

## China – Spring 1999

We have had, since several years, an exchange program, sponsored by the Dutch and Chinese Academies of Science, with a university in Wuhan, Huazhong (Central China) Normal University. There they have an Institute of Particle Physics, composed mainly of theorists. They are particularly interested in fancy correlations, which is also the interest of the head of our group. When they visited Nijmegen, they could try out their theoretical ideas on our data. Previously they had looked at data from an earlier experiment, and I did not have much to do with them. But now they wanted to look at data from the L3 experiment, in which I am involved. So I visited Wuhan this year to give some lectures about analysis of L3 data. While I was there, to fill the time, I also lectured on experimental aspects of testing the theory of Quantum Chromo-Dynamics and on statistics.

Prof. Liu, the head of the institute there, had told me that the weather was best in May. So I planned on two weeks in Wuhan at the end of April and beginning of May followed by ten days vacation, and then a final few days in Wuhan and a short visit to the High Energy Institute (IHEP) in Beijing, which is also involved in L3.

Since I had to be in CERN just before going to China, I decided to go to China from Geneva. I could fly KLM, changing in Amsterdam, and break my flight back, *i.e.*, come back to Holland and use the Amsterdam-Geneva ticket the next time I went to CERN.

**Wednesday, Apr. 21.** The plane Geneva-Amsterdam was a half hour late taking off; it had arrived late. But that was OK, since I had almost two hours between planes at Schiphol. However, the 747-combi that was supposed to take me to Beijing did not look too promising, what with technicians crawling about inside one of its motors. After a while they all packed up and left, and sure enough there eventually came an announcement that the flight would be delayed by two hours. Fortunately, the Dutch customs was training some dogs to sniff out passengers carrying drugs. This provided some amusement while waiting.

It also did not seem so bad because the scheduled arrival in Beijing was 8 a.m. and the plane to Wuhan was not until 4 p.m. I was sure that waiting at Schiphol was less unpleasant than waiting at the Beijing airport.

So, we took off from Schiphol two hours late in a different 747. The combi had been nearly full, and we still had the same seat assignments. That meant that the back half of the plane was empty. Everyone was asking if they could change seats. The answer, from the cockpit, was that we must wait until the plane had reached cruising altitude. The take-off procedure had been calculated assuming the plane was loaded as given by the seat assignments, and so for a safe take-off we had to stay put. After reaching altitude we were told we could move, and there was a mad rush to the rear. I managed to get three seats next to a window, and so could rest rather well for the long flight.

**Thursday, Apr. 22.** We landed the next morning at 10 in Beijing, the flight time being almost exactly the scheduled 9 hours and 20 minutes. I was met by a graduate student from IHEP, who got his undergraduate degree in Wuhan. He had my plane ticket to Wuhan. (The exchange agreement is that the host country pays travel and living expenses within its country and that the travel expenses between the two

countries is paid by the visitor's country.) He insisted on waiting with me until it was time for the plane. That was a long time, and conversation was pretty difficult, since his English was not very good. I had forebodings of a difficult visit in Wuhan. It seemed to surprise him that he could not go with me to the gate. So even after his long wait I still had to check in by myself and find the gate. Not that this was particularly difficult. Signs were in English as well as Chinese, as were the announcements. The quality of the announcements, both the loudspeakers and the pronunciation, left something to be desired. But I found the gate with no problem. We boarded on time, only to wait a half hour before leaving the gate. It was probably just the usual congestion; it had been raining and there was a lot of fog for a couple of hours around noon, which probably screwed up the schedule.

At Wuhan I was met by Prof. Liu and a student, Jinghua Fu, whom I later learned to call Hua. She would be coming to Nijmegen in mid-July for 3 months. The airport is far out of town and the traffic was pretty heavy. It took something like an hour and it was 7 by the time we got to the "Foreign Experts Guest House" at the university. Prof. Liu had a meeting, but Hua would take me to dinner. After putting my stuff in my room she and I went to the restaurant just two buildings away. I guess we would call it the Faculty Club. The fancy part seemed to be upstairs—that is where Prof. Liu headed. Hua and I went into the downstairs restaurant. There was a large party going on; several of the people seemed to have had too much to drink, and it was very noisy. Fortunately that broke up after about 20 minutes. Hua ordered, since the menu was only in Chinese. One of the dishes was loaded with little chili peppers, and I did not pay enough attention and bit into one. Unfortunately that gave Hua the impression that I could only tolerate the mild dishes, and she instructed the waitresses that I was not to have the spicy ones. Hua's English was quite good. I asked her what she was planning on doing when she came to Nijmegen, and she replied that she did not know—Prof. Liu had not told her. That seems to be the way it works in China.

**Friday, Apr. 23.** My room is rather spartan, but the bed is comfortable enough. There are 2 bedrooms, each with 2 beds, a bathroom, a living room complete with TV (but only Chinese stations), and a couple of little rooms which could be a kitchen and a pantry, but without equipment. At least for now the other bedroom is not occupied. I hope it will stay that way. There was hot water last night, but not this morning, although it was still warm enough to shave. The concierge brings 2 thermos bottles of hot water every morning, leaving them outside the door. By filling the two porcelain tea cups, which have lids, and letting them sit a while, I get a resemblance of cool water. That is a major cultural difference—the Chinese like to drink warm water.

I went to the restaurant for breakfast. Then Hua came to get me and showed me the way to the institute, only about a 5 minute walk. I have a room, which I share with a German, Martin, who is also visiting. He is finishing his Ph.D. in statistical physics at Aachen. His professor there is a Chinese, who also has an appointment in Wuhan, where he spends a couple of months per year. This time he brought his student with him. We each have a PC, and can work pretty well. I could log in on computers in Nijmegen and CERN, and though the response time was none too good, it was possible to work. I gave my first lecture—on L3. There were only a few students, since this was a very specialized topic. It seemed to go OK—I spoke very slowly and repeated things; and most of it was on transparencies. They seemed to be

interested and asked lots of questions.

A guy from the “foreign office” (of the university), Zhang Yichuan (“just call me Johnny”), came by this afternoon. Besides making sure that I am well taken care of in Wuhan, he is supposed to help me with arrangements for my vacation. I told him the apartment was fine, and that eating in the restaurant was also OK, but that I would like also to be able to eat other places. He promised to bring me some money for eating.

I had already, by e-mail, told Prof. Liu more or less what I had in mind for my vacation, and he had passed that along to Johnny. Johnny had a proposal, or rather two, essentially a package deal with all transportation and hotels and probably guides picking me up and taking me around. The difference in the two was the price, depending on whether I wanted the very, very expensive hotels or only the very expensive ones. I told him that I had something much cheaper in mind, and really only wanted hotel reservations and some tickets. He promised to come back on Monday with more information.

**Saturday, Apr. 24.** Hua met me in the afternoon to show me around the campus. The university is like a small city on a hill. There are quite a lot of trees and open areas. There is housing not only for students but also for the staff. The size of the apartments seems to vary with rank. There are also schools, from kindergarten through high school, which are not only for children of the staff. The undergraduates live in dormitories, some of which are quite old and decrepit looking. They start out 6 to a room of 20 m<sup>2</sup>. After the first degree (approx. bachelor, I guess) they get a room for 4. After getting the masters degree and becoming Ph.D. students, there are only 2 to a room.

Unfortunately it started to rain, not bad at first, but later very hard. Fortunately, Hua had an umbrella. In the interest of saving weight, I had not brought one.

We also went for a walk in town in the area of the university. There are lots of small stores, and a few larger ones. We visited a covered market, where, I think to Hua’s amazement, I compared what was available there with what is available in Nijmegen. It seemed to be mostly people selling their own produce, and actually there were not too many things that were different. Examples of different things were lotus root, bamboo shoots. We went into a department store. There were all the usual things, including a food section. I was amused in the toy department to see the large number of Western toys. For the most part it was not quite up to the quality (or price) of Play-Mobil or Fisher-Price, but it was much the same thing, including, *e.g.*, school buses. (I knew, because “school bus” was written on the vehicle, it was yellow, and its shape was that of an American school bus.) I don’t know how a Chinese child identifies with something like that. Hua agreed, but there is great interest in the West, and things Western. The book section was also interesting. There were a large number of books on learning English, and in particular on training for the TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language, I think), which is the English proficiency test on which you have to get a good score in order to be accepted, *e.g.*, by American universities, and for the test (I have forgotten its name) for admission to U.S. universities. Apparently, if you have a top score on both of these tests, you get to go to the U.S. to study. Very few return to China. It is your ticket to the Promised Land, so not surprising that there are lots of books for it.

**Sunday, Apr. 25.** Today Prof. Liu and Hua took me and Martin on a tour of Wuhan. The first, and probably most interesting, stop was the local museum. It is apparently just open, since my guidebook still refers to it as being in a different place and as having rather poor displays. Most of what it has comes from the grave of a nobleman dating from about 433 B.C. His title was translated as viscount. The tomb had been untouched—so they found everything in its original place, about 7000 items. The items were nicely displayed with explanations in both Chinese and English. The largest item, although I was not clear whether it came from the tomb or not, was a room-filling set of bronze bells—65 of them on a large wooden frame. There was a replica (the second copy) in an annex of the museum, which were played in a short demonstration. The music was very pleasant, especially when combined with a drum, a zither, and a few flute-like instruments. It took 3 or 4 people to play the bells, walking from one to the other. The smaller bells were struck with a hammer, but the largest ones near the floor were struck (poked, actually) with a long pole by a person who walked up and down the row.

Then we went to nearby East Lake. There are some islands linked by a causeway. Fish pens were to be seen at many places. Most of the fish (except, I suppose, along the coast) are raised in farms in the lakes and rivers. We drove up to the top of a hill overlooking the lake. A better way would have been to walk or take the cable car, but we did it the easiest way. There was a nice view and some monuments with phrases of famous people about how fine the East Lake is. And it *was* quite nice, though unfortunately there was quite a bit of haze.

The driver brought us to one of the fancy hotels in town and was dismissed. The hotel has three restaurants: Chinese, Western, and mixed. Prof. Liu took us to the ‘mixed’ one. There was a buffet of mostly Chinese dishes and mostly Western desserts. And there were knives and forks and no chopsticks. It was the first time Hua had ever used a knife and fork. But she learned—about as quickly as I learned the first time I had to use chopsticks. Prof. Liu ordered a bottle of Dynasty red wine, which is one of the few ‘French-style’ wines produced in China. It was drinkable, though somewhat thin. And we had real coffee. Usually in China you get instant coffee, but here you could also order it made from freshly ground beans. It was quite good, although it took forever between ordering it and its arrival. Probably there is only one person who knows how to make it.

After lunch we went to a nearby Taoist temple—quite different from Buddhist temples and not so common. There was a memorial service going on for a priest or monk who had died—interesting: Five or six people dressed in red robes sat around a table. One was the leader and stood with a sort of flat board in his hand, which meant he had the spirit or the power or something. He recited some stuff and made some stylized steps around. Someone else lighted a piece of paper wound into a torch and with it wrote symbols in the air above and around the leader. Then the leader wrote symbols in the air with a special block of wood—high in the air and low pointing to the ground and facing in several directions. This took some time and was accompanied by a drum roll for the entire time. At the end another person struck cymbals. We left at that point.

I noticed, to the side, a garden with a room marked with a hospital symbol. This was the office of some traditional Taoist doctors. We went in—for free they would feel your pulse, look at your tongue, and tell you what was wrong with you. I had a strong pulse and a red tongue, from which he concluded that I had very high cholesterol and

stomach problems. He would be glad to prescribe medicine, but I said no thanks. The German was next—he is young, 30 or so, but also had a strong pulse and a red tongue, and high cholesterol. He was not quick enough to say no to the prescription, which was immediately snatched by one of the girls working there and taken off to be filled. Then he said that he didn't really want to buy, and they tore up the prescription. The medicines seemed to be things like powdered, dried sea horse or other sea plants or creatures. Hua was told she had certain problems which she didn't translate further except to say that she didn't have them although many women got them later. But with Prof. Liu they hit it lucky—he has whatever they said he has, and he even bought their stuff. He said he thought it would help him. It was clear to me that these guys tell you you have something which is common for people like you, *e.g.*, high cholesterol for westerners. Then, of course, there is a good chance that you do have it and will be impressed enough to buy their remedies.

Back outside, in front of their office, there was a wooden table with a rim around its edge and a huge stone ball. This is used to grind their medicines. (See the picture of me on my home page <http://home.cern.ch/metzger>.)

Then we went to see the “old” bridge, the first one across the Changjiang River, or as we call it the Yangtze or Yangtse or Yangzi, depending on which transliteration scheme you use. The bridge is a double-decker with cars on top and trains underneath. We walked across it. I was surprised at the lack of traffic on the river. There were a few boats, but nothing like the Waal in Nijmegen. Then we got a taxi back to the university.

In the evening there was to be a “drinking party to welcome our foreign guests” starting at 7:30. After peanuts and a few glasses of wine or beer or cola, during which everyone introduced himself, the lights went out and they brought in a large two-tiered birthday cake with “Happy Birthday Wes Metzger” spouted on top in English and, they said, in Chinese. Prof. Liu had seen my birth-date on the copy of my passport that I had sent him as part of the paperwork to come. Then they sang *Happy Birthday*. They said that *Happy Birthday* is commonly sung in China, but usually in Chinese. I cut the cake, and we sat around and ate cake and talked for a couple of hours until 10. It was my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, which is a special birthday in China, where years traditionally follow cycles of 12 animals and 5 elements. So 60 completes the entire cycle.

**Monday, Apr. 26.** Today was my first lecture on QCD. Tomorrow I lecture on statistics. These two subjects will alternate. Johnny was supposed to come today to talk about my trip, but didn't. Maybe tomorrow. There is still plenty of time.

**Wednesday, Apr. 28.** Lectures seem to be going OK; still no sign of Johnny. About the trip, there is still enough time, but I would like to get some money. I am getting a little tired of always eating in the same place, although I can't really complain about the food. Lunch and dinner are fine. There are always two dishes, of which one is usually vegetables and one contains meat or fish, plus rice and soup. The soup has repeated a few times, but the other dishes not. It has been quite good, with the exception of some of the soups, but then I am not usually particularly fond of soup. However, breakfast is something else. For a light breakfast person like me, the fried egg (which you eat with chopsticks), meat-filled dumplings, noodles, pickled vegetables, thin rice gruel, *etc.*, is a bit much, although I am getting used to it.

Prof. Liu informed me today that I was expected to give a lecture on Friday at another university, a teachers college in Jingzhou. It is to be to physics students, but their level is middle undergraduate, and its being a teachers college, that is none too high. So it should be a fairly general talk. This was a surprise for me. It seems that previous visitors from Nijmegen had also done this, but no one had mentioned it to me before. And I have only a day and a half to prepare it. Since the president of China had visited CERN only a month before, and since the spokesman of L3 is Chinese-American, I decided to talk about L3, CERN, and international collaboration—it would even end up being politically correct.

**Thursday, Apr. 29.** Johnny came today. After about a half hour I managed to convince him that I could travel alone. “You don’t know the language.” “You could get lost.” “People might cheat you.” “We are responsible for your safety.” But I had traveled alone four years ago, and whatever people might cheat me out of would be much smaller than the difference between the cost of his package tours and what I had in mind. Finally he gave in. He will get me the plane ticket for the first leg of the trip, Wuhan to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. And he will call the hotels to reserve a room, for which I have given him the phone numbers. But he says he cannot buy bus tickets or boat tickets for me—I will have to do that myself.

Also, he gave me “pocket money.” From now on I have to pay my own meals. With ¥60 per day that should be no problem.

At 5 Hua and I were picked up by a professor from the teachers college in Jingzhou. Hua is going along to translate. The level of English comprehension among the prospective teachers is apparently not so high.

The professor, Gang Chen (with the names in Western order), got his degree in Wuhan, and in fact hopes to return to Wuhan to do a Ph.D. Furthermore, he hopes to come to Nijmegen for a few months later in the year. He seems nice enough, but his English is very poor.

We arrived in Jingzhou about 8 and were taken to eat. It was a sort of spicy hot pot with a special fish from the only river nearby with clear water, a mountain river, or so they said. (A hot pot is like a fondue, but with a spicy broth in which all sorts of things may be put to cook. With your chopsticks you retrieve out of the broth what you want to eat.) The fish was very good. There were also other dishes which kept coming, and later they added bean curd noodles to the hot pot as well as some leaves of what looked like lettuce. It was all quite tasty except that the fish kept getting hotter and hotter as the water evaporated and the spices became more concentrated. They (except for Hua, who doesn’t drink) drank beer in deference to me, although they would have preferred rice wine. Etiquette says that you only drink when someone toasts you. So there is lots of toasting.

The hotel is acceptable, but barely. This seems really to be the sticks. There are spittoons everywhere. The bathroom looks like before I was born. But there is a TV. And there are tea bags and the usual thermos cans of hot water. Hua and I went over my transparencies and what I would say so that she would be a bit prepared to translate. And she added, at my insistence, some Chinese to a few of the transparencies.

**Friday, Apr. 30.** Gang came at 7:30 this morning. We went to one of the many little hole-in-the-wall restaurants for a breakfast of dumplings, spicy stir-fried meat, a

sort of turnip soup. As we were eating, a Western couple passed by, and asked where I was from. They were in Jingzhou for a year teaching, and apparently were anxious to see a Western face. My lecture was supposed to be at 8, but we were late. There was a big red sign with gold characters at the entrance to the university announcing my talk. I could, of course, not read any of it except for the “Wes Metzger” in the middle. There was another sign, similar but different, in front of the physics building. At this point we were only a few minutes late, but before giving the lecture I had to meet several people from the university, although it was far from clear to me who everyone was. We met in a small room (staff lounge?), and little happened but that they said hello and gave us bottles of water, in case we got thirsty.

Then the lecture. I had said that I needed a overhead projector, and there was one. I was introduced, with so many superlatives that I felt rather embarrassed. But then walking to the projector, I tripped over the cord, pulling it from the wall socket. It took five or ten minutes to get that fixed, because there was in fact no plug on the cord—the bare wires were pushed into the socket.

Giving a talk with an interpreter goes very slowly. Hua did, I think, a wonderful job of translating. She ad-libbed a lot, giving more explanation when she thought it necessary, and leaving out things she thought unimportant, which she later admitted when I commented, tongue in cheek, on the large disparities between the lengths of her sentences and mine. Thanks to being late and to the approximately doubling of time due to translating, there were only five or ten minutes left when I finished, just right for a few questions. Some of the students were clearly interested and asked some good questions.

After the talk, Gang took us to a tower outside of town. It is on the banks of the Yangtze. He pointed out the marker of how high the water had come the previous year. It was nearly to the top of the dike. The tower, 7 stories high, about 400 years old, is built from 2347 stones. We went in, offered incense to the large Buddha, and climbed the stairs to the top—reminiscent of climbing narrow church towers—where we could look out over the Yangtze. At each floor there was another Buddha, but you did not have to make an offering. Outside, around the tower, there were a great many old stone slabs with writing on them. However, the characters have changed so much over the years that neither Hua nor Gang could read them. There was a pleasant park around the tower with clumps of bamboo providing shade.

Then we went back to the hotel and were told to rest while Gang went back to the college to get some other people to go to lunch. I did not want to rest and took a walk, which unfortunately took a lot longer than planned because I missed a turn on the way back. So they were getting worried, and a couple of them had been riding around on bicycles trying to find me. One of them, Gang, succeeded, but only when I was almost back to the hotel anyway. It was rather embarrassing, but I did see some of the town that I otherwise would not have. Jingzhou is not a very large city—about the size of Nijmegen.

It was a nice lunch, again with a hot pot, but with a different kind of fish, a dish with eel, a couple of vegetable dishes, and some others which I can't describe. There were actually potatoes in one of them. At the end of the meal they asked if I wanted rice or noodles. By this time I was full, and there was still lots of food left on the table. I said that I didn't really want rice, but some came anyway. Contrary to the way it is in Chinese restaurants in the West, they don't eat rice or noodles with the main part of the meal, but rather at the end (to fill you up in case you are still hungry), at least

at dinner parties. During the meal there was constant toasting—again with beer.

If I understood the introductions, the other people at lunch were the chairman of the physics department, a physics teacher, and the dean of science. Gang speaks very poor English; the others apparently none at all.

After lunch we went back to the hotel to “rest” again while Gang went back to the college to find the teacher who would guide us around town in the afternoon.

He took us to the museum, which has a very nice display of things, including the body from a tomb found in the vicinity. It dates from a few hundred B.C. at the time of the Chu kingdom of which Jingzhou was the capital. The man was a middle-level civil servant and about 60 years old, if I remember correctly. The tomb was about 10 meters deep in rather humid ground. So the temperature variations were small. The tomb was wooden, with three chambers with doors. In the coffin chamber there was a double coffin, *i.e.*, a coffin within a coffin, each of which was hermetically sealed. Further, there was a fluid which kept the tomb humid and perhaps worked as a biocide. All of this accounts for the remarkable preservation of the body. It was not dried out; the skin was still placid and the organs had a “normal” appearance. The body was on display, as were the other things found in the tomb, the most interesting being lacquer-ware and some statues of servants about 40 cm high. Before finding this tomb, it had been thought that such high quality lacquer-ware only appeared much later.

The Jingzhou city walls still surround the city, and are in good shape (restored, of course, in many places). They are not so thick as those of Xi-an, which I saw on my previous trip to China in 1995, but still impressive. After the museum, we went to the East gate, which is the nicest of the four gates to the city, larger and fancier than the one I saw on my too long walk before lunch. From the top there was a nice view. There was also a German tourist group visiting the gate and the crafts and souvenir store within it.

I walked off a bit, leaving Hua and the physics teacher who was guiding us, in order to take a picture. After I had taken the picture three young men came up, or rather one of the three did. They were students at a petroleum institute, he said, and we talked a bit. Then he asked if they could take my picture with him. I said sure, and one of his buddies took a picture. Hua and the teacher came over, perhaps thinking I needed rescuing. The one who had his picture taken with me asked her (in Chinese, but she later told me) if she was my translator. She said that she had replied, “No, he is my teacher.” That sort of surprised them.

We went back to the college and ran into Gang. It seems he had just been assigned a flat in a new building. Housing, apparently, goes with the job, and he had high enough rank to get one of the new flats. He asked if we would like to see it, a chance I couldn’t resist. It had just been finished, and he had not yet moved in. So it would be almost empty, he warned us. It was on the top floor of a six-story building, and no elevator. The distance between that building and others is minuscule. He said the apartment was 120 square meters. It appeared quite nice: a reasonably sized living room, a small dining room, a small kitchen, and three bedrooms, which I suspect will be two bedrooms and a workroom, since he and his wife have only one child (in conformance with official policy).

After seeing the apartment, Hua and I walked to the restaurant—the same one as at noon. Gang went on his bike. It was also the same people as at noon, with a few additions: the teacher who had shown us around and a woman, who I think was also a



teacher but may have been someone's wife (or both, of course). It was just too much for some of them to have only beer at such a festive occasion. They ordered a bottle of rice "wine" and divided it up in their glasses. There were also little porcelain cups the size of a thimble. The procedure was to pour a thimbleful from your glass into the cup and make a toast to someone. Then both would drink the stuff and show the other one the empty cup to prove they had drunk it all. It reminded me of college drinking parties. I was persuaded to try it, but once was enough for me—that stuff is real fire-water. The meal was again a hot pot with this time a tortoise—delicious, but not particularly easy to eat with chopsticks, since the pieces were large and the meat is still fastened to the shell—and a large variety of other dishes.

During the meal, as at noon, I sat next to Hua and talked with her a bit. The others would sometimes urge me to try some particular dish. But the language barrier was so great that there was virtually no conversation between them and me. They talked among themselves, and occasionally with Hua. Hua had told me earlier—when she was showing me around the campus—of the great interest the Chinese had in what was happening in Kosovo. Most of them seem to support the Chinese government position that NATO is interfering in the internal affairs of Serbia and is therefore in the wrong. It seems that little is reported about atrocities and refugees. Hua herself is not so sure who is right—she listens to Voice of America—and we had discussed this. At one point during dinner she told me that everyone was discussing Kosovo. A bit later one of them asked me, in the best English I had as yet heard from any of them, "Is Holland in NATO?" I replied, "Yes," and that was pretty much the extent of my conversation with them. I found it rather strange that they didn't want to hear my views on Kosovo, but probably they are not brought up to discuss politics with strangers, or perhaps they thought it would embarrass me.

We were done with dinner by 8:30. Hua and I agreed it was sort of early. She said she had been ordered not to let me out on my own. She asked if I was tired and wanted to go upstairs. I said not really, but since I wasn't allowed to go out on my own, it was up to her what we did. So we went out and wandered around town for almost two hours. It was very pleasant walking and talking with her. I learned a lot about China, and she is interested in Europe and the U.S.

**Saturday, May 1.** Gang was to pick us up between 7 and 7:30 to take us to the bus station. At 7:30 there was a knock on my door accompanied by a boy who said "Good morning, may we come in?" It was Gang's son, who is 12 and almost through his first year of English. He had lots of stock questions, and his pronunciation was pretty good. I told him it was better than his father's.

They had a present for me—a replica on quarter scale of a lacquer-ware statue in the museum. It is a "phoenix", a mythological bird (but not from the same myth as a Western phoenix) shaped like a crane with a deer's antlers on its back and standing on a lion. The crane and the deer, were apparently signs of good luck or happiness, and the lion is to protect you.

We went to breakfast—dumplings (2 kinds), stewed dates, and a sort of rice gruel, all but the last very tasty. We got to the bus station just before a bus came. Unfortunately it was almost full so that Hua and I could not sit together. The trip took about four hours. Part of it, through the countryside, was interesting—people planting rice or plowing the field, usually with an ox although occasionally with a horse. We took a local bus from the bus station in Wuhan to the campus, not so far actually. And

there, after I had said that I was not hungry and felt that I had done nothing but eat for the last two days, we had a small lunch in a little restaurant on campus that students go to.

I had rather expected there to be some kind of celebration. After all, it was May Day, and China is Communist. But no, it seemed to be just an ordinary Saturday. Hua confirmed, when asked, that there was nothing special going on.

In the evening, I was really on my own for the first time. I went to a little restaurant near the campus which was full, which I always take as an encouraging sign. One person spoke a few words of English, but what he told me I would get was not what I got. It was a plate full of dumplings and a plate with tofu—one solid block—surrounded by wedges of aged eggs (the ones where the yolk has turned green and the whites have become translucent). The tofu was pretty good; I have had better dumplings; the eggs were fine. That, plus a beer (¥4=f1=\$0.50 for 64 cl), came to ¥23. I also bought something for breakfast at a store near the restaurant.

**Sunday, May 2.** This was the first day that I was completely on my own. I took a bus into Wuhan to the Yangtze, where I had been with Prof. Liu and Hua the week before. There were a lot of people standing and talking and looking at the river. A particular attraction was an old man fishing with a thruddhistow-net.

I walked across the bridge and down a few blocks to the Buddhist Guiyuan Temple. I knew I was getting close when all the shops along the street were selling sticks of incense and assorted Buddhist souvenirs. There was an assortment of beggars near the entrance. I bought my ticket (¥3) and went in. I was not overly impressed, except with one building which contained a several hundred life-size statues of disciples of Buddha, all different, sitting on benches. They were discussing, laughing, drinking, *etc.*

Then I took a bus up to the old concession area of Wuhan. The old western buildings are sort of run down and used for various purposes. I walked around a while, found a nice street market with vegetables, fish, meat, chicken—everything fresh, the fish swimming in tubs of water, the meat hanging from hooks, the chickens still alive.

Then, with the help of someone who saw me standing, studying my Chinese map on which only some of the bus routes are indicated, I found the right bus to get me back to the university. The young man who helped me said he was a doctor, but was now in business with a friend in order to earn more money.

**Monday–Friday, May 2–7.** Work, work, work. Giving a two-hour lecture every day kept me pretty busy. One day Johnny came along with my airplane ticket. And he had written out my schedule in Chinese, so that I could ask directions more easily. I did not really deem this adequate and got Hua to write out all the specific phrases I thought I would need, such as “I want a bus to Xindu”, knowing full well that you always forget at least one. Johnny also told me that a university car would take me to the airport, and that he would ask one of the students to accompany me. I said the car was very nice, but that a student really wasn’t necessary.

One evening I stumbled into a hot-pot restaurant without realizing it. Everyone was very considerate and kept bringing more things to eat, most of it very spicy. It was all you could eat for ¥38, including beer and a cola they brought me (unasked) with dessert. About half of the stuff was sea food, some of it rather tough and tasteless.

Some of the fish was delicious. Most of the meat was so spicy I could just barely eat it.

Other nights I ate at other restaurants using my phrase book, or simply pointing at things on other tables, with varying degrees of success. One restaurant I went back to a second time. The first time it was ¥25 for chicken with peanuts and a braised eggplant dish plus a beer, all of which was delicious. The second time was almost as good, and cheaper.

Another night there was a banquet with Prof. Liu, the physics professor from Aachen, Martin and his wife, who had arrived a couple of days before, a couple of people (Johnny and his boss) from the university foreign office, and the President of the university. The president had been only recently appointed. He is a young mathematician, who studied in England; so his English was very good. He seems to be setting about to modernize the university. There was lots of conversation, mostly on a superficial level, but still pleasant. The food was excellent, more refined than in Jingzhou, as were the table manners of the Chinese. Martin and I were presented with souvenirs of the university—some brochures and a black plastic plate with the touristic highlights of Wuhan engraved in it.

**Saturday, May 8.** I was up early to leave for the airport at 6. Prof. Liu came to wish me a good trip, and Hua came to accompany me to the airport. That was nice, although unnecessary, since she has never flown before, and so I knew my way around the airport better (you've seen one airport, you've seen them all) than she, despite the language.

The flight to Chengdu was fine, and there was a bus for ¥8 which brought me quite near to my hotel. I decided to see some parks, and a Taoist monastery. That should have been easy enough, but it seemed that the bus did not really go as far as the map indicated it should. So there was a bit of extra walking. And another bus, did not stop where I wanted to get off—apparently the bus stop had been canceled because of construction.

I saw an accident today. It is amazing there are not more. Basically, everyone ignores stop lights—maybe because there are so few. Cars and buses sort of abide by them, but pedestrians and bikes never. The cars had green and came streaming along. A three-wheeled bike, the type used for making deliveries or bringing wares to market, saw a break in traffic and moved out into the first lane but couldn't get further. A big bus, horn blaring, bore down on him. So he pushed out into the second lane. The cars there managed to avoid him, but the bus, which tried to go behind him, caught the back of the bike. The bike was pretty well smashed up. The man was thrown to the ground but could get up. The bus stopped and the driver got out. After some heated discussion the bus went on—I don't know how it was settled.

I went to a restaurant, visited by Mao himself in 1958 according to my guidebook, which turned out to be a Western-Chinese restaurant. So, knives and forks and rather bland dishes, although not bad. But it also had disco lighting and “music.” If I had known that when I walked in, I would have left immediately, but it only started later, unfortunately before I was done.

**Sunday, May 9.** I was up early and one of the first to breakfast, which starts at 6:30. The choice between Western and Chinese breakfast was easily decided—experience has shown that the Eastern idea of a Western breakfast is pretty strange.

A short walk brought me to a bus stop from which I could get a bus to the Xi-men bus station in the north-west of town, from which I could get a bus to Dujiangyan, about 55 km NW and the site of an early water management project. Just before arriving at the bus station, there was something of a traffic jam caused by a demonstration of young people. They were marching down the street carrying signs, which I, of course, could not read. There were policemen clearing the way for them, so it was clearly an officially approved demonstration, and so not what had first occurred to me, namely a demonstration in commemoration of the Tiananmen Square massacre whose tenth anniversary was approaching.

I bought my bus ticket, using a slip of paper on which Hua had written “I want a bus to Dujiangyan.” On the way out of town, we saw several buses going into town which were crammed full with young people; I am sure it was impossible to fit another person into these buses. People in my bus were pointing and laughing such that they clearly found it rather ridiculous. It was clear that the demonstration was going to be a big one.

The large, new bus station in Dujiangyan is on the outskirts of town. I had lots of time and felt energetic, and walked through the city, and then through a park to get to the famous water works. The city was rather nice, with broad streets. There were side-walk tea houses and a market selling just about anything you could think of along the banks of the fast-flowing river. There was a nice covered bridge across the river. Although clearly new, as evidenced by the concrete foundations, its appearance was traditional, with lots of figures adorning it.

The walk through the park turned out to pass through a monastery, requiring a small entrance fee. There were nice views out over the valley and the rivers. Leaving the monastery on the other side, next to the river, it became very touristy with lots of souvenir shops and fast-food stands, as well as entrances to some more Buddhist temples or monasteries. It seemed that the thing to do was to cross the river on a suspension bridge. Everyone found that quite an adventure, as it bounced around and swayed so much that it was almost impossible to keep your balance. Once on the other side, one could walk along the river to the dam, modern now, of course, but I guess at the place of the original installation. The problem had been, back around 250 B.C., that the Min river silted up and that there were severe floods. The solution was to divide the river up into various channels by a series of earth dams. This provided an irrigation system and controlled flooding. The downstream end of one of the channels was at the place where all the buildup occurred. This channel was normally blocked off, but once a year it was opened and the resulting outpour of water was strong enough that it washed all the built-up silt away. At least that is what I could piece together out of the “descriptions” in my guidebooks. The system has been expanded during the years and been very successful—no more floods in 2200 years, and the area is one of China’s most fertile, thanks to the irrigation.

Back in town, I walked back towards the bus station. I had bought my ticket to come at the official bus station window in Chengdu for ¥8. Here there were several buses vying for fares a few blocks before the bus station. After some haggling among the conductors from different busses, I chose one for ¥5. It was nearly full, so we left with little delay.

Walking back to the hotel, I passed several apartment buildings with large signs hanging out the windows. On one building, two of the signs were in English: “Castrate Clinton” and “NATO=NAZI”. The first sounded like not such a bad idea, albeit a

little late. The second made clear that the demonstrations that day must have been about Kosovo. Back in the hotel, I heard about the bombing of the Chinese embassy, and that there had been a huge demonstration in Chengdu (and in most large Chinese cities) that afternoon. A young man in the travel agency in the hotel, assured us of his outrage and of his willingness to die for his country if need be. Someone asked if it was safe, as a Westerner, to go out. He told us that the outrage of the Chinese people was directed against the Western governments, not against Western people—we should not worry. And, in fact, I did not worry. Nor did I experience any problems. But then, I did not go to any of the demonstrations, where crowds can always get out of control and do crazy things, although I might have if I had known where they would be.

For dinner I went to a little restaurant not far from the hotel. It was clearly a simple restaurant with lots of ordinary Chinese there eating. Pointing at some things that looked good, I got a tasty and inexpensive meal. No one expressed any anti-Western sentiments.

**Monday, May 10.** This morning was devoted to the Panda Research Base outside of Chengdu. It is quite some distance outside of town, and so remote that there is no public transportation to get there. That means either a very expensive taxi, a long ride on a rented bike, or a tour. The hotel arranged “tours”, *i.e.*, transportation plus entry fee, which were not that expensive compared to the taxi fare, if there was more than one person. Fortunately there was—a retired Dutch school teacher, and three young Canadians from Vancouver. The Panda station is partly financed by the WWF. A large part of it consists of large open areas where the pandas are free to roam. You can only observe from the perimeter, which means that the pandas you see (if you see them) are at quite a distance. But there are also pandas in smaller enclosures, which are still much larger than in most zoos. There was a mother with a baby a few months old inside one of the buildings. It was a beautiful display of parent/child interaction. Mother sat there practically immobile, calmly eating bamboo, while the cub climbed all over her, up the bars of the door, and on a tree trunk in the middle of the room. About half the climbing attempts resulted in a fall. Highly amusing.

In the museum, one could learn a great deal about pandas. It seems they weigh only 100 grams at birth and are about as long as your hand. One of the reasons, they say, that reproduction is so difficult is that the male’s penis is very short compared to the length of the female’s vagina. The panda seems to be an evolutionary relic—contemporary to the mammoth and saber-toothed tiger. Relatives who evolved are raccoons and modern bears.

Besides the Giant Pandas, there were also Lesser Pandas—smaller, brown creatures, who seemed to spend most of their time in tree tops.

In the afternoon I got a bus out to Xindu, about 18 km NE of Chengdu, to see the Buddhist Monastery of Precious Light. The bus was rather difficult to find—instead of being in front of the train station, it was several blocks east of it, but people kept telling me to go further so that I eventually found it. These mini-buses are always so amusing. There is a driver and one or two conductors/hustlers, who try to get people to take their bus instead of a competitor’s, sometimes almost dragging people aboard. They drive very slowly looking for prospective passengers until they are full, or a cop moves them on.

The monastery was nice. The star attractions were a 13-story pagoda from about

900 and a great hall containing row upon row of 2m-high terracotta statues, about 500 Buddhas and disciples.

For dinner I went to what my guidebook called “one of Chengdu’s most famous and authentic Sichuan restaurants.” Downstairs it was sort of like a cafe with many tables at which you could order drinks and snacks. Upstairs was a nice restaurant with tanks containing swimming and crawling things to eat. It was quite good.

**Tuesday, May 11.** Today I tried to get a bus to Dazu. The guidebook said there were several buses a day. When I first asked in the hotel, the guy said that there was only one, at 2:30. Not trusting that, I went to the bus station (next door to the hotel). There the timetable on the wall listed five buses, the first at 7:00 AM, which is what I wanted. I asked a second person at the hotel who said that there were several buses. So I felt better. But just to be on the safe side, I also asked about buses to Chongqing. No worry—lots of buses—every 20 minutes from the East Terminal.

So this morning I was up early to catch the 7:00 bus. But at the bus station ticket office, when I showed my piece of paper with “I want to go to Dazu” in Chinese, after which I had added “7:00”, I was told something in Chinese and given my piece of paper back with something which I took to mean “PM” and “2:30”, which corresponded with one of the times on the timetable. So the first guy in the hotel was right.

The nice thing about being up so early is that not many others are. So I hiked the few blocks to get to a bus line to go to the East Terminal, which like all the new bus terminals is on the edge of the city. There everything was modern and clean with signs in English as well as Chinese. The express bus cost ¥98.50 (about £25 or \$12.50) for something like 350 km in a modern air-conditioned Volvo bus. I arrived in Chongqing around 11:30 after having seen some nice countryside and two horrible movies with lots of explosions, car chases, kung-fu fights, *etc.*

After looking all around, I finally gave up on finding the bus and took a taxi to my hotel. Since I had come directly rather than to Dazu for a day, I was a day early. But that made no difference; the hotel had a room.

Chongqing (previously Chungking) is certainly hilly, which I suppose is why it is also known as “Mountain City.” The old town is on a sort of peninsula between the Yangtze and Jialing rivers, and there are cable cars across the rivers, as well as some new bridges. Chongqing was Chiang Kaishek’s headquarters during World War II, but I did not visit his prisons outside of town nor the village for Communist visitors, also outside of town.

I spent the afternoon walking around. In the old section of town the streets were narrow, often so steep and with stairs so that you only could walk, or perhaps use a motorbike. A street market had the usual display of vegetables, spices, butcher stalls, and living chickens, ducks, fish, *etc.* At the top of one hill was a small park with a stand selling tea and lots of benches and tables, nearly all full with people playing some card games, which I did not understand, and other people watching. Everywhere the old buildings are being torn down and “skyscrapers,” actually only 20 or 30 stories, are going up. In the center of town there are some streets reserved for pedestrians amongst modern buildings housing up-scale stores and some construction sites where even more modern buildings are appearing. I even found a Carrefour supermarket—very similar to those in France, except of course with Chinese food and prices, although there were a number of French products too.

**Wednesday, May 12.** I went to bed early last night but had trouble sleeping—they were working late on one of the skyscrapers nearby. Breakfast was at 7. I had no problem getting up for that since about a dozen Chinese on my floor were also waiting for 7 and watching loud TV while doing so. A Chinese breakfast: rice soup, two types of pickled vegetables, peanuts, dumplings, a hard-boiled egg.

The floor attendant checked my room that I hadn't broken or stolen anything and gave me a paper so that I could get my ¥50 deposit back, which I did. I tried taking the bus to the train station from where I thought I could walk to the bus station, but I stayed on one stop too far. (I should have known better when almost everyone got off at the previous stop.) I set off walking in what I thought was the direction of the bus station, but got lost and finally flagged a taxi. Still, I had saved a bit: ¥1 for the bus plus ¥5 for the taxi was still cheaper than the day before when the taxi from the bus station to the hotel cost ¥11.30. And I saw another part of the city.

It is a big bus station, but luckily there are receptionists to help ignorant passengers. They even know some set phrases of English. So one of them guided me to the proper gate. I bought my ticket and she pointed to the right bus. In Dazu, about 100 km west of Chongqing, I found the hotel with no problem and checked in. Again, there was no problem that I arrived on the wrong day. Then I headed back to the bus station to catch a minibus to Baoding. As usual, I watched how much other people paid and offered the same—I make sure I have lots of small banknotes (there are almost no coins).

Around Baoding it is pleasant hilly countryside with terraced rice paddies. But the big attraction is the grotto sculptures, which date from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are carved in a U-shaped cliff where there is a natural overhang above the sculptures, which protects them from rain. Most of them are in surprisingly good condition. There are some statues, but most of the sculptures are high- or bas-relief. Most depict Buddhas or Buddhist, Taoist, or Confucian saints, but some are scenes from everyday life or plants and animals. The biggest single piece is a 31-m long, 5-m high, reclining Buddha.

After the sculptures, I visited a nearby Buddhist temple and walked around the countryside a bit, watching peasants tending their rice paddies.

I went back to the town to get a minibus back to Dazu. There was one waiting, but empty. So I walked around a bit more. When I came back, it was still empty. The woman tried to persuade me to get in. I pointed to my watch. She pulled out two ¥10 banknotes and indicated that for that much they would leave immediately. I said no and walked off. A few minutes later a second minibus pulled up, and a few minutes after that I saw that two locals had gotten into it. So I walked back. The first lady made motions towards her, still empty, bus. But I figured the chances were that the other one would leave first. So I got into it. The first lady came over and indicated that for ¥10 I could go with her. The second woman, in whose bus I sat, pulled out a ¥5 note, undercutting the first woman. I pulled out a ¥2 note (the amount I had paid to come to Baoding in the morning), and they all had a good laugh—I knew what the fare was. A few minutes later we left.

Back in Dazu, I looked around for a place to eat. There didn't seem to be many real restaurants, and I finally ate at a sidewalk place. Along this one street for several blocks there were sidewalk restaurants, one after the other. That consisted of usually a man and woman with a charcoal fire and a wok. Things they had to eat were on display, like at a market. You just pointed to what you wanted and they fixed it for

you. There were also tables and chairs, making it rather pleasant to sit and eat and watch everyone walking by. It was also quite tasty, and cheap.

**Thursday, May 13.** This morning I saw the sculptures at Beishan, a hill (“mountain”) on the edge of Dazu. They were smaller and simpler than those yesterday at Baoding, and not so well preserved. But they were still worth seeing, I guess.

Then I got the bus back to Chongqing. This time I easily found the bus from the bus station into town. It was hot, around 30°C, and I didn’t feel like doing too much. Besides, I felt I had pretty well seen Chongqing. Fortunately, the hotel had not really ordered the boat ticket I had asked for two days ago. So I could get one for today. I walked around a bit and bought some supplies for the boat trip.

After a hassle boarding—the boat was a half hour late—I finally got into my cabin. It is a second-class cabin (there is no first class), which means it has a wash basin and four beds, and not much room for anything else. There are three young Chinese guys for the other beds, who seem to know each other. I managed to get a meal in the galley, by pointing to some things others were eating. The galley is a sanitary mess. Everyone just spits out bones and such that he doesn’t want to eat. After a while you don’t feel very good just walking over the floor. And that was nothing compared to the toilets.

**Friday, May 14.** This morning it was raining, even lightning and thunder, for the first time on my “vacation.” So it was nice to be on the boat rather than walking somewhere. Later the rain stopped, but it remained very hazy with low clouds until well into the afternoon. I stayed mostly in the cabin reading and watching the river banks go by—nothing spectacular. Tomorrow we will get to the Three Gorges.

One of the Chinese apparently got off at one of the several stops, since I haven’t seen him since this morning.

**Saturday, May 15.** We were supposed to pass the Three Gorges in daylight. And we entered the first one about 2 minutes after sunrise, or so it seemed. I saw much of it through the window while shaving: steep rock walls up to 700 m high, which seemed even higher seen from the boat.

Then we stopped at Wushan. Most people, including me, went on a tour of the Lesser Three Gorges, three gorges on the Daning River, a tributary of the Yangtze. To get there we were herded into buses, which after 30 minutes or so arrived at docks where smaller boats were tied up waiting for us. The bus ride was not uneventful, as it went through a town with streets only slightly wider than the bus and traffic in both directions.

Almost everyone seemed to be on a tour. So they all had tour guides looking after them. I, the only Westerner as far as I could see, was alone. But that was not much of a problem. People found a boat with a free seat, and after paying I could have it. This river is much smaller than the Yangtze, and the gorges less deep. But seen from the small boat (maybe 40 people) it was still quite spectacular. At some narrow places it was very difficult to proceed, because the current was so strong. I am not sure whether the water was particularly low, but in any case we were frequently scraping bottom. At one place there were several kids begging. They had small baskets on the ends of long poles. They ran along the banks holding out the pole, and hoping that



we would put some money in the basket. Occasionally they would fall into the water, which everyone found amusing.

At the point where the boats could go no further, we stopped and could get out. On the banks were lots of food and souvenir stands. You could also walk further along the banks to where the river branches. Along the smaller branch we have the Mini Three Gorges. At this point the river is so shallow and narrow that you can only use canoes or rafts. It looked as though it would have been fun. But there was no time.

It would have been nice if the trip could have ended here with a bus back to our Yangtze boat, but we had to go back the way we came. The Chinese around me were friendly, but none spoke English. One woman made sure that I got a seat when we got back onto the boat and also on the bus. She was also concerned that I had gotten something to eat.

The Chinese who share my cabin had bought some fried potatoes (with interesting spices on them) and some beer at one of the food stalls on shore, and they shared it all with me. Shortly after getting back on the big boat it started to rain. The rain was not too heavy, but with the low-lying clouds, there was not enough light for pictures as we went through the second gorge. Nevertheless it was very pleasant scenery. The rain and mist added to the atmosphere. You could imagine better what it must have been like 100 years ago with small boats struggling in a storm. I stood on the rear deck along with several others. There was an overhang from the deck above so that we were out of the rain. There was a girl whom I had talked with briefly while waiting for the bus at Wushan. She was a student and one of the few on the boat not on a tour.

By the third gorge it was raining much harder and by about the middle of it it was definitely dark. So we could not see very much, and could see nothing of the big Sanxia Dam being built, which will eventually flood the Three Gorges out of existence. But we could see the flood lights and hear the sound of construction. It is apparently a round-the-clock operation.

We finally arrived in Yichang just before midnight. It was still raining. I was, I think, the first off the boat. Given the hard rain, I took a taxi to my hotel. It looked like a very fancy hotel. Given the time of day, I was a bit worried, since I was arriving a day early. But fortunately they still had a room in the “business building,” which seems to be extra cheap rooms for officials and state guests or something like that. At any rate I was told a price of only ¥120, quite a bit cheaper than the posted room price of ¥320. However, the “business building” rooms looked like they had escaped the renovation the hotel went through a few years ago; at any rate I would not have rated it \*\*\*. But it was more than adequate for one night, and much better than the boat. The bell hop refused a tip—only in China! I rather suspect that it is a state-owned hotel.

**Sunday, May 16.** I was up not too late and checked out with the pleasant surprise that they knocked about a third off the already low price of the room. I’m not sure why—maybe because I paid with a credit card, which in China just might mean a discount.

I walked to the bus station, even though it was raining slightly. It wasn’t far. I went to the special window for “foreign and dumb people” and bought my ticket. The bus left about 15 minutes later, and I was back in Wuhan by 1 o’clock.

I ran into Prof. Liu immediately on entering the campus. He was surprised to see me back a day early.

I took a bath and changed clothes—my pants, especially, were rather grubby after a week in dirty buses and the boat. Then I went to the lab., where I met Hua on my way to my office. She came by a bit later to hear about my trip and to show me her results so far. Around 7, it was time to go eat, and I asked her if she would go with me. We went to the little place just off campus where I had been twice before. They all recognize me there. We ate slowly and talked a lot, which is not very Chinese. Hua was surprised that it was 9 by the time we finished.

**Monday, May 17.** The heat and the rain of the last few days had brought out the mosquitoes and such. Between the heat and the mosquitoes I slept rather poorly and was up fairly early. I rearranged my suitcases in preparation for leaving tomorrow. I spent the day getting caught up on e-mail over a very slow connection to Nijmegen. Hua had more results today and we discussed what she should do next. Around 7, when I was leaving the building, she came running up to ask if she could take me out to eat. So we went to the same restaurant. Again it was about 9 when we left.

**Tuesday, May 18.** I was up early. Prof. Liu had come to say good-bye and make sure that the car was there. Then Hua accompanied me to the airport. Since it was so early, there was little traffic, and we arrived an hour and a half before the flight. We talked for a half hour or so before saying good-bye. If all goes well Hua will come to Nijmegen in July.

The flight to Beijing was uneventful. It had rained hard, so traffic had been worse than usual. That meant that no one was there to meet me. But they came after a half hour or so. Again, it was a graduate student who had the task of meeting me, together with a car and driver from the High Energy Institute. I was brought to the institute's guest house, where I had stayed for a few days after the Lepton-Photon conference four years previously. I was met by one of the L3 physicists, whom I knew from CERN, and told when my talk would be. He would meet me before the talk to take me to the lecture room. He warned me that not too many people would come to my talk. It seems that I am there at a bad time. The institute has been ordered to reorganize and reduce its personnel by  $\frac{1}{3}$ ! Further, there is a review by their funding agency during the coming two days.

I ate a nice lunch in the institute's restaurant next to the guest house, where I met another of the L3 physicists I knew. She apologized for not being able to come to my talk; she still had much to prepare for the funding review. As predicted there were not many people at my talk, about ten, but they seemed interested.

In the evening there was a dinner at a nearby restaurant. Several of the people were friends from L3, including H. S. Chen, who is now the director of the institute. He seemed not so concerned about the present problems. The reduction in personnel was something that should have been done before, but only now—with the more capitalistic government policies—possible. The only difficulty was that it all had to be accomplished in one month. He also had hopes that the funding agency review would result in more money rather than less. So that sounded nicely optimistic. The food was very good, and there was a bit of atmosphere provided by the boy who kept the tea cups full. He poured the tea from a pot with a spout about a meter long from a distance of about two meters. He managed not to miss the cup very often.

Unlike in Jingzhou, there was lively discussion about Serbia and Kosovo. Partly it was because they could all speak English well, and partly it was that several of them knew me. It was clear that most of them did not think it right that NATO was interfering with the internal affairs of Serbia (the official Chinese line), and I agreed that on purely legal reasoning they were probably right. And they were furious, and could not understand, the bombing of the Chinese embassy. Was it a plot by China haters in the U. S. establishment? In any case, the excuse of using old maps was unbelievable—what had there previously been at that place? I had to agree with them there. Further, they claimed that all the demonstrations in China were not government organized (although perhaps government aided). Most of the demonstrators, they said, were students, from good universities, ‘all’ of whom understood English and had internet access and so were not just listening to government propaganda. I was somewhat handicapped in the discussion because I had not really heard the news for several weeks. But I tried to explain the humanitarian tragedy, the ethnic cleansing, and how it was very difficult to stand by and do nothing when there were so many refugees and atrocities.

**Wednesday, May 19.** Today was a free day for sightseeing—the advantage of having given my talk yesterday. The same graduate student who had met me the day before at the airport had been assigned to show me around. At dinner the evening before they had asked me where I would like to go, and I had said I wanted to see the “Marco Polo Bridge”, which meant nothing to them, since it is only known by that name in Western guidebooks. But when I said that it was at this bridge that there was a skirmish with Japanese troops in 1937 which was more or less the start of World War II for China, they all knew immediately what bridge it was.

So we started by taking a taxi to this bridge, which is 8 km south-west of Beijing. That took a long time, because traffic was so bad. The bridge was built between 1189 and 1192 and was described by Marco Polo, which is the reason for its Western name. It is very nice, with little lions atop the railing every few meters, none of them identical. The Yongding River was completely dry and there was lots of construction going on. Apparently they are channeling the river and making a big park alongside it. Nearby was a walled town of about the same age, I guess, which was originally a garrison town.

Then we managed to find a taxi to take us back to Beijing, and we visited the Forbidden City. I had been there four years ago, but then it had been raining so hard, that I could not really see it well. Today was a beautiful day, although actually a bit too warm. Unfortunately several of the buildings were behind scaffolding getting spruced up for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the People’s Republic this fall. (Hua told me that during the month of the celebration people will need special permission to enter Beijing.) Nevertheless, it was a nice visit, and I saw some parts which I had skipped previously because of the rain.

Not only was the Forbidden City being spruced up—the entire Tiananmen Square was closed off for improvements. Some think that this work was proceeding purposefully slowly in order to keep the square closed until after the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre.

We finished with the Forbidden City about 4, and I then, with some difficulty, convinced my ‘guide’ to leave me alone to do some shopping, although I didn’t really find anything to buy. Then I took the metro back to the institute, ate a big dinner,

and went to bed early.

**Thursday, May 20.** I again had to get up early. My guide of yesterday with car and driver picked me up at 7:00 to go to the airport. They had been afraid of bad traffic, but in fact it was quite light. So the trip to the airport took less than an hour. That left lots of time to wait for my flight at 10:20. We took off on time, and the winds were favorable. So we landed in Amsterdam about a half hour ahead of schedule. Not that it helped much, since we then had to wait 20 minutes for a free gate.