

COMMISSIONER VISITS THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

by Philip Castle



THE People's Republic of China has been undergoing enormous political, social and economic change in the past 10 years. Part of that change has meant a more 'open door' policy and a genuine interest in establishing contacts with its international neighbours. It is against this background that the significance of the recent visit to China by the Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Major General Ronald Grey, must be seen.

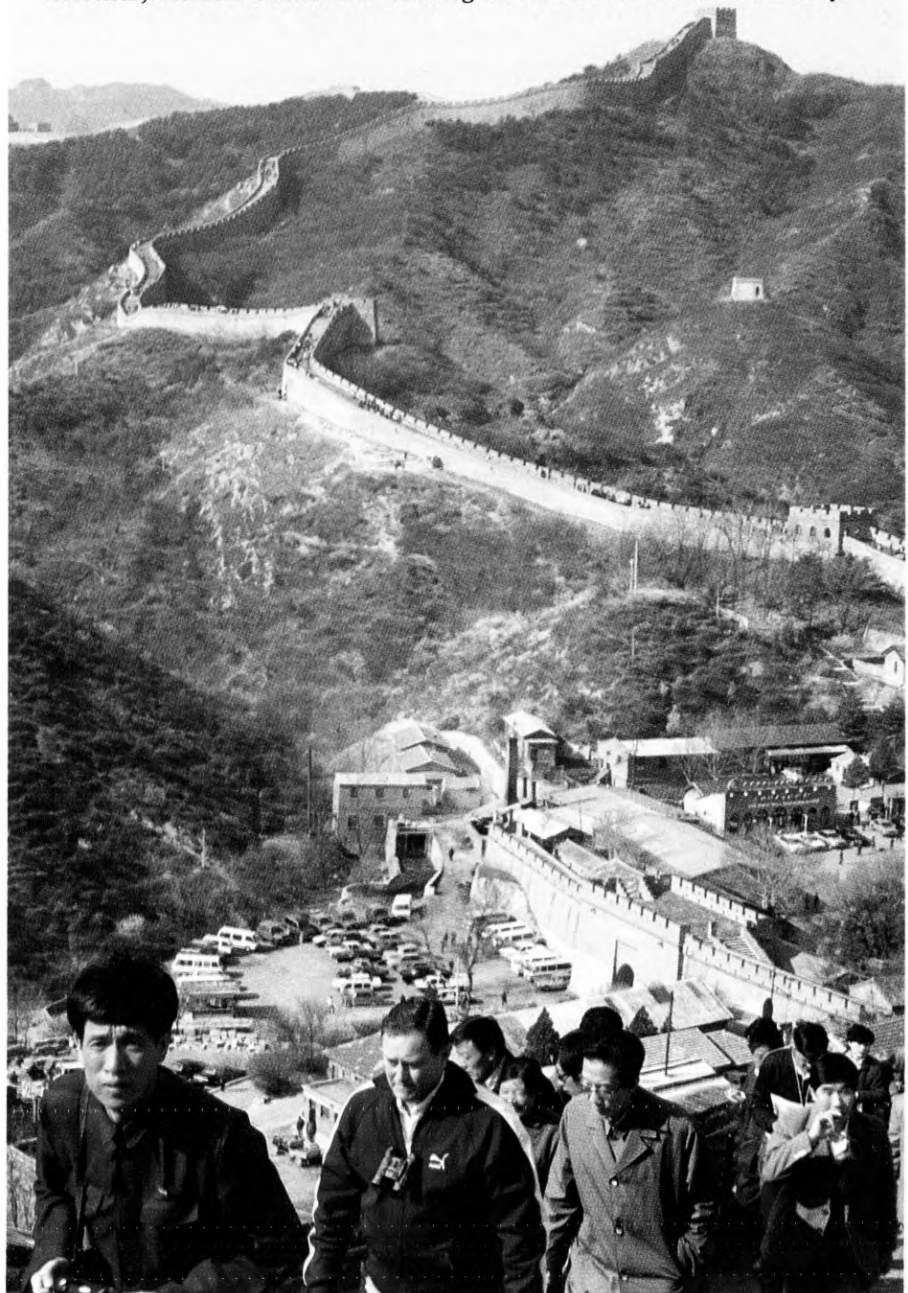
The Commissioner's official visit, from 22 April to 1 May was the first by an Australian Police Commissioner. He was accompanied by the Commander, AFP Training, Chief Superintendent Peter Dawson; the Commander, Personnel, Chief Superintendent Chris Campbell-Thomson; the Commander International Branch, Chief Inspector Col Rowley; and a senior officer from the Department of the Special Minister of State, Mr Chris Whyte. At the completion of the visit, the Commissioner attended a three-day Overseas Liaison Officers' conference in Hong Kong and made a two-day official visit to Thailand.

China has a population of more than 1034 million on 1985 figures. Its national policing is undertaken by the Ministry of Public Security with a force of about 1.2 million, of whom about 600,000 constitute the People's Armed Police (PAP).

Like most countries recently, it has experienced the reality of international crime which recognises no boundaries. Its leaders accept that China must develop economically. To do this it must open its doors to foreign contact for trade and development. This will inevitably mean opening also to the 'flies and mosquitoes' — to quote an expression used by the Vice Minister of Public Security, Mr Yu Lei. Overseas criminals will have an impact on Chinese society.

Some recent commentators have said that the enormous changes which China is facing could be comparable to it

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Chief Superintendent Campbell-Thomson, Commissioner Grey, and Chief Superintendent Dawson with their escorts and interpreters at the tomb of the late Chairman Mao in Beijing.

missing out on the twentieth century by the year 2000. Its concern about economic development means that it cannot afford to have a flamboyant lifestyle or to do things for show. Its leaders accept that increasing contact with international neighbours is essential — and that includes policing. Australia has been seen as a helping partner in that process, a situation accepted by both countries as valuable and desirable. It is bound to continue.

The invitation to a visit by the Commissioner represents an important overture by China and was requested of the then Special Minister of State, Mr Mick Young, during an official visit in June 1986. The invitation was accepted as it was seen as an important message that China desired Australia's friendship, and an appreciation of the help already given in international policing.

INTERPOL

The delicate question of China's membership of the now 142-member international police organization INTERPOL arose at the 53rd General Assembly Session in Luxembourg in September 1984, when Taiwan's membership proved an obstacle. The successful nomination of the People's Republic of China was made by Commissioner Grey with the full support of the Australian Government. As with China's membership of the United Nations, it was considered unrealistic to ignore the world's most populated nation in an international policing organization.

The concept of global policing could be difficult for some AFP members to grasp. We are all prone to be parochial. The AFP has many roles but has three main thrusts — community, national and international. It must be effective against

urban crime in the ACT. It must ensure that fraud against the Federal Government is investigated and that criminals attempting to import illegal narcotics are prevented from doing so and are brought to justice. But there is another dimension: it must work against international criminals who prey on weaker members of society regardless of where they live. These criminals recognise no laws except greed and self satisfaction. It is within this background of international policing, for which the AFP has a charter, that the significance of the Commissioner's visit must be seen.

VIP Treatment

The Commissioner and his party were treated with extreme courtesy by the Chinese Officials and given honours normally reserved for visiting Heads of State. There was some time for official



A young visitor to the Great Wall tries on a police escort's hat.

sight-seeing, such as the visits to the Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City. Much of the visit included the important process of meeting members of the Ministry of Public Security. These meetings were hosted by the Vice Minister, Mr Yu Lei.

The visit included tours of the Ministry's training establishments, including the Police University in Beijing, the Criminal Science Institute, local police stations, international policing bureaux and a first class demonstration of the People's Armed Police anti-terrorist skills when the delegation visited its training school.

The Commissioner was frequently given an honour guard and made a number of addresses to formal gatherings including a brief speech to the Police University's English language school. A banquet was held in honour of the visit in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. During a visit to the Shanghai Municipal Prison the visitors were entertained by a prisoners' orchestra, playing classical as well as Chinese airs.

'It was very clear that the AFP was accorded 'favoured nation' and special treatment,' the Commissioner said. 'The welcome by the Vice Minister, Mr Yu Lei, and the constant personal treatment by some of the Ministry's senior officers, at a time when 15 other foreign delegations were also visiting, was a feature we all noted.'

Community Policing

'There is little doubt that the system of public security and law and order within the PRC is most effective under the conditions that currently prevail. It is obvious that there is little we could teach them about community policing.'

He said 'Admittedly, there are controls and measures which are quite different from those in our society, such as the long detention of suspects during an investigation, and that the local people's committees in an apartment or factory often undertake the initial investigation of a crime. If the matter is not serious, that is not indictable in our terms, then these committees can impose penalties such as re-education or short-term imprisonment.

'The system of justice seems also to be effective. It has, according to stated figures, seen a drop in domestic crime of about 15 per cent between 1983 and 1986 with 540,000 indictable offences recorded in 1986,' the Commissioner said.

Organized crime

'At the outset of my visit, Vice Minister Yu Lei told me of the inadequacies of the PRC's ability to deal with international criminal elements, through what



Chief Superintendent Campbell-Thomson with a staff member of a police scientific section checking out a computer terminal.

will inevitably accompany the growth of the country's economy through its 'open door' policy. There is the expressed feeling that the PRC lacks at present a perceived ability to deal with sophisticated and organized crime.'

Commissioner Grey said that the Vice Minister considered the inadequacies were exacerbated by the existence of some outmoded police methods and equipment, insufficient modern technology and some dissatisfaction with their police education, training systems and facilities, although this was improving.

Cooperation

Commissioner Grey said that such a short visit over only a small part of such a vast country and population made it difficult to assess whether this was correct. China was seeking Australia's friendly cooperation in whatever way this could be provided and perhaps, subject to future invitations, even some assistance. It would be presumptuous for Australia to feel that it was in some privileged position of advancement in these areas. If assistance was asked for, then this should be provided, subject to AFP needs, however small by comparison it may seem. This assistance was not seen as large, but comparatively small in selected areas.

'I have advised the Special Minister of State, Senator Tate, that it would therefore be appropriate that a delegation from the Ministry of Public Security be invited to come to Australia later this year, possibly in December, to assess what areas could be of development assistance to them,' Commissioner Grey said.

Anti-terrorism

'As an immediate step the AFP has agreed to provide some documents and training films on some areas such as anti-terrorism, disaster control and training methods which the Ministry may find useful. This has already begun.'

Commissioner Grey said also that it would be appropriate to have regular exchanges with the MPS and the AFP at whatever level it was found to be useful. This would be subject to continued discussion and evolution against AFP essential needs.

Oceania Region

Chief Superintendent Dawson said that the entire visit showed that the AFP and the Commissioner were held in high regard in the region.

'In China the AFP in general and the Commissioner in particular are highly regarded by the top echelon of the MPS,' he said. 'They are most appreciative of the support given by Australia for its membership of INTERPOL in 1984.'

'Under regionalised arrangements for INTERPOL, China and Australia will have closer ties as both countries are now members of the Oceania Region, an area which encompasses the South and West Pacific and South East Asia.'

Staff Development

'Without diminishing the significance of INTERPOL in international policing, the MPS leaders and the AFP Commissioner recognised the added need for closer bilateral relationships, particularly in force and staff development, in countering sophisticated international crime.'

'It was agreed that an action plan needed to be developed for personnel exchanges and the provision of development assistance where needed.'

'China is quite able to cope with its domestic policing and such a low crime rate. There is little we can learn from each other at this level, at this stage, because of the disparity in our environmental and social systems,' he said.

People's Committees

'China has an intransigent population and the local committees have a pretty good idea of what is going on. These are people's committees which can send people to re-education camps and so forth. They are empowered to control behaviour. The police conduct a regular census and know where most of the people are. There is almost total social control. Capital punishment is used for serious crimes such as murder, rape and corruption. Most offenders plead guilty, so there is not the large backlog of legal processes which we see in Australia. In one case a criminal we heard of was executed within a week of him being found guilty,' he said.

'There is no doubt their society will change and they accept this. They are concerned about possible credit fraud, counterfeiting, corruption of officials, drug trading, pornography, organized crime and prostitution.'

'Australia, and particularly the AFP, has an opportunity to play a small but valuable role in helping China become part of the international community in policing,' Chief Superintendent Dawson said.



Musical prisoners at the Shanghai Municipal Prison entertain their Australian visitors.

Training

Chief Superintendent Campbell-Thomson said the MPS was concerned about crime from the outside at three levels: illegal drugs, organised criminals (coming in to exploit China) and pornography. The future contact could embrace the exchange of information, provision of training and the potential for operational cooperation.

China recognised that its own people might be vulnerable to the temptations of overseas dollars and the threat of illegal drugs coming over the border through its southern regions and through Hong Kong, he said. Foreign contact was considerable. Shanghai, for example, was one of the world's largest ports where more than 600,000 foreign sailors called every year. There were now great numbers of tourists and business people visiting China.

'Australia should be careful not to be self-indulgent about what we can do for China,' he said. 'There is much that they can teach us. We must accept that any offers for assistance on our part may be quite puny by comparison to their needs. However, there are a few small areas of training and some exchange of information that can be offered in friendship.'

'We observed their anti-terrorism training and it was of a world standard. Their crime clear-up rates would be the envy of many other countries. They do have significant technology needs and have already embarked on a national card registration system. Remember that is for a country with a population of over a billion.'

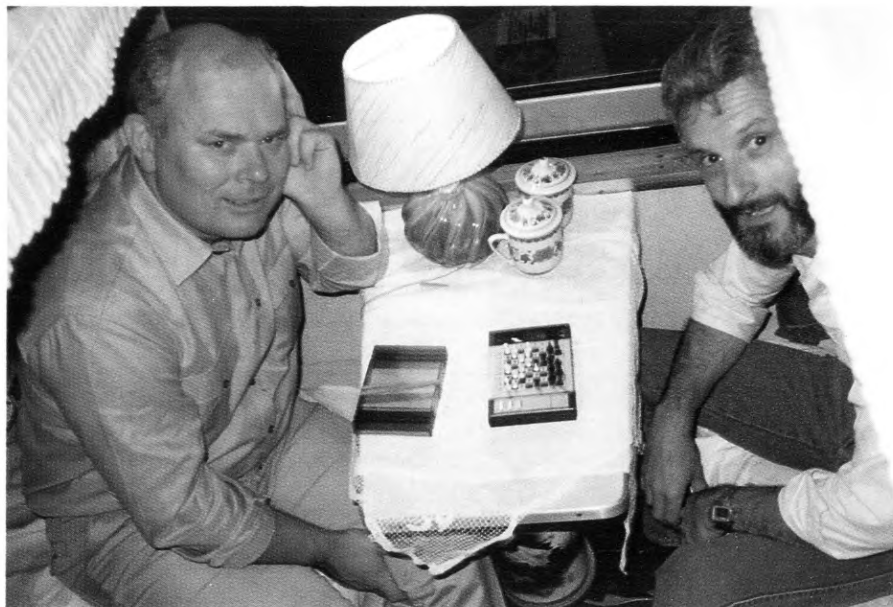
Pornography

'An aspect that may surprise Westerners is their concern about pornography. They see it as a threat to their society and that it has a degrading effect on women. We should note that China is a country which has more than 1000 years of cultural modesty which is being outraged by western style pornography.'

Language Training

'What came out of the China visit as well as the Liaison Officers' conference in Hong Kong and the brief stopover in Thailand was the feeling that the AFP will have to begin looking at grooming some of our officers for international policing.'

He said, 'It will become more important. Perhaps we will have to start looking at some candidates early in their careers to undertake language training and cultural assimilation.'



Chief Superintendent Peter Dawson (left) and Mr Chris Whyte enjoy a game during the overnight journey on the Shanghai-Beijing Express.

The visitors were impressed by the standard of anti-terrorism training.



Friendship

Chief Inspector Col Rowley said the Ministry of Public Security had a clear purpose and by Australian standards had domestic crime under control. The police and community work together. That was an attitude that Australians could learn from.

'The Chinese appeared very receptive to any advice or criticism — as they called it — offered,' Chief Inspector Rowley said. 'But they are constantly on guard against being exploited by outsiders as they believe they have been in the past. That is why the trust they expressed towards the AFP and the Commissioner must be seen as important.'

'There were many occasions when things were obviously not staged for a formal visit, such as an impromptu visit to a local police station. We were shown

genuine friendship and warmth.

'In Shanghai they have adopted a traffic light system based on New South Wales advice which they have further developed. Its traffic lights also include a clock which shows, in seconds, the time remaining for the lights to change. It has reduced accident numbers.'

Hi-jacking

'The PAP were conducting trials with a 7.62mm short ammunition round, developed by Chinese scientists especially for aircraft hi-jacking incidents which, if fired, would be effective against offenders but would not penetrate a fuselage.'

'It is in the international areas that the AFP might be able to help. The MPS officers seemed to be as proud of their force as the AFP is of its own.'