

Visitor from Iceland

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Visitor From Iceland

Recently, a blind man from Iceland visited the site of the National Institute of the Peasant Movement founded by Chairman Mao in 1926 in Kwangchow. He listened carefully to what the guide was saying and, when shown the room Chairman Mao had once lived in, ran his hands lightly and lovingly over the bed, desk, chair and bookshelves. He was the 25-year-old Mr. Arnthor Helgason, President of the Iceland-China Society for Culture.

Mr. Helgason lost his sight in an unsuccessful eye operation when he was a boy. Despite this handicap, he has, in the past ten years, worked tirelessly to enhance understanding and friendship between the people of Iceland and China. In 1966, he heard over the radio an Icelandic journalist speak about his three visits to China. He was moved when the speaker described the revolutionary optimism and the indomitable spirit of the Chinese people. Later, he heard some revolutionary Chinese music and was inspired by its vigour and militancy. Then he began listening to the English transmission from Radio Peking and reading Chinese publications with the help of friends. As his interest in China grew, so did his friendship for this country.

In recent years, he has done much work arranging Chinese music for presentation over Icelandic radio, and has spoken over the air many times about

Chinese music and given recitals in person. He has also lectured on and written articles about the political, economic, cultural and educational achievements of New China as well as about China's stand in international affairs. In March this year he was elected President of the Iceland-China Society for Culture.

During their visit to China, Mr. Helgason and other members of the Delegation of the Iceland-China Society for Culture visited factories, rural communes, schools and hospitals to get a first-hand understanding of the way the Chinese people live and work. He taped most of his meetings with Chinese people. Returning to the hotel after a whole day's visit, he would neglect rest to discuss with the delegation members what they had seen and heard.

Mr. Helgason and his party were met by Chinese Vice-Premier Wang Chen in Peking's Great Hall of the People. He presented the Vice-Premier with a copy of *Long March — Chairman Mao's Poems*, an Icelandic translation he had revised and written a foreword to. "I'm honoured to have the opportunity to present this book to a veteran revolutionary of China who took part in the Long March," he said. Vice-Premier Wang Chen was very pleased to receive this precious gift symbolic of the friendship between the two peoples, and, opening the flyleaf, asked Mr. Helgason and the other

Icelandic friends for their autographs.