

public and private clashes with the Communist leaders, he returned to Canada for a fund-raising speaking tour. He was received as a hero, met by hundreds at the Toronto airport and escorted by marching bands to the lawn of the Provincial legislature where he addressed a crowd of 5,000.

The tour was a success, but not for Bethune. He decided in August that he would not return to Spain. He said he would join what he considered the real struggle, the one in China, where the Japanese occupied Manchuria and the Chinese had spent futile years fighting each other—Chiang Kai-shek's army against the persistent forces led by Mao Tse-tung. The two forces had finally joined, uneasily, but the Japanese held much of North China including Peiping.

Bethune went to China in early 1938, as the main ingredient of the Canadian-American Mobile Medical Unit. It was a nineteen-day trip to Hong Kong and he was forty-seven years old. As Frances, his former wife, would say, he was going on his "last fling." Or, as an associate said more particularly, "All of us felt he was going to his death. We knew what conditions were there. He was going to cut himself off from modern medicine. . . ."

Bethune wound up as the chief medical man with Mao's Eighth Route Army. He showed as much concern for the sick peasant as for the wounded soldier and he lived as they did, eating the same food, sharing the same shelter. In the

face of impossible odds, he founded over twenty hospitals, teaching as well as nursing hospitals. He himself described his trainees: "The doctors who run this hospital range in age from nineteen to twenty-two and not one of them has received any training in a modern hospital; the nurses are young people between fourteen and nineteen. These are our greatest resource: They study diligently, strive to improve themselves and are willing to listen to criticism. Sometimes I'm unhappy with them from the point of view of medical knowledge, but when I see their purity, their sincere efforts to study, their love of their comrades and their selfless diligence, I can always find a way to suppress my dissatisfactions. . . ."

He also operated on the soldiers brought in from the front, once sixty hours in succession without sleep. On October 28, 1939, he cut his hand while operating bare-handed on a soldier, and several days later while operating on another the cut became infected. He died from septicaemia.

Today, Bethune is still a puzzle. He was a man of peace (who served in three armies) and saved tens of thousands of lives. He was too romantic for marriage, too independent to be either an economically successful surgeon or a good peacetime communist, and too easily popular.

He became, nevertheless, a father figure to the idealistic, a pioneer surgeon and a person of political significance in two separate worlds.

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