

Poems by
Rewi Alley

The
Freshening
Breeze

THE
FRESHENING BREEZE

POEMS BY
REWI ALLEY

NEW WORLD PRESS
PEKING

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PREFACE

THESE lines have been written mostly in the years 1975-77. Some have been published in the English language weekly edition of *Takungpao* in Hongkong. Two older pieces, one on Chen Yi and one on Edgar Snow, were published in "Poems for Aotearoa" in 1972. Three others, those on Mao Tsetung, Chou En-lai and Chu Teh, were also published in New Zealand in the anthology called *Snow over the Pines* this year. The majority of them were written in 1977, and in the spirit of the Continuing Revolution that is being so ably led today, taking us up to October 25, 1977.

Rewi Alley

October end, 1977

IN MEMORIAM—CHEN YI

Ruthless, determined
when it came to principle
ever steady, ever loyal
to the people whose cause
he made his own; suffering
hunger, wounds cheerfully
for them; with no bitterness
too bitter to be faced casually,
gallantly.

“Where is Lao Liu?”
the Kuomintang killers
demanded of the people
around Yushan.

“*I ing shao*”
local speech for
“I do not know”
would come back
the immediate answer.

Chen Yi
intolerant of fools and tools,
able to meet world leaders

and gain immediate respect
for his cause; impressing
with a clear, bluff honesty
ever with laughter not far
beneath; a fighter who could
write a poem when lying wounded
with enemy soldiers searching
nearby; take an operation
without any painkiller
casually smoking a cigarette
leg tied to a tree.

So many stories
about Chen Yi
his strength of character
his tenderness to those
who fought with him,
and in after years
around Yushan the people
still remembered him
and loved the memory; he
who served them after the Long March
went north, fighting on against
incredible odds.

Chen Yi you have fought well
and now you have marched on,
Chen Yi, and the Chinese people

together with so many
around the world shall not
forget you
Chen Yi.

Christchurch,
January 22, 1972

IN MEMORIAM — EDGAR SNOW

Looking out at me
from the morning's paper
the quiet steady face,
the understanding eyes
of the American dreamer
who saw how dreams
could be made come true
and who caught some
of the fire of the Chinese
revolution and its leadership
so that along with them
as they so incredibly fought
did he fight with his pen
for all he came to believe in.

Yes he suffered all right
not simple to face those wild
Northwest highlands in search
of the Red Army that
the then world called bandits
only to be exterminated;
not simple to get their
story and paint it so deftly

that it rocked around
the world in every major
language.

He did not die rich,
this good American; never
with more than just
enough to get by; yet
ever with ordinary people,
millions of them
hanging on his words,
gaining through him new clarity.

Gone from us in body
his spirit living through
his writing is this man
whose heart was with
fighters and to whom
youth of the future will look
in gratitude for the classic
Red Star over China
that ever remained his star,
his hope for a saner
cleaner world to be.

Christchurch,
February 17, 1972

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SUN YAT-SEN

Today it is fifty years
since the passing of Sun Yat-sen;
and now has emerged the kind
of China he struggled for, died for;
people's power, better
people's livelihood taken
for granted; the communications
he dreamt of now matter of fact,
an everyday convenience.

And one ponders over how
for twenty-five years his name
was taken over by the counter-revolution;
his will read piously, unctuously
each Monday morning by those who
did everything possible to batter
down his ideas in practice, just
as social imperialism of today
claims to follow Lenin and then
does all the things to which he
was so strongly opposed; still

in the occupied province of Taiwan
the rump of warlords who took
over the mantle of the Kuomintang
with superpower help, try
to use his memory to grace
their treachery to the Chinese people.

Fifty years of passion and endeavour
with China raising herself by
her own efforts, tossing off old bonds,
memorial enough for even so great
and so steadfast a patriot.

Fifty years and his widow keeps
his memory green, herself giving
leadership in her own right, steady
through thick and thin.

Fifty years and now the once bare
and deserted hills around his tomb
are rich with forest where a million
birds sing, and workers go with
families of laughing children
for picnics on holidays.

Sun Yat-sen, once a barefoot boy
of Tsuiheng Village in Chungshan
born in 1866 while the Taiping
revolution still fought, the lad

who was to become China's first
President after the fall of a
decadent dynasty, making the first
stepping-stone out of a feudal past
so that new revolutionaries could rise
who would carry his ideas still further until
there rose the clarity of Mao Tsetung Thought,
the flame of which spread
from the time of the Great Revolution
right into every corner of the land;
small wonder then that on May the first
and October day, the portrait of
Sun Yat-sen stands by the monument
to fallen heroes facing Tien An Men,
and the crowds of liberated people
who in their tens of thousands surge past
give silent respect to him.

Peking,
March 12, 1975

OLD BOOKS—NEW BOOKS

A golden Tang-style horse
looks mildly at a vase
of Chingtehchen blue and white;
a piece of rich "sang de boeuf"
stands proudly between two
figurines of Tehua "blanc de chine"
fronting my bookshelves that carry
titles encompassing so much of
China's struggle over the years;
the works of Mao Tsetung that
move the millions; *Red Star*
over China and all the other books
of early gallant revolutionary effort;
Needham's clear
scientific explanation of the
genius of China through the ages,
in its many volumes;
books on Chinese porcelain that has come
from the hands of the potter
so well expressing the creative
in the Chinese people; then the story
of Bethune who stands for the
internationalist spirit; Lindley's books