

Mission Unfulfilled

Marshall in China, by John Robinson Beal, *Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970. 385 pp. \$7.95.*

JOHN ROBINSON BEAL, who has written biographies of Lester Pearson and John Foster Dulles, retired in Ottawa in 1966 after a long career in journalism, working for the United Press from 1929 to 1944, then as news editor for *Time* in Washington, D. C., and lastly as *Time's* bureau chief in Ottawa. In early 1946 he accepted an invitation to join General Marshall's mission to China, and thus became an advisor to the National Government of China. Told that his job was "to keep the Chinese out of trouble with the United States," and "to get to China as fast as possible," Beal had no

time to bone up on such a job or on the Chinese situation, so he decided that in view of the uncertainties he faced he had better keep a diary. This he did during his stay in China, each night writing himself "a full report of what [he] had witnessed that day and of the conversations in which [he] had taken part." This diary now published in part for the first time makes up the core of his book. Here too, as in the case of the Lindbergh journals, we have a diary of the times, written at the time of the events recorded, or soon after, by an expert observer of serious purpose, for guidance in the present as well as for knowledge of the past, but in this case a diary much narrower in scope, April 1946 to mid-January 1947, and limited in subject to this single episode in the career of the author. Furthermore, whereas the Lindbergh journals are self-explanatory, requiring limited annotations chiefly as to persons, the intriguing and confusing intricacies of the situation in China, of which at first he was ignorant, require him to intersperse his diary entries with explanatory narration and analyses, drawn from other notes and related papers, in order to construct an account, intelligible to himself and the reader, of the Marshall Mission and his (Beal's) relation to it, which is the subject of the book.

Since the reader finds it difficult to discover the forest for the trees in the tricky complexities of the conflict which caused bitter frustrations for the chief protagonist himself, Marshall, the author has helped to bring this forest into focus for the reader by heading each chapter with a brief summary of the content. Furthermore, after humorously describing his difficulties in distinguishing between Chinese place-names and similar Chinese names of persons, Beal admonishes the reader "to take a relaxed approach to the Chinese names he encounters," since the author will make clear those which are significant. These prove to be, on the Nationalist side, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang, Dr. T. V. Soong, the Prime Min-

ister that year, Dr. Peng Hsueh-pei, Minister of Information, Dr. Lee Wei-kuo, his vice-minister, and, on the Communist side, Chou En-lai. Moreover, although the reader gets involved in the minutiae of the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists, the rivalries and intrigues, warfare and ceasefires, the ups and downs of cooperation and non-cooperation, and in the relationship of Marshall and others to the conflict, all of which is especially interesting, informative and valuable to professional historians, it is Beal's descriptions and analyses of the Chinese scene, of Chinese and American leaders, of his own experiences and life in China which the general reader will find most fascinating, informative and instructive.

The author's long training, in detailed, exact, observation of what he sees, absorption of what he hears, and felicitous ability in recording the substance of discussions and the minutiae of his observations, is revealed throughout the book in the many diary entries which in chronological order delineate his experiences, the mission of Marshall, and its failure. Many personal meetings and official interviews with Chiang, Madame Chiang, T. V. Soong and the Minister of Information; with General Marshall, Ambassador J. Leighton Stuart, and other leading officials, American and Chinese, are recorded by Beal in regard to his task of trying to keep track of what was going on in order to help the Nationalists in their publicity and Marshall in his mission. Many social affairs, private and official dinners, which Beal was called upon to attend, are recorded by him, including about half a dozen in honor of his chief employer, Henry Luce, who unknown to Beal had been "informally invited by the Generalissimo" to visit China. To add to the confusion Luce arrived in China just after Beal's wife and family, whom he had not seen for six months, had arrived. And throughout the book Beal describes in fascinating detail the physical appearance and character of individuals met, the clothing worn, the in-

terior of rooms visited, the food and drink being served, his living accommodations, his travels by train, plane, auto, and sedan chair, the cities where he worked—Shanghai, Nanking, Kuling—Chinese life and psychology, custom and usage, and, of course, the events of the conflict, the policies and objectives of the protagonists, and his own views and criticisms.

Although Beal went to China, he admits, infected with the then prevailing impression in the United States that Chinese Communists were “agrarian reformers,” the regime of Chiang Kai-shek “corrupt and inefficient,” the experience of “seeing for himself” during a year and a half of direct involvement in the complexities of the situation led him to the realization that Chinese Communists were indeed Comintern Communists, as Chiang well knew, and to the recognition that though the regime was inefficient its leaders were not corrupt but hard working capable men who, he implies, could have achieved victory over the Communists and the inflationary economic situation had the United States not cut off arms and financial aid to them. Furthermore, as the meeting of the National Assembly approached in November 1946, Beal became convinced that Marshall’s mission was failing and that there would be no Communist-Kuomintang coalition, convictions which proved out when Chou En-lai and the Communists made clear to Marshall that they no longer wanted his mediation, and thus brought the mission to an end in failure.

Marshall departed in January 1947 to become United States Secretary of State. Beal remained for several months after the expiration of his contract, at the request of Chiang. Beal wanted to see completed the reorganization of the National government which he had followed with sympathetic understanding during the meetings of the National Assembly, meetings which he recorded. In summer he returned with his family to the States.

A fine introduction to the book by Mr. Robert Murphy gives recognition to the

significance of Beal’s account as a contribution to the literature on Marshall and to the critical study of U. S. foreign policy then and now. Perhaps Mr. Beal has more diaries he will expose to the light of publicity in due course. If so, they will be worth waiting for.

Reviewed by HENRY M. ADAMS

The Chinese Nation

The Strenuous Decade: China’s Nation-Building Efforts, 1927-37, edited by Paul K. T. Sih, *Jamaica, N.Y.:* *St. John’s University Press, 1970. xxi + 385 pp. \$10.00.*

THERE HAS BEEN an ever-increasing interest in studies of Chinese history since the Communist occupation of the mainland in 1949, an interest reflected in the large number of publications in this field that have appeared in the last two decades. We are often informed of the political strength of the Communist government and its importance in world politics, of the scientific progress under the Maoist regime and its achievements in modernization. Many have been led to believe that it is Communism that has built the Chinese nation and given it its firm foothold in the world as a major power. At the same time the notion has been spread that the Nationalist government was corrupt, ineffectual, and that it never succeeded in strengthening the country or winning the confidence of the people. Such beliefs are biased, dangerous and above all inaccurate and unintelligent.

In his introduction to the volume under review, Professor Sih points out that

Present-day China, like many other countries, can be comprehended only in