

JAMES BERTRAM

NORTH CHINA FRONT

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING



NORTH CHINA FRONT

BY
JAMES BERTRAM
AUTHOR OF "CRISIS IN CHINA"

Foreign Languages Press

First published by Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, UK, 1939

Home Page:

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

E-mail Addresses:

info@flp.com.cn

sales@flp.com.cn

ISBN 7-119-03530-4

Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2004

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China



A GUERRILLA UNIT OF THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY IN THE NORTH SHANSI HILLS

ADD83/04

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
GRIFF MCLAURIN

Killed in Spain,

November, 1936

*“On ne découvre qu’une fois la guerre,
mais on découvre plusieurs fois la vie.”*

PREFACE

BOOKS about China multiply, though the good ones continue rare. This is not for lack of interpreters, and the rapid sequence of events in the Far East since 1937 has secured for the commentator a readier hearing than he might count on in the past. But those best qualified to write about the war in China are often, for one reason or another, unable to do so. And we seem now to be in an interim period between background studies of the war, and the sober estimate of its concrete progress that only the historian of the future will be in a position to attempt.

This leaves an opening for the journalist, who is usually more concerned to have the first word than the last; and he can hardly be blamed for taking it. Because this is so large a theme, because—in spite of all that has been happening in China since July, 1937—it is so little known, anyone who can bring first-hand information from the actual scene may contribute something to our understanding of it. That is my only excuse for writing this book.

The greatest difficulty in any approach to the problem of the Far East is still the unfamiliarity of the Far Eastern scene. It is not so hard to grasp the issues at stake; we have seen them raised, too often and too bloodily, a good deal nearer home than Hankow. But it is hard to see China clearly, and most of us have to *see* a country before we can feel for it. Spain is also Europe, part of a familiar world; and the agony of the Spanish people has burnt in upon our European consciousness. For too many Westerners, the battlefields of Asia remain unvisualised, remote and out of mind.

This book, based upon my own travels in Japan and North China during the first year of hostilities, is an attempt to describe some phases of the Far Eastern war in direct and personal terms. The limitations of this method are obvious, and lie chiefly in the capacities of the observer: I set out with no other qualifications than those afforded (thanks to the generosity of the Rhodes Trustees) by a preliminary year of study and travel in China, and a moderately useful knowledge of Chinese. But I have not knowingly distorted anything I saw in the telling of it, and that is about as much as any honest reporter can say.

Above all, I have tried to show what this war has already meant to the common people both in China and Japan, for this is one part of the picture that is often left out. There has been a tendency, perhaps, to dwell too much upon the suffering and sacrifice of China, and to neglect the positive elements of unity and political consciousness that have emerged in a war-torn nation. In writing of guerilla warfare and mass mobilisation over the northern provinces, I have outlined the means the Chinese people themselves have found for their own defence. But it must not be forgotten that this is also a means to self-realisation, and a new road to life for the Chinese peasant.

The greater part of this book is occupied with an account of a winter spent with the Chinese forces in the northern hills. During this time I covered a fair section of the interior of North China, on foot, on horseback, and by military truck; and I think I shared as fully as any foreigner may do in the common life of a Chinese army. It was an interesting experience, and convinced me—as nothing else could have done—of the inner strength of the Chinese resistance. In the early months of the war, the importance of the fighting in North China was generally overlooked. I can only venture here my own opinion that the north, and especially the north-west, is the real key to the struggle now going on for the mastery of “China-south-of-the-Wall”.

These personal impressions of the Far Eastern scene make no claim to completeness; it must be left to that future historian to trace, in loving or indifferent detail, all the events of which some few are touched on here. Nor can I claim, I fear, to be impartial. Pity, terror, indignation and resolution, but

little of detachment and less of final wisdom, are to be found within earshot of the guns. In these days, writers take sides.

For the rest, the book must speak for itself. But as there is a good deal in these pages about the Chinese communists, and the part they are playing in China's struggle to-day, I ought perhaps to make my own position clear in this regard. I am not a communist, and the opportunity I was given to travel with the Chinese Eighth Route Army was accepted on the understanding that I should be free to write as I pleased on all that I saw. If I have written enthusiastically about the very people whom the Japanese Government oddly assume to be responsible for all the trouble, that is not just to spite the Japanese Government; but because I believe the communists are probably doing more to build up a front of popular resistance in China than anybody else. Their influence is certainly increasing from day to day, but the Japanese militarists have only themselves to thank for that. And it should hardly be necessary to insist, at this stage, that the communist armies are only one part of the Chinese National forces.

My thanks are due to more people than I can well name here, for many kindnesses received in China and Japan. If this book were worthier of dedication, it could only be addressed to the Chinese people who with such patient heroism, and a growing comprehension, are working out their destiny by the hardest of all roads. But remembering an earlier friendship, I have inscribed on it the name of a fellow-countryman, one of the first to fall in the defence of Madrid.

Like many others, the best of their generation, he went to meet danger half-way. And it is the same war, in Spain as in China, against the same enemy. We might do well to recognise that fact, before the rising tide has reached our own shores.

London,
B.

J.

December, 1938.

CONTENTS

List of illustration	xv
Preface	xvii

PROLOGUE: APPROACH OF WAR

I. THE ISLAND PEOPLE	3
II. ALARUM OFF	11
III. MIDSUMMER MADNESS	18
IV. "BANZAI!"	24
V. SAYONARA TO JAPAN	30

CHAPTER ONE: COLLAPSE IN THE NORTH

I. MARCO POLO BRIDGE	39
II. THE SIEGE OF PEKING	47
III. MASSACRE	54
IV. TRIUMPHAL ENTRY	60
V. "REALLY WAR"	66

CHAPTER TWO: THE ROAD TO YENAN

I. SHANTUNG ROUNDABOUT	75
II. SIAN REVISITED	83
III. ENTER THE RED ARMY	90
IV. THE TOMB OF HUANG TI	98
V. JOURNEY'S END	104

CHAPTER THREE: RED CHINA AT WAR

I. INSIDE YENAN	113
II. CHINESE LENIN	122
III. KUOMINTANG AND KUNGCH'ANTANG.....	132
IV. COMMUNIST STRATEGY	141
V. THE "SPECIAL DISTRICT"	148

CHAPTER FOUR: INTO SHANSI

I. FAREWELL TO YENAN	159
II. ON THE ROAD THROUGH SHENPEI	162
III. YELLOW RIVER CROSSING	166
IV. THE WAR IN SHANSI	170
V. CHINESE RETREAT	174

CHAPTER FIVE: THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY

I. POLITICAL COMMISSAR	181
II. ON TO HEADQUARTERS	186
III. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF	191
IV. MISSIONARY INTERLUDE	197
V. RENCONTER	201

CHAPTER SIX: TO THE NORTH

I. FAREWELL TO HEADQUARTERS	207
II. DESOLATION	212
III. THE FIGHTING DIVISION	217
IV. MASS MOBILISATION	222
V. WINTER JOURNEY	227

CHAPTER SEVEN: IN THE HILLS WITH HO LUNG

I. DIVISION HEADQUARTERS.....	235
II. BY FIRE AND FLOOD	240
III. THEATRICAL	247

IV. TESTAMENT OF YOUTH	252
V. THE NEW YEAR	259

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE FRONT OF WAR

I. PORTRAIT OF A WARLORD	267
II. MOBILE UNIT	272
III. ALONG THE FRONT	277
IV. WHERE THE BATTLE WAS	282
V. ACROSS THE JAPANESE LINES	287

CHAPTER NINE: PARTISAN

I. BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS	295
II. GUERILLA WARFARE	300
III. PORTRAIT OF A HERO	306
IV. THEY CALL IT PEACE	311
V. THE NEW GREAT WALL	317

CHAPTER TEN: UNITED FRONT

I. THE RETURN	325
II. CHRISTIANS AND COMMUNISTS	331
III. FIFTH COLUMN	336
IV. HANKOW SYMPHONY	341
V. HONG KONG DISCORDS	348

EPILOGUE: THE BLIND INVADER

I. THE SECOND SPRING.....	357
II. PEKING IN SHADOW.....	363
III. THE ARCHITECTS OF EMPIRE.....	369
IV. MAY DAY IN TOKYO.....	374
V. NO RISING SUN	380

REFERENCE LIST	385
----------------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A GUERILLA UNIT OF THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY IN THE NORTH SHANSI HILLS	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ON THE "OPEN ROAD" TO YENAN	FACING PAGE 106
"LITTLE DEVILS" OF THE PROPAGANDA UNIT SINGING PATRIOTIC SONGS	106
"CHINESE LENIN": MAO TSE-TUNG, THE CHINESE COMMUNIST LEADER	138
CHU TEH, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY	192
HO LUNG, COMMANDER OF THE 120TH DIVISION, EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY	236
HSIAO KEH, SECOND- IN-COMMAND, 120TH DIVISION, WITH THE AUTHOR	236
THE HILLS AT HSINK'OU PASS: A COUNTRY PARTICULARLY FAVOURABLE TO THE CHINESE GUERILLAS	284
A CAPTURED JAPANESE SMALL-BORE, LONG-RANGE MACHINE GUN	284
LIU TZE-CHI, A VETERAN OF THE CIVIL WARS	308
ON GUARD IN THE SHANSI HILLS—BEHIND THE JAPANESE LINES	308
A BATCH OF NEW RECRUITS FOR THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY	318
HOMELESS PEASANTS AMID THE RUINS OF THEIR VILLAGE	318
MAP OF AUTHOR'S ROUTE IN NORTH CHINA	<i>Endpapers</i>

PROLOGUE:

APPROACH OF WAR

