

書 評

Key Ray Chong, Americans and Chinese Reform and Revolution, 1898-1922: The Role of Private Citizens in Diplomacy
(University Press of America, 1984) xiii, 308pp including
appendices, selected bibliography, index.

In the main this book focuses on the involvement of Homer Lea and his associates in China's reform and revolutionary movements at the turn of this century. Homer Lea was a little known American, but to those who are familiar with Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary career, he is by no means a total stranger. There are quite a few brief references about him in Sun Yat-sen's collected works. Until the appearance of this book, however, there has been no well documented study of the part he and his associates played in Chinese affairs. Based on personal correspondence including the Charles B. Boothe Papers, the Joshua B. Powers Collection, the James Deitrick Papers and newspaper accounts, the author puts together a picture of Homer Lea's activities on behalf of firstly the reformists led by K'ang Yu-wei and later the revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen. By focusing on the private actions of individuals such as Homer Lea and his American associates, the author aims to give a different perspective of Sino-American relations by raising and answering three questions. Firstly, who initiated private and semi-official relations between the United States and China during the period of 1898-1922? Secondly, how did private citizens and government officials differ in terms of rhetoric and action? Thirdly, what is the extent of the effects of private and semi-official relations on American official policy on China?

The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 outlines American Chinese relations to 1898. Chapter 2 discusses the efforts of the reformer, K'ang Yu-wei, to solicit American aid for his cause after 1898. K'ang failed to gain entry into the U. S. A. in this period, but he was able to tour Canada and there gained overseas Chinese support for his Emperor Protection Society, a branch of which was established in San Francisco in October 1899. Chapter 3 records a temporary change in American attitude on the question of reform in China after the Boxer Rebellion. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who was K'ang Yu-wei's

most important disciple and supporter, was permitted to visit the U. S. A. It was at this juncture that Homer Lea entered the scene, and the book unfolds the theme of its main concern, the involvement of some private Americans in China's domestic affairs, and the official or semi-official attitude of the American government towards their activities. Apart from two trips which Homer Lea seems to have made in this period with the intention of taking part in Chinese revolts against the Manchu dynasty, (namely the Hankow Revolt of 1900 and the Canton Uprising of 1903), he and his other American associates operated mainly in the U. S. A. Their activities included drilling overseas Chinese in the art of war, recruiting American mercenaries, and soliciting funds from American financiers by promising rich rewards when reforms succeeded in China. Judging by the reception Liang Ch'i-ch'ao received during his trans-continental tour of America, the reformist cause received considerable sympathy. But higher American authorities including Roosevelt remained cool towards the reformers and their cause, although in the Su-pao case of 1903, the President expressed his disinclination to cooperate with the Manchu government on the question of extraditing political dissidents. Business leaders also did not seem interested in the reformers' cause.

The next period, 1904-1907, is studied in chapter 4. It traces the rise and decline of the reformist cause in America. In this period Homer Lea established his Western Military Academy to train officers and men for the Chinese Imperial Army. This force was allowed to appear openly until the American government banned it under pressures from people who viewed the training of Chinese soldiers, and particularly their public appearance with arms, as an infringement on American sovereignty. In the same period, money raised by the Emperor Protection Society was invested in profitable enterprises in America and Mexico, and K'ang Yu-wei was allowed to enter the U. S. A. in 1905 to speak on America's Exclusion Act and other issues. On China's reform cause, however, he was also unable to arouse American government's interest despite initially promising receptions by Americans and in some press circles. Then came the downturn from which K'ang and his reform cause were never to regain their former influence in America and elsewhere. Inept financial management and the financial depression in the U. S. A. and Mexico led to the loss of their investments and the collapse of their company, the Commercial Corporation. In 1907, K'ang left America, thereby leaving the field to his rival Sun

Yat-sen and his revolutionary cause.

Though disapproving of K'ang's handling of the Emperor Protection Society's funds, Lea and his associates did not desert the reformist cause immediately. The addition of two new Americans to his team in 1908 brightened his hope of gaining American support for the China cause. W.W. Allen and Charles B. Boothe were influential men because of their wide connections with the government and financial circles of America. Their continuous efforts to obtain the backing of the American government and financiers for, firstly, the Chinese reformists and later, the revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen, are the main concerns of chapter 5 which covers the period 1908-1910. Their efforts brought no greater success than those of preceding years. In order to sway Americans to his view of China, Lea wrote two books in this period. *The Vermillion Pencil* published in 1908 was critical of the activities of Christian missionaries who, in his view, had destroyed the glory of the Confucian tradition. Though believing in the necessity of removing the Manchu dynasty, he advocated the preservation of Chinese civilization. His second book entitled the *Valor of Ignorance* appeared in 1909. It warned America of the Japanese threat and the need to maintain a balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region by building up American military strength and by helping Chinese reform (p. 126). It seems this book had a better reception than the first one. It received the approval of Elihu Root, chairman of the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. No rhetoric, however, seems able to interest American bureaucrats and politicians in China's domestic affairs. Though interested in furthering its economic and commercial enterprises in China, America was not willing to commit its resources to these interests. The author is probably right in asserting that Lea never really had any chance of success as he had 'never developed a political or coherent public face' (p. 136). He and his collaborators do not seem to have ever 'effectively pulled together, and that to the detriment of their cause, their individual priorities worked against a convincing, soundly led and adequately funded effort with some chance of success.' (p. 136)

Undaunted by the lack of progress towards his goal, Lea continued to work for his China cause. His continuous association with Sun Yat-sen from 1910 to his death in November 1912 is described in chapter 6. Although his writings failed to enthruse Americans into helping China's reform or revolutio-

nary cause, they established him as a military expert in some eyes. His warnings on Germanic and Slavic menace were taken seriously by some leaders in Britain who were interested in promoting Anglo-Saxon military superiority throughout the world. His European trip proved to be only a temporary diversion. After the outbreak of the Wuchang Uprising in October 1911, he busied himself with Sun's diplomatic manoeuvres to stop foreign dealings with the Manchu government, and to gain belligerent status for the revolutionary camp. Their efforts might have contributed to the neutral posture of the powers during the 1911 revolution in China. The concession of landing rights to Sun Yat-sen was no less than a British recognition of Sun's special position in the Chinese civil war.

Lea then accompanied Sun to China. As Sun's political adviser, he lobbied hard for American support. A certain Singapore press built him up as the 'Von Moltke of China' (p. 157), while earlier, it had compared him somewhat ineptly with General Charles Gordon who fought on the side of the Manchu dynasty against the Taiping rebels. (p. 154). The U.S. government remained unmoved, however, by either Lea's plea or the events, as its diplomats in China consistently counselled against helping the revolutionaries. The author puts this persistent refusal down to traditional American isolationism and its innate resistance to change. While not rejecting them as possible factors underlying American foreign policy, there were more practical and expedient considerations which shaped America's official attitude. China then was a highly internationalised country in many respects. Taking sides in China's civil war without a prior agreement with the other powers must have seemed plain folly to the American administration. This was in fact bluntly expressed by a counselor of the state department who told the American minister to China that 'he should not give "the appearance of the United States acting independently of the other powers," a situation contrary to past policy.' (p. 194)

After several months in China, illness forced Lea to return to the U. S. A. where he kept on working for his China cause until his death on 1st November 1912 at the age of thirty-six.

Chapter 7 discusses Sun's continuing effort to obtain American backing for his railway project. He sought Mrs. Homer Lea's help, but more promising helpers were James Deitrick, a self-made millionaire of San Francisco, George Bronson Rea, editor and publisher of the *Far Eastern Review*, and

Austin P. Brown, an American financier in New York. All of them were interested in Sun's railway project for China. Unfortunately Sun's position in the Chinese government was greatly weakened by Yuan Shih-k'ai the president, who was not anxious to see Sun succeed in his project. American diplomats undoubtedly realised this and advised their government not to get involved in Sun's project. The Second Revolution in 1913 ended Sun's plan and he turned his attention to fund raising for his anti-Yuan campaign. His efforts in this regard were also fruitless. His only consolation was that his Chinese rivals also did not manage to raise any funds in America.

The last chapter deals with the final phase of Sun's relations with the U.S.A. during the warlord era when he obtained a tenuous hold on Canton as a base for his revolution. He managed to win some support amongst U.S. citizens and the sympathy of some U.S. consular officials in China, especially those in Canton. But they were not sufficient to move the American government to change its pro-Peking policy. 1922 marks the end of his active search for American aid. In that year he accepted the only offer of help, and signed the Sun-Joffe Communique in January 1923.

To conclude, it is a story well told. The author has given us a very tidy book of which the foregoing summary is far from adequate. Clearly the efforts of people described in the book had no impact on America's foreign policy and so had no positive influence on subsequent events in China. That is not to say, however, that these men's activities are not worthy of historians' attention. The author has done a good job in filling an obvious gap in our knowledge of Sino-American relations. I have no major bones to pick over this book except perhaps a brief remark in the conclusion that 'The direction of China towards communism was then charted in the 1920s after the U.S. had repulsed the many advances of Sun Yat-sen and supporters' (p. 201). I feel that this is overdrawn. Although communist movement in China began in early 1920s, between then and 1949 there was a long intervening period during which nationalism rather than communism triumphed. Besides, we have all witnessed in recent years that even energetic intervention by the U.S. government could not guide the development of some countries along liberal lines.

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