

THE OTHER
SIDE OF
THE RIVER
Red China Today

EDGAR SNOW



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To Bennett Cerf, Donald Klopfer, Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, Rewi Alley, and Gardner Cowles, who helped make it possible for me to visit China.

And to countless Chinese, Americans and Europeans who contributed in various ways to this report—for which no one is responsible except the facts and myself.

A strange justice that is bounded by a river! Can anything be more ridiculous than that a man should have the right to kill me because he lives on the other side . . .

—BLAISE PASCAL, *Pensées*

Men will not receive the truth from their enemies and it is very seldom offered to them by their friends; on this very account I have frankly uttered it.

Placed between the conflicting opinions that divide my countrymen, I have endeavored for the time to stifle in my own bosom the sympathy or the aversion that I felt for either . . .

The subject that I wished to cover by my investigations is immense, for it includes most of the feelings and opinions produced by the new condition of the world's affairs. Such a subject certainly exceeds my strength, and in the treatment of it I have not been able to satisfy myself.

—ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, Preface to
Democracy in America, VOLUME II

A Note on Chinese Pronunciation

It is not necessary to strangle over the pronunciation of Chinese names if one observes a few simple rules in the rather arbitrary but workable "Wade system" of transliteration (romanization) of the language into English. Each Chinese character represents only one sound and homonyms are innumerable. Chinese is monosyllabic, but combinations of characters in the spoken language may form a single idea or equivalent of one foreign word and thus in a sense the spoken language is polysyllabic. Chinese surnames come first, given names (usually two words) follow, as in Teng Hsiao-p'ing. Aspirates are represented in this book by apostrophes; they indicate a soft consonantal sound. Examples:

Chi (as in *Chi Chao-t'ing*) is pronounced as "Gee," but *Ch'i* (as in *Liu Shao-ch'i*) sounds like "Chee." *Ch'in* is exactly our "chin."

Chu is roughly like "Jew," as in *Chu Teh* (Jew Duhr), but *Ch'u* equals "Chew."

Tsung is "dzung"; *ts'ung* with the "ts" as in "Patsy."

Tai is our word sound "die"; *T'ai*—"tie."

Pai is "buy" and *P'ai* is "pie."

Kung is like "Gung" (a Din); *K'ung* with the "k" as in "kind."

J is the equivalent of *r* but slur it, as *rrun*.

H before an *s*, as in *hsi*, is the equivalent of an aspirate but is often dropped, as in *Sian* for *Hsian*.

Single Chinese words are always pronounced as monosyllables. Thus: *Chiang* is not "Chee-yi-ang" but a single sound, "Geeang." *Mao* is not "may-ow" but pronounced like a cat's "miaow" without the "i." *Chou En-lai* is "Joe Un-lie" but the last syllable of his wife's given name, *Ying-ch'ao*, sounds like "chow."

Vowels in Chinese are generally short or medium, not long and flat. Thus *Tang* sounds like "dong," never like our "tang." *T'ang* is "tong."

a as in father

e—run

eh—hen

i—see

ih—her

o—look

ou—go

There is also a *ü* as in German and an *ê* as in French. I have omitted Wade's umlaut and circumflex markings, which are found in European latinizations of Chinese.

u—soon

These sounds indicate Chinese as spoken in *kuo-yu*, the northern (Peking, mandarin) speech, which is now the national language, taught in all schools. Where journalism has already popularized misspellings or variants in other dialects, such as Chiang Kai-shek for Chiang Chieh-shih, etc., I have followed the familiar version.

Chinese words frequently encountered in place names are:

sheng—province; *hsien*—county; *hsiang*—township; *ching* (or *king*)—capital; *ch'eng*—city; *ts'un*—village; *chiang* (kiang)—great river; *ho*—river; *hu*—lake; *k'ou*—mouth; *pei*—north; *nan*—south; *tung*—east; *hsi* (or *si*)—west; *chung*—central; *shan*—mountain.

Such words combine in the following examples:

Peking (properly, *Pei-ching*, pronounced “Bay-ging”), meaning “northern capital.” Peking was renamed “Pei-p'ing” (Peiping or, erroneously, Peping), “northern peace” (or tranquillity), by the Kuomintang regime, which made its seat in Nanking (southern capital) but the historic name remained in general use and was formally restored—except at the State Department—in 1949.

Shantung means East of the mountains.

Shansi—West of the mountains.

Hankow—Mouth of the Han (river).

Sian—Western Peace (tranquillity).

Hopei—North of the (Yellow) river.

Hunan—South of the lakes.

Yunnan—South of the clouds.

Kiangsi—West of the river.

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**THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE RIVER**

Introduction

Journey to the Beginning,¹ an autobiographical account of adventures in ignorance (not necessarily all mine), contains enough details of my personal history to satisfy any reasonable reader's curiosity—and considering the subject of this book you have a right to be curious. It tells among other things how I went to China when I was twenty-two and there began my career as a foreign correspondent, with Colonel McCormick's *Chicago Tribune*.

What is relevant here is that I happen to be well known in China because I was the first person to penetrate a civil war blockade and interview and photograph Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai and other leaders of the old Chinese Red Army. That was a century ago (1936), a year before the Communists and the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek called a truce in their first nine years of mutual extermination, in order to compete in a war of resistance against Japan. I then represented the *London Daily Herald* and the *New York Sun*. My reports on the Chinese Communists also appeared in *Life* and in the *Saturday Evening Post*, for which I later became a world correspondent and then was for many years an associate editor.

Mao Tse-tung told me his own story and the history of the Chinese Communist revolution up to that time, which appeared in my book

Red Star Over China, published in 1937.² A Chinese version of that book came out before the English edition and provided countless Chinese with the first authentic information about Chinese Communists. Among those readers were many youths whom I have recently met as second- or third-echelon leaders of Red China today.

This background made it possible for me to be given a welcome, despite official hostility between Peking and Washington, when I returned to China in 1960 for the first time since the end of the Second World War. Relatively few of the small number of Occidentals who have seen Red China ever lived there before the revolution. I believe I was, among resident American correspondents who knew China in prewar days, the first to return.

It might be assumed from the foregoing that it was easy for me to get a Chinese visa, but several years elapsed before my application was granted—only after reaching the highest level of authority. Some of my reports about Stalin's Russia had caused me to be barred from that country and I had expressed views on the origins of the Korean War sharply at variance with the way it looked from Peking. Other comments on Sino-Soviet relations, on Yugoslavia, and on communism in general might have made me *persona non grata* if Peking authorities admitted to China only those who never questioned their official *People's Daily* version of history. As early as 1948 (December 11), I had suggested that Tito's heresy marked the beginning of Communist heterodoxy and foreshadowed today's Sino-Soviet dispute.

"The Belgrade schism," I wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post* at that time, when Stalin expelled Tito and his colleagues from the Cominform,

provides a mirror which clearly reflects the basic aims and limitations of Russia's policies in Europe [and] likewise gives us a perspective on events now transpiring in China. There is projected, against the screen of the remote future, the real possibility* of war between socialist states even after the "final" extirpation of capitalism. The possibility first impressed me a decade ago in China, where the Communist party was at that time the only one in the world outside Russia which had an army, territory and real administrative responsibilities of its own. Because of that, it seemed likely that the Chinese would become the first foreign Communists openly to place their national interests on a level with those of Russia. But while the Chinese were still deeply involved in a long and complicated civil war on a continental scale, the Yugoslav party relatively quickly won absolute internal victory. It thus achieved all the conditions necessary to enable it seriously to question the paramountcy of Kremlin interests.

* Possibility, not "inevitability." In 1957, Mao Tse-tung himself discerned "contradictions" between socialist national states. See page 387.

As is well known, the Yugoslav Communists were not installed by the Red Army but as a result of a severe internal struggle in which they were armed chiefly by Britain and America. Out of the struggle grew a strong sense of pride and brotherhood bound together in a spirit of self-reliance and self-glorification. Demands imposed in the name of the Kremlin myth [of infallibility] increasingly interfered with the performance of internal tasks which Yugoslav Communists themselves considered necessary to stabilize their power. And it was in bold rejection of the doctrine of Kremlin infallibility that the Yugoslav party reiterated, last July [1948], its conviction that "the national independence of the people of Yugoslavia is the condition for their road to socialism and their progress in general."

As a result there is a head-on collision, not between [Yugoslavian] nationalism on the one hand and [Stalinist] internationalism on the other, but between two sets of nationalisms within the "socialist system of states." And it has come not because of a Yugoslav deviation from the Russian model so much as because of a too exact emulation of it.

Insubordination in Marshal Tito and his party could not long be tolerated without encouraging others to place the national interests of their own countries on a level with those of Russia. For there exists, in every Communist party that possesses even a measure of responsible power, a latent but growing will to free itself of the dogma of unconditional obedience. The heresy of Tito marks the end of an era of communism *as an extension of Russian nationalism*. The Kremlin myth has been defied and the infidel has not fallen dead. Tito is the beginning of a true heterodoxy in the Communist "universal church." The lesson must have penetrated even the thick walls of the Kremlin, to bring about realization that the satellite countries themselves could not be counted as true assets, rather than liabilities, in the event of an early war. In particular, the potential risks of Poland and Hungary—not to mention Soviet Germany—following Belgrade's example must haunt the Russian high command.

How, then, explain provocative Soviet actions at Berlin and elsewhere? Russian tactics can be viewed primarily as heavy-handed efforts to accelerate a basic settlement recognizing international legality of the new status quo. . . . The blockade of Berlin and sabotage of the United Nations' pattern of internationalism [reflect] Russia's growing determination to hold onto and fully consolidate economic and political control over all the territory it now dominates militarily including, above all, Eastern Germany. . . . Russia's second objective is to dis-

engage herself from the war crisis with the United States by accepting the division of Germany as a legal fact, and the demarcation line as basis for a new balance of power system in Europe. Unless we attempt to drive Russia from Eastern Europe by force there will be no general war between us in the foreseeable future.

That was published on December 18, 1948. Four months later (April 9, 1949) I wrote about China in the same precincts:

As a result of the Communists' sovereign victory in China there now exists in East Asia a new set of circumstances with significant implications both inside and beyond the Marxist world. Moscow must deal with a major foreign power run by Communists possessing all the means of maintaining real equality and independence. This becomes important when it is realized that potential sources of friction between Soviet and Chinese nationalisms already exist in Manchuria, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan, where Russian attrition has been going on for generations. The question is: Will the legacy of past differences, and their influence on the psychology of the two regimes which now face each other along many thousands of miles of frontier, be overcome by their adherence to a common ideology? . . .

Far from accepting the role of satellites, either for Manchuria or for China as a whole, the Chinese Communists look upon their country as the potential focus of a new federation of Eastern socialist states, which can exist independently, on a plane of complete equality with the U.S.S.R. While the Kremlin cannot be much happier over such a prospect than it was about Tito's Balkan federation scheme, it would be highly illusory to imagine that the Russians will promptly repeat, in China, the mistakes which lost them effective control in Yugoslavia. They will proceed with extreme caution, hopefully waiting for the Americans to make the blunders on which their own success could be improvised. . . .

So long as it is true that the United States is the main support of the old regime in China and of any or all anti-Communist parties, groups, politicians or warlords prepared to continue what is now clearly a lost war, Americans will easily hold their present position as Foreign Enemy No. 1. . . . If the purpose of American policy is to strengthen China's independence from Russia then it is not likely to be achieved by forcing the Communists to resign themselves to the terms of Russian alliance in self-defense. . . . In any event, in the long run the Chinese Communist Party cannot and will not subordinate the

national interests of China to the interests of the Kremlin. *China will become the first Communist-run major power independent of Moscow's dictation. And that in itself would project entirely new perspectives within the socialist camp, as elsewhere . . .* [Italics added.]

Given the opportunity to develop its own resources in arm's length cooperation with other nations such a new Asia might form a bloc of powers important enough to maintain a stable balance between the Russian and American spheres of influence. People accustomed to thinking in terms of ideological absolutes may find it hard to understand how "communism" can be contained by communism or how it could be checked by anything but its exact opposite, which they tend to see as "capitalism." But there are many shades and variations in meaning and growth in words of that type, and there will be more. It is likely that the threat of *Russian* world dictatorship will be checked by rival developments of communist power as well as by social democracy and modified capitalism. History shows us that conquering universal faiths and organizations have been halted before they united the world—or burned it up—by internal rivalries and disintegration more often than by attacks from without.

Following these remarks I was barred from the U.S.S.R. during Stalin's lifetime, and in one Shanghai journal I was called an agent of American imperialism. Washington likewise rejected the views expressed above; United States policy for a decade was based on quite opposite assumptions that the Peking regime was "non-Chinese" and a will-less puppet of Moscow, and that the process of Soviet expansion by such means could continue indefinitely. Twelve years later it had become clear to everyone that disputes and rivalries rooted in conflicts of national interest had arisen between Russia and China, and so respected a diplomatic historian as George Kennan was able to draw the following logical inference without fear of contradiction even by his less discerning colleagues in the State Department:

There is no magic by which great nations are brought to obey for any length of time the will of people very far away who understand their problems poorly and with whom they feel no intimacy . . . or understanding. This has to be done by bayonets or it is not done at all. . . . This is the reason why, despite all that is said about Soviet expansion, the power of the Kremlin extends precisely to those areas which it is able to dominate with its own armed forces without involving impossible lines of communication, and no farther. . . . What I am asserting is that universal world dominion is a technical impossibility and that