

CALL OF YANAN

Story of the Indian Medical Mission to China 1938-1943

Dr. B. K. Basu

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Story of the Indian Medical Mission
to China 1938-43

by

Dr **B K Basu**

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Manjeet H Singh

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David Olivant

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作 者 (印) 巴苏 (Basu, B.K.)

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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

We reprint some rare photographs from Dr B K Basu's collection, mostly taken by him, during his stay in China with the Indian Medical Mission from 1938 to 1943, when he, along with Dr Dwarkanath S. Kotnis, took an active part in the Chinese Great Revolution and in China's War of Resistance against Japan.

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PART I

Mission to China

International League of Oppressed Peoples Against Imperialism

At the Madras Congress of 1927 where a resolution of complete independence was passed, the Indian National Congress got affiliated to the newly formed International League Against Imperialism. A resolution was passed to protest against the despatch of Indian troops to Shanghai for use against the Chinese Revolution. The Congress took part in the foundation of the International League of Oppressed Peoples Against Imperialism and got affiliated to the League. It was represented at the Brussels Conference by Nehru. This was an important land mark in the development of a common front by world anti-imperialist forces, linking the colonial peoples and the international working class.

Indian Medical Mission to China

On General Chu Teh's appeal to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in November 1937, for medical supplies and surgeons, to aid China in its War of Resistance against Japanese imperialism, the Indian National Congress at its 52nd session adopted a resolution to send a medical mission to China and set up a special committee to select personnel and to collect funds.

The five Indian doctors who comprised the Indian medical mission to China were—Dr M M Atal, the leader, who had joined the International Brigade in 1936, to fight for the Spanish peoples fight against Fascism, Dr M M Cholkar, the deputy leader, Dr B K Basu, Dr Debesh Mukherjee and Dr Dwarkanath S Kotnis.

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

"The idea that a social system is bad which destroys food to keep up prices, at a time when large numbers of people are in a state of semi-starvation, is clearly a dangerous thought. It leads on to the idea of a system in which production is for use and not for profit; and this leads to the organisation of socialist and communist parties which begin to work to bring about the change to the new system." Emile Burns.

"Lenin analysed that in the imperialist stage of capitalism, which he regarded as having developed by about 1900, there were five economic features to be noted—

- 1. The concentration of production and of capital had developed to such an extent that it had created monopolies which played an important part in economic life.*
- 2. Bank capital had merged with industrial capital, creating a "finance capital" oligarchy which virtually ruled each country.*
- 3. The export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities grew in importance.*
- 4. International monopoly combines of capitalists were formed which divided up the world between them.*
- 5. The territorial division of the world by the greatest powers was virtually completed (the percentage of Africa belonging to European powers was 11 in 1876, and 90 in 1900). The easy annexation of more or less defence-less countries could no longer continue. The finance-capital groups in the wealthiest states could no longer expand the territories they controlled except at each other's expense i. e. only by large scale wars to redivide the world in favour of the victorious state.*

"So the imperialist stage of capitalism inevitably brought with it greater economic crisis, wars on a world scale, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, working class revolutions and the revolt of oppressed peoples in the colonies and semi-colonial areas against their exploitation by imperialists" Emile Burns in Introduction to Marxism.