

CHINA'S

MILLIONS

ANNA LOUISE
STRONG

SELECTED WORKS I

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CHINA'S MILLIONS
Revolution in Central China, 1927

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Author's Preface to Selected Works on China's Revolution

I have known in my lifetime three civilizations — the American, the Russian, the Chinese — the three that have shaped and are shaping our times. I have lived and worked in them all as social worker, exhibit expert, reporter, editor, lecturer and writer, first from my home in Seattle, then from a residence of nearly thirty years in Moscow, and now at the age of eighty from Peking.

In Seattle we fought for more perfect forms of democracy in what we considered already "God's country," the world's pioneer of democracy; we won many formal battles but saw our country change to the world's greatest, most destructive imperialism. Drawn from afar by the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, which shook the world and inspired all progressives, I went to Moscow and for nearly three decades made it the center for all the middle years of my adult working life; the majority of my more than thirty books were written about the USSR.

From Moscow I gradually became aware of a new revolution arising in the East, and began to visit China on my trips to America, beginning just half my lifetime ago in 1925 when the Kuomintang-Communist coalition was rising in Canton. In six such visits my interest in China steadily grew. Even before the victory of China's Revolution in 1949 broke the long capitalist encirclement of the USSR, changed the balance of world forces and began to stimulate anti-imperialist revolutions around the world, I decided to come to China to stay.

And now my Chinese friends are celebrating my eightieth birthday by publishing this edition of my Selected Works, taking those that concern China's Revolution. These may well have

the longest life expectancy of all that I have ever done. Not only because China, with nearly one-fourth of earth's population, is today full of eager, intelligent readers. But also, and especially, because as the great anti-imperialist revolution of our century, China's Revolution, both in its defeats and its victories, best gives the lessons that other anti-imperialist revolutions now worldwide will wish to learn.

I must therefore glance back at the road that I have travelled, in America, in the USSR and in those visits to China which drew me to Peking as my home and produced the six books now being republished.

Born in the United States of America in 1885, my personal career began well before the First World War. After taking the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1908, I went home to Seattle where my father had moved after my mother's death. I invented, with my father, a "Know Your City Institute," a combination of lectures, discussions and visits by which Seattle citizens — many of them newcomers from the eastern states — became acquainted with the city's life. I was invited to organize similar institutes in other western cities; their popularity led to my taking part in a great Child Welfare Exhibition in New York, after which I continued to organize Child Welfare Exhibits from city to city for several years, becoming the leading organizer in this field. Their aim was to arouse the city's consciousness to the conditions and needs of all the city's children, in schools, health, playgrounds and welfare activities, and thus to create new laws and institutions through popular demand.

As I felt the growth and explosion in each place of a city consciousness which was stimulated by correct organization of committees and exhibition techniques and which then created new institutions and local laws, I felt that I was improving our American democracy. This was part of a positive faith that America was the pioneer in democracy for the world. Long ago we had stated our stand in our Declaration of Independence; then men of all races and nations had come to our shores seeking freedom.

Our westward lands, still open to free settlers, were the "world's last frontier." Of course we were often obliged to fight "the interests," i.e. the monopoly controls that pressed on us from New York. They tried to control even my exhibitions, but I felt that I was independent still.

It was in Kansas City in my third exhibition, the first in which I was top administrator, that the exhibition's end made it necessary to fire the people who had worked in it and for whom there were few chances of jobs. It worried me. After a sleepless night spent in thought I decided that there was no way to correct this under our capitalist system and that therefore the system itself was "all wrong." The only proper system would put all jobs, and therefore all work and enterprises under public ownership. This, I knew, was called socialism, so I must be a socialist. It was years later before I saw how "class struggle" fitted in.

When the First World War broke in Europe in 1914, it found me in Dublin, Ireland, running a Child Welfare Exhibition for the Women's National Health Association, of which Lady Aberdeen, the viceroy's wife, was president; I lived in the vice-regal lodge as her guest. I came back to America in a fast ship through a blackout against German submarines to the post that already waited for me as "exhibit expert" in the newly created U.S. Children's Bureau in Washington. Just under thirty years old, I seemed fixed in a federal civil service job for life.

I quickly found that Washington was a deadly bureaucracy in which I was hardly able to breathe. So after organizing the Children's Bureau Exhibition for the San Francisco world's fair in 1915, and another exhibition on "Children's Interests" in Portland, Oregon, and writing a manual on how to organize Child Welfare Exhibits which was published by the federal government, I resigned. I went home to Seattle where the energetic life of the coast attracted me; I was quickly elected to the Seattle City School Board as the "progressive candidate," the first woman on the board for years.

Seattle was a "progressive city": in any hard-fought election, the people always beat "the interests" i.e. the monopolies that pressed on us from New York. Seattle owned its light and power system, and a municipal wharf, and finally we bought out the private street-car lines for city ownership. We saw this as a widening of democratic control and even as the beginnings of socialism. We hardly noticed that after every "victory for people's ownership," the profits of the big private enterprises increased. When "City Light" assumed the task of giving electricity to citizens' homes far-flung over many square miles of hills, this freed Seattle General Electric, the private company, to sell power at lower rates and higher profits to the downtown concentrated industries. When we bought out the street-car lines, the former stock-holders got higher, safer income on our city bonds than they might have earned by the car lines in a period when auto transport was coming in.

If we saw that these "victories of people's power" were not entirely victories, we clung to a faith in "inevitable progress" which would bring whatever the people wanted some day. This was the deepest faith in the American democracy of my youth.

Towards the end of 1916 we became aware that strong forces were pushing America into the war in Europe. This, we were convinced, was against the American's people's will. So I helped organize one peace movement after another, to keep America out of the war. We thought we succeeded when we elected Woodrow Wilson as president on the slogan: "He kept us out of war." We went on the streets and collected signatures by the hundreds of thousands — across the country the total ran into millions — showing that the people were 90 to 95 percent against going into war. We telegraphed the results to Washington almost daily to "support the hands of the President". Similar illusions have persisted down the years into Lyndon Johnson's day.

Then this America whose people wanted peace and whose capitalists wanted war, marched right into the war in Europe. Nothing in my whole life so shook the foundations of my soul.

"Our America" was lost, and forever! The militarists had raped her to their bidding. I could not delude myself, as many did, that this was a "war to make the world safe for democracy." I had seen democracy violated in the very declaration of war. Where and how to begin again I had no notion.

If the First World War broke for me, and for many American progressives, the faith in our peaceful, democratic uniqueness, we had our recompense; we also became joint heirs of the world revolution. Across the flaming battle lines of Europe, across two seas and continents, we also, in the far northwest of the U.S.A., got signals from Moscow when the thunder of the October Revolution awakened the world.

The world's journalists rushed to the battlefields, to the Versailles Peace Conference, to Moscow if they could get a visa. I admired them and arranged lectures for them in Seattle but it did not yet occur to me to go. This was a world revolution; it began in Moscow but was coming around the world and would take us in. My battle-post was Seattle. When my peace movement broke up at the declaration of war and only my pacifist father and the left wing of the trade unions still spoke out against the war, I had begun to write as a volunteer for a small new revolutionary newspaper. The Seattle Daily Call lived for nine months on debts and contributions and was then smashed by hooligans wrecking the presses. It was followed by a stronger, more "respectable" labor paper, the Seattle Union Record, the first daily in the United States to be owned by a local labor council. I became one of its editors and a delegate from its news-writers' union to the Seattle Central Labor Council, where we often sat till midnight hearing speakers who had visited Moscow or reports of other uprisings around the world. We heard of factories seized in Germany, Soviets arising in Hungary and Bavaria, a mutiny of French sailors in Odessa, Koreans who proclaimed independence in the streets in white robes without weapons.

Workers all over the world seemed rising to rule, in every kind of way. This seemed to us quite proper, part of the inevitable march of progress that would come to us too. We had not the slightest idea of the problems involved in the seizure of power. It even seemed to us that the Bolshevik Revolution, the British Labour Party which hoped to vote itself into office and the unarmed Koreans shot down in the streets were all going in much the same general direction.

Out of this confused thinking came our Seattle General Strike, which the capitalists called the "Seattle Revolution" and which books have since mentioned by that name. It was no attempt at revolution, though one disappointed newsboy said afterwards, "I thought we were going to get the industries," and others may have had similar ideas. Basically it was a strike of solidarity with our shipyard workers and a protest against Washington for clandestinely interfering in their demands for better wages. It was so effective that for three days a Strike Committee of Fifteen ran the city, "permitting" the mayor to have "City Light as protection against hooliganism," giving permits to garbage wagons to collect "wet garbage only for health reasons" and supplying citizens with meals and milk for children through hastily organized voluntary agencies. When we called it off on the fourth day we thought it a victory.

Then Washington closed our shipyards by cancelling contracts. Our workers drifted to other cities for jobs. The young, the daring, the revolutionary went; the older men with homes and mortgages could not easily go. Our powerful labor movement withered from within. Our Labor Council became a place where carpenters and plumbers fought for control of jobs. Our proud Union Record trimmed its sails to suit advertisers. "Comrades" were calling each other traitors. What had become of our "worker's power?"

That was why I went to Moscow, to find out how the Russians did it. We had failed but they had succeeded. I went first for

the American Friends' Service, on leave from the Union Record; later the Seattle Labour Council sent me a credential as observer to the Red Trade Union International Congress in 1922. Finally, I made my home in Moscow for nearly 30 years. I wrote about the Russian Revolution, both for the bourgeois press and increasingly for the workers' press that was spreading through the world. I also tried to help in other ways in the USSR. In my few months under the American Friends' Service I took the first cars of foreign relief food to the Volga famine in Samara in 1921; later I helped organize a farm colony for homeless children on the Volga. Still later in the early Thirties, when many American workers and engineers came to Russia to work in the constructions of the five-year plans, I organized the Moscow News* to serve their needs. It began as a weekly and grew to a daily. At about this time I married a Russian Communist who was also an editor and writer. He did not change the nature of my work but stimulated and assisted it. He died in the Urals in the Second World War when I was in the United States.

Every year or two I went on lecture tour in America. At these times I visited other revolutions on the way, in Germany, Mexico, Spain and China. During those years and under varied conditions of war, I traversed the USSR by almost every possible route, through Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and direct by ship to Leningrad on the west, through the Black Sea on the south, and by the Trans-Siberian or much more spectacular routes on the east. Thus once I went by plane from Alma Ata in Soviet Central Asia to Chungking when Hitler blocked all routes westward. After Japan entered the Pacific War I flew by Lend-Lease freight plane from Fairbanks, Alaska, out over the Arctic and found that the American Vice-President Henry Wallace had personally planted selected vegetable seeds at the first stop in the Soviet Arctic on a similar trip. Earlier I had gone with Borodin and the retiring

* Not the Moscow News that exists today but an earlier paper of which I was one of the editors.

Russians from Hankow to Moscow by auto caravan 3,000 kilometers through northwest China and the deserts of Mongolia after the revolution in China collapsed in 1927 in Wuhan.

In all the years till after the Second World War Moscow remained my center, from which I wrote of the Russian revolution and of other revolutions around the world.

I first saw China in late 1925 precisely half my lifetime ago, when I was forty years old. I have made six visits in all, choosing times when some revolutionary change seemed important and also possible to see. In 1925 it was warlord China, with hints of change in the south, where a new revolutionary government had been set up by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Canton under a coalition of the Kuomintang and the Communists. I visited this government when it was acting as host to the great Canton-Hongkong Strike. Two years later, in 1927, I went up the Yangtze River from Shanghai to see the revolutionary government in Wuhan. I remained in Wuhan until its government ceased to be revolutionary and began suppressing workers and peasants; that was when I travelled to Moscow with Michael Borodin and the returning Russian advisers by auto across China's northwest and the deserts of Mongolia. During my stay in Wuhan I also journeyed south into Hunan where the revolution had been "reddest" and had been suppressed but where the stories of it, told even by its enemies, testified to the power and nature of the new forces arising in China among workers and peasants.

These first two visits gave the material for my book "China's Millions" which deals especially with the revolution in Wuhan and in Hunan. This book has been published in different ways in several countries. In Moscow it appeared as two separate books, the first on "Mass Revolt in Central China", the second on my trip "From Hankow to Moscow". In the American and British editions, these two were combined into a single volume under the title "China's Millions". Other editions in Europe and Latin

America have used sometimes one volume, sometimes both. In these Selected Works we publish the first volume, and supplement it with "Canton Prelude" from 1925; we omit the return trip to Moscow which had little connection with China's Revolution.

After the fall of revolutionary Wuhan I did not return to China for ten years. I had little interest in Chiang Kai-shek's regime in Nanking, which seemed only a new edition of warlord China, backed by one foreign imperialism after another but increasingly by the United States. Chinese "Soviet areas" were rising in Kiangsi and in other parts of China, but were impossible for a foreigner to visit. Then the Long March of the Chinese Red Army, which began as a defeat in the southern provinces, became, by a change of leadership to Mao Tse-tung, a spectacular shift of base to the northwest, which electrified all China, and brought the Communists to the forefront of the national resistance to Japan. A new united front was formed with Chiang's government which, defeated in Shanghai and Nanking, had moved to Wuhan.

In late 1937 I again went to China by ship from Italy to Hongkong and thence by plane to Wuhan. From Hankow, under the temporary conditions, I was able to go by the special train of Yen Hsi-shan, the Shansi warlord, to the headquarters of the famous Eighth Route Army, where the Communists, under Chu Teh as Commander-in-Chief, were already working out the strategy and tactics which is today described as "people's war." At Chu Teh's headquarters in the South Shansi hills I was present during a military conference to which three division commanders came across the Japanese lines. They were Lin Piao, Ho Lung, Liu Po-cheng, still today among China's top leaders.

At that time, in January 1938, they had already restored Chinese government in thirty county towns and were getting radio reports of two or three skirmishes daily in various parts of North China. They were winning because they had the full support of the Chinese peasants. The Chinese peasants had always hated soldiers, but the Communists showed them a new kind of soldier, who never raped or looted but respected the peasants and helped

them get in their harvests and especially taught the people their own strength and the way to fight and win.

I reported Chu Teh's message: "We believe that the hope of saving China lies largely in the mobile units of North China. The old forces cannot beat Japan; we must release new forces." Already students, professors and doctors were travelling in hardship and peril to these Japanese-encircled areas where, protected by the Eighth Route Army, they taught reading and writing, hygiene, politics and defense to peasants. Some of them I met and learned to know on the special train that took me to that front. I wrote a book about this trip, "One-Fifth of Mankind."

Not long did that Indian summer of Kuomintang-Communist co-operation last. Kuomintang generals, who feared the popularity the Communists were gaining in the north by their success in organizing the peasants against Japan, began to attack the Communist forces from the rear. Many of Chiang's generals in the north went over to Japan and fought the Communists as Japan's puppets. This was leniently regarded in Chungking; they called it "beating the enemy by curved line method."

In late 1940, wishing to go from Moscow to America and finding that Hitler blocked all routes through Europe, I flew from Alma Ata to Chungking, the capital to which Chiang had retreated, and thence over the Japanese lines to Hongkong. In Chungking I interviewed Chiang for the first time. He smiled primly and said: "yes, yes," which meant nothing. I also talked with Chou En-lai whom I had first met briefly in Hankow in 1938. He was in Chungking as representative of the Eighth Route Army, still officially one of Chiang's armies. It was said that he could stay in Chungking somewhat more safely than other Communists because he had saved Chiang's life in the Sian Incident. He was not entirely safe, however, and received me late at night in an obscure part of the city.

The Communists, I learned, had already half a million men in their armies all over North and East China. Northward they had contacted the Manchurian Volunteers, cut railways around Peking

and put up posters inside the city walls; eastward they had reached the Shantung coast and held the port of Chefoo long enough to run in supplies. This "unruly expansion," even though it was at Japan's expense, annoyed Kuomintang generals who had been unable to defend their own towns. From 1939 onwards, sundry KMT generals in North and East China had been attacking Communist-led troops and even signalling their location to Japanese planes. Chou En-lai gave me a long account of these attacks which he asked me not to publish until he sent me word.

"Both sides are still silent about these clashes," he said. "We do not wish to increase friction and Chiang does not want his American backers to know that any disunity exists in China. But if the armed clashes increase, we want the information to be ready to release abroad."

I was on the steamer approaching San Francisco in January 1941 when one of Chiang's generals staged the notorious massacre of the rear guard and hospital of the New Fourth Army. In New York a message reached me: "Publish what you know." With it came an additional document, the official order by the Chinese Communists to reorganize the New Fourth under instructions to continue fighting the Japanese "while guarding against the pro-Japanese traitors of the rear." At that time, a month after the massacre, Americans still believed that the massacre had been only a disciplining of unruly troops in which the Chinese Communists concurred. This was the only version permitted by the Chungking censorship.

I released in the New York headlines the story that Chiang no longer ruled a united China nor commanded a united army. Thus it was learned by Chiang's bankers. A more detailed account appeared in *Amerasia* magazine and will be published in these *Select-ed Works*. What effect my revelations had I have no means of knowing. Probably not much. People with better connections than I had with the U.S. government — "China experts" of the U.S. State Department and General Stilwell, commanding U.S. aid to China — were informing Washington that Chiang was not a reliable ally

against Japan. But Stilwell was recalled at Chiang's request and the "China experts" were later forced out by McCarthy. By early 1945 Chiang used American equipment to fight the Chinese Communists, with the knowledge of the U.S. representatives in China, even while the war against Japan was on. For twenty years since the Japanese war, Washington, knowing that Chiang had lost China, has continued to finance Chiang.

After the defeat of Japan I made my fifth trip to China in June 1946, flying from San Francisco to Shanghai by converted U.S. Army plane without seats. It was the period known as the Marshall Truce. Chiang was openly fighting the Chinese Communists without much success. General Marshall, under the forms of making truce, was trying to edge the Communists out of the territories they had liberated from the Japanese, a type of policy Washington today attempts in Vietnam.

When Japan surrendered in September 1945, Chiang, routed by Japan's final drive through Hunan, had been isolated in southwest China and could not get to the north or to the sea without American aid. The "Liberated Areas" of the Communists reached from the Yangtze north to Harbin and from the Mongolian deserts to the sea, interrupted only by strips of railway and fortified cities held by Japanese or by former KMT generals who had traitorously become Japan's puppets. Chiang quickly restored these generals to favor and ordered them to hold out against the Communists; at the same time the U.S. forces instructed the Japanese not to surrender to any "irregular" Chinese forces but to hold their positions for Chiang or American troops. Meantime the U.S. air force air-lifted Chiang's troops and government administrations into the northern cities and sent orders to the Chinese Communist troops not to take new territory, an order which they disobeyed.

"Take the cities. Take the railways," was General Chu Teh's order radioed from Yen-an to the Liberated Areas in the north and east. The strategy of surrounding the cities by the countryside

was the basic strategy that won the Chinese revolution; it has today become an essential part of the theory of "people's war."

By mid-September the Communist-led Liberation Armies had doubled the number of county towns they held in north China and were approaching Shanghai. They could have taken that city with the welcome of its workers but refrained, to avoid a clash then with America. Washington, failing to give Chiang control of North China by its air-lift, sent General George C. Marshall to negotiate. Marshall set up in Peking a kind of super-government called "Executive Headquarters," with equal representation of Kuomintang and Communists under American chairmanship. In all the contested fortified cities, some forty in number, "Truce Teams" were set up, also consisting of KMT and Communists under U.S. officers as chairmen. The Truce Teams were connected with Executive Headquarters by U.S. army planes which carried supplies, mail and also correspondents who wished to report the war.

I pass over the fact that all this apparatus, supposed to be arranging cease-fire in various localities, actually kept throwing territory to Chiang. Nor shall I comment on the way that U.S. pilots were enabled to map all North and East China very thoroughly from the air. I note only that any accredited correspondent could for the first time travel to all the controversial spots in China's civil war and even free of charge.

I decided at once to stay as long as this situation lasted and to visit as many of the Communist Liberated Areas as possible.

According to Marshall's figures in his "Cease-fire Order" January 1946, the Liberated Areas comprised 835,000 sq. miles with 140,000,000 population, organized in eight sister areas with common policies and a common postal system but without contacts with the outer world. For nine months I travelled those Liberated Areas by plane, lived several months in Yen-an, visited also Kalgan just before Chiang took it, saw Liu Po-cheng's Four-Province area in the heart of north China, and Lin Piao's Northeast area from Harbin to Tsitsihar.

I must leave to "The Chinese Conquer China" the description of amazingly effective policies in government, economy, strategy and every field of life, which Mao Tse-tung's genius derived from his analysis of the Chinese peasants' needs: the land reform that shifted its tactics with new situations yet kept always the final goal; the army strategy that yielded county towns while eliminating Chiang's troops; the self-supporting government whose ministers raised most of their food in their spare time and other inventions.

Where else in history had there been an army of a million men that drew its replacements in men and munitions from the enemy and thus grew steadily for twenty years? "Chiang's soldiers are very good soldiers," Mao told me with a smile. "They need only some political training." Where others would have seen only the enemy, Mao saw within the enemy, the Chinese farmhand who must be made a friend. Today the South Vietnam Liberation Army understands this approach too.

I left Yen-an by one of the last American planes in early 1947. "You must leave at once or you may be cut off," warned Mao. "You cannot go where we shall go. But you have now all the material about us and will take it to the world. When we again have contact with the world, you may return." He thought this would be "in about two years."

When I left Yen-an I knew that China, under the Chinese Communists, was what I wanted for the rest of my life. For this there were many reasons, too long to give in a preface but I hope they may appear in the following books. Basically it was because in the discussions in Yen-an I felt my own mind expanding and realized that in recent years I had felt it contracting in Moscow into rigid forms. I said: Russians are concentrating now on building Great Russia, but Russia is not my country. The Chinese still think in term of the world revolution where I belong. For the world includes and transcends my country.

I started back to China in September 1948 with the thought that this might be permanent. I took ten years on the way.

What first interrupted me was a five months' wait in Moscow for an exit permit into Manchuria, after which the Russians arrested me as a "spy" and sent me back through Poland. For six years thereafter no Communists anywhere in the world would speak to me. When Moscow exonerated me in 1955, stating that the charge had been "without grounds" I again renewed contact with China and again had invitation but meantime the U.S. State Department refused me a passport. Even to get out of the United States took me a legal fight of three years. In August 1958 I finally reached Peking for which I had started ten years earlier.

I found the type of work for which I had come; it is to write about China's Revolution for my fellow-Americans — especially those in the new, mounting struggle against the aggressive wars of U.S. imperialism which today threaten all mankind — and for anyone else around the world who may be interested; it seems the number of these has greatly grown. For I am issuing now a Letter from China, which goes out in six languages to more lands than I shall ever see, and more peoples than I have ever known. I found also the conditions of life and of travel, both material and social, which enable me even at the age of eighty to seek for material and to write. I found the same comradeship and clear thinking that had stimulated me in Yen-an.

Beyond this I found more than I had expected: a wider audience than I had ever had, some of it in lands I had barely heard of, where people in national liberation movements want to know "China's way." For Peking also is the center of a world.

When I applied to my Chinese friends to stay in Peking, I put it: "I think the Chinese know better than anyone else the way for man. I want to learn and write." I am still learning and writing and expect to keep on.

Anna Louise Strong

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