

THE CAVE OF THE PEKING MAN

soon after dawn a red dust is in the sky
and old men shadow box

or jog in shorts around the block. Shanghai* cabs
are driving on their horns

in the great Plaza of Heavenly Peace.
the masses in blue trousers

hurry to work. we go west by the silk route . . .
mirrors float on the paddies,

fields stink of human fertilizer, and hills
of green ink are fragrant

with wild herbs and mist . . . the ancient cave
is empty. we climb down

and rub our fingers futilely on the wall
where the cranium was stuck.

the Peking Man is gone. he may be in a
marine's footlocker or

at the bottom of the Pacific or in a
Japanese coffee shop.

his forty comrades of the cave have also
split. they stopped breathing

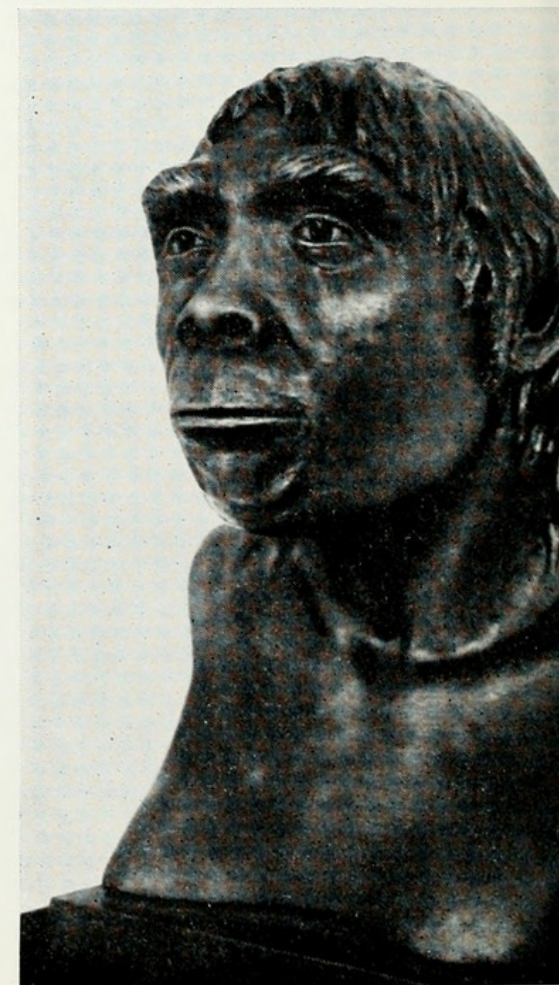
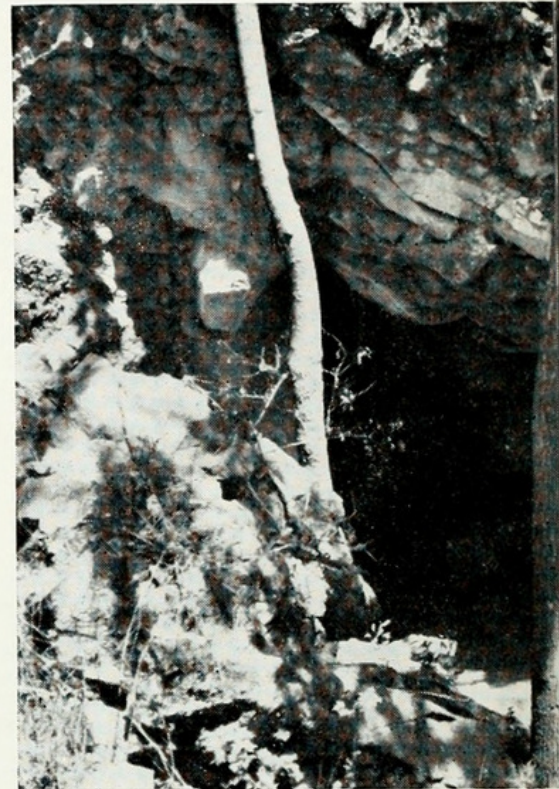
about a half a million years ago . . . the masses
in blue trousers hurry to work

and dig up ancient coffins of an emperor
or greatly raise production

in a rubber shoe or paper factory. we have
been dying for a long time.

Willis Barnstone

*"Shanghai" is the name of the automobile built in Shanghai.





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