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far east

Reporter

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER CHANGES WORLDS

LIFE IN CHINA OF AN EX-PRISONER OF WAR





Including Jim's Daughter

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER CHANGES WORLDS

LIFE IN CHINA

OF AN EX-PRISONER OF WAR

"Jim," an American soldier, was captured by the Chinese during the Korean War. Given the choice to stay in China or to return to the United States, he elected to stay. Now, more than twenty years later, he tells the story of his life there. His straightforward, informal account of China as seen through the eyes of an average American is all the more significant.

The story this POW tells is simple - but the contrast between his life as a working man in China and the kind of future the returning working-man-soldier faces in the United States highlights the contrast between the two systems - the decayed capitalist and the socialist.

EX-PRISONER OF WAR JIM WRITES A LETTER

Jim finds a friend

You ask me how I met my wife. To really answer I must go back to when I first started to work in this paper factory. I met a worker who became my teacher. He taught me the techniques of running big and small lathes. Since then we have become very good friends - you can say we are bosom friends; he treats me like his own brother. This teacher of mine not only taught me about techniques; for seventeen years he has talked about revolution, about Chairman Mao, about the Communist Party of China, and about our personal feelings - where they are the same or where they are different.

The friend's background

This friend and fellow-worker of mine came from a poor family. When he was twelve his village was overrun by the Japanese fascists, who burned everything down, looted all they could, slaughtered left and right, raped the women. People everywhere starved. My teacher's big brother was shot to death before his eyes. My friend ran away into the mountains. After many days of hunger and wandering he finally found the Eighth Route Army and became a soldier. The Japanese were defeated, The reactionary Kuomintang Army was defeated, and my friend has been a revolutionary worker ever since; and today he repudiates the revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi. I love to be with people like that. There's an old saying in China - "You can tell the speed of a horse by how it runs; you can tell the heart of a man by the passing of time." So it is very natural for me to rely on this teacher-friend.

His friend help Jim find a wife

One day I consulted my friend on the marriage problem, and he agreed to introduce me to a woman, saying "Wait a few months until I can find one suitable." After about three months he asked me to come his house; he had found a woman he wanted to introduce to me. He was acting as middle-man. When I first saw her my heart missed a beat. Why? Because for many years I had had a picture in my mind of the kind of woman I would like to marry - and here was a woman who fitted the picture!

The future wife's background

After many talks I found out more about her, and the more I found, the more I made up my mind to marry her. Little by little I found out her history. She was also of a poor peasant family. The Japanese fascists had also come to her village; they raped and killed and looted and burned everything. Her mother had six boys and this one girl. Along with this Japanese scourge came another - drought and famine. Every one was starving. The nine of them - father, mother, and seven children went from place to place looking for

food, till all were weak and could hardly move. At that time no one cared for the people. This family gave most of their children away and moved on. My wife was left at a landlord's house and was treated badly - having to work hard with little to eat. She was beaten with an iron poker and still has the scars on her legs. After ten years of this life, China was liberated under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. This whole family of my wife's was reunited with the help of the People's Liberation Army,

The wedding

After six months of talking and going together we agreed to marry. We were married on May Day 1957. We went to the marriage office, paid about fifty cents for a license, and were pronounced married.

The marriage day was a day I'll never forget. We all had a wonderful time. About four or five hundred people came, plus about four hundred children. They came from everywhere; it lasted four or five days this way. I'll never regret marrying this woman!

The new family

The workers of our factories were good to us. They fixed up a house for us to live in, real close to the factory where I worked.

My wife was working in a rubber factory, but recently she stopped working - the house affairs are quite a few and also, the big daughter (by my wife's previous marriage) had just turned eighteen and had answered the call of Chairman Mao to go to the country to work and to be educated by the poor and lower middle peasants; she was happy about going!

Now I would like to talk about the new member who has been added to the family, a six-months old baby girl. She was born in a hospital very near where I work, about ten minutes from the factory.

The hospital and medical services

Two years ago my wife lost our first child, and this time she took special care. I went to see the members of the Revolutionary Committee of this hospital at an early date; they were very considerate and serious about the situation. My wife was allowed to stay in the hospital one month before she gave birth; two women doctors (demobilized doctors who had for a long time served in the People's Liberation Army) took good care of her. When it came time near the birth, those two doctors stood over my wife day and night for two days just to make sure and to be there for any complications. Everything came out smoothly. She gave birth to a little fat baby girl, $8\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, coal black hair, large black eyes, long eyebrows and beautiful long eyelashes. Everyone in the hospital was happy. This attitude of being responsible to the people comes from the Party, from Chairman Mao's Thought - how much concern they show to the people. Look how different it is in the United States, where it's a man-eat-man society.

My bill for the hospital expenses was \$8.50 and I got a \$4.25 refund at the factory. Can you imagine it - \$4.25 for hospital care! This never happened to me in The States - I dreaded to be sick there!

Women in China, when they get pregnant, if they are in a factory they are given light work to do. After they have given birth and leave the hospital they are given 56 days of leave with pay and free medical attention. You won't find a good situation like this in the United States!

In China medicine is very cheap, and in the last seventeen years I have seen the prices come down, down many times. When I was in The States the prices were always going up. Now I know what system is best for the people. If a worker has medicine, hospital treatment or has to stay in the hospital, all his expenses are paid by the factory. If he can't go to work owing to illness, he still draws his pay. If any of his family get sick he pays half the medical expenses and the factory pays the other half. Boy, I really found a home in China! I lived twenty years in The States

and it never happened this way. If someone had told me these things twenty years ago I'd never believe him. I'd just think he was propagating socialism. But today I surely believe it, because I live in China.

I will never forget the working staff of the hospital, especially the two women doctors. They were really responsible to the people. I'll never forget them - their motions and thoughts brought happiness to my home - really it's Chairman Mao's Thought that has brought happiness to my home.

The happy customs persist

After my wife and baby came from the hospital I really started to prepare; in China it is an old custom to send colored eggs to your friends; and the wife and I got busy and colored hundreds of eggs and sent them to our friends. What I didn't realize was that our friends also sent eggs to us - my family of six really stuffed ourselves with eggs for two weeks! Eggs come cheap in China - about 84 fen (34 cents) a catty. Another Chinese custom is to have pictures taken at a studio when the baby is one hundred days old. The pictures went like hotcakes - we had to have them reprinted many times. In the United States, on a happy occasion like this, men pass cigars around. In China I passed around good cigarettes and drank good tea with my friends.

The children

My wife, whose previous husband had died some years earlier, had four children. When these children first saw me they liked me - and I like children. I get along well with our children. I like people to show concern and treat me good and I must be that way to others. Actually, it's a class-conscious feeling. Children are very smart and they sense and feel if you treat them good or bad; children through time come to see who treats them good.

The baby has a grandmother who loves her like her own...All four children together chose the name for the baby - she is called Wen Shai-hsia - "Dawn Over

Shaoshan". The big sister dearly loves her baby sister and is always taking good care of her. When the big sister left for the countryside she looked at her little sister and tears rolled down her cheeks; and in every letter she asks about her. When she was here she was always carrying her around, washing her, changing her diapers. For many years she had always wanted a little sister - she already had two younger brothers. They all play with the baby, day in and day out, and the baby jumps around and laughs all the time. It's all one big happy family. I'd like to add one more to the family in the future, then stop production.

What is also interesting, many other people, who live close by, also like the baby and they carry her around; if today she is not in this house, then for sure she's in another. It's so beautiful. My house every day is full of children - it's one big merry-go-round!

Jim's education

Let's talk of my education. Of course I had twelve years of education in The States, but as Chairman Mao says, "One is divisible into two". I learned to read and write, add, subtract, etc. This was good but I also found out that education in The States is controlled by the monopoly group, with the result that too many are duped and become obedient tools. I was duped into going to Korea to become cannon fodder for the monopolists. The monopolist education distorts and gives class falsehood.

Jim - a working man

I've been working in this factory for over seventeen years (including three years of school). First I worked on lathes, now I am working in the cutting room. There are four machines which cut straw, wheat stocks, old rags, and old worn-out cloth shoes which have been discarded. I'm working harder than before and I want to work much harder - - - - because you know why you are working. You are paid wages, but also what is produced for the state in one form or another, comes back to you. When production increases, prices come

down and there's more to buy. Everyone feels this way. China is a state run by the working class and what is produced by the people goes back to the people in one form or another. So things are getting better with each passing day and people are happy to work hard.

You can also say I'm working for Chairman Mao, because Mao's Thought is truth. What is truth? What is in the interest of the people, the working people, is truth. Chairman Mao's Thought is in the interest of over 95% of the world's people, and I want to work hard for the rest of my life - I never want to retire at 60. I'm not working for a handful of money bags!

The imperialists and the social-imperialists talk of working for the people but really that is a slogan to cover up their sucking of the people's blood. Isn't this a fact? The Afro-American wants to improve his livelihood, and many other people, but what happens to them? They are shot down. They should grasp Chairman Mao's Thought - it becomes an invincible weapon of the working class.

Due to the victory of Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution our little paper factory has fulfilled the state plan ahead of schedule by 120 days. 10,000 tons of paper were produced, about 30 varieties and the workers are now preparing for the big leap forward in 1971. We have four steam balls to cook the pulp in and now four more have come into the factory. In 1971 we are prepared to double production, especially as the factory will produce more of its own pulp. This living example - multiply it by millions all through China -- and you can see where China is going. At present 1800 workers, after work, are studying Chairman Mao's philosophical works: this is the guarantee of victory in the big leap forward!

A rebirth: a second life

Since coming to China, I have added three more years to my education; I was sent free-of-cost to the People's University in Peking. Then I requested to come back to the factory. I have learned more truth in one year in China than I did in twenty years back there. I know the

truth because I can make a comparison. How do you know when a thing is white? Only one way and that is to compare it with black, and vice-versa. Twenty eight years in The States and twenty in China is enough to see which system is best for the working people. I'll take socialism.

Some people say I've been "brainwashed". Yes, that's true. I want to be brainwashed, and I've not been brainwashed enough. It's wonderful to wash away the capitalist dirt they put into your brains.

We were sent to Korea to kill and be killed while the capitalists stayed at home and fattened on the killing of Chinese and Korean people. Many were killed and Korea was flattened to the ground; not a house or factory - nothing - was left. The people, Koreans and Chinese, treated POW's well - because they knew it wasn't our (the American soldiers'...ed) war. I come from a working class family. But you didn't see any capitalists in the front lines. So it is true that you have only class love and class hate. What love does the capitalist ruling class have for the workers of China? of Korea? They also shoot down workers in The States.

So, for twenty years I have been living the life of Riley in China. For seventeen years I've not known unemployment as I would have in The States. Every one who wants to, works in China.

If Chairman Mao's policy was not based on class, how could I live in China? how could I work in China? How could I marry a Chinese woman with Chinese children? How could I live in China for twenty years? I've found Paradise in China. Twenty years ago I had a re-birth. I'm living a second life, and the source of all this happiness is Chairman Mao's Thought.

A POSTSCRIPT

In Jim's story American history comes full circle. In 1776 many soldiers, sent by the British to suppress the American Revolution, deserted and fought for the Revolution. Today Jim makes dramatically clear that People's China pioneers the road to freedom while the United States is its would-be executioner.

The good life - which is getting better - of the people of China was won only in protracted, difficult, painful struggles. Despite all efforts of the Kuomintang and the reactionaries the world over led by the United States, the people of China prevailed. One big reason for this was that millions of Kuomintang soldiers deserted and joined the **People's Liberation Army**.

There is a moral in this for Americans today. A Chinese proverb speaks of the person who picks up a stone to hurl at another only to have it fall on his own feet. United States soldiers are being sent to South East Asia to suppress the liberation movements of these peoples. For many of these soldiers this marks the beginning of their reeducation. James Reston describes what happens on their return to the United States:

"The 'boys,' as we call them are coming back from the war, but what are they coming back to? And what are they bringing back with them - what thoughts, what dreams, what habits?.....They are coming back to a divided country, which has five million unemployed and a dwindling market for unskilled labor, a fabulously rich country with a shortage of houses as well as jobs and a surplus of inflation and social tension.....They are no longer 'boys'; they are men trained in violence....all of them expecting, and rightly too, useful work, and a decent life..."(NYT 3/7/71)

The Establishment is fearful and with good cause. The reeducation of former American soldiers is continuing. For them the news of life in China is good and provides ideas of how life can also be improved for the American people.