

70 years of Bethune Studies in China¹

70 ANNÉES D'ÉTUDES SUR BÉTHUNE EN CHINE

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Abstract: For 70 years, Bethune Studies in China is on the way from propaganda to academic research. Mao Zedong's *In memory of Norman Bethune* and Zhou Erfu's *Dr. Bethune* have played an important role in propagandizing the image of Bethune. *The Scalpel, the Sword* by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon and *The Politics of Passion -Norman Bethune's Writing and Art* by Larry Hannant are especially the significant works to study Bethune. Since the beginning of 1980s some new features have been presented, such as new information, endless emerging of new works, enlarged number of researchers and the organizational trend of the study and so on. Of course we have more work to do, which needs the cooperation and the communication between researchers in different areas, between different branches of learning or even between different countries.

Key Words: Norman Bethune; Bethune Study; Canada

Résumé: Depuis 70 ans en Chine, des études sur Béthune se transforment de la propagande en recherche universitaire. À la mémoire de Norman Béthune de Mao Zedong et Docteur Béthune de Zhou Erfu ont joué un rôle important dans la popularisation de l'image de Béthune. *Le Scalpel et l'épée* de Ted Allan et Sydney Gordon, et *Politique de passion - créations et récits de Norman Béthune* de Larry Hannant sont notamment des oeuvres importantes pour les études sur Bethune. Depuis le début des années 1980, de nouvelles caractéristiques ont été présentées, tels que de nouvelles informations, de nouvelles œuvres émergentes, un nombre accru de chercheurs, la tendance organisationnelle de l'étude etc. Nous avons bien sûr encore du travail à faire, ce qui nécessite la coopération et la communication entre chercheurs de différents domaines, entre différentes branches de connaissances ou même entre différents pays.

Mots-clés: Norman Béthune; études sur Béthune; Canada

70 years ago, Norman Bethune(1890-1939),the great internationalism soldier and the leading thoracic surgery specialist of Canada, came to China with a Canada-America medical team. He left for Chinese anti-Japanese battle front and sacrificed his precious life in Nov.,1939.He has fallen asleep in China for 70

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years. It hasn't ceased for propagandizing Bethune and researching his spirits since his sacrifice. We can see these features as follow:

1. A PATH FROM PROPAGANDIZING TO RESEARCHING ON BETHUNE'S STUDIES IN CHINA

1.1 It gives priority for propagandizing Bethune's nobility of thought from his death to 1950s. Mao Zedong's *In memory of Norman Bethune*(MAO, 1991)(P653-654) and Zhou Erfu's *Dr. Bethune* have played an important role during this time

Those who propagandized Bethune's stories and his spirits at the very first time were the Politics Depart. of the 8th Route Army, General Nie Rongzhen and Mao Zedong after he died in Huangshikou village, Tang County, Hebei Province. Huangshikou was under the jurisdiction of Wan County at that time but Tang County in 1950s. Thus someone put off these two counties in their articles. Mao wrote *Learn from Norman Bethune* on Dec. 21, 1939, for an autograph book: *Norman Bethune Autograph Book* by the Politics Depart. and Medical Depart. of the 8th Route Army which would appear shortly in 1940. Mao's article was changed its name to *In Memory of Norman Bethune* when it was edited into *Selected Works of Mao Zedong Volume*. The very article by Mao became a very famous one like his other ones which swept the country by every family, without distinction of sex and age in the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976). Bethune is here in hearts of millions of Chinese from the article, being the most famous Canadian in China.

Articles by Nie Rongzhen, Lv Zhengcao and Zhu De were published at the same time. *In Memory of Comrade Bethune* by Nie Rongzhen, commander of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area and *In Memory of Doctor Bethune* by Lv Zhengcao, vice commander of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area, were put on a piece of newspaper of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area named *Against the Invaders, Issued Every Three Days* on Jan. 4, 1940. *In Memory of Comrade Bethune* by Zhu De was carried on *Liberation Daily* at the 3rd anniversary of Bethune's sacrifice.

These articles appealed Chinese army and civilians to learn from Bethune's spirits, to defeat the Japanese aggressors, and to build a new China with freedom, democracy and happiness standing in praising and propagandizing his internationalism spirit. They reflected a political Bethune.

Zhou Erfu (1914-2004), a morden Chinese writer and the vice Minister of the Ministry of Culture at one time, wrote a long reportage named *Sections of Norman Bethune* in 1944. The reportage was viewed the most early and most comprehensive details of Bethune after his death. It was issued on *Liberation Daily*, Yan'an in Nov., 1944 at the 5th anniversary of Bethune's sacrifice then got well-received by the public. An relative earlier pamphlet, according to announcement of the National Library of China holdings, was the one which was pressed in Mar., 1945, by Politics Depart. of the 8th Route Army. There are about 20 thousand words in the 39-page, 32 mo book. Prof. Lin Gang, Chinese language and literature Dept., Sun Yat-Sen Univ., says in one of his article that he has seen a version of Jianghuai Publishing House, 1944. It maybe a limited edition. Zhou printed a reportage union entitled *Bethune and Alov* with another morden writer, Fang Ji. In this book, there are three articles as *Learn from Norman Bethune* by Mao, *Sections of Norman Bethune* by Zhou and *Doctor Alov* by Fang Ji. Alov was a USSR surgeon who worked in Yan'an just like Bethune.

Zhou Erfu worked in Hong Kong to do the united front work of CPC in Dec., 1946. He created a long novel entitled *Doctor Bethune* which was the basis of his reportage *Sections of Norman Bethune* published in installments in *The Short Story Monthly*, Hong Kong with an extensive influence.

Those senior commanders of the 8th Route Army in the novel have their true names while the others are generalized on literatural law, assuring the basis of some true persons and true stories, to be fitting the literatural form and aesthetic needs. The earliest Chinese versions of the novel were the one pressed in May, 1949 by Tianjin Knowledge Publishing House and the other published in 1949, by Beiping (now Beijing) Xinhua Bookstore. Whereas its English manuscript spreads far away. In 1940s, Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon of Canada were preparing a biography of Bethune. Zhou's novel and other materials which were not yet made available to publication, such as Bethune's interpreter Dong Yueqian's private notes received at third hand by Song Qingling---Mrs. Sun Yat-sen, became the important source of information

about Bethune's work and life in China in *The Scalpel, the Sword*. That's the reason why these biographies quote each other on Bethune's work and life in China.

The Scalpel, the Sword was printed in 1952 in US at the first time. It was translated into Chinese by Pingming Publishing House, 1954. It had several different names and versions, such as *Biography of Bethune*, *Stories of Doctor Bethune*, etc. I prefer *The Scalpel, the Sword* as its name is in the paper.

Both Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon are Canadians. Still the former one is Bethune's friend who went to Spain with Bethune together. He held a lot of letters and other documents of Bethune in his own hands for a long time. Neither of them came to China when their book was finished in 1950s. It is incorrect when sometimes it marks American writers in its Chinese version. It's easy to be thought as American writers because it was published in US at first. There were more than 10 kinds of languages of it and had been sold millions of copies in the world but only 16 thousand copies in Canada before 1970. It changed since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1970 between China and Canada. The book was reprinted in 1971, being sold more than 5000 copies in three months. It is one of the most important biographies of Bethune in Canada up to now.

Zhou's novel has been reprinted many times, such as in 1949, 1953, 1958, 1959, 1978, 1980, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, etc, according to announcement of the National Library of China holdings but hasn't during 1960-1977. We can understand it's because of the Cultural Revolution. It has versions in different languages like English, French, Russian, Japanese, Italian, Korean, Vietnamese, Albanian and so on with an extensive effect and an uncountable number of copies.

Bethune's literary image spread widely by means of films, TV plays and picture books on the basis of Zhou's novel. It can be seen as the most important text on Bethune studies even though it has a birth defect: It is indeed not a biography but a novel. Certainly, in spite of not a biography it is mentioned as a biography for quoting. This book was the first one on Bethune studies.

1.2 A film and picture books about Bethune's life and spirit have come out one after another Since 1960s. Propaganda was in full swing at this time.

Bethune's image is most based on "Five a person" of Mao's work: "He is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people." (MAO, 1991)⁽⁶⁵³⁻⁶⁵⁴⁾ Indeed, Zhou's novel is perfect on Bethune's work and life in China and Ted Allan's book has a voice most on Bethune's work and life in Canada and Spain. Most works of this time are combined by these two books.

The film *Doctor Bethune*, adapted by Zhang Junxiang and Zhao Tuo, was finished by Seagull Film Studio in 1965. Yet it wasn't put on sale until 1977 because of forbidding by Jiang Qing---- Mao Zedong's wife during the Cultural Revolution. There came two movie picture books whose names were the same as Zhou's novel's name. One is in June 1978 by Tianjin Fine Arts Publishing House and the other is in Feb. 1979 by Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House.

There are a dozen different kinds of drawing picture books at this period. It has never been so flourishing before. The best of all is *Bethune in China* by four painters of as Xu Rongchu, Xu Yong and so on in 1974, Liaoning People's Publishing House. It got the first prize in the second session of serious books comparison in China in 1981 and was selected as one of "the 600 most influential books in new China in 60 years" by China National Publications and Publishers Research Institute of China. The first cover of the book is the Great Wall and it symbolizes union is strength in anti-Japanese war. It was reprinted in 1975 by another publishing house and had an English version by Foreign Languages Press, having a worldwide effect. Further more, of all these ones, a colorful picture book *Bethune*, a line drawing one *Bethune* and *The Great Internationalism Soldier Bethune* by Yunan People's Publishing House, *A Story of the Proletariat Internationalism Soldier Bethune* by Zhejiang People's Publishing House, are high-quality works with contents and forms during the Cultural Revolution. They are best collections in China nowadays, for example, the painter Guang Jun's manuscript. There weren't computers and TV in 1960-1970s and few of films. Spreading Bethune's name and story by picture books is the Chinese characteristic on Bethune studies for its superiorities as short and pithy, large circulation, great speed, low price and so on.

Of course, the broadest one is Mao Zedong's *In Memory of Norman Bethune*. Mao's this article is thought as "the old three pieces" with two other articles *The Foolish Old Man Removed Mountains* and *Serve the People*, learned by all most all of the people. "The old three pieces" are almost in all of the languages of Chinese minorities and a few dozen of the languages of the world. The number of copies of Mao's article and *Selected Works of Mao Zedong Volume* should be got by authority.

The occasional recollections or recollection corpus of those medical and other workers who ever worked with Bethune, begin to fill up the lack on Bethune studies about giving priority to propagandizing and literature. For example, there are recollections by Nie Rongzhen, Ye Qingshan, You Shenghua, Dong Yueqian, Lang Lin, Lin Jinliang, He Zixin and so on about a book named *The Great Internationalism Soldier Bethune* in 1965. Almost all this book can be thought as a unite in a group of all the workers who worked with Bethune together and is very important among those information about Bethune. Especially, *To Follow Doctor Bethune for Two Years* by He Zixin's dictation and *Comrade Bethune I See* by Liu Xiaokang, possess historical data value.

There appeared many poets on learning Bethune for propagandizing, such as *A Song of Praise Bethune* and *A Noble Man*. Still, an orchestral score entitled *Bethune Symphonic Poem* was published by People's Music Publishing House in 1981. It is thus clear that the styles of the works on memory and propagandizing of Bethune are too numerous to count with rich contents.

Those kinds of books edited or adapted from Bethune's stories sell well. All forms of monographs and collaborations are edited or adapted by these persons as Tang Shu, Sun Ying, Tang Enyuan, Sheng Xiangong, Xu Weiguo, Hu Qi, Wang Tianxin, Lu Lin, Zhou Xiaoying, Zuo Bingwen, Zhou Wenbin, Tian Zongyuan and so on especially Ji Junmei, Wang Yan and Dong Li who published frequently these years.

Medical School of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area was renamed Bethune Medical School while Model Hospital was changed into Bethune International Peace Hospital after Bethune's martyr. It needs a whole book to describe the mountains of work for Bethune International Peace Hospital. This is medical image of Bethune.

1.3 Since the end of 1970s, Bethune Studies is from propaganda to academic research

A Biographical Sketch of Bethune was compiled by Zhang Xuexin in 1984 by Fujian People's Publishing House. It came up a history Bethune for it's the first non-fiction biography of Bethune. Bethune Studies began to change from propaganda by politics and characterization by literature to history research with deep values and multiangles. His biographical sketch is based on some Bethune's letters, recollections by his colleagues. It emphasizes Bethune's work and life in China and cites some materials from Norman Bethune by Canada Public Health Association in 1982. Chinese people know about his spiritual world from these letters. We cannot shut our eyes to this fact that the literature image by Zhou Erfu is so successful that people are unwilling to pay attention to his true image. It is found with hindsight that Bethune's true image doesn't pale beside his literature image, of course. Bethune leads people to believe that there does exist some really noble men whenever it's war time or peace time. They are hard cores of a society.

2. SINCE 1980S, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME NEW FEATURES ON BETHUNE STUDIES, SUCH AS NEW MATERIALS, NEW VIEWS AND NEW FACTS AND SO ON TO A FARTHER WAY OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH

There are new materials as follow:

2.1 Some faithful historical account appeared

A book named *In Memory of Bethune* by People's Publishing House in Nov., 1979 at the 40th anniversary of Bethune's sacrifice. It compiles not only those articles touched in this paper foregoing but also some ones by foreign friends, as Ma Haide, whose true name is George Hatem, an American doctor, Ted Allan,

Roderick Stewart, Rewi Alley, etc. Further more there are a dozen of Bethune's speeches, papers and letters. Ma Haide and Rewi Alley are "the red foreigners" who have been helping the Chinese people in their War of Resistance Against Japan. Their articles gave the researchers a new view on Bethune studies.

2.2 Some circumstantial evidence were published

Jean Ewen, a Canadian nurse who came to China with Bethune, wrote her memoirs: *China Nurse: 1932—1939* in 1984. She told that even if Bethune is a hero he was sometimes abusing people with a bad temper. It looks like that's the first time who pointed out Bethune's shortcoming though we know that he seldom abused people indeed. His honor remained intact in China except this shortcoming. Other materials are from Kathleen Hall, her Chinese name is He Mingqing, a missionary of New Zealand who helped Bethune in China. The Chinese version of *A Biography of Kathleen Hall* was printed in July, 1993 by Hebei people's publishing house. Its English name is *Dr. Bethune's an Angel*---a very emotional name in fact. The same story of this lady appeared in another book, *See the Sunrise: Dr. Bethune's a Daughter*. We can understand Bethune's feeling as a modern person whatever she is angel or daughter. It makes the research course more interesting as they are small fractions of Bethune meanwhile it helps to return a god Bethune to a real one.

2.3 Bethune's working and life in the front line is enlarged and described in details.

Two books can't be ignored. One is *Bethune in Tang County*, edited by Han Haishan with high-quality pictures and written explanations; the other is *Bethune in Lingqiu Anti-Japanese Front* edited by Gao Fengshan with many pictures too. The more these kinds of books appear, the more quickly a chronicle of Bethune's life comes out.

2.4 Some picture collections about Bethune's working and life in Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area prove to be valuable information, recording those days about Bethune's fighting against Fascism with Chinese people.

Photos by Wu Yinxian and Sha Fei and statues by Situ Jie are wonderful in all. *Artwork Collections in Bethune Memorial Hall* by Ji Junmei, director of Bethune Memorial Hall, Shijiazhuang are detailed and accurate.

3. ENLARGED NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS

Bethune Studies relate to areas beyond China because Bethune's life includes north America, Spain, USSR and such other countries and areas. Here we have to talk about something in Canada. Researchers in China know about three biographies of Bethune. They are *The Scalpel, the Sword* by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, *Bethune* by Roderick Stewart and *The Politics of Passion-Norman Bethune's Writing and Art* by Larry Hannant. The one by Larry Hannant is the perfect one in and abroad China by now and its Chinese version becomes the most important one on Bethune Studies in China. We don't have the Chinese version of *Bethune* by Roderick Stewart and his other book *The Mind of Norman Bethune*. They are seen in other one's books.

It develops in breadth and depth on Bethune Studies by translation, explanation and research of specialists and scholars in universities and other institute. Larry Hannant's work was published in 1997. In 2003, Prof. Li Wei of Shandong Univ. began to translate it with us five graduate students with the help of Canada embassy. Prof. Li Wei is a historian on America, Canada and Europe. He leads us to Bethune Studies from the course of translation. I introduced this book and the translation in detail in one of my paper Bethune in more dimensions perspective and his multidimensional life (QI, 2005).

It should be thoughtfully noted that it needs researchers between different areas and different branches of learning for Bethune's life span different areas as medical, literature, art, revolution and so on. For example, Bethune's last two years are closely related to history of CPC, Anti-Japanese War and Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area therefore it needs scholars in Chinese history. In need of deep exchange, those foreign language and foreign history learners are necessary. An article entitled *Forgetfulness and imagine by collective memory: Analysis on Subjects of Bethune in 60 Years* (LIN, 2008), with significant depth in the theory on views of aesthetics of art and literature, analyzing a lot of subjects of Bethune. The writer is

Prof.Lin Gang, Sun Yat-Sen Univ.,I have considered in the former. These articles like this one are welcomed.

Those offsprings of Bethune's colleagues at that time,with a sincere and warmly feeling to Bethune, join the line of researchers. Some active persons are Wang Yan, daughter of Sha Fei;You Liqing, daughter of You Shenghua;Ye Xing, daughter of Ye Qingshan,;Dong Chun, daughter of Dong Yueqian and so on. *In Memory of Bethune*, edited by Wang Yan, details Bethune's deeds in China from June,1938 to Nov.,1939 by pictures taken by her father. These successors to the revolution become a force to be reckoned, following their older generations, gathering, editing and publishing relative information. Some of them propagandize Bethune on internet. *Bethune's Last Month* by You Liqing on her blog reduces Bethune's death cause and clears some questions by visiting parties and consulting literature materials. Not only it's a believable record but also an impressive article.

4. COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN RESEARCHERS IN DIFFERENT AREAS OR EVEN BETWEEN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Forms of literature and art have more influence than those published articles and works on extending Bethune studies to the masses. Films and TV plays play an important role.

There are several films and TV plays nowadays.The first one is *Doctor Bethune* by Zhang Junxiang and Zhao Tuo in 1964 with high artistic quality. It makes Bethune one of the most famous foreigners in Chinese history of cinema. The second one is *A Hero's Path* by Canada, France and China jointly in 1990.It has a smaller influence in China because it describes Bethune giving orders to Chinese people but not interactive relate with Chinese in a western eye. We can see this film in the National Library of China. Perhaps the third one is that shoot in Canada, performed by Donald Sutherland in 1977, named *Bethune*. But it can't be stored in the National Library of China. A TV program, *Film legend: Who Made Light of Travelling Thousands of Miles to China*, performing and explaining by the famous compere,Cui Yongyuan,has a superior ratings.It spreads Bethune's deeds to young people.A 20-episode TV plays entitled *Bethune*, directed by a woman director Yang Yang in 2007,is awarded a Prize of Spiritual Civilization in China. It should be realized that not all of these films or TV plays have the same level of achievement in art on representing Bethune's true spirit. Some of the works are too exaggerate even disparage historical figure. To a certain degree,it has a bearing on Bethune studies' lacking of influence but only in scholars' studies. Therefore, it's necessary to spread the research achievements while lay stress on it.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL TREND OF THE STUDY IS ABOVE SUSPICION

In recent years, some research societies have been established one by one, getting things going actively. *China Association for Bethune's Mind*, whose headquarter is located at Beijing, was set up in June,1997.It has developed 6 activities during its 10-year history. The vice-president of the society, Zhang Yesheng, who ever worked with Bethune, became the vice president of General Hospital, Beijing Military Region.Mr. Zhang is one of those who propagandize, learn and study Bethune all their lives because of revelation and inspiration of Bethune. *Bethune Correspondence*, which was founded and published by Mr. Zhang Yesheng himself, is an informal publication which has done a vast amount of work. A more earlier association named Beijing Alumni Association of Bethune Medical Univ. has its own website and acts frequently.It appears another association, like association of Bethune in Hebei province. The association up to date is Association of Bethune Studies which was set up in Beijing on a grand scale, gathering medical staff.

6. EXPECTATION AND OUTLOOK

We could see that Bethune Studies in China is on the way from propaganda to academic research for these 70 years. Bethune's image has been changed from a perfect hero to a most colorful one. The information on

Bethune Studies is from the concept of novel to believable record, quoting materials between China and abroad. Materials and information appears endless. We may say that it's the best time on Bethune Studies.

Even if, we must note that what we have done is just a small part of Bethune Studies for it has a huge developing space. More work needs us to do, for example, the question about Bethune's will, in another accurate term as the last letter Bethune gave to General Nie, spread widely in China but is suspected by Larry Hannant. I have written out my opinion that "the will did exist but the original manuscript was unable to be preserved" in the 15th note (Larry & LI, 2005).^(p468) of the Chinese version of Larry Hannant's work. But I made a mistake on the newspaper's name. Its true name is *Against the Invaders, Issued Every Three Days* but not *Jin-Cha-Ji Border Area Daily*. There won't be these kinds of mistakes if I learn more from specialists on Chinese history. It calls on cooperation and communication between researchers in different areas indeed.

At last, Bethune's images in China between different areas among medical, literature, history and politics are not the same one. I hope these images can be united into one. Also I hope there will be more support by loans and research institute, more exchange between researchers in and abroad China, and enlargement of achievements in research. Eventually, Bethune should be accepted as the hero against Fascism, overcoming political parties, nationalities, national boundaries by the world people.

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