the autumns. Industrial exports grew in proportion to traditional lines — farm and animal products, minerals, handicrafts — though these, too, increased. The rise in attendance and turnover at a time of the heightened aggression of U.S. imperialism in neighbouring Vietnam signified the complete bankruptcy of U.S. and associated attempts to “isolate” China. China has friends everywhere. Contact with her on the economic plane is more and more widely attractive because of her rapid progress and her reputation for fair dealing.

At the 17th Fair not only did regular traders arrive as usual but another record was set, in the number of newcomers from every continent including North America except for the U.S., which is not wanted or welcome. The U.S. absence, incidentally, not only pleased Asians, Africans and Latin Americans. It was a relief to many western traders as well. “This is one market they can't run or spoil,” one said to me with satisfaction.

### Textile Revolutionized

The first hall I visited was Textiles — it featured 3,600 different varieties and designs, no fewer than 1,500 of them brand new, in

strikingly artistic displays. Behind this lies a veritable industrial revolution. Old China's cotton yarns were relatively coarse (few over 20 count) and range of fabrics and prints poor. Now yarn counts run as fine as 200, and besides plain goods and drills there are cotton satins, velvets, jacquards, raised designs and wide-wale corduroys, yarn-dyed flannels and poplins, and non-iron, drip-dry “new cottons”. The new chemical industry provides artificial and synthetic fibres — rayon, capron, vinylon, etc. — used by themselves or in mixtures with cotton and wool. It also supplies brilliant and varied dyes. Printing processes are sophisticated and export designs meet many national styles and tastes — notably in Southeast Asia and Africa.

Woollens and worsteds, hardly produced before the liberation, are of all kinds and weights, as are velours, plushes, mohairs, angoras, cashmeres, etc. A fine, lustrous new suiting combines silk and wool. Silks and tussahs, ancient Chinese crafts, have been further developed.

A new and promising export line is ready-made clothing for men, women and children, with quality stemming not only from good materials but also from Shanghai's famous tailoring (China runs a special Garment Export Fair in that city).

Morning and afternoon, every negotiating table along the long aisles of the Textile Hall was full, with customers from all corners of the globe waiting their turn.

#### Machines for Self-reliance

The machines and instruments offered — 1,700 items — were vivid illustrations of China's advance: before the liberation she made none of them. Those shown were picked for two criteria. First, like all other export articles, they had been thoroughly tested domestically and were internationally com-

petitive. Secondly, themselves the fruit of China's revolutionary self-reliance, most were selected for maximum usefulness to new countries wishing to build up their own self-reliant economies free from imperialist influence or any other dependence.

There was construction, mining and metal-working machinery to set up their basic industries, and rubber, textile and food-processing machinery to turn their own produce into consumer goods in both big factories and small local ones. For their transport systems, China

offered trucks and buses, diesel engines for river and sea craft, and, for the first time, 23 different types of railway rolling stock — freight and passenger cars, mail and baggage vans, oil-tank and refrigerator cars, and dump and ballast-distribution cars for construction needs.

"We have learned to take quality for granted here," a Southeast Asian merchant declared. Another, who had bought a rubber mill with an ample stock of spare parts, came back after a year to say, surprised, "I did not need to make a single replacement!"

Older industrial countries, too, are in the market for Chinese machines and instruments. They include Japan, France and Italy. A British textile equipment manufacturer, who came to the Fair to sell, became interested in buying Chinese knitting frames. "This trend means that China's trade with others is becoming the type common among industrial nations — which buy each other's machines when they are the best of their kind," a western merchant commented.

In the instrument department, a good reputation is enjoyed by Chinese meters, radios and radio parts, including transistors and diodes, educational equipment, photographic materials, automobile parts, record players and cameras (the popularly priced "Shanghai 4" competes well in Hongkong with foreign makes). A new Chinese item is industrial television equipment.

Hand tools have more than doubled their sales in the past two years. In some Pakistan towns, "Peacock", a Chinese trade mark, has become the accepted word for a good tool.

Business in machinery and instruments at the Fair was 70 per cent above last spring's figure.

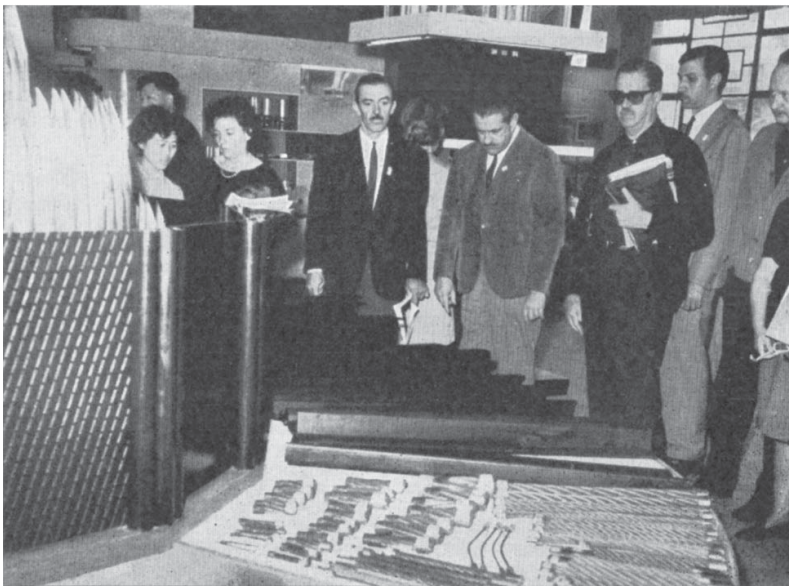
#### Breakthrough in Chemicals

Chemicals, like machinery, are a "mother industry" in any nation's economic development. Displayed for export were a multitude of organic and inorganic products of which China was an importer only a few years ago. Newest are petrochemicals, fruit of her recent



Businessmen from Ghana look over bicycles.

An Argentine group inspects steel products in the Metals and Minerals Hall.





achievement of virtual self-sufficiency in petroleum and its products. Experts state that China's petroleum coke indicates an exceptionally high technical level.

An adequate range of high-grade dyestuffs, including the most modern vat, azo and metal-complex-acid dyes, goes to scores of countries.

Foreign sales of Chinese pharmaceuticals in 1964 were 70 times those in 1957. This was made possible by mass production of up-to-date antibiotics, sulfonamides, steroid hormones, vitamins, anti-tuberculosics and other remedies for the needs of China's own people. Markets include Southeast Asia, Latin America and Italy. Such rapid headway in the face of the old-established tendency to trust only the pharmaceuticals produced by German, Swiss, British and American monopolies testifies to the impeccable standard of Chinese drugs.

Chinese medical, surgical, dental and X-ray instruments and apparatus, and hospital supplies of many kinds, are finding much favour abroad.

Rubber articles of every type, from motor vehicle tires and industrial belting to surgical gloves and tubing, were also shown here.

#### **Farm and Animal Products**

The complete recovery of China's commune agriculture from the natural disasters of 1959-61 and its vigorous renewed advance were evident on the Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs floor. Rice is sold to Southeast Asian countries that need it, soya beans go in large quantities to Japan and Europe, and edible oils are back as an export. And China's industrial progress makes it possible to sell more frozen and canned meats, poultry, marine products and fruit to many markets.

Her canned mutton is a favourite in Muslim lands. Customers know by experience that in quality and purity China's packed foods are unexcelled. A British merchant remarked that Chinese luncheon meats, stringless green beans, pears

in syrup and other items are the world's tastiest.

The development of fisheries has created a new export — iced fresh fish which goes to Japan. There many coastal waters have been closed off by U.S. naval bases, forcing fishermen to go greater distances, raising costs and detracting from freshness. Hence supply from nearby China has become very important to the Japanese people's diet — and shopping budget.

In non-edible oils, Chinese tung oil continues to be sought as the best for varnishes and paints, despite the appearance of other producers.

In animal products, an unprecedented increase in pigs has led to greater exports of the famous Chinese bristles. An entire ton of various kinds of hair was sold to Japan for the making of traditional writing brushes, important to the resistance of her national culture to U.S. engulfment. An Italian fur and skin buyer told Chinese negotiators, "When I sign a contract elsewhere, I worry for months until the shipment arrives. When I sign with China, I sleep well — I know I will get the precise assortment promised."

Peking, Tientsin and Sinkiang carpets, justly renowned for their designs, quality and long wear, were shown in both hand and machine-woven types.

Leather footwear (600 varieties and fittings), gloves and luggage were of first-class quality, reflecting improvements in tanning, dyeing and design. They sell on all continents.

#### **Metals and Minerals**

China's non-ferrous metals — wolfram, antimony, tin and mercury — have long been much sought after. Today her own rapid industrialization means their growing use at home, but expanded and improved mining and processing make foreign sales possible. Cadmium is a new export. Non-metallic minerals, including talc, fluor spar, sulphur, graphite and barites are supplied to wide markets. Coal and coke sales are rising notably to Japan and Pakistan, which prefers them for its railways and factories.



Exports of metal manufactures are growing — notably of construction steel to Africa and the Middle East. Dozens of countries buy builders' hardware (including steel windows, hinges, locks, etc.), wire products (including zinc and plastic-coated varieties), sheets and tubing of various metals and specifications, aluminium foil, etc.

Chinese cement competes well with foreign makes in Hongkong and Southeast Asia. It is now offered in colours as well as plain. China exports many types of refractory materials and asbestos products. Chinese marbles and terrazos, of which there is a great variety, beautify public buildings in many parts of the world.

In her growing metal trade China both sells and buys — for example copper from producers like Chile, and some special steels from the West and Japan. Merchants, therefore, often make two-way deals.

#### **Light Industry: Quality and Variety**

It was hard to get through the crush of negotiators and sample-viewers at the Light Industry hall. This presented thousands of products. All merchants remarked on the further leap in their variety,

quality and design. I shall mention only a few.

New types of electric fans made in Shanghai and Canton have been tested for seven days' continuous operation, can make 40, 60, 90 and 180 degree turns and carry time switches which can stop them automatically, for instance, half an hour after the user goes to sleep.

Alarm clocks in over 50 varieties and shapes have won markets all the way from Southeast Asia and Australia to Scandinavia, as well as in Africa, Latin America and Canada. The explanation—these workaday timekeepers have as much attention paid to hair-springs and shafts as in good watches, and each is tested for a week before export.

Canadian retail-chain representatives were the latest customers for Chinese dry batteries of all sizes, which are leakproof, have a burning life well over international standards and are guaranteed in any climate.

European countries, Australia and Indonesia are among the main buyers of pianos, accordions, violins, brasses, clarinets and other wind and international-type instruments, made in China only since the liberation.

Chinese toys sell in over 70 lands. On show were 500 altogether new varieties of soft, inflatable, plastic, rubber, electric and friction drive and educational playthings. Middle-aged buyers wore boyish smiles as they watched these delightful inventions. Chinese toys are durable under rough handling, educational and safe;

paints are non-toxic, and sharp edges and corners are avoided.

There is no space to describe other important sections such as ceramics, arts and crafts.

### Trade and Friendship

To sum up, businessmen at the Fair found that the old situation of an agricultural China and an industrialized West and Japan is gone forever. "Formerly China only bought our machines; today we begin to buy hers as well," declared a Japanese visitor. "This is all to the good; now we can exchange not only commodities but technical experience. Primitive trade can become normal and equal trade. And people in the importing countries can be educated, not only by words but by actual products, to respect China's progress and oppose policies that ignore it."

Also obsolete is the idea of China as a "cheap market". She sells at world prices or uses her commodities in her own socialist economy. But her terms allow the merchant due profit. She neither truckles to big traders nor uses her economic strength to bully the small; in fact the latter find special consideration. So does the first-time visitor. "The newcomer has no handicaps at this Fair," said one trader.

Every merchant I spoke to thought trade between his country and China could be increased, given the proper political conditions. Japanese traders, who numbered 500 and were the biggest foreign contingent at the Fair, signed a collective protest to their

government, which, bowing to U.S. imperialism, has frustrated several big Sino-Japanese transactions by blocking credit. They pointed out that China and Japan have complementary economies and it makes no sense to buy from afar the goods they can exchange at close quarters. But without proper relations, in the absence even of diplomatic ties, this great potential cannot develop. Quotas and other restrictions on trade with China also exist elsewhere. It is not economic obstacles that impede growth. The old hostile allegations about China's "ability to pay", for instance, fetched a laugh. "This was always political propaganda," said a western trader. "China has more goods to offer every year and her credit is A-1."

France, having established diplomatic relations, was the biggest seller of equipment to China the following year. Sino-Italian transactions have increased since the recent exchange of commercial offices. "I think the trade can double in 1965," said an Italian importer-exporter. "Diplomatic relations would help."

For all who come, the Fair is more than a business event. "Every time I come I see progress, and meet old friends," said a regular visitor. "Everything is quite different, far better than I had been taught to believe by our newspapers," was a typical new man's reaction. On Sundays, trips are arranged to communes, factories and scenic spots. The people of Canton are especially hospitable to fair-goers.

The stability the visitors saw in Canton relieved anxieties. "Frankly, I was scared to come in the present world situation," said a Canadian. "War might break out—and I would be separated from my family. But once here, I found it hard to be scared any more." During the Fair there were great demonstrations against U.S. aggression in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, and China exploded her second A-bomb. Their own experience taught visitors that China, determined that imperialist aggression shall meet defeat, believes friendship among nations, including trade for mutual needs, will triumph over all obstacles.

Japanese businessmen sing a song at a banquet given in their honour.

Photos by Huang Li-liang

