

seem sufficient, he focused more attention on society rather than the individual."

In August, 1934, Bethune went to Moscow and Leningrad to attend the International Physiological Congress. On his return, Louis Kon, a leader of the Canadian Communist Party, asked him to become the chairman of "The Friends of the Soviet Union." He declined, writing, ". . . I am not, as yet, perfectly convinced that communism is the solution to the problem. If I were, I assure you, I should not only accept your offer but would become a member of the Communist Party. What stands in the way of my acceptance? This—my strong feeling of individualism—the right of a man to walk alone, if that's his nature . . . Second, such being the case—to jeopardize the only position—economic and professional—I possess, by even associating with a communistic-leaning association such as yours would be senseless . . ."

He did, however, continue to jeopardize his professional position in more basic ways: at the

1936 convention of the American Association of Thoracic Surgery, he delivered a carefully prepared paper entitled, "Some errors in technique and mistakes in judgment [including his own] in the course of 1,000 thoracic surgical operations." To speak of surgical mistakes at a convention of surgeons was somewhat like speaking about rope in a family where someone had been hanged.

He was commended for the paper by a few of his colleagues but damned by many, and the paper was never published. The Spanish Civil War resolved his position; he left for Spain on October 24, 1936, with a quantity of medical supplies and a letter of introduction to the head of the Loyalist government. He swiftly became a major figure in the war, organizing a blood collection agency, first operating in Madrid and then as the front line shifted, moving his transfusion service, Servicio Canadiense, wherever it was needed. Politically, his success was less marked—he strongly resented taking orders, and the Communists found him insufficiently docile. After

*Bethune set up training hospitals all over the Chinese front. This one was in a Buddhist temple, probably in Hopei, in 1939.*

