



# CHINA HANDS

*Peter Rand*

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## **CHINA HANDS** Peter Rand

From the earliest days of the twentieth century, China was plunged into chaos and civil war. In the 1920s and 1930s, the nightmare quickened with the invasion by the Japanese and the onslaught of war. There to experience the darkness and the terror was a small corps of inspired, eccentric American writers and reporters. They were the emissaries of their day to the Middle Kingdom, bringing news of the East to the West in the tradition established by other great chroniclers like Marco Polo and Rudyard Kipling. Peter Rand skillfully interweaves a highly charged narrative of revolution, horror, and political mayhem with the dramatic personal adventures of these American originals who set out to find fame and fortune in a far-off land and ended up as part of the story they came to tell.

They form a fascinating cast of characters: the brilliant, doomed “angel of mercy,” Rayna Prohme; Harold Isaacs, the hot-headed radical from Manhattan’s Upper West Side who launched a tabloid in Shanghai; charming Edgar Snow, favored by fortune, who made his way to the remote rebel stronghold of Mao Zedong and returned to write an American classic; his strong-willed wife, Helen; the irrepressible Theodore H. White, Time-Life’s wizard in wartime China; and Barbara Stephens, an adventurous, golden-haired beauty who set out by herself to investigate Chinese atrocities in central Asia and never returned. This epic saga teems with famous figures from history: Chiang Kai-shek, Borodin, Madame Sun Yat-sen, and “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, among others. Rand, whose father was a China hand, summons forth this lost world with a personal touch of his own.

China Hands is the thrilling, deeply moving story of an epoch and of the colorful Americans who lived it and wrote it. Equal parts history, biography, drama, China Hands is above all a compelling contribution to the literature on twentieth-century China, beautifully written by a master storyteller.

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