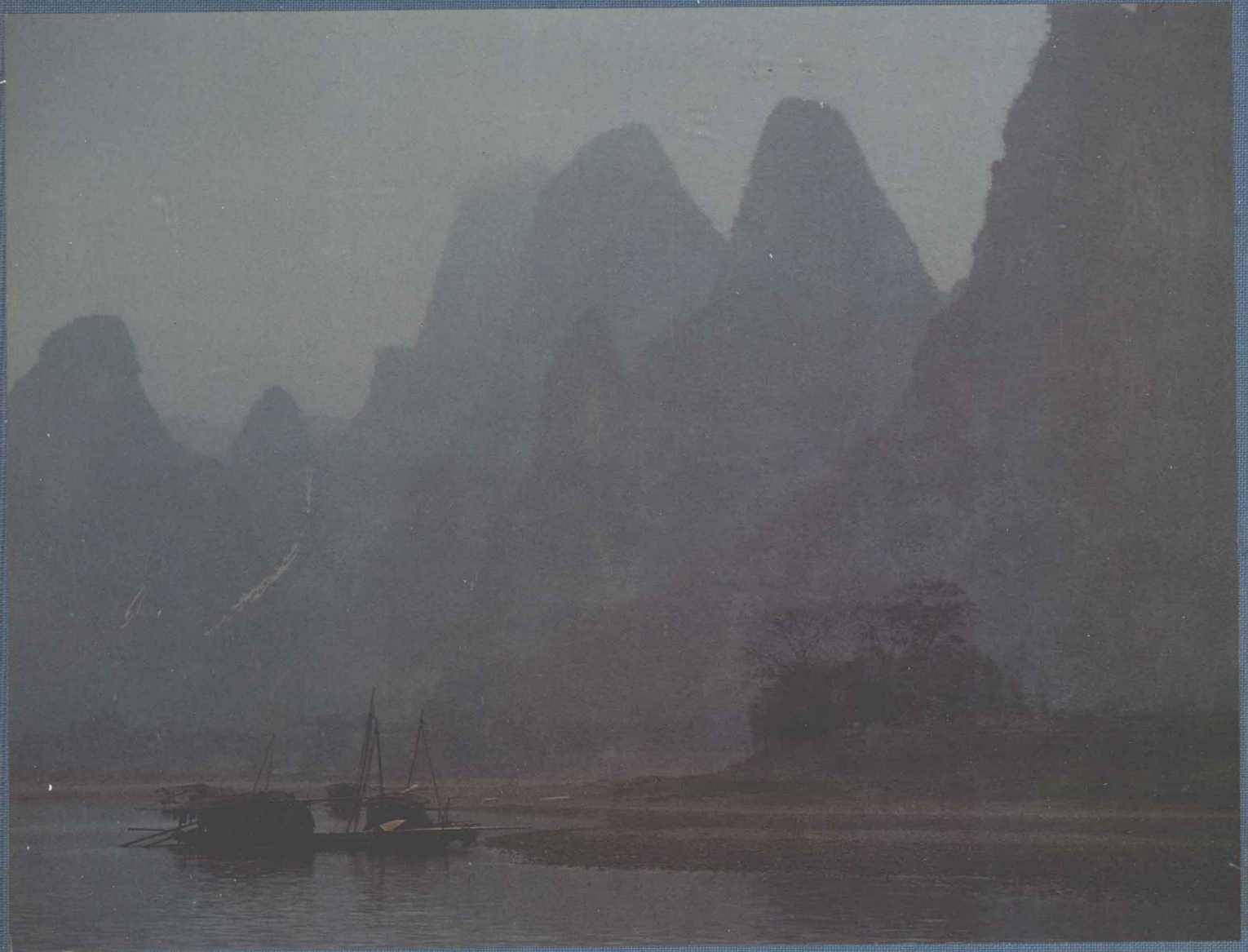


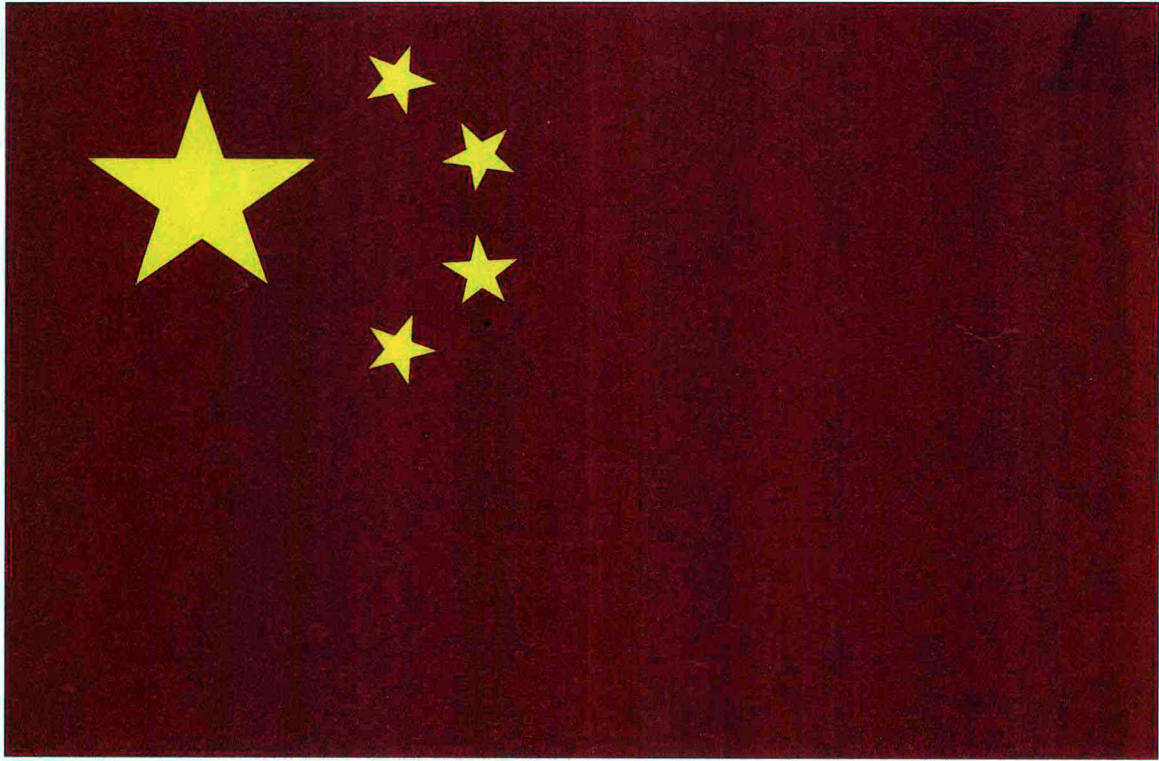
LIBRARY OF NATIONS



CHINA

CHINA





CHINA

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CONSULTANT

Dr. Richard Bush, recipient of a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, has done extensive research in China. Deputy Director of the China Council of the Asia Society in Washington D.C., he is author and co-author of numerous books and articles on China.

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Cover: Fishing junks moored to the banks of the Lu River float below wooded mountain peaks near the town of Guilin in southern China. The limestone pinnacles, compared by a Chinese poet to "blue jade hairpins", are pitted with caves formed by the action of underground rivers.

China's official emblem is shown on page 1; the building depicted is in Tiananmen Square in Peking. The national flag is shown on page 2.

This volume is one in a series of books describing countries of the world, their lands, peoples, histories, economics and governments.



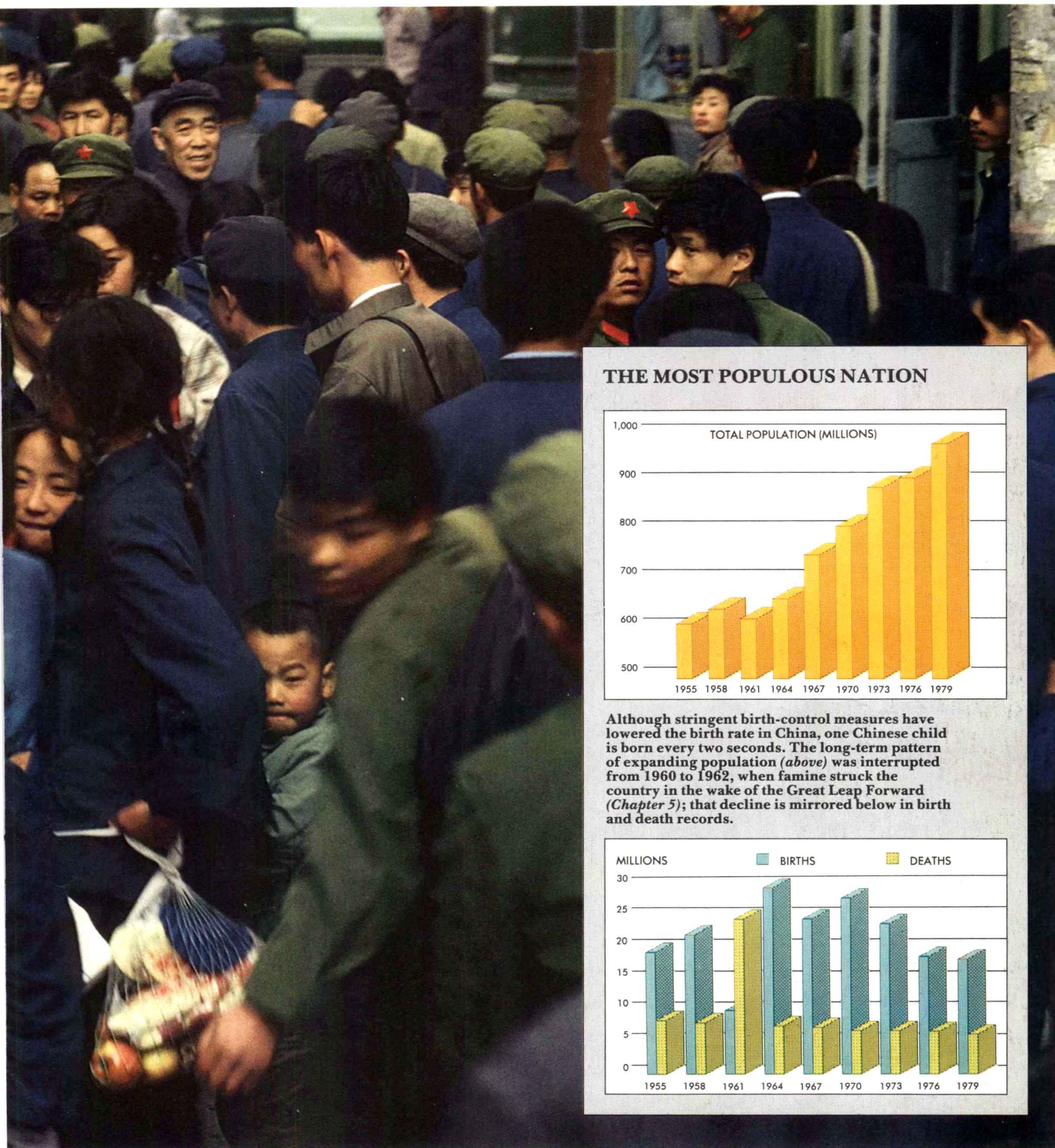
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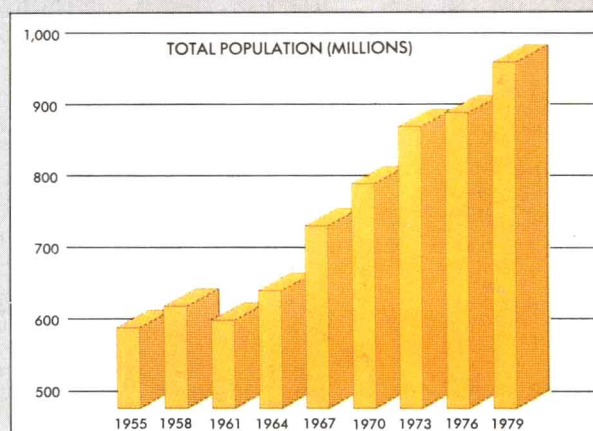
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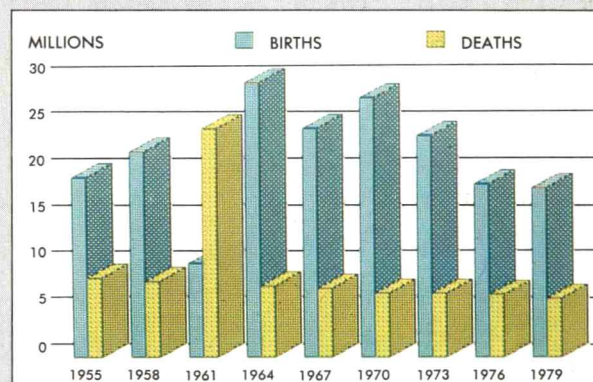
A mass of workers and shoppers clogs a street in downtown Peking. China's population passed the billion mark in late 1981.



THE MOST POPULOUS NATION



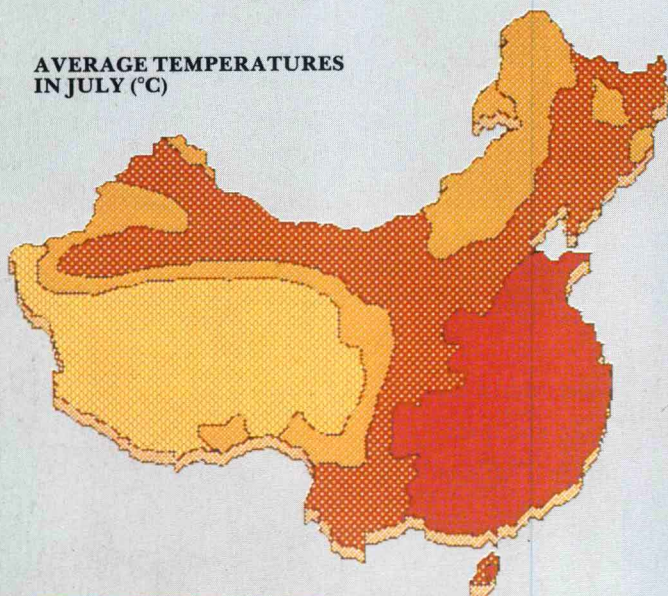
Although stringent birth-control measures have lowered the birth rate in China, one Chinese child is born every two seconds. The long-term pattern of expanding population (*above*) was interrupted from 1960 to 1962, when famine struck the country in the wake of the Great Leap Forward (*Chapter 5*); that decline is mirrored below in birth and death records.



A RECALCITRANT CLIMATE

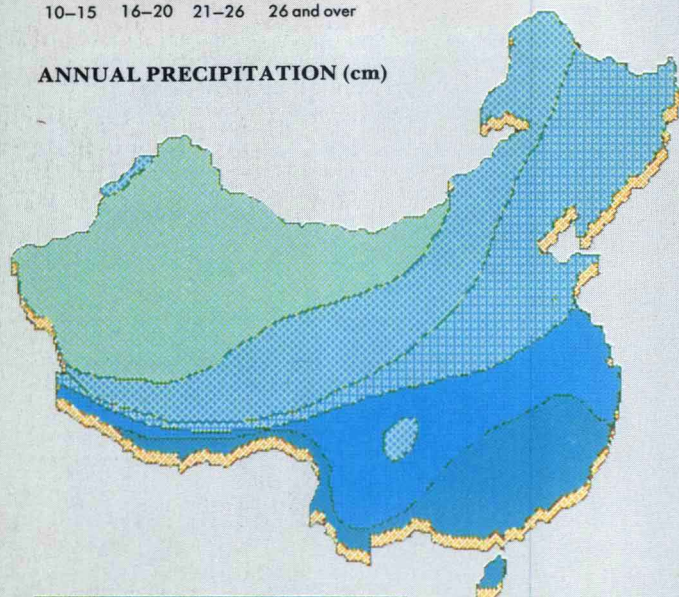
Even in July, the average temperature remains below 15°C in one third of China; moreover, where summer temperatures are high enough for productive agriculture, much of the land gets less than 25 centimetres of precipitation per year, too little for farming without irrigation. Only the south-east has long, warm growing seasons and plentiful rainfall.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES
IN JULY (°C)



10–15 16–20 21–26 26 and over

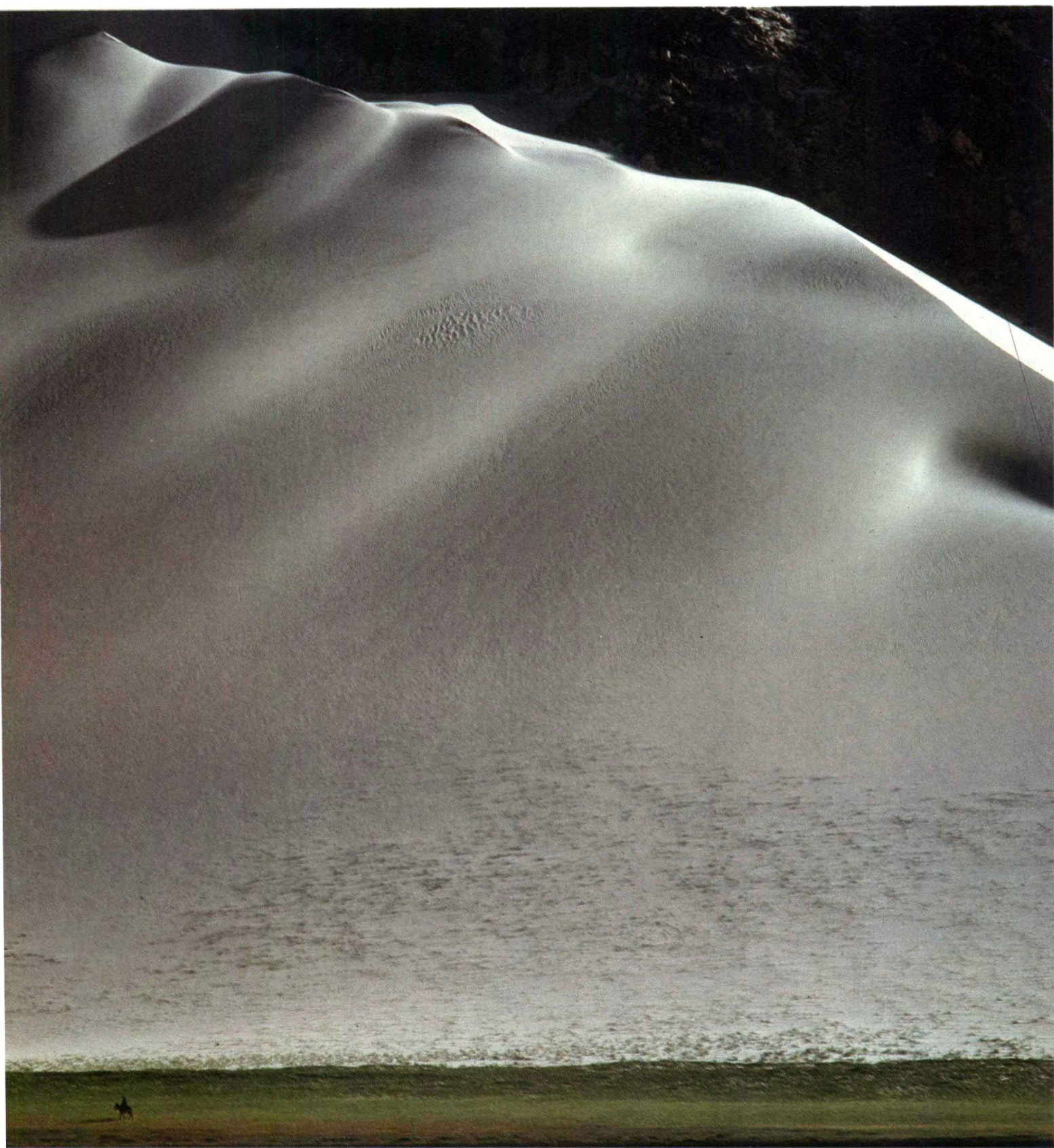
ANNUAL PRECIPITATION (cm)



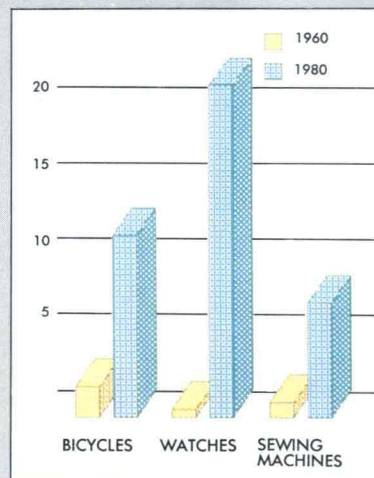
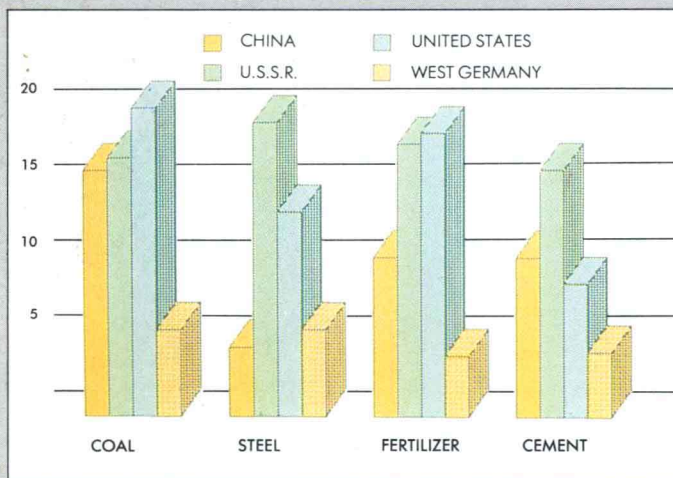
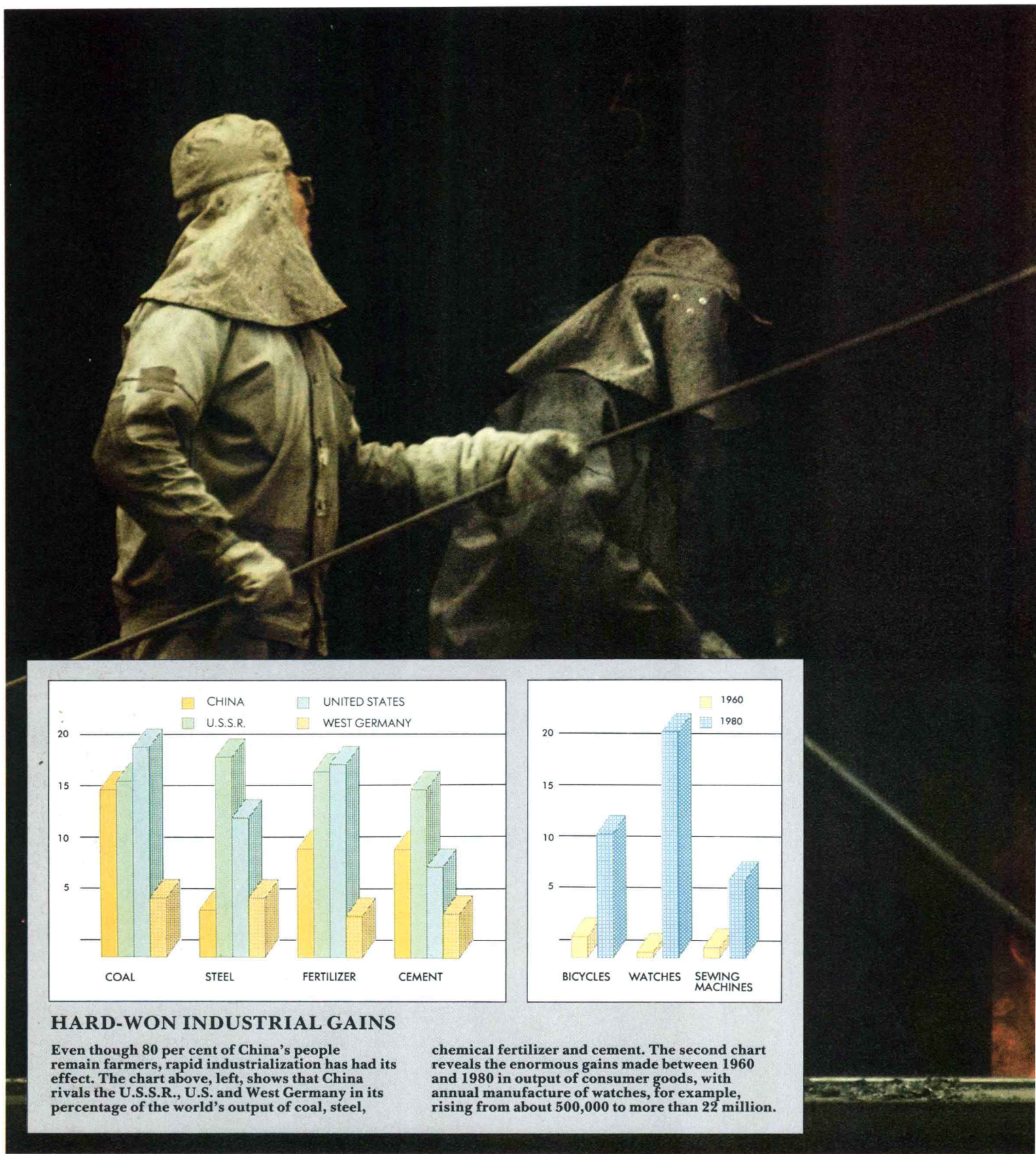
20–24 25–49 50–99 100–149 150 and over



Dwarfed by a mammoth sand dune, two horsemen cross a high valley of the



arid Xinjiang region in western China, near the borders with the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Above the dune loom the jagged peaks of the Pamirs.

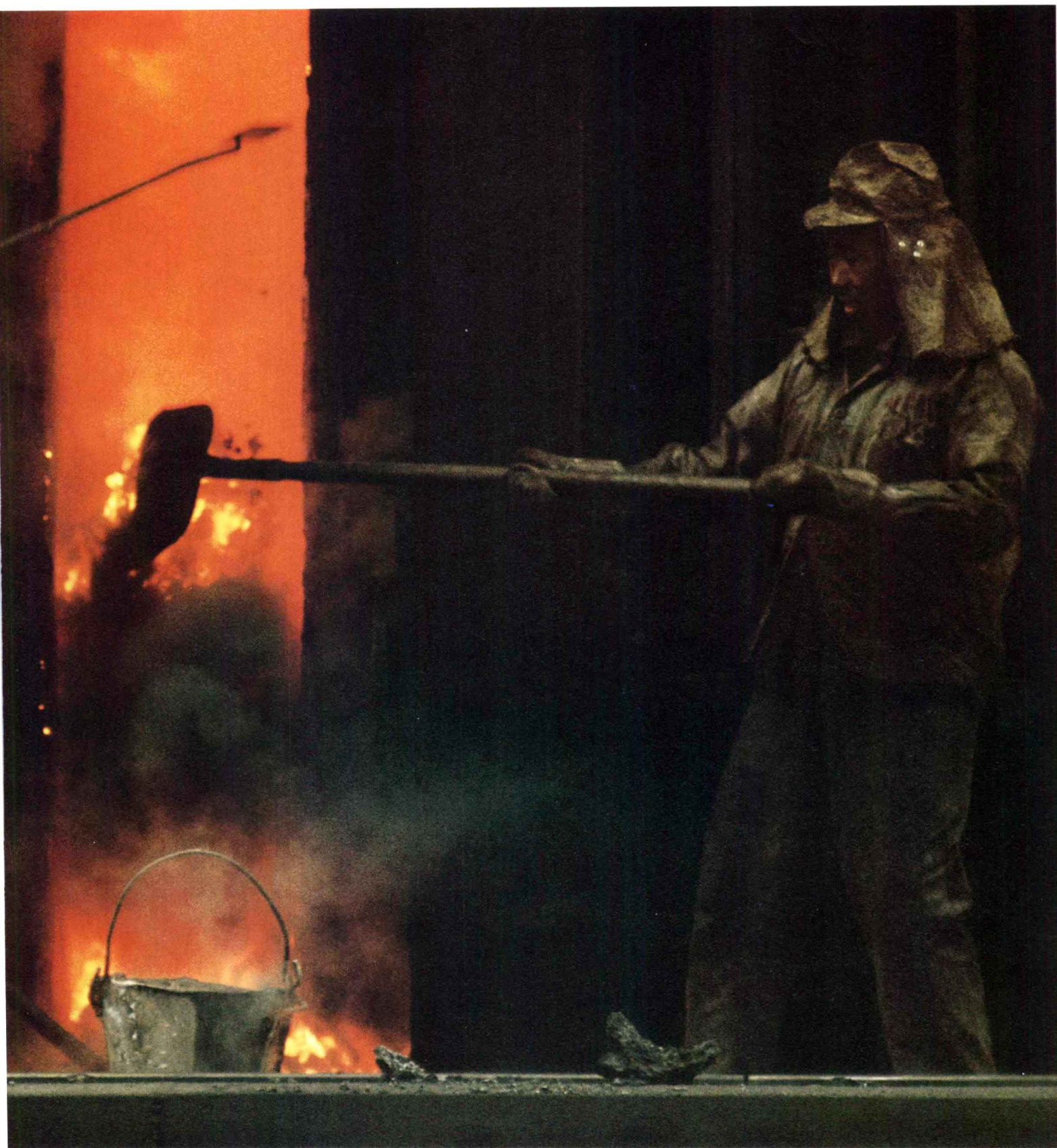


HARD-WON INDUSTRIAL GAINS

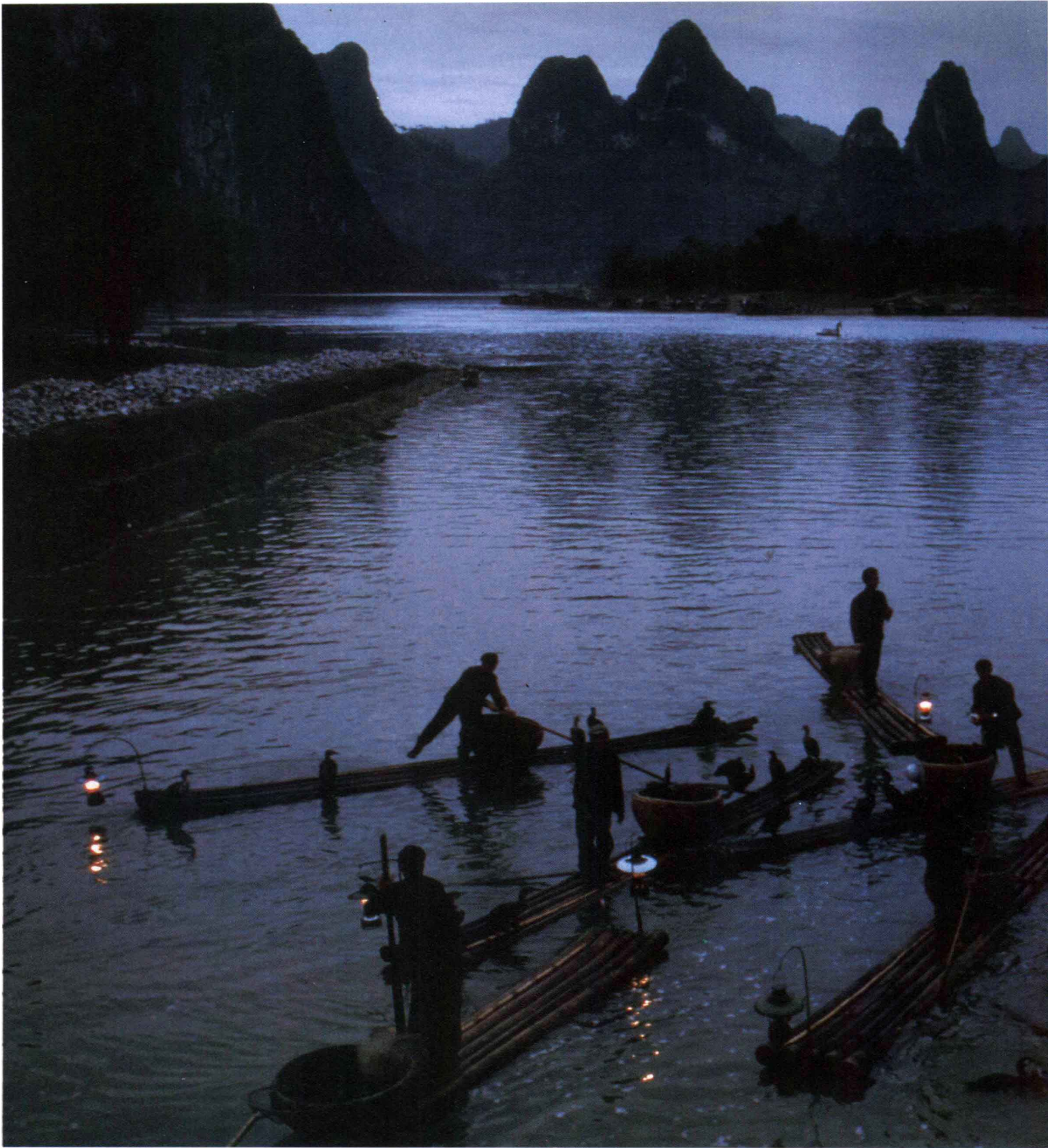
Even though 80 per cent of China's people remain farmers, rapid industrialization has had its effect. The chart above, left, shows that China rivals the U.S.S.R., U.S. and West Germany in its percentage of the world's output of coal, steel,

chemical fertilizer and cement. The second chart reveals the enormous gains made between 1960 and 1980 in output of consumer goods, with annual manufacture of watches, for example, rising from about 500,000 to more than 22 million.

Shielded by special clothing that gives them protection against the intense heat, three workers at the Shijingshan plant near Peking tend a furnace



converting coal into coke, which is then used to make steel from iron ore.

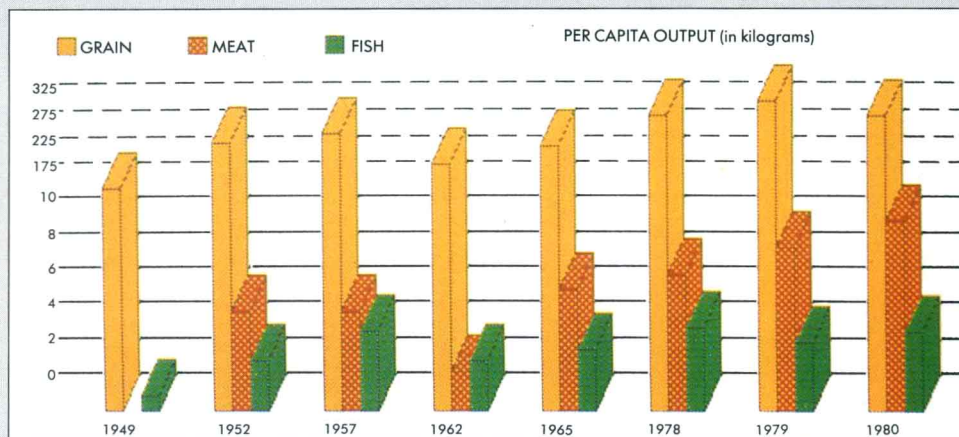


Fishermen pole their slender scows on the River Li in south-eastern China. Lamps are hung over the water to serve as an attractant, and tame cormorants

GROWING MORE FOOD

Except during the famine years in the early 1960s, food supply per person in China has been steadily increasing since the Communist takeover. Freshwater fish are a major source of protein. The Chinese catch is greater than that of any other nation; a quarter of the supply is provided by the traditional fisherman, while pond-cultivation of fish makes up the rest.

希望(15)



are employed to dive and catch the fish. Collars round the birds' necks keep them from swallowing their prey, which is later pulled from their beaks.

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Although China's present government is atheist, its constitution guarantees religious freedom. By and large the promise is kept. Three world religions—Buddhism, Islam and Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity—survive along with folk beliefs and the ancient philosophies of Confucianism and Daoism.

The earliest of the imported religions, Buddhism, came from India in the first century B.C. Before the Communist takeover in 1949, the followers of Buddha supported half a million monks and nuns; 40,000 temples and monasteries dotted the land, along with uncounted statues of the Buddha, some of them

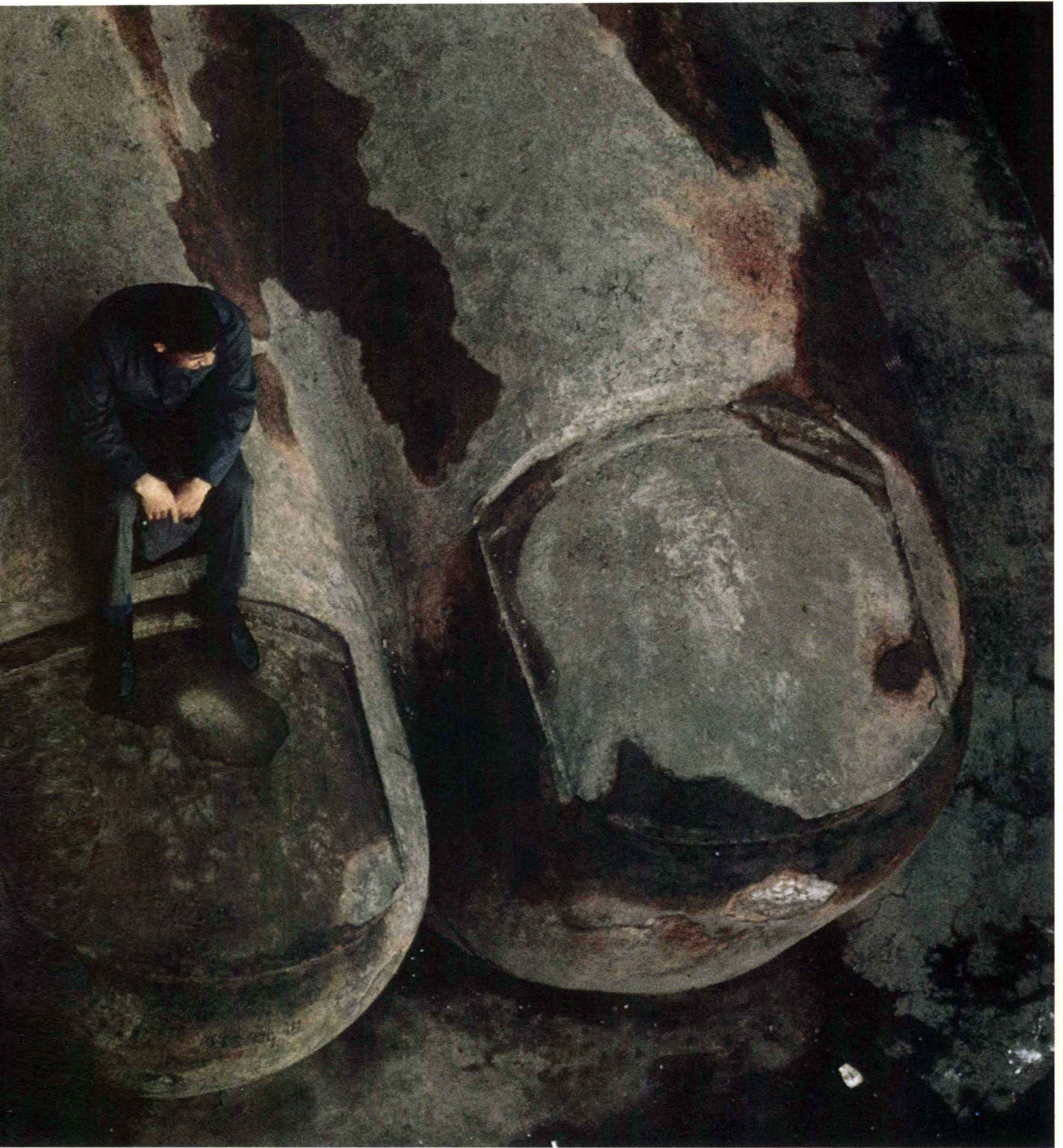
monumental (*right*). Since then, the number of clerics has shrunk, but the great yearly festivals go on.

Islam, introduced to China by Arab traders in the seventh century, thrives largely among the minority peoples of the north-west, although there are faithful even in Peking.

Christianity, which arrived from Europe in the 16th century, has been strictly controlled by government regulations. All foreign missionaries were expelled in the 1950s; churches were forced to become autonomous Chinese bodies, divorced from their brethren elsewhere. Still, Christians in China—four million, at least—are free to worship as they wish.



A blue-clad Chinese worker meditates peacefully on the time-stained toe of a colossal statue of the Buddha in Sichuan province. The figure was erected



during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), when the growing popularity of Buddhism coincided with great artistic activity.

China is a land of extremes in almost every respect—size, climate, population, industrial development, even history. The third largest nation on earth, it covers 9.56 million square kilometres, reaching from sub-Arctic wastes to the tropics. In its forbidding west, 3,200 kilometres inland from the sea, are deserts too dry and too hot or cold for extensive settlement. In the south-west rises the inhospitable Tibetan plateau, averaging 4,400 metres in altitude.

China is the oldest of great nations, its dynamic history stretching 4,000 years in an unbroken span. Some works of long-ago emperors have never been equalled. The Grand Canal—longest on the globe—was dug in the seventh century A.D. to connect the north with the rice-growing Yangtze valley, 1,800 kilometres to the south. It required 5.5 million labourers, kept on the job by 50,000 guards. Some 900 kilometres are still in use, carrying barges between Hangzhou and the Yellow River. The Chinese also built the largest structure ever erected, the Great Wall, completed 2,000 years ago. It writhes 6,000 kilometres through valleys and over mountains from the coast north-east of Peking to the deserts of Inner Mongolia.

But the most significant superlative applies to population: China is—and long has been—the most populous nation; in 1762 a census counted 200 million people, perhaps twice the number than in Western Europe. Today the count exceeds one billion. (India is second with 700 million.) A Chinese, wrote scholar John K. Fairbank, “is seldom in all his life beyond earshot of other people.”

Until 1911 the government of these throngs consisted of a huge bureaucracy headed by an emperor. That year, the last imperial ruler was toppled by young reformers organized by an idealistic physician, Sun Yat-sen. The country soon fell into chaos, centralized government disintegrated, and various regions were controlled by contending factions: individual warlords; the Nationalist Party of Sun Yat-sen and his brother-in-law, Chiang Kai-shek; and a growing Communist organization. The man who emerged as leader of the Communists, Mao Tse-tung, perceived that success depended on winning over peasant farmers. He proclaimed that the peasants, properly led, would “rise like a mighty storm”. In the 1930s and 1940s he harnessed this storm, partly through land reform, partly through propaganda, partly through iron discipline over his armies. His troops—unlike the usual run of rapacious soldiers known to the peasants—“were always courteous,” one farmer recalled. “They did not enter your house unless invited, and they asked politely for food.” Victory came in 1949.

Mao swiftly attempted to convert agrarian China into a powerful industrial nation. But with little home-grown capital and only parsimonious help from the Soviet Union, expansion required painful diversion of resources from agriculture and consumer goods to industry. Still, during the next three decades railway track increased from 22,000 kilometres to 53,000; the road network grew from 75,000