



# RETURN TO CHINA

**James Bertram**

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*Photograph: W. R. Geddes*  
This young girl is a member of the Chinese Pioneers, the Communist youth movement—her membership is denoted by the red scarf tied round her neck. The Pioneers, a development of the Communist Party's Children's Labour Corps, were formed in 1953 and now include a large proportion of the youth of China

# RETURN TO CHINA

James H. Watson

## PREFACE

*Huang Hua*

It is a great honor for me to write a preface for the new, PFS (China Society for People's Friendship Studies) 50-book series under the general title of *Light on China*. All these books were written in English by journalistic and other eyewitnesses of the events described. I have read many of them over the seven decades since my student days at Yenching University. With some of the outstanding authors in this series I have ties of personal friendship, mutual regard, and warm memories dating from before the Chinese people's Liberation in 1949.

Looking back and forward, I am convinced that China is pursuing the right course in building a strong and prosperous country in a rapidly changing world with its complex and sometimes volatile developments.

The books in this series cover a span of some 150 years, from the mid 19th to the early 21st century. The numerous events in China, the sufferings and struggles of the Chinese people, their history and culture, and their dreams and aspirations were written by foreign

observers animated by the spirit of friendship, equality and cooperation. Owing to copyright matters and other difficulties, not all eligible books have as yet been included.

The founder of the first Chinese republic, Dr. Sun Yat-sen wrote in his Testament in 1925, "For forty years I have devoted myself to the cause of the people's revolution with but one end in view: the elevation of China to a position of freedom and equality among the nations. My experiences during those forty years have convinced me that to attain this goal we must bring about an awakening of our own people and ally ourselves in common struggle with those people of the world who regard us as equals."

Chairman Mao Zedong declared, at the triumphal founding of the People's Republic in 1949, "The Chinese people have stood up." Today, having passed its 53rd anniversary, we see the vast forward strides that have been taken, and note that many more remain to be made.

Many foreign observers have traced and reported the real historical movement of modern China, that is: from humiliation — through struggle — to victory. Seeking understanding and friendship with the Chinese people, their insight and perspective were in basic harmony with the real developments in China. But there have been others who viewed China and the Chinese people through glasses tinted by hostile prejudice or ignorance and have invariably made irrelevant observations that could not stand the test of time. This needs to be better understood by young people and students, at home and abroad. The PFS series *Light on China* can help them gain an overview of what went before, is happening now, and will



emerge in the future.

Young students in China can additionally benefit from these works by seeing how foreign journalists and authors use fluent English to record and present historical, philosophical, and socio-political issues and choices in China. For millions of students in China, English has become a compulsory second language. These texts will also have many-sided usefulness in conveying knowledge of our country to other peoples.

Students abroad, on their part, may be helped by the example of warm, direct accounts and impressions of China presented by their elders in the language that most readily reaches them.

Above all, this timely and needed series should help build bridges of friendship and mutual understanding. Good books long out of print will be brought back to strengthen the edifice.

My hearty thanks and congratulations go first to ex-Premier Zhu Rongji, who has been an effective supporter of this new, PFS series. They go to all engaged in this worthy project, the Foreign Languages Press, our China Society for People's Friendship Studies, and others who have given their efforts and cooperation.

Chairman Mao Zedong has written: "So many deeds cry out to be done, and always urgently. The world rolls on, time presses. Ten thousand years are too long. Seize the day, seize the hour."

The hour has come for making these books available to young people in China and abroad whose destiny is to build a better world together. Let this series add a small brick to that structure.

*Beijing, Autumn 2003*

**FOR J,  
AND A HORSE CALLED HOLIDAY**

**FOREWORD**

The first part of the book is a collection of poems and stories that I have written over the years. Some of them are about horses, and some are about other things. I hope you will enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed writing them.

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## FOREWORD

This book is a record of firsthand impressions of China, gathered on a one-month tour of that country in 1956. But I should never have dared to write it on this basis alone.

Ten years spent in the Far East before 1946 had given me a working knowledge of the Chinese language, and had taken me through most of the provinces north and south of the Great Wall. As a newspaper correspondent, and later for a time as acting Press Attaché at the British Embassy in Chungking, I had met a number of the people who are now leaders of the Peking Government, in years when they were very far indeed from power. Finally, the experience of nearly four years as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese gave me some insight into the life of the under-privileged, and of what it feels like to be a coolie in Asia. A little of this is glanced at in my first chapter: if it seems too self-centred, I apologise in advance. For it is an attempt to present my credentials, such as they are, to make valid comparisons between China under Chiang Kai-shek and China under Mao Tse-tung.

This is a very personal book, for I believe human contacts can sometimes be more revealing than statistics or political argument. No one can pretend to know the whole truth about Communist China. But not so many independent observers who knew China before 1949 have since had the opportunity to visit it again; and one of these can at least try to give his own impressions, as directly and honestly as possible. That is all I have sought to do here.

Parts of the material included in this book have appeared as articles in

the following journals and periodicals: *The Nation*, New York; *The New Zealand Listener*; *Landfall*, a New Zealand Quarterly; *The Auckland Star*; *The Dominion*, Wellington; and *The Press*, Christchurch. To the editors of all these I express my gratitude for permission to reprint.

I am indebted to Mr. W. R. Geddes for giving me permission to reproduce nine of the photographs which he took during the course of our expedition. Where no acknowledgment appears, the photograph is my own.

J.B.

Wellington, New Zealand.

August, 1956.

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## Part I

# JOURNEY TO PEKING