

THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION IN CHINA

J. Epstein



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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

To the memory of men I knew:

Evans F. Carlson	Tom Lee
Chin Pang-hsien	Li Kung-po
Chou Tao-fen	Li Shao-tang
T. T. Fang	Miao I-fan
Norman France	Shang Chung-yi
George Hogg	Joseph W. Stilwell
Dwarkanath Kotnis	Teng Fa

whose origins and thoughts were different
but who all died looking forward.

**“The revolution is not yet completed.
Our comrades must strive on.”**

(From the will of Sun Yat-sen)

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PART ONE

A Billion People Move

I

WHAT'S GOING ON IN ASIA?

JAPAN HAD NO SOONER SURRENDERED THAN STRANGE THINGS began to happen in Eastern Asia.

British and Dutch troops landing to “liberate” Java did not disarm conquered enemy units but ordered them to co-operate in subduing the local population, which had formed a government to rule itself. It was only when the Indonesians stood up and fought that the British stopped shooting for a while and tried talking.

French forces in Indo-China, again with British support, employed Japanese soldiers against the independent Viet Nam government.

The British in Malaya allowed the Japanese garrisons to keep a considerable part of their arms for “self-defense” and began to hunt down the wartime anti-Japanese guerillas there. In Burma friction developed between local anti-fascist forces and the victorious Allies.

In the Philippines, General MacArthur disarmed and deported the Japanese. But he became the protector of Filipino landlords, commercial magnates and politicians who had been Japan’s quislings during the occupation. American troops collaborated with these forces in expeditions against the Hukbalahap, the Filipino peasant Maquis which had battled the enemy and

divided the estates of traitors among the tenants.

In China, Chiang Kai-shek threatened dire penalties to any Japanese who surrendered to the guerilla armies which had fought them for eight years in technically occupied territory. He hastily legalized former puppet forces and officials there so that the Chinese Communists could not take over their garrison posts. The United States Navy and Air Transport Command rushed Chiang's own troops to these areas, while landing parties of American Marines co-operated with the Japanese to guard bridgeheads and communications.

China's Communist-led peasant armies proved too strong to be cowed or beaten by this new and fantastic alliance. The United States realized that not fifty thousand Marines for six months but half a million for ten years might be needed to suppress them, and that even they might not succeed where an equal number of Japanese had failed. Moreover, American fighting men were not Japanese samurai. They thought the war was over when the Axis was licked and yearned to get back to civilian life, not to reform the thinking of the Northern Chinese with bullets. Demonstrations of Chinese students carrying placards asking the G.I.'s, "Why don't you leave?" encountered parades of American soldiers who chanted, "We wanna go home."

As a result, Ambassador Hurley and saber rattling gave way to General Marshall and negotiations. Chiang Kai-shek still enjoyed American support in diplomacy, money and arms, but was given to understand that Americans could not do his shooting for him. But while Marshall mediated, United States forces helped hundreds of thousands of Kuomintang troops to get to places where they could most advantageously break the truces he arranged.

This book is about China, but the problems it deals with are common to all Asia.

The Asiatic peoples want national freedom and progress from their own backwardness, which they acknowledge. Much bitter experience tells them that without freedom there will be no progress.

India is no richer, and no more literate, after two hundred years of British rule than she was when it started.

The Philippines, undoubtedly a model as colonies go, have an impoverished peasantry and only 40 per cent literacy after three centuries of misrule by Spain and forty years under the United States. Two quotations from the testimony of an American expert will make it clear that here, as elsewhere in colonial Asia, foreign rule strengthened local feudalism. "In Mindanao in 1939," Robert L. Pendleton writes in *Pacific Affairs*, "'big shots' who belonged to the socially and politically prominent families of Manila owned or leased most of the desirable land. These men almost invariably went well armed Numerous cases were reported of their scaring off onto poorer land, or back into the forest, settlers who had made good progress in developing lands which they expected to get title to under the homestead or other land laws. When making soil surveys in Occidental Negros Province, about 1925, [the writer] came upon instances of children being sold into bondage to large owners or operators of estates."*

China has managed to avoid domination by any one imperialist power but her freedom has been highly conditional. There has not been a day in the last three hundred years that there have not been foreign troops on her soil, first Manchu, then Western and Japanese. Until 1928 she did not even enjoy the right to fix her own import tariffs as an aid to home industry. She too has a long way to go before she is a modern nation.

Japan, alone of all East Asian nations, escaped any large degree of foreign control. She built a greater industry and achieved a higher level of education than the rest. But because her own peasantry remained feudally exploited and provided no market, her industry was used for overseas dumping and conquest, and her people were told that they could not be better off until they dominated half the world. Everybody knows what happened to imperialist Japan. The peoples of Asia helped it to happen. But this does not make them want freedom less. They are keenly aware that Japan, even though defeated, has more industrial development and skill with which to start on a new path, if she will, than they have. They did not fight her to remain or become the slaves

* "Land Utilization in Southeastern Asia," by Robert L. Pendleton. *Pacific Affairs*, March 1946.

of others.

Different elements in Asia have different aims in seeking freedom. The rich want to take advantage of uncontrolled rents and cheap labor reserves for industry without sharing their profits with foreign overlords. The poor peasants, tenants and share croppers, who comprise at least 80 per cent of the population of the continent, want land free of debt and crushing rentals. Workers want to be as well off as the workingmen of more advanced countries.

The privileged groups among the Asiatic peoples desire freedom with themselves on top. Otherwise they are not sure they want it. They are keenly aware that if the sweated peasants fight for national independence and their own poor men's interests at the same time, the old structure of internal exploitation will not stand the strain. While the poor man's nationalism dreams of tolerable living quarters and a full stomach, the feudal rich man's nationalism in Asia dreams of the vanished glories of her ancient kings. It accuses domestic liberals, democrats and Communists of lack of culture and enslavement to "Western ideologies foreign to Asia's spiritual heritage." But when its own people rise it is often happy enough to call on the militarily stronger Westerner to quell them.

There is no record in Asia, on the other hand, of the poor calling for foreign rule in preference to that of home-grown oppressors. British liberals and laborites have often patiently explained to Indian peasants and workers that if they won freedom from England they would be kicked around by their own potentates, landlords and millowners without the benefit of British equality before the law. These explanations never get them anywhere. Nobody but the white man in Asia believes in the "white man's burden," and nobody but the Japanese believed in the divine mission of Japan to free her Asiatic brothers.

Despite such colonial solicitude, the common people of the Far East believe that it will be easier to deal with their own reactionaries when free than while carrying the double weight of the native oppressor sitting on their necks and a foreign one sitting on his.

China is important because her people, in fighting off Japan, have carried this belief into practice. A struggle against national enslavement carries with it

the arming and training of great numbers of the poor. This is especially true in many Asiatic lands whose richer sons have generally been happy to leave warfare to the lower orders. If the struggle is long and consistent, more and more of the poor learn how to fight and what is worth fighting for. In China, the national war has shifted the balance of power within the country and opened the road to progress more widely than it was ever opened before.

Now that the Japanese are gone China does not want to be the exclusive property of the foreign-supported Kuomintang. It would prefer to be a China of the Chinese people. India is not interested in being Britain's India just because she so narrowly dodged being Japan's. The Indonesians have as little use for a Dutch Indonesia as they had for a Japanese one. They want an Indonesians' Indonesia.

There has been much worry outside as to how China can get a government which the Chinese people will regard as representative. How to devise one or several in India which the Indians will accept? What type of rule best suits the Indonesians? These questions worry the Asiatic nations also, but they want to work them out for themselves. Once free of foreign occupation, they will welcome sympathy and even ask for technical and organizational aid. But they do not want any more "training for selfgovernment." Madame Sun Yat-sen, widow of the founder of the Chinese Republic, summed this up in her criticism of the protracted "political tutelage" within her own country. "The best way to learn to swim is to get in the water," she said. "No one has ever done it any other way."

It is surprising that such things should need resaying and explaining. All this has happened before—and not in Asia. The United States too was born antifeudal and anti-imperialist. Its first settlers were lucky because they did not have to fight feudalism to get rid of its constrictions. They simply left it behind them in Western Europe where it was soon to receive its deathblow, and came to a new country where it had never existed. Most of them were plain working people, and of the rest very few were of the group that had profited from feudalism at home. So except in the South they did not reproduce it here.

But although they were not aware of it, those settlers brought colonial-