

CHINA

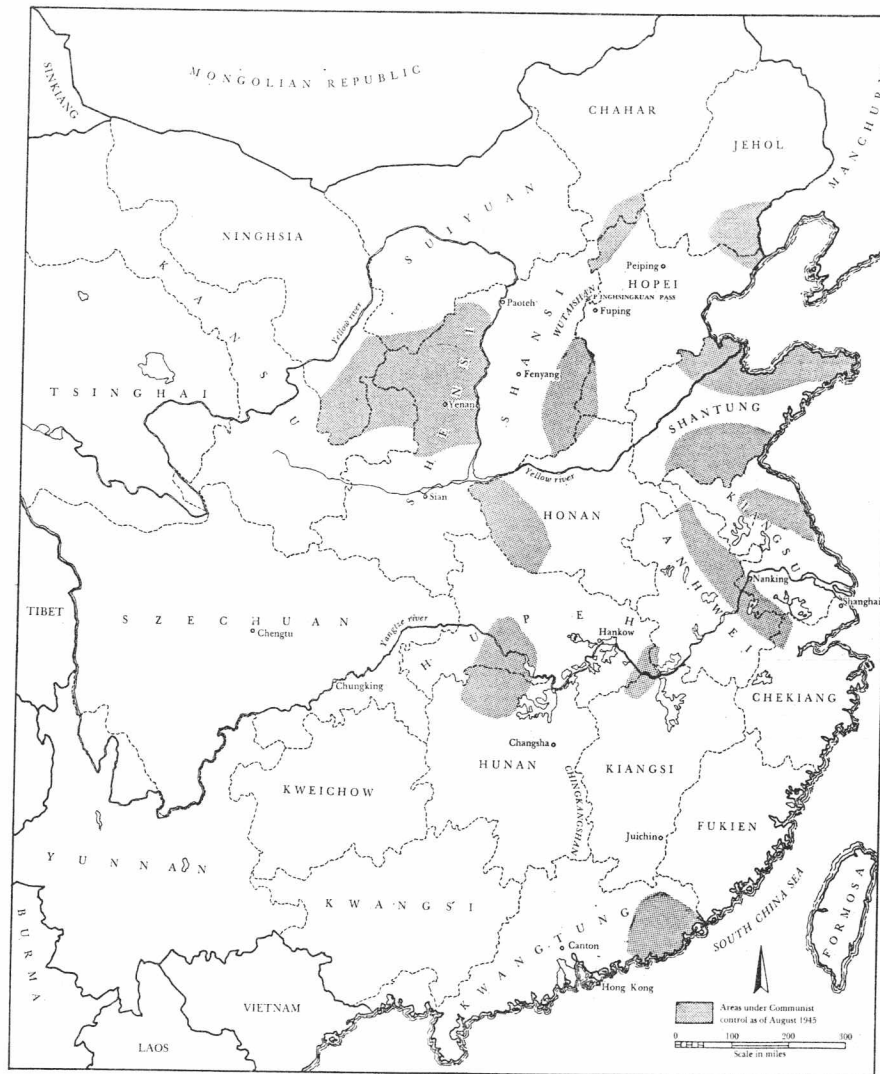
Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945

★ A PERSUADING ENCOUNTER

Kenneth E. Shewmaker

Cornell University Press

ITHACA AND LONDON



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*To Liese and to
Richard W. Leopold*

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K. E. S.

Hanover, N.H.
February 1971

Contents

Introduction	1
PART I. FOREIGN REPORTING ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, 1927-1936	
1. Before the Blockade: 1927	11
2. From Revolutionaries to Bandits: 1928-1936	20
3. The Bandit-Remnant Thesis Questioned: 1931-1936	34
PART II. FIRSTHAND ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS, 1936-1945	
4. The Bandit-Remnant Thesis Destroyed: 1936-1937	47
5. The "Blockade Runners": 1937	70
6. The Open Door: 1937-1938	86
7. Closing the Door: 1939	110
8. The News Blockade Reimposed: 1939-1944	125
9. The Censorship: 1937-1944	141
10. Press Party to the Northwest: 1944-1945	158
PART III. IMAGE AND REALITY: THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS IN WESTERN LITERATURE	
11. Superior Human Beings	183
12. Prince Valiant in Straw Sandals	191
13. "The Land of Five Withouts"	199

14. Loyal Partners in an Uneasy Enterprise	218
15. Are They Moscow's Minions?	229
16. Are They Really Communists?	239
17. The Image	263

PART IV. PERSUADING ENCOUNTER

18. The Conspiracy Thesis	269
19. The American Perspective	297
20. The Chinese Perspective	320
21. Two Kinds of Time	335
Bibliography	349
Index	377

Illustrations

MAP

China

frontispiece

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Yen-an, 1937	63
2. Agnes Smedley in a Red Army uniform	64
3. Helen Foster Snow with Generals Hsiao K'eh and Chu Teh	65
4. Americans with Mao Tse-tung	66
5. James Bertram with General Hsiao K'eh	67
6. Evans F. Carlson with General Chu Teh	68
7. A press conference with General Joseph W. Stilwell	69

Introduction

This study of the first contacts between Americans and Chinese Communists is part of an increasingly common type of historical inquiry that as yet has no adequate name. It can be called diplomatic history, but it bears little resemblance to the traditional concern of the diplomatic historian with the foreign policies of various countries. It can be called intellectual history, but it is focused less on ideas than on assumptions, images, and perceptions. Yet it is diplomatic history in that it seeks to describe the direct encounter between Americans and Chinese Communists, and intellectual history in that it tries to grasp the different value systems that underlay such interaction. The Sino-American relationship comprises all the direct and indirect contacts between individual Americans and individual Chinese. And international relations, as Akira Iriye wrote, "are nothing if not relations among men."¹

Perhaps Iriye has best described the nature and goal of this new kind of bicultural historical inquiry. "All diplomatic history," he observes, "is hyphenated history." But to make meaningful contributions to an understanding of American-East Asian relations, scholarship ought to be "hy-

¹ Akira Iriye, "The Twenties (1922-1931)," unpub. paper, American-East Asian Relations Research Conference, Cuernavaca, Mexico, January 2-4, 1970, p. 2.

phenated in more than one way." It should be "diplomatic-intellectual-psychological history."² Only when United States relations with China are seen as a complex intellectual problem of communication will it be possible for us to liberate ourselves from the burden of the past and look forward to a more peaceful world.³

Iriye's suggestion that foreign relations should be seen primarily as an intellectual problem seems particularly appropriate to a study of the experiences and writings of Americans who came into direct personal contact with the Chinese Communists from 1937 to 1945. Against a background of twenty-five years of intense Chinese Communist-American hostility and mutual recrimination, it may be difficult for some to imagine that the relationship could ever have been different. But it was different in the years 1937-1945. This was the period of the united front against Japan in China, the era when the Sino-Japanese conflict became a part of the Second World War. Outside aggression had temporarily prevented the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from settling their accounts on the field of battle. Japanese expansionism also had temporarily allowed

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York, 1967), p. 329. Other works representative of the kind of historical inquiry under consideration include John K. Fairbank, *China: The People's Middle Kingdom and the U.S.A.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), and "Assignment for the '70's," *American Historical Review*, LXXIV (February 1969), 861-879; Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., *American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition* (Boston and Toronto, 1966); James C. Thomson, Jr., *While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China, 1941-50* (Chicago, 1963), and "The American Political Tradition and the American Image of Chinese Communism," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXVII (December 1962), 570-600; Marilyn B. Young, *The Rhetoric of Empire: American China Policy, 1895-1901* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

Americans to think of Chinese, whether Nationalist or Communist, as allies in the world-wide defense of freedom and self-determination.

From 1937 to 1944, the United States government had no official contact with the CCP. Before Chiang Kai-shek authorized the establishment of an American military mission in Yen-an, Foreign Service officers had to base their assessments of Chinese communism largely on secondhand information.⁴ The first contingent of the Yen-an Observer Group did not arrive in the Communist areas of China until July 22, 1944.⁵ Shortly thereafter American policy as implemented by Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley succeeded in alienating the CCP from the United States. By July 1945, the CCP had publicly denounced Hurley and other "imperialist elements" in the United States for giving unilateral support to the KMT.⁶ Chinese Communist-American relations assumed the pattern of enmity and exclusion that has persisted to the present. Since 1949, Jonathan Mirsky has noted, "no American, except for Edgar Snow, has traveled widely in the People's Republic and written about it."⁷ Those Americans

⁴ Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton, 1953), pp. 157-165. See also Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), pp. 196-234.

⁵ Colonel David Barrett, Yen-an, August 14, 1944, to the Commanding General, United States Army, China-Burma-India Theater, APO 879, "Dixie Mission" papers.

⁶ Cited in Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (rev. and enlarged ed., New York, Washington, and London, 1969), pp. 400-404. See also the excerpts from a New China News Agency broadcast from Yen-an on June 26, 1945, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945. The Far East and China* (Washington, D.C., 1969), pp. 418-421.

⁷ Jonathan Mirsky, "Report from the China Sea," *New York Review of Books*, XIII (August 21, 1969), 35.

who traveled to Yen-an before 1945 knew a different Communist China, one that was reasonably well disposed toward the United States.

The first American visitors to Red China were not diplomats and other governmental officials. Most were journalists, but others were businessmen, doctors, educators, military observers, missionaries, even a housewife. Whatever their background, they almost invariably returned from Yen-an aglow with praise for China's Communists. Though it may seem strange today, there is reason to believe that the Chinese Communists were as impressed by Americans as Americans were by them.⁸

Although this book concentrates on Americans and Chinese Communists, I have attempted to present a representative cross section of Western opinion. Accordingly, I have devoted considerable attention to the Europeans who had face-to-face encounters with the Chinese Communists. Their observations are useful and important in that they provide a means of comparison and contrast. Nonetheless, since most of the foreigners who traveled in the Communist regions of China during these years of war and human misery were Americans, the story is truly theirs.

Anyone who attempts to treat the relationship between Americans and Chinese Communists is confronted with certain difficulties, perhaps the most important of which is the controversial nature of the subject. As Ross Y. Koen observed in 1960, "United States policy toward China is more deeply involved in domestic politics than any other aspect of American foreign affairs."⁹ After 1949, Chinese communism

⁸ See Feis, *The China Tangle*, p. 206; Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (New York, 1966), pp. 209-210; Warren I. Cohen, "The Development of Chinese Communist Policy Toward the United States, 1922-1933," *Orbis*, XI (Spring 1967), 219-237, and "The Development of Chinese Communist Policy Toward the United States, 1934-1945," *ibid.* (Summer 1967), 551-569.

⁹ Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York, 1960), p. vii.

became a hotly debated issue in the United States. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, the Republican spokesman on foreign policy, excluded China from the scope of bipartisan ship. He wrote about "the China 'crime'" of selling Chiang Kai-shek "down the river" and emphatically disassociated himself from the Far Eastern programs of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. While Senator Vandenberg recognized that it was quite easy to look backward and to condemn, he personally was "not disposed to do much of it."¹⁰ Some of Vandenberg's colleagues, however, most notably Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, were less restrained when it came to discussing the China story. As a consequence, many of the men and women who appear in this study became prime targets in the anti-Communist crusade of the 1950's.

While the intense emotionalism of the 1950's has abated, the subject of American contact with the Chinese Communists is still one that can conjure up images of dark conspiracy and rampant un-Americanism. Historians of the right, such as Anthony Kubek, have labored to keep the mistakes of the past before the American public.¹¹ Contemporary reporters occasionally find parallels between our current involvement in Vietnam and the earlier experience of the United States in wartime China. Thus, for example, Lee Hall labeled the designation of American military personnel in Vietnam as "advisers" as "possibly the most inaccurate description since the Chinese Communists were termed 'agrarian reformers.'" ¹² The subject of this study, then, remains

¹⁰ Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., ed., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston, 1952), pp. 535, 543.

¹¹ Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago, 1963). See especially Chapter XVI, "Subversion Along the Linotype Front: Reviewers at Work."

¹² Lee Hall, "Capt. Gillespie Goes Out After the Viet-cong," *Life*, LVII (November 27, 1964), 33. Hall is the Paris bureau chief for *Life* magazine.

controversial and sensitive. When I was engaged in research in the files of the Department of State, an affable official made a casual inquiry about the nature of my project. I replied that I was interested in the problem of American reporting on the Chinese Communist movement. The official's response, "Oh, my God," is a revealing commentary on the continuing status of the American experience in Red China as a topic for inquiry.

A second difficulty is related to the first. One might assume from the plethora of charges and countercharges that were common in the 1950's that Americans have always been deeply concerned about Chinese communism. Actually, throughout most of the period under examination, only a handful of Americans were reasonably well informed about the CCP. Chinese communism, moreover, was scarcely front-page news during these years. The present colors the past, and one of the historian's tasks is to understand events in their proper context. It should be recognized at the outset that hindsight has tended to distort our perspective on the American experience in Red China. Not until very late did the Chinese Communists attain a degree of prominence before the bar of American public opinion. While the CCP emerged from obscurity to a kind of recognition by 1945, relatively little was known about them when the war against Japan ended. When most people thought of China, they thought of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, his attractive wife, and the Flying Tigers. As the chaplain for General Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers recalled, the Chinese Communists "were always a side issue."¹³ This is the setting in which the Chinese Communist movement must be understood.

A third problem is semantics. I have used a number of terms that are commonplace in the literature of American reporting on the Chinese Communist movement but that

¹³ Paul Frillmann and Graham Peck, *China: The Remembered Life* (Boston, 1968), p. 221.

might be confusing to the reader of this book. For example, the word "Red," as in the Chinese Red Army or the Chinese Reds, is not meant to be a pejorative. Although some first-hand observers used the term in a negative way, others such as Edgar Snow did not, and a popular song in the People's Republic proclaims that "red is beautiful." No particular connotation is intended when the author employs that colorful word. The designations Red China, Communist China, CCP China, and the Border Regions or Border Areas have been used interchangeably. Since Communist rule did not extend over all of China proper until after 1945, these appellations refer only to those parts of the country that were under CCP domination at specific times. The abbreviations KMT and CCP are often used in their broadest sense to refer to Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists respectively. After 1937 the Red Army was known as the Eighth Route Army, the Eighteenth Group Army, or the Paluchun. I have restricted myself to the two most common usages, Red Army and Eighth Route Army. The phrases "news blockade" and "news blackout" are not meant to be taken literally. They pertain to a specific state of affairs that was characterized by stringent news censorship and prohibitions against foreign travel in certain restricted locales. It should be recognized, however, that a bona fide military barrier replete with blockhouses and picket lines did in fact surround the Communist strongholds during most of the period 1937-1945. Finally, I have used the terms "reporters" and "reporting" in two ways. "Reporter" means either simply someone who retells or a person who is authorized by a news agency to gather information and regularly to submit written accounts. "Reporting" is associated with a professional correspondent's finished product, or, more broadly, with an account, published or unpublished and by a particular individual, that provides information about the Chinese Communists. I hope that these various usages will become adequately clear in context.

The organization of any book causes problems, and

ordering this book proved to be no exception. Part One provides a background sketch of foreign reporting on the Chinese Communists prior to 1937. It tries to place the subject in historical perspective and does not pretend to be exhaustive. The few individuals of this early period whose writings were important at a later date, such as Agnes Smedley, have been treated at some length. Part Two is a narrative history of firsthand encounters with the Chinese Communists from 1936 to 1945. Although I have been mainly occupied in this section with the questions *who* and *when*, I have also attempted to describe briefly the significant literary productions of the period and to suggest contemporary reactions to these writings. Part Three discusses this literature in a more thematic and more detailed fashion, particularly with respect to the "agrarian reformer" myth. The last section is concerned with the totality of the American experience in Red China. It focuses on the question *why* Westerners responded to China's Communists as they did and tries to suggest certain patterns of intercultural contact.

American involvement with the Chinese Communists is a subject of never-ending fascination. Why? One writer has speculated that the distinctiveness of Sino-American relations is a case of the "attraction of opposites."¹⁴ An examination of the firsthand encounters of Americans and Chinese Communists, at least in the period 1937–1945, suggests the opposite conclusion. By analyzing the writings of travelers who had direct contacts with China's Communists during these years, I have sought to understand why Americans perceived Chinese Communists as they did and to see how closely their perceptions corresponded to reality. My major purpose is to provide an equitable and orderly account of a controversial topic in Sino-American history, and a reasoned explanation of why things happened and why people behaved as they did.

¹⁴ Fairbank, *China*, p. 67.

★ PART I

FOREIGN REPORTING ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, 1927-1936

Before the Blockade: 1927

In the early hours of April 12, 1927, the Kuomintang abruptly ended its revolutionary entente with the Chinese Communist Party by seizing and executing scores of Communists in Shanghai. From 1923 to 1927 the two parties had participated in an uneasy alliance that was in reality little more than a marriage of convenience. Communists individually acquired membership in the KMT, but the CCP retained its independent organization and apparatus. The White Terror unleashed by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 exposed the façade and inaugurated a civil war which bled China until 1937. The heritage of distrust resulting from the Shanghai coup was never overcome. Only in 1949, when the Communists had driven the Nationalists from the mainland, did peace return to China.

To the foreign eye, there was not much to distinguish Communist from Nationalist before 1927. Few observers were aware of the impending split, and Americans generally assumed that the KMT was subject to powerful Communist influence.¹ It was true, moreover, that the Soviet Union had been the mainstay of the KMT, providing it with military advisers and economic assistance. The KMT had even been

¹ Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1928* (New York, 1947), p. 256; James E. Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yü-hsiang* (Stanford, 1966), p. 170.

admitted to the Communist International and granted a consultative status. Until Chiang Kai-shek's rupture with the CCP, suspicion of the Chinese Nationalist movement was commonplace in the West,² and many Americans and Europeans were relieved when Chiang turned against his erstwhile collaborators.³

After disbanding the Communist organizations in Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek set up a government in Nanking on April 18 to rival the established left-wing KMT regime at Hankow. This so-called Wuhan government was a coalition of Chinese Communists and liberal KMT elements under the leadership of Wang Ching-wei. The CCP hoped to withstand Chiang's opposition by cementing their alliance with the left-KMT, but this hope crumbled when the powerful warlord Feng Yü-hsiang defected to Nanking. In mid-July the Wuhan Nationalists outlawed the CCP. Michael Borodin and his fellow Soviet advisers quickly made their exit from China.⁴ The Chinese comrades were left to fend for themselves and were soon fighting for survival against a purged KMT. In less than six months, membership in the

² See, for example: Putnam Weale [Bertram Lenox Simpson], *Why China Sees Red* (New York, 1925), p. 89 *et. seq.*; H. G. W. Woodhead, Julean Arnold, and Henry Kittredge Norton, *Occidental Interpretations of the Far Eastern Problem* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 47, 60-69, 217-228; Edward Thomas Williams, *China Yesterday and Today* (rev. ed., New York, 1928), pp. 539-540.

³ A. T. Steele, *The American People and China* (New York, Toronto, and London, 1966), p. 24. For contemporary examples see: Williams, *A Short History of China* (New York and London, 1928), pp. 607, 610-612; Grover Clark, *In Perspective: A Review of the Politico-Military Situation in China in the Summer of 1927* (Peking, 1927), pp. 3-9; O. D. Rasmussen, *What's Right With China: An Answer to Foreign Criticisms* (Shanghai, 1927), p. 222; Stanley K. Hornbeck, *China To-day: Political* (Boston, 1927), pp. 438-440; Thomas F. Millard, *China: Where It Is Today and Why* (New York, 1928), pp. 44-48.

⁴ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, pp. 219-233; Jonathan Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China, 1620-1960* (Boston and Toronto, 1969), p. 203.

CCP fell from more than 50,000 to less than 25,000.⁵ A phase in the history of the CCP had come to an end. The Chinese Communists were no longer even nominally a part of the KMT. From 1927 until the second united-front agreement of 1937, the Communists marched under their own tattered banners.

Prior to the climactic events of the spring and summer of 1927, most reporting on the Chinese Communists had been hostile and based on secondhand sources. Thereafter, it became almost impossible for Western reporters to contact Chinese Communists. Between the Shanghai coup in April and the expulsion of the Communists from Wang Ching-wei's short-lived regime in July, however, three Americans were able to observe China's Communists firsthand. Earl Browder's *Civil War in Nationalist China*, Anna Louise Strong's *China's Millions*, and Vincent Sheean's *Personal History* are atypical in being based on extensive personal contact with leading Communist figures and in being written from a point of view not unfriendly to the CCP. Browder's, Strong's, and Sheean's observations acquire an added significance because nearly a decade was to elapse before other Westerners had face-to-face encounters with the Chinese Communists.

Earl Browder scarcely requires an introduction. In 1927 the future secretary-general of the American Communist Party was part of the International Workers' Delegation (IWD) to China. He was also a Comintern agent. Accompanied by his comrades, the Briton Tom Mann and the Frenchman Jacques Doriot, Browder arrived at Canton on February 17, 1927. In the five months from February to June, the IWD traveled through the provinces of Kwangtung, Kiangsi, Hupeh, and Honan.⁶ Although their on-the-

⁵ Jerome Ch'en, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* (New York, 1967), p. 125.

⁶ Earl Browder, *Civil War in Nationalist China* (Chicago, 1927), pp. 9-10.

spot communiqués parroted the Comintern line in supporting Chiang Kai-shek and the united front, these Western Communists did not, as Harold R. Isaacs has written, miss the importance of what they observed.⁷

Browder's pamphlet, *Civil War in Nationalist China*, is an interesting account in the form of a diary of the IWD's experiences in China. The author is long on description and short on analysis, a quality that makes *Civil War in Nationalist China* rather unusual for a Communist publication. Browder is, moreover, sparing in his use of Leninist slogans and keeps Marxist theorizing to a minimum. The sources he used include personal observations, interviews with KMT and CCP leaders, and reports made available by the chief Soviet adviser, Michael Borodin. Browder's emphasis is on civil strife within the KMT.

Most of the sixty-one pages of Browder's essay constitute a vivid portrayal of the breakdown of Chinese unity and the ascendancy of Nanking. At nearly every stop on the road, he recorded such portents as KMT police suppressing trade and peasant unions. The only bright spot on the itinerary had been Kianfu, Kiangsi, "a revolutionary oasis in a desert of counter-revolution." Although Browder recognized that the Chinese Communists had suffered a reverse at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek, he ended *Civil War in Nationalist China* on a note of dialectical optimism. The setback was not permanent. Rather, Browder proclaimed, it was only a matter of time before the workers would lead their peasant and petty bourgeois allies in a successful drive to revamp Chinese society.⁸ The interpretation may not have been original with Earl Browder, but he did embellish it with a wealth of fascinating eyewitness political observations of China from Canton to Hankow during a decisive period in KMT-CCP relations.

⁷ Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (2nd rev. ed., Stanford, 1961), p. 158.

⁸ Browder, *Civil War in Nationalist China*, pp. 19, 59-61.

By the time Anna Louise Strong arrived in Shanghai in May 1927, she was predisposed to accept Communists as oracles whose crystal balls dialectically reflected the substance of human reality. Miss Strong could trace her lineage deep into America's colonial past, but she was a modern, emancipated woman. Her father, Dr. Sydney Strong, was a Congregationalist minister who advocated the teachings of Charles Darwin; her mother was a graduate of Oberlin. Anna Louise, who was born in Friend, Nebraska, in 1885, followed in the footsteps of her parents. At the age of twenty-three she had won a doctorate, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Chicago and then found employment with the Russell Sage Foundation as a specialist in child-welfare exhibits.⁹ Experience led her to conclude that capitalism was an inefficient way of organizing society. At first seeking an intellectual substitute in the kind of utopian socialism offered in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, she eventually drifted into a career of journalism and became an advocate for militant labor groups in the Pacific Northwest. American participation in the First World War and the failure of the Seattle general strike of 1919 left her disillusioned and ripe for the Communist alternative.

A conversation with Lincoln Steffens in 1920 convinced her that she must see the brave new world being created in the Soviet Union. From the autumn of 1921 until her mysterious expulsion from the U.S.S.R. in 1949, she made a second home in Moscow. She became the Russian correspondent for Hearst's International News Service, attended the Fourth Comintern Congress of 1922, and began a career as free-lance writer. As roving journalist she divided her time between lecturing American audiences on the virtues of the Soviet experiment and visiting the world's trouble spots, always returning to her spiritual mecca, Moscow. By 1927,

⁹ Miss Strong's doctoral thesis was published by the University of Chicago. See Anna Louise Strong, *A Consideration of Prayer from the Standpoint of Social Psychology* (Chicago, 1908).

then, Anna Louise Strong had accepted the Russian Communists as the engineers of the future, constantly turned to them for advice and guidance, and was driven by an intense desire to be a useful instrument in the cause of international socialism.¹⁰

She had first visited China in 1925. While en route from Moscow to the United States, she met Fanny Borodin in Peking. The wife of the Comintern adviser to the KMT persuaded her that a brief detour to revolutionary Canton would be worth the inconvenience. After spending a few days in the strike-bound city, she continued on to her original destination. She did not return to China until after the Shanghai coup had seriously damaged the CCP.¹¹

China's Millions is semi-autobiographical and recalls the events Miss Strong witnessed in the spring and summer of 1927. Shortly after her arrival in Shanghai, she made her way to "Red Hankow." Here the Communists who had escaped extermination at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek were trying desperately to preserve their shaky entente with the Wuhan Nationalists. While at Hankow, she stayed with Madame Sun Yat-sen and spent much of her time interviewing leading Communist figures like Borodin, Chen Tu-hsiu, and Li Li-san. Borodin had introduced her to Chen Tu-hsiu, the secretary-general of the CCP, with a prophetic remark: "Miss Strong is unlucky in her revolutions. She came too late for the Russian revolution and now she has come too soon for China."¹²

China's Millions is full of romantic tales of heroic personal sacrifice, confident predictions that the future of China lay in the hands of the awakened worker and peasant masses,

¹⁰ Strong, *I Change Worlds: The Remaking of an American* (New York, 1935), pp. 1-227; Philip Jaffe, "The Strange Case of Anna Louise Strong," *Survey*, LIII (October 1964), 129-130.

¹¹ Strong, *I Change Worlds*, pp. 227-237; Jaffe, "The Strange Case of Anna Louise Strong," 130.

¹² Strong, *I Change Worlds*, p. 261.

and criticisms of the feudal militarists and bourgeois politicians who had betrayed the Chinese revolution. Although based on firsthand observations, it does little more than recapitulate in travelogue fashion the author's experiences as she witnessed the last gasp of revolutionary *élan* in a China that was moving toward domination by the Nanking regime. Anna Louise Strong accepted Borodin's dictum that the Chinese upheaval failed because the workers and peasants had placed too much trust in the petty bourgeoisie. Like him, she grieved over lost comrades but took hope in the inevitable socialist future. The time, however, was not ripe. When Borodin hastily departed Hankow for Moscow on July 27, she accompanied his small party. The weary traveler breathed a sigh of relief when she was once again in Russia and the "great, dark chaos" of China was far behind her.¹³ Not until 1938 did she return to China.

Although Vincent Sheean shared Anna Louise Strong's contempt for the Chinese bourgeoisie and her admiration for Borodin and those who labored at his side, their personalities and approaches were dissimilar. While Miss Strong tried to emulate proletarian virtues, Sheean was something of a dandy who smoked Egyptian cigarettes and dressed ostentatiously. Anna Louise Strong tried to analyze the forces that gave the Chinese revolution its impetus and accounted for its failure, but Sheean was not really interested in the upheaval itself. His forte was the dissection of the human personality. It was flesh and bone that attracted him, not abstractions. Sheean's *Personal History*, which became a popular book in the United States, was just what its title suggested—a semi-autobiographical exercise in political journalism dominated by colorful character sketches.

Early in his career Sheean worked for several prominent newspapers, among them the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1927 the North American Newspaper Alliance sent him to China.

¹³ Strong, *China's Millions* (New York, 1928), p. 412.

He arrived in mid-April, shortly after Chiang Kai-shek had launched his anti-Communist crusade. The twenty-seven-year-old reporter was appalled by the misery and exploitation he saw in Shanghai, sickened by the ruthlessness of the KMT's counterrevolutionary terror, and critical of missionaries who tried to impose an alien God on the Chinese and of the assumptions of superiority that characterized the thinking of Western businessmen.

Arriving at the seat of the Wuhan government about the same time as Anna Louise Strong, Sheean was also moved by the dedication of such individuals as Borodin, Madame Sun Yat-sen, and Rayna Prohme. Rayna and her husband, William, were radical American journalists who ran Hankow's *People's Tribune* as a propaganda organ for the Communists and the left-wing KMT. Sheean considered Mrs. Prohme the most significant personal influence he had ever encountered. Although he was unable to accompany Borodin's party when it left China, by September he had rejoined his Hankow friends in Moscow.¹⁴

Sheean summarized his depressing experience of five months in China by saying that everything he believed "worth a damn had gone to pot." The right-wing KMT had triumphed over the forces that had captured his sympathy—the Russian Bolsheviks and their Chinese comrades. But Sheean faced an even greater disappointment in Moscow. Rayna Prohme died of encephalitis shortly before she was to become a member of the Communist Party.¹⁵ It was not until late 1941 that Sheean returned to China and resumed his condemnations of the KMT.

While the books of Browder, Sheean, and Anna Louise Strong were based on intimate contact with Communist functionaries, they did not constitute substantial sources of information on Chinese communism. All three accounts

¹⁴ Vincent Sheean, *Personal History* (New York, 1935), pp. 203–204, 208, 230.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

were entertaining, but they were generally unenlightening when it came to questions involving the nature of the CCP. Neither Miss Strong nor Sheean paid much heed to the Chinese. It was the Soviet advisory personnel, particularly Borodin, who commanded their attention. The schematic nature of *China's Millions* and the preoccupation of its author with descriptive trivia limited its value as a source of information. Sheean's overriding concern with personality made his work unsatisfactory for readers who sought an understanding of the larger historical forces that contributed to the growth of the Chinese Communist movement. Browder's book was the most detailed and perceptive of the three. Although he was committed to a stereotyped interpretation of history, he meticulously recorded the events that he witnessed.¹⁶ Whatever their shortcomings, *Civil War in Nationalist China*, *China's Millions*, and *Personal History* were uniquely valuable works, if only because not until 1936 were other Westerners able to write about the CCP from the standpoint of firsthand observation.

¹⁶ For an interesting statement of Earl Browder's philosophy of history see Browder, "The American Communist Party in the Thirties," in *As We Saw the Thirties: Essays on Social and Political Movements of a Decade*, ed. Rita James Simon (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1967), pp. 245, 252–253.

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From Revolutionaries to Bandits: 1928-1936

The 1927 coup and the ensuing counterrevolution nearly obliterated the Chinese Communist Party. It was only with considerable effort that the remnants of the CCP were able to survive. The Communist movement split into two currents: the urban-oriented, Moscow-directed underground group of conspirators who made their secret headquarters in Shanghai, and the less orthodox, peasant-oriented band of enthusiasts who established guerrilla bases in the mountainous regions of Southeastern China. Following the disastrous Comintern line of urban insurrection, the first group suffered one crushing defeat after another at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's superior forces. This branch of the Communist movement had all but disappeared by 1932. Its survivors were incorporated into the more successful group directed by the comrades who operated from partisan bases deep within the relatively inaccessible hinterlands of China.

In the winter of 1927-1928, Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh combined their 10,000 remaining followers into one unified force. This action inaugurated one of the most remarkable movements in modern history. In the mountainous Ching-kangshan region on the Hunan-Kiangsi border, the Mao-Chu combine established a territorial base, created a Red Army, and developed a "Maoist" strategy which fused civil-

ian peasant support behind mobile guerrilla bands. At Jui-chin in Kiangsi, a Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed on November 7, 1931. Its radical constitution provided for extensive land redistribution and appealed to the class interests of the poor. Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh rose to dominate the Chinese Communist movement by virtue of their own tenaciousness and drive. They were not simply Moscow's obedient creatures.

Chiang Kai-shek cordoned off the Communist base with a ring of blockhouses and attempted to wipe out the Red disease before it infected other parts of the body politic. After a series of extermination campaigns and the expenditure of much blood and treasure, the Generalissimo was finally able to dislodge his opponents from their mountain strongholds. In October 1934, 100,000 Communist veterans surged forth from the Kiangsi redoubt, broke through the KMT blockade, and began the 6,000-mile Long March which has become an epic in the history of human endurance. In the midst of this ordeal, at the Tsunyi Conference of the Politburo in January 1935, Mao Tse-tung gained supreme leadership of the CCP. By late October of the same year, he had arrived in the northwestern province of Shensi, where he commenced an expansion of the Communist enclave which had been established by Liu Chih-tan.¹ Foreigners knew little of these momentous events.

For all practical purposes, direct foreign contact with the Chinese Communists had come to an end when Anna Louise Strong retreated from Wuhan with Borodin. The years from

¹ John King Fairbank, *The United States and China* (rev. ed., New York, 1958), pp. 230-234; O. Edmund Clubb, *20th Century China* (New York and London, 1964), pp. 190-202; Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* (2nd ed., Stanford, 1963), pp. 92-167; Jerome Ch'en, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* (New York, 1967), pp. 116-200; Mark Selden, "The Guerrilla Movement in Northwest China: The Origins of the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region," *China Quarterly*, Nos. 28-29 (October-December 1966, January-March 1967), 63-81, 61-81.