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CHINA'S NEW OPEN DOOR

Looming over the new Peking Skyline like giant grain silos over an American prairie, the twenty-two story, 1000 room GREAT WALL HOTEL, TRANSFORMS the heart of the dragon into/<sup>a</sup>typical American Hyatt, as contrasted with the otherwise drab metropolis.

At sunrise and sunset, its glass curtain-walls shimmer in the orange light, accentuating the colorlessness of the low-lying buildings nearby. At night, it fairly glows with electric light, providing an oasis of illumination in an otherwise dimly lit city, where most people have no more than a single bulb in each room, with halls and stairways left dark.

The Great Wall of China is generally conceded to be one of the most majestic Monuments ever created. Today it has a notable rival-the Great Wall Hotel, according to the Hotel's Brochure. At first, it may seem a little outlandish to compare a hotel to the 4,000 mile Great Wall built in the 3rd Century B. C. by China's first emperor to keep out the "barbarian" tribes from Mongolia. But the hotel's presence in the Capital of the People's Republic of China is indeed in many ways as extraordinary as the Great Wall itself, though its purpose is just the opposite--to draw the barbarians in.

The Great Wall hotel is one of many new Western-style hotels that have recently been built in China; they are a small part of the over-all effort by the Chinese government to lure foreign business and tourism. These Western -style facilities include such amenities as convention centers, golf and tennis facilities, theme parks, luxury cruise ships and trains featuring German made sleeping cars and private dining coaches.

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The concessions to foreign wealth are the outcome of Deng Xiaoping's so-called open door policy, which the Chinese leader initiated in the late nineteen seventies. In a few short years, the new policy has transformed relations between socialist China and the capitalist world.

The phrase "Open Door" was a curious choice for a new Chinese foreign policy, laden as it is with historial overtones from a humiliating period of Chinese contact with the West. In 1900 U. S. Secretary of State John Hay, fearful that American Businessmen would be squeezed out of China by Japanese and European attempts to establish semi-colonial "spheres of influence", issued diplomatic notes urging major powers to preserve equality of trade with China. It was really just a way of insuring that all interested nations would be able to exploit China equally.

Mao Zedong swept to power in the nineteen forties by addressing his Revolution to foreign domination and exploitation. After a ten year marriage to Soviet advisers, the two parted company, and China was charted a course devout of foreign capital and technical expertise. All this has changed now and under the new open door policy China has begun to court Western business with single-minded ardor.

I had a chance recently to see for myself the changes wrought by the open door policy during a stay at the Great Wall Hotel in Peking. Our arrival was greeted by doormen and bellhops in crimson jackets with a cheerful English chorus of "Goodmorning sir, How are you today? Previously, the Revolutionary slogan of "serving the people" had never been translated into such service at Chinese hotels and restaurants, perhaps because it smacked of just the kind of exploitation that Mao had set out to eradicate.

Once inside the hotel, the environment was so different from any we had experienced ~~previously~~ in China that I felt as if I had crossed an unmarked border into another country. From the lushly carpeted floor rose 40 foot columns encased in polished chrome. Plants and flowers complemented the purple plush sofas. In contrast to the red, dusty outside October air, the hotel's interior was as

"This Hotel offers what no other can, a first-class international standard of service infused with the mystique of China," notes the Great Wall's promotional material. Actually, the "mystique of China" seems to have been effectively kept outside the hotel's doors, except for an occasional Oriental touch such as a tapestry of the Great Wall itself.

What was so remarkable, was how successful those responsible for the hotel's design had been in re-creating an almost totally Western environment in the middle of Peking which for years, had resisted just such intrusions.

The China International Travel Service had pre-registered our delegation and we learned as we were being swished to our 15th floor room on the glass encased elevators, that the Chinese came to the United States and looked at American Hotels and fell in love with the Dallas Hyatt Regency and the Great Wall Hotel in Peking was based on the Hyatt design.

The Great Wall Hotel was a 75 Million-dollar project initiated by C. B. Sung, a Shanghai-born American Businessman, who raised the money to finance the construction from a consortium of Western banks and the China International Travel Service. C.I. T. S., as the Chinese partner, was assigned a 51% share in the venture. Mr. Sung also facilitated a 50 Million, joint venture between the Jeep Division of American Motors and the Peking Automotive Works to build four wheel drive vehicles in China.

The Great Wall Hotel was not the first foreign-financed and foreign-run luxury hotel to open in Peking, but the others generally have been State owned and operated. The Great Wall Hotel is a universe apart from these seedy accommodations. Indeed, the People's Republic of China citizens are not allowed to stay there. But those Chinese

lucky enough to be invited in by foreign guests find its imported luxury mind-boggling. It has a health club, complete with gym, indoor swimming pool, saunas, steam baths, outdoor jogging track and

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and two lighted tennis courts. For entertainment, there are four lounges, including the Cosmos Club, a night club with an atmosphere of "electric intimacy" featuring a seven piece Filipino band.

Two years ago, Chinese authorities sponsored a booklet called "How to Distinguish Decadent Music," which admonished millions to beware of the effects of Western sounds. Western Jazz was said to be against the normal psychological needs of man. Now, in a complete turnaround, China's Leaders have decided that modern Western music, including disco, ballads, folk music and some rock & roll, is to be permitted and encouraged. "This Country is ready to dance," someone in our group commented. Millions of Chinese are taking dancing lessons, they consider it good exercise like shadow-boxing. (Taiji)

For the dining pleasure of its regular guests, the Great Wall Hotel harbors a number of restaurants. Chinese cuisine is served in the Fan, a Cantonese restaurant on the Second floor. The hotel's principal dining room is Le France, carpeted in gold with square mirrored columns and fresh roses on each table, which could just as easily be in New York or Paris. The Silk Road offers a sumptuous buffet, including a "steak bar" with steaks imported from the United States. The Orient Express, a coffee shop, serves Western Meals and snacks twenty-four hours a day. Much of the hotel's food is imported from Hong Kong.

Hamburgers, French fries, and pizzas have appeared on the Chinese, with the latest food item--white bread---fast gaining popularity.

President Reagan held a state Banquet in the hotel's Grand Ballroom in 1983, which is advertised as being "influenced by the

Forbidden City itself," with intricate woodwork and lacquers of traditional Chinese reds" and folding screens with dragon motifs." It can accommodate 1800 people. The president's Chinese and American guests were served turkey dinners, the turkeys themselves having been flown in from the United States. I understand the Chinese Chefs had practiced on several advance turkeys in order to master the preparation of this American meal before the President's appearance.

Unlike Chinese run hotels, the Great Wall also offers round-the-clock room service. Being able to eat and play throughout the night, while the rest of China closes down completely, takes some getting used to. Nothing like it has been seen here since "liberation". Before 1949, foreign visitors could amuse themselves until early morning hours in clubs and nightspots-notably the Westernized port city of Shanghai. Although night life is confined virtually to foreign clientele, one wonders how long it will be before the Chinese demand to be a part of the fun.



Night Life is hardly the only new idea these Western Hotels are pioneering in China. Telephones are of the touch tone variety and operators will provide wake-up calls. The floors of the Great Wall Hotel are covered with thousands of square feet of carpet, a concept of interior decoration that has no precedent in China, where people have traditionally treated hallways and lobbies as extensions of the streets-places to discard unwanted trash, put out cigarettes or spit.

The guest rooms range in price from \$90 to \$800 for a luxury suite. \$800 is nearly six times the annual wage of an average factory worker. Almost everything in the Hotel has been imported. The plate glass exterior came from Belgium, the bathroom fixtures from the United States, the carpets from New Zealand, the room furniture and Television sets from Japan. Like a space colony constructed in orbit, the Great Wall Hotel was put together out of pieces, imported from the outside world and then painstakingly assembled in Peking. To keep it going, the hotel must maintain a lifeline to that world beyond China's border which the country's leaders were once so determined to do without. This hotel is designed to give foreign tourist and businessmen a way to be in China without being of it--to convey the feeling that everything is here, within the confines of a single building, so that except for an occasional shopping spree or a trip to a historical monument, there is no need to venture out.

I would open the curtains that shrouded the plate glass windows to my room in the morning and there I would find Peking. As I stood in my climate-controlled room, watching the Chinese board buses or bicycle off to work, it seemed as if I were looking at a television screen--at an illusory image of China, rather than China itself. Leaving the Great Wall's comfortable embrace to visit the Ming Tombs, the Great Wall

itself , or Tenimen Square and Chairman Mao's Tomb, always involved riding packed buses, eating in dirty and noisy restaurants, or attending entertainment events in Theatres, came to seem almost too unappealing to warrant the effort.

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Somehow, it became easier to get information from the CHINA DAILY, the English language newspaper slipped under my door each morning, or from the taxi drivers or elevator boys assigned to foreigners.

Perfect though the physical plant of the Hotel was, however, there were still myriad ways in which the Chinese world sifted in. While the touch-tone phones did facilitate room-to-room communication, a guest trying to reach an outside number would be plunged into the morass of the Chinese Telephone system. One would frequently have to try several times before getting access to the outside. Then, often as not, the circuit would be busy or the number itself would be busy. One could be on the phone for fifteen minutes or more to no effect other than tying up the lines. At times it seemed that the entire City would be jammed into one gridlock.

In the hotel restaurants, one noted tentativeness in the way the waitresses, not familiar with Western food went about serving the foreigners. I am advised that during the first few weeks the Hotel was opened, that labelled pictures of food were posted in the kitchen. Coffee drinking rites of the West have not been mastered. Waitresses haven't gotten the hang of cruising the floor with a coffee-pot in hand and they would often forget to bring the cream.

There are some 1500 Chinese on the staff at the hotel, chosen from 10 times that number of applicants. With no experience with Hotels, Western customs or cuisine, and with little foreign language instruction, they began going about their jobs like artists trying to draw portraits from a verbal description. However, they are dazzled by the idea of working at a place like this, even though some of the jobs are menial. The men are proud

of their new uniforms and the women are thrilled to get out of their shapeless Chinese clothes and have their hair cut and permed. I understand that training the staff was quite a challenge. It must be remembered that the housekeeper staff had never seen a vacuum cleaner before.

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Is there resentment on the part of the Chinese staff that effectively excludes the Chinese? Most appear to be happy just to work here but one wonders what will happen after they have been cleaning rooms and waiting on tables for a few years and want to go abroad but can't.

What made my stay at the Great Wall so different from one at a similar modern hotel elsewhere in the world was my awareness of the historical isolation of foreigners in China. From the time Westerners first appeared on the Chinese scene, they have lived apart--either by Chinese intent or through their own desire to maintain their Western style of living. The Communists erected huge, graceless "guesthouses" in which the visitors could be cordoned off, so that their bourgeois outlook would not contaminate the purity of the Chinese Revolution.

As contrasted with the old Chinese-run hostelries, the Great Wall lobby invites guests to linger and congregate and social encounters are encouraged. One afternoon, I saw two elderly Chinese men wearing Mao suits come into the Lobby of the Great Wall. Once inside, they paused, doffed their caps, and gazed around in wonder. Their presence transformed an isolated Western preserve into a confluence of two cultures. The Chinese are not permitted to frequent the Hotel unchaperoned, and sure enough a foreign guest appeared on the scene and the three began to converse in Chinese. Almost daily, we would see groups of Chinese trooping through the lobby and wearing expressions of awe as they toured the hotel. Actually, very few Chinese ever have an opportunity to go inside the Hotel but all of them can see it from the outside. Like earthquakes sending shock waves hundreds of miles through the hardest rock formations, hotels like the Great Wall are exerting a powerful

influence on China, creating dreams by their presence.

And just as the Chinese dream of the West, whether as a terrifying enemy or a potential technological savior, so the West dreams of China.

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To 19th Century Western missionaries, China was a harvest of millions of potential Christian souls and to the 20th century Western Businessmen, untold customers. Recently, China has been everything from a billion red ants threatening to destroy the world to a billion staunch socialists offering the only hope for its salvation. From the isolated security of hotels like the Great Wall, the West is again dreaming of China as a bottomless sinkhole for Western Capital and goods. a billion customers to drink Coca-Cola, wear jeans, buy Western factories and power plants and arms. One of Reagon's most significant acts during his visit was to initiate steps to enable the American nuclear power industry to participate in the construction of ten nuclear plants in China at a cost of twenty billion dollars.

It is quite easy for a guest at the Great Wall to forget that what is out there is a relatively impoverished country.

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As I peered out my window at the Great Wall, only an occasional bus glided past, but hordes of bicycle riders were bent over their handlebars, pedaling toward the refuge of their modest shacks. Horse carts piled with straw, moved slowly into the red, dusty wind, like boats struggling up a river against a strong current.

What event last year most affected the history of the world?

William Safire, New York Times columnist, has said that surely it is the rejection of Marxism and embrace of Capitalism by the government of a billion Chinese.

As the door <sup>to China</sup> is opened, one ponders the infusion of nuclear know-how as the final closing of the door for mankind.