

Helen Foster Snow



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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

PREFACE

Looking back over the past hundred years in China, some ten women are seen to have become the chief historical figures of their sex. I have known personally six of these.

Two were the famous pioneer women writers. Ping Hsin, born in 1900, was a friend and neighbor at Yenching University in Peking in 1934-1935; she wrote her own story and sent it to me from Japan. Ting Ling, born in 1906, told me her autobiography.

Two were the dowager widows of the early Kuomintang leaders, Madame Sun Yat-sen and Madame Liao Chung-k'ai. I have considered myself a friend of Madame Sun since 1931 when she was a lonely and unhappy person, self-exiled in the French Concession in Shanghai, but holding a torch for civil liberties in total darkness. In Hong Kong in 1938 Madame Sun introduced me to Madame Liao, born Ho Hsiang-ning in 1876, who was Commissioner of Overseas Chinese Affairs for the twelve million Chinese abroad from 1949 to 1959, when her son, Liao Ch'eng-chih, took over the post, though his mother remained the only woman Vice-chairman of the National People's Congress. The son told me the story of his parents, along with his own autobiography.

I had to make a perilous journey in 1937 to Yen-an to get the autobiographies of the two leading Communist women, along with those of over thirty Communists. Tsai Ch'ang, born in 1900, was the close friend of Mao Tsê-

tung from student days. She is the wife of the State Planning Commissioner, Li Fu-ch'un, and was elected President of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation of some seventy-six million members. Teng Ying-ch'ao, born in 1903, was elected Vice-president of this Federation. The name has been changed to the National Women's Federation but they still hold these posts.

In addition to the above six women whom I have known, two others were contemporary: Madame Chiang Kai-shek, born in 1901, one of the three fabulous Soong sisters, and Madame Feng Yü-hsiang, born in 1896, Minister of Health since 1949. In 1938, all three Soong sisters sponsored the Industrial Co-operatives in China and without their influence these could never have been begun.

The remaining two of the ten women were the last Empress, the Manchu Tzū-Hsi, who died in 1908; and the patriot Ch'iu Chin, who was executed by the Manchus in 1907.

These ten women may, in fact, be described as the leading historical figures of the past thousand years in China since foot-binding began, a mass mutilation ended only in 1911 when Sun Yat-sen's revolution had a measure of success.

Of the eight still living all but Ting Ling acquired a measure of their claim to fame and much of their prestige and influence as founders of brilliantly successful modern conjugal, monogamous marriages, pioneers in a new and hazardous field. These model wives were not only Puritans but each a Caesar's wife, beyond the suspicion of reproach, an indispensable qualification, though beautiful women in public life are never immune from malicious slander.

Four of the ten were Protestants, with an American education—the Soong sisters, graduates of Wesleyan and Wellesley Colleges; Ping Hsin, of Yenching and Wellesley; Madame Feng Yü-hsiang, third generation Protestant, daughter of a minister and herself a Y.W.C.A. secretary.

Five of the ten were the national beauties of their time. All were women of superlative charm, wit and ability, capable of attracting and holding men, difficult men. Those born without the incalculable advantage of beauty, made

up for it in personality, talent, intellect, courage, integrity and personal magnetism.

Without exception, they have lived lives of danger, suffering and stress requiring more than their share of the inherent Chinese ethnic power of survival and sanity. The two leading Communists were all but mortally ill of tuberculosis during the Long March and Ping Hsin had that dread disease during much of her writing career. Several came close to nervous breakdown under strain.

To reach their pedestals, these women had to be endowed with a surplus of almost everything. They had to establish the principle of respect for women as women, as well as wives. The two Soong sisters and Ch'iu Chin had to establish the principle of modern divorce in a nation where secondary wives were looked upon as concubines. The Soong sisters could not marry the Presidents of China until the latter secured legal divorces from their old-fashioned wives, yet they both took places as the first First Ladies of the Republic with the dignity and personality that compelled respect in their own right.

The Empress was actually a concubine.

Not only have these women lived dangerously and successfully but in the realm of high romance and high adventure, for the most part. They lived close to history and they helped to make history. They have been the architects of a cantilever bridge between an era of girl infanticide and slavery and tribal ancestor-worship to the modern age. Under the piers of that bridge are immolated millions of women, usually young girls who gave up their lives for the future. This was actually an ancient custom. In 1933, the populace of Canton widely believed that the engineers of the new cantilever bridge had buried alive a quantity of girl babies as magic sacrifice for the good-luck of the undertaking.

France has also made its traditional influence felt in China as elsewhere, with its example of women of the arts and the salon, as well as Joan of Arc. It turned Tsai Ch'ang into a Communist when she studied there in 1923 together with her friends, Chou En-lai, present Foreign Minister Chen Yi and others. The woman martyr of modern China, Ch'iu Chin, said in her most

famous poem: 'We'll follow Joan of Arc'. Madame Sun Yat-sen was called the Joan of Arc and national conscience of China and also its Madame Récamier, who gathered to her cause the liberal philosophers of the time, foreigners in China as well as Chinese. Ting Ling had her own salon of artists and writers; she imitated George Sand, de Maupassant and Daudet. In 1957 she was outcast for a certain liberalism in love and marriage, not consonant with the extreme puritanism of the new society, as well as for being a 'Rightist'. The first woman Communist leader, Hsiang Chin-yü, joined that party while a student in France and hid in the French Concession in Hankow in 1928, where the French Consul tried to protect her, but in the end she was extradited and executed immediately.

Only one of the ten studied in Moscow. That was Tsai Ch'ang for four months in 1924, though Ting Ling was influenced in her writing by the Russian 'Socialist Realism', as well as by Turgenev.

The Communists strictly reject 'personal heroism' and even biography at present, but their women leaders have followed in the Joan of Arc tradition, even to commanding troops in a few instances, such as that of Chu Teh's wife, who was given away as a slave girl at the age of one month. Chen Shao-min was a guerilla commander in World War II and member of the Communist Central Committee in 1956. Hsieh Hsueh-hung was sold as a slave girl to be a concubine at the age of twelve; she was Chairman of the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League after 1947 until removed as a 'Rightist' in 1958.

Some of the close friends I made in China in my youth are now the Yen-ching-Tsinghua dynasty in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was enrolled in 1934-1935 as a student at Yen-ching University in Peking and my former husband, Edgar Snow, was teaching Journalism there at a time when wheel of history lay dead at nadir. We could not resist putting out hands on the pilotless wheel to give it a little nudge in the direction of resisting Japan. The Yen-ching Student Government started the December 9th demonstration, one of the six epochs of modern Chinese history up to 1949. One of the boy leaders, Huang Hua, became Director of Western European and African Af-

fairs and was spokesman at the Geneva conversations.

The girls in the Yenching Student Government who led on December 9th were K'ang P'u-sheng, Li Min and Chang Hsu-yi. K'ung P'u-sheng became Deputy Director of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; her sister K'ung P'eng became Director of the Department of Information and Research. Both married Tsinghua students of the same vintage, one now Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, the other an assistant Vice-minister.

The December 9th student heroine of Tsinghua, Liu Tsui, who used to hide in our closet, became Secretary-general of the Women's Federation of some seventy-six million members.

Another Yenching student leader, whom we knew before the December 9th affair, Yang Kang, became the premier newspaperwoman of China and also secretary of the Women's Federation.

It was in 1935 that a trend toward coalition began which culminated in the formation of the 1949 government. During the December 9th movement a tacit alliance was created between the American-educated and Westernized Yenching-Tsinghua students and the Left-wing and Communist element. Until the communes arrived, the word 'Democratic' was put in the cumbersome titles of mass organization.

In 1938, I had the original idea of starting the 'Gung Ho' Industrial Co-operatives in China, which Edgar Snow, and Rewi Alley then planned and organized; later Colonel Evans F. Carlson put the term in the English dictionaries as the slogan of the Marine Corps in the South Pacific. In India, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote an introduction to my book on co-operatives, *China Builds for Democracy*, and proceeded to encourage such industries there. For this book, Edgar Snow wrote an introduction to the Hong Kong edition saying: 'Industrial Co-operation as realized today in hundreds of busy self-supporting workshops throughout China, was thus first of all the brain child of Nym Wales'. The idea spread to other countries and in 1946 the Japanese named the 'Nym Wales Sewing Co-operative' in Tokyo for me.

Handicraft and small industrial co-operatives are of importance in the

birth-control problem, as they enable women to earn a living while still caring for their families. Most important they help to remove the felt need for having large families of sons to provide economic support for the family and in old-age. Thus a woman co-operative member has economic status and is not anxious to have a large family.

The right of dissent is all but incomprehensible to the Chinese, but in helping to raise the status of Chinese women the West has an enduring historical monument. The foreign women and men connected with China, especially the missionaries, took every opportunity to advance the emancipation of women. Their marriages and joint enterprises were a pattern for the modern Chinese to attempt to follow. Their educational institutions were of great value.

I wish to thank two friends and pioneers in the field who preceded me. Dr. Olga Lang, of Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr, wrote a standard text on the *Chinese Family and Society*. She was kind enough to read the original draft of this manuscript and to correct a number of errors, as well as allowing me to use Chinese language materials and translating from the German for me. Miss Ida Pruitt, an old friend since 1933, who has fought with me on the Industrial Co-operatives Committee battlefield, has many times discussed controversial questions with me.

I also take this opportunity to express appreciation to Pearl S. Buck. Her writing on China has been of historic importance in helping our benighted relations with that much misunderstood nation. I am personally indebted both to her and her late husband, Richard J. Walsh, for the friendly interest they have taken in my varied researches. He was second only to his wife in making Asia more understandable to the rest of the world through his prodigious work as editor and publisher. They were both also helpful in sponsoring the Industrial Co-operatives.

I have had special research assistance from Ho Mei-sheng and Li Min, an old friend from the December 9th days in Peking. In China we employed a full-time translator and secretary and many Chinese have helped as interpreters and translators from time to time, all of whom took a special interest

in our work.

I am grateful to the Yale Library for the use of their excellent materials on China and to various persons at the University who have been helpful. The draft of my manuscript was read by the late Dr. Ralph Linton, anthropologist and Director of the Yale Institute of Human Relations. It was Mary C. Wright, first woman to be a full professor of Chinese history at Yale, who made the happy suggestion that I send the manuscript to Mouton & Co at the Hague. The Yale ethnologist and Curator of the Peabody Museum, Dr. Cornelius Osgood, an authority on China and Korea in his field, read the original draft and made useful critical suggestions.

It is not possible in one volume to have all of the personalities who could be included in a complete survey of important women in contemporary China. I have made a study of the ten leading women, but one of them, the Manchu Empress Dowager, who died in 1908, belongs in a book on traditional China. Of the secondary personalities, any supplement to the history of the Kuomintang would include Ch'eh Pi-ch'un and Soumay Tcheng. In education Tseng Pao-tsuen was outstanding, as well as Dr. Wu Yi-fang. The life story of Wu Yi-fang has already appeared in *Five Stars Over China* by Mary A. Endicott. Miss Shih Liang was Minister of Justice of the 1949 government in Peking. To name a few other leaders, one would include Mrs. Herman C. E. Liu, Sophia H. Chen, Tsai Kwei, Secretary-General of the Y.W.C.A., Madame Lu Hsün and others. These were of the pioneer generation who opened new paths and I knew several of them in China but did not ask for their life stories, unfortunately. As to the younger generation, some of whom I knew before they became important, the time is not yet to evaluate their role in history.

My study of the status of women in China was inevitable from the first moment I arrived there in 1931. No one could have been more alien to the Chinese tradition than I and China confirmed me in my own background. Not for one moment was I in danger of becoming sinicized—the not uncommon fate of those who try to see the Chinese point of view. I found it possible to communicate with the Chinese on my own terms. The 1930's were the

great years for a foreigner to be in China—the desperate uncertain years of decision-making and friendliness toward the West, when every day was an adventure of the mind or of geography.

The American and Chinese forms of civilization are more antithetical to each other than any others, both in the distant past and now. Asia, Africa and Europe still have remnants of tribalism and feudalism to bridge this gap.

HELEN FOSTER SNOW

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Madame Liao Chung-k'ai, famous Kuomintang leader, with her daughter, Cynthia, at that time secretary to Madame Sun Yat-sen.

2. Madame San Yat-sen (Soong Chingling), a rare photograph taken in 1915 at the time she married Dr. Sun Yat-sen. She had just returned from Wesleyan College in Georgia.

3. Madame Sun Yat-sen (Soong Chingling), during her widowhood, 1941.

4. Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Soong Mayling), a rare photograph taken at White Cloud Mountain, Canton, January 1925, before she was married. (Courtesy of Lewis Gannett).

5. The three Soong sisters in 1942, from left to right, Soong Chingling, Soong Mayling (Madame Chiang Kai-shek), and Soong Eling (Madame H. H. Kung). This photograph was sent to the author by Soong Chingling with the inscription: 'How do you like our "Easter bonnets"? This was taken after an air raid during our journey from Chungking to Chengtu.' (Photo by S. C. Chuck).

6. Ting Ling in Yen-an, 1937. (Photo by the author).

7. Tsai Ch'ang (Madame Li Fu-ch'un) in Yen-an, 1937. She has been the chief woman in the Communist Party since 1927. Since 1949 she has been President of the National Women's Federation. Born in 1900, she was educated in France. (Photo by the author).

8. Teng Ying-ch'ao and her husband Chou En-lai, now Premier of China. She has ranked with Tsai Ch'ang as a woman Communist leader since 1927.

(Photo by Edgar Snow, Hankow, 1938).

9. Members of one of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, wearing the triangle badge and standing before their workshop. (Photo by George A. Hogg, Sandan, China, about 1939).

10. Mai Yu-kuei, a typical modern girl of Peking and friend of the author. Her feet were never bound.

11. Young Chinese factory girl with bound feet holding bolts of cotton cloth made in her mill. She is wearing the blue costume usual at that time. (Photo by the author, 1936).

12. K'ang K'e-ching, the Red Amazon, wife of General Chu Teh, marching with the Red troops against the Japanese, in full battle regalia. She has commanded men troops in battle. Chu Teh was for many years Commander-in-Chief of the Red armies. (Photo by Brigadier-General Evans F. Carlson, 1938).

13. Tribeswoman of China, a rare photograph taken during the Long March, 1935-1936, in Sikong, Inner Tibet, by Miss K'ang K'e-ching. She regarded it as a treasure as few photographs were saved of the Long March. She spent the winter of 1935 among these tribes.

14. Madame Chao, known as 'Mother of the Guerrillas', during the war against Japan. A grand matriarch, she encouraged and helped her sons and their followers to organize in the villages, non-Communist activities. She was in Hong Kong raising funds for them when the author took this picture in 1938 and helped with the fund raising.

15. Women in the armed forces in China during the war with Japan.

16. K'ung P'eng, with her baby, and Mao Tsê-tung (center), at the time she handled press relations for Chou En-lai in Chungking. Since 1949 she has been Director of the Department of Information and Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1950 she was in the delegation to the United Nations on the Korean affair with her sister K'ung P'u-sheng and husband, Chiao Kuan-hua (shown behind her, with glasses. The person on the left is unknown, probably an Indian). (Courtesy of K'ung P'u-sheng).

17. The three Soong sisters with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. From

left to right, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Madame H.H. Kung, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Sun Yat-sen, 1942, Chungking. Madame Sun sent this photograph to the author with the inscription on the back 'U.F.' meaning United Front against Japan. The Chiang Kai-sheks went to Taiwan to rule that island; Madame Kung went to New York; Madame Sun was elected vice-president on the mainland, 1949. All three of the sisters are much more beautiful in person than in photographs.

18. 'Unbound Feet'-girls doing their own laundry at the Southeast training school for members of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives.

19. Helen Foster Snow (Pen-name Nym Wales) in China, 1932.

20. Helen Foster Snow, age 23, on arrival in China, 1931.

21. Helen Foster Snow on return from China, 1942.