

Chapter 16

William Hinton: From An Idealist To An Ideologue Who Could See Only Red

William Hinton eventually became more famous than his sisters or his mother Carmelita. To American radicals of the 1960s and 1970s he was a hero. That was not predictable during his youth as “Billy” was not radical but mild mannered when he attended the progressive schools in Boston and Weston and he was not a trouble-maker at his mother’s Putney, Vermont high school. His college choice also suggested he was not headed for a radical’s life. Instead of a progressive and left-oriented school such as Bennington and Reed College his sisters attended, he chose the traditional, elite, and expensive Harvard University.¹

William did show an adventurous side when he decided on an Alan Clark type of post high school graduation trip in 1937. Instead of the typical European pre-college excursion by youths of his class he took-up his mother’s challenge and hitch-hiked across the United States with hopes for work on a merchant ship to Australia. In San Francisco, he visited his ultra-rich great uncle who was a board member of the American President Lines, the shipping giant of the Pacific. His uncle could not arrange a job on an Australia-bound ship, so William changed his plans and took a dish-washer’s job on a freighter to Japan. Using his father’s old newspaper connections he found a reporter’s job at *The Japan Advertiser*, a Tokyo English-language newspaper. He stayed there for a few months then decided to return to America by train through China, Russia, and Western Europe. He crossed the Atlantic on a freighter.

William entered Harvard in 1938 and was a star on its ski-team during his second year. Then, he had a profound change of mind. In 1940, he transferred to Cornell University’s two-year, low tuition Agricultural College program to study agronomy and dairy farming, “something useful”

he said. His student status earned him a draft deferment while he edited the college's literary magazine. His transfer to Cornell was prompted by his sister Jean's urging him to become the kind of farm expert put into the field by the New Deal's more radical members of the Department of Agriculture. They were attempting to save American farmers from their inefficient ways through socialistic-tinged programs. However, on graduation in 1941 William did not take a job with any of the nation's agricultural programs. Feeling no guilt about nepotism, he returned to his mother's Putney School to be "the" expert running its dairy and farms. He applied all his scientific learning to their operations. Then, unable to claim his mother Carmelita as a dependent, he discovered he was subject to the military draft. He avoided it, however.²

He asserted he was and always had been a pacifist and asked to serve alternative duty on a conscientious objector's project. The American government usually granted such exemptions only to established members of religious denominations with historic records of pacifism, such as the Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren.³ But the self-proclaimed non-religious William was accepted into the objectors' program in late 1942. He was bitter when he discovered the program did not pay wages and did not provide financial support for dependents as did military service. William was assigned to a soil conservation team at a New Hampshire farm supervised by the Quaker's American Friends Service Committee. The project was not a heroic or even pleasant experience, but William had time to read, including a book Jean recommended, Edgar Snow's, *Red Star Over China*. It gave an idealistic, romantic picture of the history and goals of China's Communists and the peasants they were leading.

Within a year at the camp William announced plans for another great life-change. Perhaps influenced by Jean's arguments that saving Soviet Russia was paramount William declared he

was no longer a pacifist. He asked to serve in the military. He left the camp and went to an induction center for his physical examination. He was declared 4F, unfit for service, because of a punctured ear drum. That was a surprise as William had never mentioned impaired hearing and expert skiers like him who needed perfect balance usually had two functional ears. William did not return to the objector's camp, he did not take a job in the merchant marine, and he did not take one in a vital defense industry.

As his brother-in-law characterized him, William had little sense of direction for his life, so he went back to Carmelita and the Putney farm in late 1943, and to a pleasant surprise. He arrived to find the school had a new staff member, the twenty-six-year-old nurse Bertha Sneck. Bertha was from a Russian-Finnish immigrant working class family that settled in Maynard, Massachusetts near Boston. The family did well. Bertha completed high school, then a nursing degree at the famed Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston where Ida Cannon had established her innovative medical social work program. Bertha aimed for more and earned a college degree in the humanities at Boston University in 1943 but then decided to return to nursing – at the Putney school. Perhaps it was because she had become an intellectual and progressive that she took the position at isolated Putney. She fit-in and Carmelita soon had her teaching history, acting as the school nurse, and as Carmelita's companion.⁴

Another Friend of Carmelita and New Friends for William

William fell in love with Bertha but he still had a desire for adventure, and some guilt over not directly helping the war effort. In mid-1945, he began looking for new employment. He thought of working for the Quaker's relief organization, then he discovered a better opportunity. Owen Lattimore, a friend of Carmelita, and a China expert who admired its communists had been appointed to run the Asian branch of the American government's Office of War Information

(OWI), a propaganda agency.⁵ William quickly accepted an offer of employment as an associate propaganda analyst, expecting to be assigned to China with all expenses paid and a handsome \$50,000 a year salary. He was told to expect a twelve month assignment. He had more good news: Bertha agreed to marry him just a month before he embarked for Chungking, China's wartime capital, in July 1945. Bertha stayed in Putney.

The twenty-six-year-old William began another great adventure--and met men who shaped his future. Among the young Americans in Chungking were Gerald Tannenbaum, John Powell, and Sidney Rittenberg.. During a critical weeks-long December meeting led by America's important General George Marshall who sought to maintain peace between the Communist and Nationalists, and to block Soviet Russia's Asian ambitions, William and Gerald had a long informal face-to-face friendly nighttime meeting with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the Communist leaders. William remembered it as a life's turning point. ⁶

William and the Party, and New China's Challenges

William returned to America in early 1946.. His association with Lattimore seemed to predict a future in government service, but he did not pursue it or another white-collar career. With his government contract continuing until July 1946 and Bertha working at Putney he had the opportunity to build enough savings to finance a new and independent life. But he and Bertha did not start their own farm or household. The couple stayed close to Carmelita at Putney. William did take a part time job, perhaps on Jean's recommendation, as a regional organizer for Archie Wright's section of the National Farmers union that had links to the old Harold Ware -Donald Henderson radical farmers' unions. There are suggestions that William joined the Party at the same time.⁷

William was an inept organizer and realized he was unlikely to have a union career and, despite being married, desired more adventures. Responding to prompting from his friend and roommate at Cornell, Sid Engst, and his sister Jean, in fall 1946 he decided to apply for a position with the Brethren Church's China tractor program. The church had a long history of foreign relief work and in July 1945 had agreed to create and supervise a two-year UNRRA program to establish model agricultural programs that China's government was expected to continue for the long-term to rehabilitate China's farms.⁸ Rehabilitation was needed was a formidable challenge. China had three times the population of the United States but one-half the arable land under cultivation and much of its other land remained unusable without massive investments in development projects. Arable land was so scarce some villages terraced nearby hills by hand. As well, the average size of a Chinese farm was 1-44th of that of an American one and productivity per acre was low.⁹

Small farm size and lack of funds made modernization and mechanization extremely difficult. China's Nationalist government's agricultural ministry had been sensitive to the problems since the 1920s but had been hampered by the civil war, Japan's invasion, a conservative land-owning class, and local government "war lords". As World War II was ending the Nationalist's drive for agricultural modernization was reenergized. Advised by UNRRA, China's administrators contacted America's agricultural experts. Among them was Brownlee Davidson of Iowa State University and founder of the American Society of Agricultural Engineering. He agreed to form a committee to make a grand survey of China's agricultural problems and future.¹⁰ It took him some time, but his tractor company sponsored two-year exploration began in 1947. Before then, UNRRA helped establish a less grand operational program, the government's Agricultural Industry Service (AIS) staffing it with one hundred

seventy-five Chinese experts and some fifty foreign agricultural engineers. One of its major programs was like that of Edgar Snow and Rewi Alley's "Gung Ho" begun in the 1930s that developed small scale self-help cooperative projects and schools for training Chinese farmers to use modern methods and machines.¹¹

Walter Illsley and Coops and the AIS's, Not Mao's Model of Reform

Critical to the AIS was the young American Walter Illsley.¹² Walter was the son of a Mid-West engineer but became attracted to farming and the 4h young farmers' organization. When he worked towards his degree at the then small Michigan State University he majored in agricultural engineering while becoming attracted to the cooperative movement. Cooperatives were an alternative to a capitalist organization of businesses. Producer or consumer "coops" were not communist but privately owned by their members. They served their members rather than making profits for investors. College students' coop bookstores, mutual insurance and savings banks, and farmers' coop stores that used combined buying power to reduce prices, are examples. Walter became so interested in the movement he studied its relation to agriculture in Mexico, then enrolled at a Danish Folk School, itself an example of a peoples' coop. America's Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, which trained labor and civil rights leaders, used the Danish school as a model.

The twenty-one-year-old Walter narrowly escaped from Europe when world War II began. He returned to the United States to give lectures on the evils of fascism. What he did during World War II is unclear but there are hints he worked for the United States Air Force as a civilian in Europe and the Mediterranean, returning from Casablanca by air in September 1944. Strangely, his plane-full of military men also had four Chinese citizens. After the war, Walter must have done some work in the agricultural field as he was selected to be one of the first

experts hired by AIS in 1946. In China, he administered programs, usually small local ones, such as creating cements factories, digging coop irrigation systems, and establishing local schools to teach farmers how to modernize. Like Rewi Alley's Gung Ho, the AIS' goal was to establish self-directed, privately owned, entrepreneurial operations.

Although based in Shanghai, Walter traveled throughout China. He was shocked by its poverty and frustrated by the corruption and inefficiency in Nationalist controlled areas. He remained committed to his work, however. When the AIS program ended after the Communist's 1949 victory, instead of returning home he transferred to the revived Rewi Alley's Gung Ho Baillie training school. Meanwhile, he had become a central part of the America expatriate community. He met and became friends with the Hinton and Engsts and was an important source for John and Sylvia Powell's English language *China Monthly Review* that became a significant supporter of Mao's regime.¹³ The journal was so critical of the United States' policies the Powells were tried for sedition when they returned to the United States after the Korean War. Their accusations that the United States conducted germ and bacteriological warfare, the use of the *Review* to sway American prisoners of war, the Reed College educated Sylvia's past connections with radical unions, and her left-leaning UNRRA work in China prompted the legal attacks. Walter Illsley, although a harsh and very public critic of the United States' policies, including the sentencing of the Rosenbergs to death, avoided such charges.

When the Communists closed Gung Ho Walter left (perhaps was expelled from) China but he became a life-long Mao advocate despite the agricultural policy changes of the 1950s that had eliminated all non-government organizations. His article in the book by the attendees at 1952's peace congress indicated he continued to believe China's economic progress had to be based on the ingenuity and voluntary contributions of individuals.¹⁴ One reason for the

American government not prosecuting him was that after a brief stop in the States in 1952 he became an expatriate in Mexico, continuing his work in local grass-roots rural industrial development and founding a version of the CIC's Bailie training school.

The Hinton Connection

In 1945, The United States' Brethren Church had accepted the challenge of mechanizing China's establishing model private farms as well as establishing dairy stations like those Sid Engst was assigned to. Funded by UNRRA and working with China's own agricultural experts, and the Nationalists' and Communists' coordinating committees, the church carefully devised impressive programs. For one of them it was to hire, train, and pay fifty young experts to establish twelve model centers to teach tractor usage and maintenance. The program promised to provide over 1,000 specially designed American-made tractors. UNRRA was to arrange and pay for travel and for the delivery of the equipment. The centers were to be in both National and Communist controlled areas.

The first group of fifteen young men arrived in Shanghai in September 1946 expecting to spend, like those who followed, a month or two waiting for tractors to arrive then assembling them then send them to the tractor stations. William Hinton was not in the first group but in one of the last, arriving in January 1947. His group's tractors were still enroute, so he was assigned to general survey work. While awaiting the equipment William was sent to Manchuria to see what might be done to overcome the destruction of the Japanese-held manufacturing centers by the Soviet invaders and looting by locals. William's group's twenty-five tractors arrived in Shanghai in April, but China's lack of ports and inland transportation, especially in the interior, delayed their arrival at the Brethren tractor center in Communist controlled territory William

was assigned to until late July. Two tractors had been destroyed and many extra parts had been pilfered.

Nevertheless, finally getting to work pleased William as did receiving a salary (he claimed only a minimal amount) and being reimbursed for travel and living costs. He stayed at the center for several months writing letters filled with praises of the locals and the Communists and condemnations of the Nationalists. William's letters to Bertha, Jean, and Carmelita indicate he had quickly become a devoted Maoist, an ideological one, who predicted the Communist egalitarians would win the renewed Chinese civil war while the United States was destroying its own unions and democracy in its race to fascism. William did not keep quiet about his views. The Nationalist Chinese's intelligence agency learned of his criticisms of Nationalist policies and his denunciations of the United States. It asked UNRRA to remove him, but the request came after the Brethren tractor work ended. The Nationalists complaints did lead to the United States government to create a file on William.¹⁵

Before then, when the tractors arrived at their centers the Brethren's experts trained young local Chinese men in their operation and maintenance. It took time, but local farmers were convinced to cooperate and allowed their lands to be jointly cultivated. In August, the new operators and the advisors at William's center plowed some 1,000 acres. (All the Brethren stations plowed over 50,000 acres in two years). A few mishaps occurred, such as the locals forgetting to replace oil in the tractors, but the work progressed. Then, in September, China's severe logistical problems stopped the work at William's center. There was no gas available except some on the black market that was selling for \$90.00 a gallon. The tractors were placed in a cave that was covered-over in hopes the equipment would not be stolen. William was sent to

another center for a few weeks, then to Peking (Beijing) to await reassignment. By then, he had suffered severe dysentery, malaria, and the debilitations caused by malnutrition.¹⁶

William Decides to Stay, Bertha Joins Him at Long Bow

While in Beijing William had to make another great decision after he realized UNRRA's and the Brethren's programs would terminate at the end of 1947. Although married and nearing thirty-years-old he decided he would find a way to stay in China. He was not alone in choosing to remain. Two hundred of the Brethren's volunteers continued on, at least until the Communist victory in 1949 and the dismantling of the services that had continued UNRRA's work. William consulted with Sid Engst and Gerald Tannenbaum. They arranged work for him with Sid at his iron/blacksmith project and to be paid by the China Welfare Fund. With that, William exerted more pressure on Bertha to join him.

Never explaining what had happened to the savings from his OWI years and his Putney and Brethren salaries, he told Bertha there finally was a way to overcome their supposed poverty. They could use the UNRRA travel money he received when its project ended, and the money from the sale of their car, to finance her China trip. Tannenbaum would arrange a job for her, William wrote. The thirty-three-year-old Bertha followed William's advice and prepared to leave. But it would be six months before she could meet him. She finally arrived in China under the China Welfare Fund's (CWF) protections but had to wait more than a month while overcoming sicknesses, then had to make a near forty-five-day trek to join William who had moved close to a village he called Long Bow. It was near the large Communist controlled Changzi city. By then, William was on the way to being able to read and speak Chinese.

William had arrived in Long Bow after he took a short term job once again financed by the CWF. Then, he was not chosen to help the Communists establish their own tractor program. They had another use for him. He was assigned to teach English to future interpreters at a newly established “university” housed in a confiscated Catholic Church compound. When he learned that some of his students were being formed into a cadre to supervise land reform in the Long Bow village he asked to be allowed to go with them because he sensed there was an opportunity to realize his new dream of becoming a professional writer. He began living in the village as its people continued to confiscate and divide the land, houses, and other property of the landowners and better-off peasants. William became close to the inhabitants, learning what it meant to be covered by blood-sucking lice and fleas and having to pick them off his body and out of his padded Chinese suit, his only clothing. It took several weeks for the DDT he ordered to reach him so that he could have some relief from the constant biting and concentrate on his teaching and writing.¹⁷

William took detailed notes on all aspects of the villagers’ reforms. He also tracked the cadre’s attempts to guide the villagers to at least engage in minimal cooperative farming. The cadre knew it would take some time to convince the villagers to yield what they thought was their private land and, eventually, agree to full communal living and farming. William and the young cadre members were following a policy recently established by Mao. After years of bloody episodes that took the lives of a million landowners, before 1949 Mao felt he had to accept the poor peasants confiscating land and property while not informing them the seizures were not theirs but the property of the Communist government. Pushing government ownership into the background Mao ordered an incremental approach to agricultural communism, despite knowing the dire consequences for the nation’s food supply of a land filled with tiny holdings.

Vital market crops such as wheat and corn and the productive use of modern farm equipment demanded much more land per farm than the typical confiscated holding.

Although frustrated, even when the civil war was ending China's Communist planners had to recognize that peasants were unwilling to accept sudden changes that might endanger what they considered the legitimate results of the Communist revolution: their private property, and their right to determine how to use it. So, Mao's advisors determined the best course was to move step by step and do it through consensus building in villages and through soft policies such as granting more and larger loans to those who consolidated their lands.¹⁸

An Idealistic William, Farm Policies, and What He Would Not Acknowledge

William Hinton had to tolerate the gradualist approach as he began taking notes for his projected book on the land reform process, and for his reports to regional authorities. But he desired a faster move to the kind of large and efficient farms he learned about at Cornell University. . At the same time, the idealistic William thought China's new large farms would be egalitarian with a workforce and managers oriented to cooperation and communism, not profit. William did see one part of his dream implemented: Within less than decade Mao changed course and forced collectivization. But with methods and results that were less than egalitarian.

William took copious notes at Long Bow and wrote long descriptive letters to his relatives. The letters contained much about the day-to-day lives of the villagers, much about how brutal conditions were under the old landlord system, and a few mentions of some violence in Long Bow during the confiscation phase. William's ideological filters meant his letters during and after his stay at Long Bow failed to contain much of importance. Although he traveled throughout China and must have heard of the chaos and brutality of the earlier peasant take-

overs, he did not emphasize them. He also never mentioned the political purges that claimed more than two million lives and two million imprisonments by between 1947 and 1953. As well, he failed to write about the mass expulsion of foreigners, the seizure of church properties, and the confiscation of foreign-owned businesses. Also missing were comments about the travel restrictions that were being imposed to prevent peasants from moving to cities in search of food and work. That was an effective but brutal way to prevent slums, but one that caused many hardships.

William was a romantic about China and Long Bow's revolution but saddened by the selfishness of some residents. For William, their focus on themselves and their new property justified the cadre's leading daily mandatory lessons on what the new communist man should be and recommending punishments for those who refused to change.

While William was busy with his teaching and Long Bow observations Bertha overcame more illnesses then put her nursing skill to use in the local university and its village. She also became pregnant, one of the reasons William accepted an assignment to a new state farm to be built on the outskirts of Beijing when the Nationalists finally acknowledged their defeat and abandoned the city. He was returned to agricultural work, but as an administrator. Because they were American citizens and were associated with the CWF which was respected by both the Nationalists and Communists, Bertha felt safe enough to go to Beijing in December 1948 before the Communist's October 1949 take-over to have her baby who, predictably, was named Carma after William's mother.

William and China's Big Agriculture

With the Communist victory William became a government employee and he, Bertha, and baby Carma settled in at the new large Double Bridge farm, accepting that it was not an exercise in revolutionary democracy like Long Bow but like Sid Engst's new posting. Double Bridge was a Communist form of a big business, one intended to provide a constant flow of milk to Beijing. As a state farm all its members, including William, were employees and their rewards were based more on productivity than need. William was classified as a foreign expert and received a handsome salary, special accommodations, extra rations, health care, and paid vacations. Despite his ideology he accepted being part of a managerial team that devised plans and gave orders rather than waiting for instructions from the workers. The outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 and China's entry in November did not lead William to consider leaving Double Bridge, partly because, despite his American citizenship, he was not persecuted.

Both he and Bertha were busy at the new farm but they had time to visit Sid and Joan in Mongolia and to help with the arrangements for 1952's great Asia Pacific Rim Peace (anti-American) Conference that made his sister Joan infamous. But William had a serious problem in 1952. He contracted a version of tuberculosis and was hospitalized for several weeks. He recovered and returned to Double Bridge but to what some believed were growing frictions with Bertha. William continued his farm work and writing for pro-China, anti-American, journals such as the *China Monthly Review* --- until summer 1953.

William Leaves Family Behind to Become a Radical in America

A few days before the July 1953 Korean War cease fire William made another of his hard-to-explain life-course decisions. He left for the United States without Bertha or Carma, without much money, without a realistic plan for making a living in the United States, and without an American passport. The only explanation he gave for leaving was he no longer felt needed after

the Soviet's many agricultural experts arrived. He also added some criticisms of the UNRRA-Brethren tractor work. He remarked how biased it had been because only small tractors that fit a typical American farm had been sent while the Soviets were providing huge tractors that matched the needs of a socialist state and its huge "peoples" collective farms.¹⁹

Instead of sailing across the Pacific William decided to again travel on the Trans-Siberian railway through Russia to Soviet controlled Prague, Czechoslovakia where he applied for a new passport. Overcoming bureaucratic difficulties caused by his remaining in China during the Korean War, and because of his choice of a route home, he was granted a passport, then made his way to the Canadian-American border in early August. He seemed surprised when he was informed the United States had embargoed China since the Nationalist's 1949 defeat and its confiscations of American property. He was allowed to enter the United States but the large wooden footlocker containing his Long Bow notes and his book collection was impounded, dashing any hope he could quickly author a money-generating book.

The customs inspectors found much of the contents of his trunks fit the established definition of propaganda. Among the items seized was a full manuscript on China's farm revolution (*Iron Oxen*) that William did not publish until 1970, more than twelve years after the government returned it. As bad for William, his passport was seized and he was denied its privileges for another for fifteen years because he was classified as a possible national security threat. He could not legally leave the United States.

William should have expected additional personal problems because he returned to America during a high-point in the drawn-out battle against the Chinese Communists by supporters of China's Nationalist government, a struggle that overlapped a greater anti-Soviet crusade. The Nationalist's supporters blamed Mao's 1949 victory on the old China Hands including

Carmelita's friends John Service and Owen Lattimore. The protests and the earlier Nationalist demand that William be removed from the 1947 UNRRA project account for the FBI's waiting for his arrival at the Canadian border, thinking he might be a paid agent of the Communist government.

William became deeply entangled in the politics of the China controversy because, although he made isolated Putney his home base, he immediately began contacting left-wing people and groups that were watched by the FBI. He visited Max and Grace Granich, 1930's COMINTERN China Hands, at their New York Farm where they ran a Communist summer camp. He contacted the United Electrical Workers and the Mine, Mill and Smelter unions that had been thrown out of the CIO. He stayed at the apartment of an older woman who the FBI had under surveillance, and he met with Bob Coe, a Party member who was continuing the work of Harold Ware's communist oriented Farm Research organization. William also contacted *The Daily Worker's* staff in New York, and Frederick Field, the rich, well-known Communist supporter. William caused problems for Sid Engst's family when he stayed with Sid's mother and brother at their new upstate New York farm. Combined with William's visits the Engsts' subscription to the left-leaning *National Guardian* made the FBI worried about their loyalty. William's consulting with National Labor Guild lawyers about a lawsuit to recover his papers triggered additional FBI concerns. William also contacted John Powell who worked for the Office of War Information in China during World War II then published the pro-Communist *Monthly China Review*. It was a reborn version of the influential journal his father had published since the 1920s until he was seized by the Japanese in 1941 and interned under such harsh conditions he lost both feet to gangrene. One of the young Powells painful chores during the war was to help coordinate his father's American lecture tour after his 1943 repatriation.²⁰

William consciously made himself a public figure. Without a job, not even as Putney's farm manager, he decided to help himself and China by lecturing. He claimed he gave over three hundred pro-China speeches throughout the country during his first-year home, asking for donations to cover his expenses. He also began publishing in left-wing and Communist journals and gave speeches at meetings of the Progressive Party. Consequently, pressures on him increased. He was called to Congressional hearings in 1954 and 1956 where he unwisely took a hard and sometime accusatory stance. He also launched a lawsuit against the American government to regain his papers and to punish it for publishing many of his letters as part of the 1956 hearing. William's reliance on Milton Friedman, a well-known Party-linked lawyer, and William's taking the Fifth Amendment when asked about his Communist connections, did not help his reputation.

The Congressional battles made William a free-speech martyr for the left, however. He soon had legal aid from the American Civil Liberties Union and a foundation led by the left-wing financier Corliss Lamont. That help was not enough to allow him to bring Bertha and Carma home as William told one friend he would do so as soon as he found a good job or bought a farm. Never explained was why his mother Carmelita, who was still financially well-off, did not volunteer to pay for the return of her friend and granddaughter and support them at Putney. William did receive some good news, however. The government decided that it would not be possible to convict him on any charges. The FBI dropped its watch on him in 1956—at least temporarily.²¹

Before then, William had made another surprising life decision. He found money to travel to Nevada and obtained a quick Reno divorce from Bertha in 1954, just a year after he left Beijing. He claimed extreme cruelty on her part but did not ask for custody of Carma, his young

daughter. William did send the Bertha monthly check, least during 1957. Oddly, Bertha remained in China, working for the government as an editor until her death in 2000. Young Carma did not leave China until she was twenty-two. Bertha may have been angry at William but she kept in close touch with the Engsts.

A Martyr and a China Professional

Much about William's post-1954 life remains unknown, or mired in ambiguities and contradictions, but it is certain he became an active Party member, a professional China booster, and a hero of the left. His first post-divorce decision was predictable: He used Putney as his base until at least 1956. But unexplained, he did still not resume his job as Carmelita's farm manager although he had few other prospects. His dream of immediately becoming a professional writer remained unrealized because his China papers remained in a government warehouse. William would complain he was blocked from other intellectual work by being black-listed, but he never gave convincing details about that.

Then, as Carmelita was about to retire in 1955 there were more unexpected Hinton family life-decisions. Carmelita left Putney but kept title to the Hinton House on the school's grounds. She then bought a working farm in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, three hundred miles from Putney and soon made William its manager. The Fleetwood farm was not located in Bucks county that had become attractive to artists and intellectuals because it was near New York City and Philadelphia. Fleetwood was in the very rural Berks county that had none of the historic quaintness of Vermont or the cultural attractions of Bucks county. Philadelphia was Fleetwood's closest center of intellectual and artistic life, but was sixty miles away. The most plausible explanation for buying the isolated farm and William later locating in Philadelphia is that William had Party contacts that knew people in city, such as Carl Reeve, who could arrange

work for him there while he managed the Fleetwood farm. As well, in 1956 Jean, his sister, moved close to Philadelphia.

Unfortunately for William, Carl Reeve, his half-brother, was not at high point in his life or his influence. Carl had earned a degree from Boston University in the early 1920s then studied journalism at Columbia University followed by a job at the *New York Herald* that seemed the beginnings of a rather conventional middle-class life. But he changed direction and devoted himself to the Party as an organizer, writer, and paid Party official, rising to be on its national council. He settled in Philadelphia in the late 1930s to head the area's Party apparatus and to gain fame when the government raided his offices and confiscated its papers in 1940. After that, he stayed with the local Party, but it and he fell on hard times. By 1950 he was working seventy hours a week as a trucker to support a wife and two young children while living in a small Philadelphia flat. The facts are not clear but Carl seems to have left the Party by the mid-1950s. He moved to a suburb, retooled, and began to erase his Party connections from public memory. By decade's end he was a public relations officer for a local hospital and on the way to becoming an author publishing two books while in his seventies. Each work indicating, he was still an ideological traditional communist.²²

The new farm was not enough for William but Carl could offer minimal help in the early 1950s. William rented a small two room apartment in Philadelphia and looked for work as he began writing a proposed epoch on the Chinese Revolution. He could not find a high-paying job and worked in Philadelphia as a truck/tractor repairman for close to a decade, then was fired. He claimed his dismissal was also the result of a blacklisting, but it was reportedly because he had become an aggressive union leader. Besides his city job, he helped run the Fleetwood farm and hired-out its equipment to neighboring farmers. He was also busy with Party matters, becoming

its regional executive director and a frequent contributor of articles on China to Part-related publications. Taking much of his time, and costing him, Carmelita, and his friends some \$60,000, was the lawsuit to recover his papers. The suit was not resolved until 1958.

William was also busy starting a new family. In 1959, he married Joanne Raiford, a beautiful American Indian / African American woman from North Carolina. She was a graduate of an historic Black woman's college, a part of Washington D.C's African American social set, a metallurgist, and, surprising given William's pacifism, she became an employee of Rockwell International, the military missile manufacturer. She was nineteen years younger than the forty-year-old William when they married. They soon had three children. In a few years Carmelita built a second home on the Fleetwood farm for them but the new Hintons usually lived in a small Philadelphia duplex, with William calling himself an independent writer. The family took excursions to Fleetwood and lived in their separate house when William needed to supervise the farm's operations.²³

Adding to William's burdens during the late 1950s and early 1960s was another round of illnesses and a battle within Pennsylvania's Party. William had agreed with Party policies after the 1956 conflicts over the revelations about Stalin, but when the Soviet Union broke with China in 1960 he sided with China, not with Russia as the Party demanded. It took some years of debates before he was expelled from the Party. William was also busy with composing his book on Long Bow. He claimed it took \$190,000 of his, Carmelita's, and left-wing foundations' money to allow him the freedom to develop it. It did take a long time to finish the 700-page manuscript and find a publisher. His *Fanshen: A Documentary of a Revolution In A Chinses Village* depicted China as a grass-roots democracy, appeared thirteen years after William returned from China, and eight years after the government released his papers. But there was no

indication the work's royalties could allow him the money he needed to become a full-time writer.²⁴

Becoming the Famous Long Bow Man

The book was first published by the small left-wing Monthly Review Press in 1966. There were a few sales, then a surprise followed. *Fanshen* became a near best-seller, and William became a celebrity. His success was partly because the book appeared just as the United States and Europe had a resurgence of radicalism and student revolts, ones that used China, not the Soviet Union, as a role model. One of the few detailed works on life in China, *Fanshen* became required reading at universities, radical conclaves, as well as at Unitarian churches on both coasts. Major publishers took over its marketing and it was translated into eight languages. Over 200,000 copies were sold, making William financially well-off and the subject of renewed FBI surveillance, just as he increased his anti-war activities. Within a few years a carefully translated Chinese edition of *Fanshen* appeared.

The book gained William an international status as a China expert, a popular one, leading to him being regarded as the Edgar Snow of the 1960s. He resumed lecturing and planning more publications as he continued to manage the Fleetwood farm and as he helped his Mennonite neighbors in exchange for their caring for his children when he was away. William published eight more books and many articles on China, one as late as 2006, all usually saluting China's great economic and social achievements during the 1940-1970 period, but criticizing trends begun after Mao's death. His 1983, *Shenfan*,²⁵ began revealing his concerns over China's move away from egalitarian communal agriculture and towards capitalism.

Staying With Mao, Joining With New American Radicals, the Bergman Connection

William interpreted the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as examples of democratic triumphs although he admitted there were excesses during the Revolution by leftist factions, ones that allowed “rightists” to take power. Revising some of his views he eventually criticized Mao for using the Revolution to build a personality cult, but William continued to revere Mao’s social and economic policies. By the 1980s William was publishing some direct criticisms of China’s post-Mao policies and by 1990 he was publicly condemning China’s move to capitalism, its bloated self-serving bureaucracy, and its perversion of Marxist-Maoist thought. His 1990, *The Great Reversal : the Privatization of China, 1978-1989*,²⁶ was aptly titled.

While keeping quiet about it William had remained politically active in America, becoming involved in American as well as China issues during the 1960s. He had always sought allies in the Party who favored China and held what he considered true revolutionary beliefs. Unsatisfied with the Party, by the mid-1960s he was looking for a new political home. He established ties to the new radical Progressive Labor Party (PLP) that favored China’s revolution and demanded a reinvigorated attempt to control America’s unions, but William abandoned it when its leaders declared China had completely turned against true communism and that the Black and major radical student movements in the United States were working against an American communist revolution.²⁷

William found a more satisfying group by 1970. His new political home, the then small Revolutionary Union (RU), where William was a secret but high-level leader, was led by the very unusual Leibel Bergman. An ex-Party and ex-PLP leader Bergman at fifty-five years-old became an elder, behind-the-scenes steersman of what radicals half-his-age were calling the New Communism. Leibel was aided in his American and China work by his son Lincoln, Ann Tompkins, and other young activists such as the famous California radical Bob Avakian.

William's friendship with Bergman and his RU and New Communist Movement involvements led him to have at least secondary links to the major radical groups of the 1960s, the Black Panthers and the Weathermen. He also had ties to the ultra-radical Clayton Van Lydegraf, a godfather of the 1960s and 1970s more violent extremists. His connections to Bergman also led William to be a major figure in the 1970s United States-China Peoples Friendship Association.²⁸

¹ On William's early years: family history; *NYT* 5-22-2004; *The Guardian* 5-23-2004; FBI FOIA, William Hinton;

² Williams' testimony at congressional hearings: for example, Senate Internal Security Committee 1954; *NYT* 5-29-1956

³ On objector policies: Frazer, Hether T. and Hig O'Sullivan, *We have Just Begin to Not to Fight* (London: Prentice Hall, 1996.)

⁴ On Bertha's early life: Census, family history.

⁵ On Lattimore and OWI and China and his connections to Putney: Newman, Robert P., *Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); FBI Vault Files on Lattimore; Lloyd, Susan McIntosh, *The Putney School: A Progressive Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁶ On the U.S.-China meeting: Carter, Carole J. *Mission to Yanan: American Liaison with the Chinese Communists, 1944 – 1947* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1997); Barrett, David D., *Dixie Mission: The United States Army Observer Group in Yanan, 1944* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

⁷ On Wright and Hinton: Dyson, Lowell K., "The Milk Strike of 1939 and the Destruction of the Dairy Farmers Union" *New York History*, 51:5 (Oct. 1970): 523-544; *NYT*, 6-11-1947; Hinton testimony 1954, 1955.

⁸ Hollenberge, Howard and Wendell Flory, *History of the UNRRA Brethren Service Unit* (Elgin, Ill: Church of the Brethren, General Brotherhood Board, 1948); <https://www.heifer.org/about-us/our-history.html>.

⁹ Woodbridge, George (ed.), *UNRRA, the History of UNRA Administration* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1950).

¹⁰ https://digitalcollections.lib.iastate.edu/islandora/object/isu%3ADavidsonJay_593

¹¹ Stepaneck, Joseph E., *A Town Called Shaoyang Introducing Industry Appropriate to China*, (Boulder, Colorado: Gold Heil Publications, 1992).

¹²: Family history; Stanley, "Foreigners in China," *Op cit.*; Illsley, Walter, "An American Engineer's Report: Industrialization Begins," *China Monthly Review*, 4:1 1953; *NYT* 1952, *passim*;

¹³ For example, *NYT* 12-17-2008, 2-6-1956.

¹⁴ *What We Saw In China, by 15 Americans* (np: np, 1952)

¹⁵ FBI FOIA, William Hinton.

¹⁶ On Hinton's quest, for example see his *Iron Oxen: Documentary of Revolution in Chinese Farming* (NY: Vintage Books, 1971).

¹⁷ Much of this period of William's life came from his copies of letters home that were seized by the U.S. Customs on his return to the United States. The contents were turned over to a senate investigating committee and much was published in Senator Eastland's Judiciary Committee report of 1956. U.S. Senate 84th Congress 2nd Session Committee on the Judiciary, Soviet Activity in the United States, 3-8-1956.

¹⁸ Very informative on Mao's policies, Meisner, Maurice J., *Mao's China and After: a History of the People's Republic* (NY: Free Press, 1993).

¹⁹ FBI FOIA, William Hinton, was the major source for this period of William's life but he would reflect on the period in testimony, newspaper articles, and his books.

²⁰ Useful on the Powells: Reed College Oral History, 2-2-2002; *SF GATE*, 12 -21-2008; Powell. John B. , *China Quarterly My Twenty - five Years in China* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945); WP 7-18-1959.)

²¹ FBI FOIA, William Hinton.

²² Census of 1950, *Doylestown Intelligencer* September 10, 1959. *The Life and Times of Daniel DeLeon* (NY: Humanities Press, 1972), *James Connolly and the United States The Road to The 1916 Irish Rebellion* (Atlantic Highland, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979).

²³ Family histories.

²⁴ NY, Vantage Press, 1968.

²⁵ NY, Random House, 1983.

²⁶ NY, Monthly Review Press.

²⁷ The major source for William's post -1960s politics is FBI FOIA, William Hinton. On the dozens of radical parties in the post-1950s, Birch, Howard and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals In America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁸ On sources for Bergman and others in the RU and the Friendship Association see the following chapter.