

# YO BANFA!

*REWI ALLEY*



# YO BANFA!

(WE HAVE A WAY!)

*by*

*Rewi Alley*

*Edited by Shirley Barton*

*Foreword by*

*JOSEPH NEEDHAM, F.R.S.*



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## FOREWORD

ONE summer evening in 1943 a truck belonging to the Sino-British Science Cooperation Office pulled into the compound of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives at Shwangshihpu in Shensi. Quickly I crossed the river and found my way through the fields and the eroded loess gullies to the wooden-fronted cave-dwelling which was the home at that time of Rewi Alley. I remember the welcome of a gay group which included George Hogg and some young Chinese afterwards my intimate friends; and I remember that there was corn-on-the-cob and honey with the local bread for supper. Now 10 years later, in another world, the privilege and the honour is entirely mine that I am asked to write a truly unnecessary foreword to this book of Rewi Alley's.

When after five decades one can begin to see one's life in perspective, it is possible to pick out perhaps half a dozen men who have not only been cardinal influences, but in whom it has been possible to see and touch what constitutes human greatness. Sanderson of Oundle, the prophetic headmaster under whom I sat, I should count as one; and at Cambridge, besides Hopkins, greatest of English biochemists, whose pupil I was, there were E. G. Browne and F. G. Burkitt, legendary scholars, who demonstrated the

romance and grandeur of learning and research. Louis Rapkine's Marxism and Conrad Noel's revolutionary interpretation of Christianity were on the same plane.

Rewi Alley I admit unhesitatingly among my half-dozen immortals. During the weeks and months which followed our first meeting at Shwangshihpu, as we penetrated further and further into China's far Northwest, along the Old Silk Road between the desert and the mountains, Rewi talked and talked and I never tired of listening. Over a roadside breakfast off the truck bonnet he descanted on the strategy of the Three Kingdoms period, in ancient inns he recounted his experiences among the dark Satanic mills of Shanghai and explained the systems of gangmasters and secret societies; during breakdowns on desert tracks he spoke of the profound humanity of the Chinese folk and the revolutionary activities of those who were determined that it should blossom forth in fullness and freedom from age-old oppression.

Although the friendship and love of Chinese friends had given me adequate psychological preparation, although I had felt entirely at home from the first moment I had arrived in China, Rewi Alley's flow of information gave what perhaps no other friend could have given, an objective appreciation and understanding of the basic problems of current Chinese civilisation. Now for the first time, whoever reads this book will be able to accompany him, as it were, on such a journey as I did, and hear him expounding in seemingly casual commentary the background of what future historians will surely regard as the greatest movement of this age.

The Resurgence of Asia. China's real Renaissance. The upsurge which has made the 500,000,000 black-haired people stand up and speak out. To democratic English ears the phrase, embodied in the national song of new China, echoes the song of the 17th century Levellers, "Ye Diggers all, Stand up now, Stand up now." Like a tidal wave the latent energy and initiative of the millions of Chinese people, second to none in the world for warm-heartedness, beauty and richness of humanist cultural traditions, has swept across Asia, unleashing everything that was previously batted down, good health, good farming, literacy, education, science, industrialisation, self-respect, transformed psychological values.

At all costs the occidental people must respond with sympathy and understanding to this overwhelming social phenomenon. They must abandon all the baseless claims of racial superiority and meet the Asian peoples as they ought always to have done, on the level of free and equal comradeship. They must throw off that mentality of domination which the historical accident of the rise of modern science and technology in western Europe so disastrously led them to adopt. For many centuries before that rise, in earlier phases of science, Asian peoples had been the teachers, not the learners. Now all must be learners, teachers and workers together, according to that great call to union which none can fail to hear, though many still foolishly dread. Let them read, mark, learn and inwardly digest this epic book of Rewi Alley's.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM, F.R.S.

Reader in Biochemistry, University of Cambridge, and  
Fellow of Caius College;

Foreign Member of Academia Sinica;

President of the Britain-China Friendship Association.

Formerly Director of the Sino-British Science Cooperation Office, Chungking.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

**F**IVE years have passed since this book was started, and already a sequel to it, entitled *The People Have Strength*, has been published. The swiftly changing present has made both books a piece of historical material, which the author hopes may still be of use to the person who seeks to gain a better understanding of what is happening in this part of his world today.

The preface to the first edition stated that there were 500 million Chinese. However, the census of 1953 shows that China had then a population of 602 million. This is a great and encouraging thing in the new world we hope for, which above all needs people to ensure its speedy development. Fighters for peace also will be inspired to know that so great a block of humanity devoted to their cause is backing them up in China.

If this new edition of *Yo Banfa!* helps at all in bringing to others some of the appreciation the author has felt for the ordinary people amongst whom he has lived, then its publication will have been well worth-while. The most satisfying period of his life was certainly that spent amongst peasant youth at Sandan, trying to

evolve with them a way for the training of creative technicians; and he constantly looks back in appreciation of their strength of character, their human warmth and their ability. Today they are scattered throughout many provinces carrying their share of responsibility for the new industrialization that gathers momentum as it sweeps forward.

An earthquake, one of those that have been periodic throughout history in West Kansu, levelled most of the buildings they erected at Sandan. The whole story of how people turned to reconstruction after that natural disaster, as I heard it from those who have come from there, is epic. The school, however, had just completed removal to a new site near Lanchow before the earthquake came. Like all other technical schools, it is very much a going and expanding set-up, and on the visit I made to it last year in the autumn, I looked with considerable pleasure at the faces of old students who were now teachers and technicians there, feeling anew that all the struggles in the other day surely did have meaning.

One more entry has been made to this edition—the story of a Sandan peasant boy, first a coal-miner, and then a student. As it is the story of so many who have found a way in the new life, it seems to me to be worth-while giving, as a good example for study.

Finally, the producers' cooperative movement in China, friends of "Gung Ho" will be glad to know, goes ahead in leaps and bounds, as does every other people's movement the necessity for which has become apparent to all of the awakened throughout this immense land.

REWI ALLEY

June 1955

## P R E F A C E

THESE pages from my diary, mainly written during 1951, are now published in the hope that through them some of what is happening in today's China may be better appreciated.

To write fully of the two decades spent living under the old society in this country, would require a work of many volumes—just as to write adequately of what has happened in these three years since liberation, would require the production of a library. Should these scattered entries, however, give some clue to the difficulties surmounted, to an understanding of the struggle which went into this merging of the old with the new, they will have succeeded in their purpose.

The immediate past, for the liberated Chinese of today, is a somewhat bitter subject. Yet, for the average man and woman outside China, there is need for a more thorough realisation of what the old meant in order better to assess the sources of strength that have gone toward making this regenerated, this completely changed China that is gaining in momentum as it swings forward so confidently into the future.

The longing that there is for peace in this part of our world, the suffering that has been endured, the incredible courage, organisation and effort employed by the forces that have struggled so clear-mindedly for the necessary change—these are things of which one has tried to tell a little of here, and of which one hopes more and more will be written. The rest of the world needs to know of them, to realise what is happening to changing man in China.

For here is the epic struggle of our age, infinitely more significant than any atomic bomb; a new way of life that has taken the old, and from it woven new patterns that are bringing to 500,000,000 people fulfilment of hopes on a scale hitherto undreamt of.



I am deeply indebted to Shirley Barton for the task of selecting and editing the passages of diary used. One has been too busy with one's own regular work to do more than make a daily record of impressions and memories and send them off to her in Shanghai, to be the basis for what is now presented to the reader.

REWI ALLEY





Rewi Alley discusses a Diesel engine with trainees.

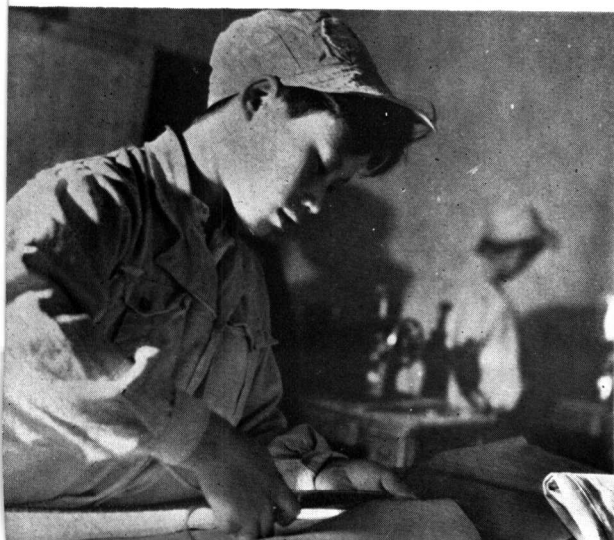


Sandan. Trainees in the machine shop.

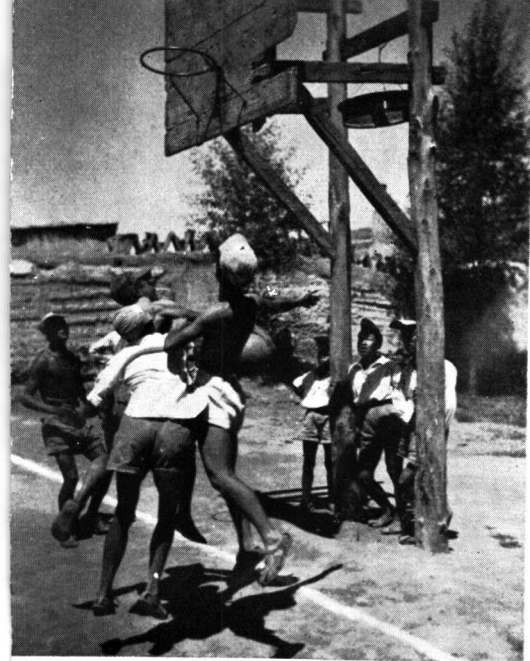


Sandan. Boys from the textile section.

Sandan. Girl student works as cutter in tailoring section.



Sandan. A girl weaver is working a peace motif into a rug.



Sandan. Trainees on basket-ball pitch.



Sandan. A group of girl students.

Sandan. Lads of the preparatory class resting after their half-day practical work.



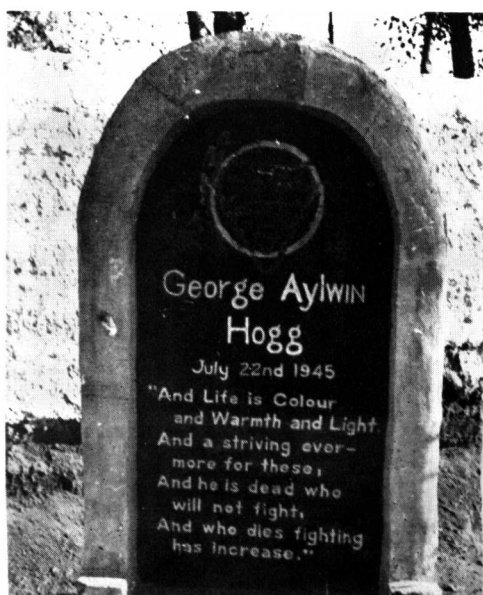


People's Liberation Army representatives pay tribute to Agnes Smedley. Inscription on tablet says:

"Friend of the Chinese People—Agnes Smedley, the American Revolutionary Writer.  
Erected by the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists."

George Hogg and Lao Ssu.

George Hogg's grave at Sandan.





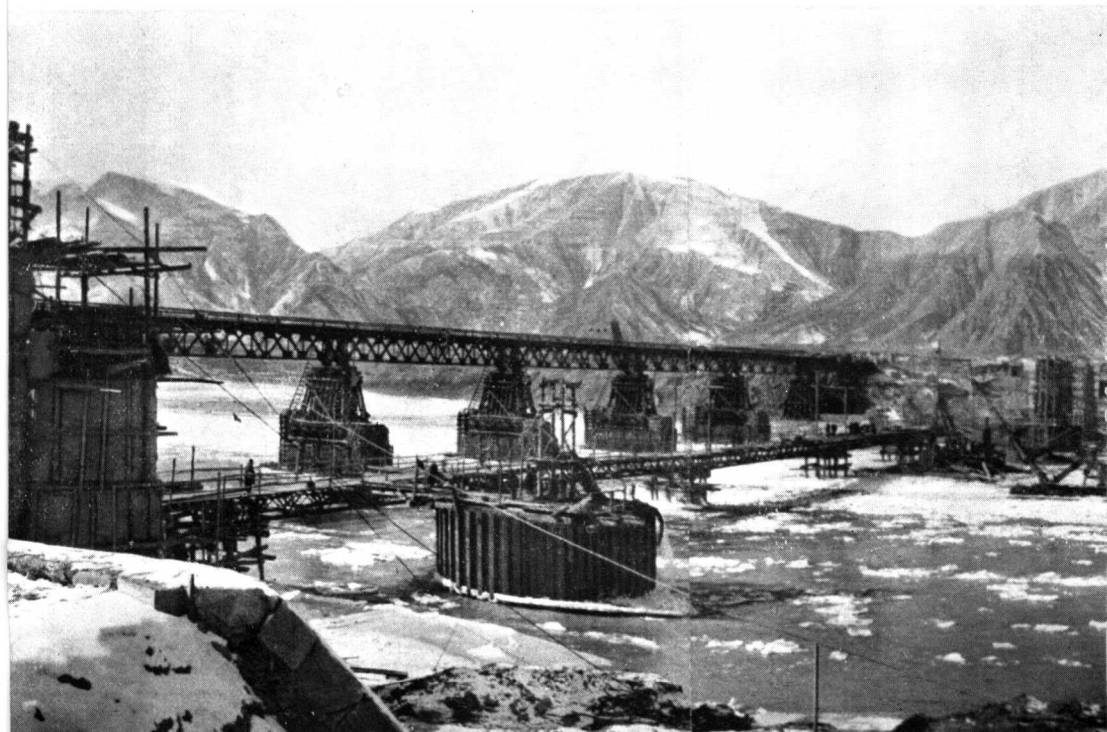


Agricultural workers at the Wulitien State Farm, near Peking, read the draft of the Constitution in the newspaper.



The completed Futseling Dam, a part of the Huai River conservancy scheme.

Work is going ahead on the new railway bridge over the Yellow River at Lanchow, Kansu.



Celebrations on the completion of the highway linking Sikang with Lhasa in Tibet. Potala Palace in background.



Building the Sikang-Tibet highway from both ends, the workers meet.





In the home of a 64-year-old worker in the railway workshops at Changhsintien. He is now a member of the local town council.

Workers' new homes at the Anshan steel works, N.E. China.





A Tibetan mother with her children in the Tienchu Autonomous Region in Kansu Province.



Kazakhs in the Pamirs in Sinkiang Province at work, shearing sheep. They now have their own autonomous area.

