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**The Indomitable  
ANNA LOUISE STRONG  
American Pioneer**

A Book Review  
by  
Maud Russell

"Right In Her Soul: The Life Of  
Anna Louise Strong"  
by  
Tracy B. Strong and  
Helene Keyssar

*"I want to make my stuff  
as widely useful as possible."*

*"Better get to work."*

*Anna Louise Strong*

### About The Reviewer

With some excitement I anticipated the Tracy Strongs' "Right In Her Soul" and then read it with a deepening understanding and appreciation of Anna Louise Strong.

I first met Anna Louise in China in the late twenties. Later, in the early thirties, I lived with her for a month or so in her Moscow flat. In the late forties, as Executive Director of the Committee For A Democratic Far Eastern Policy, I was in fairly close relationship with her, both while she was in New York and also through correspondence from China.

Visiting in China in 1959. she was a gracious hostess. She was still a person of great fortitude. Belatedly, I realized that never once during the fifty years I had known her, did she ever mention any of the serious health problems that afflicted much of her adult life.

Right In Her Soul  
The Life Of Anna Louise Strong

By

Tracy B Strong & Helene Keyssar

A Review

By

Maud Russell

Introduction

"Right In Her Soul," a book of almost 400 pages, written by Anna Louise Strong's grand-nephew, Tracy B Strong and his wife, Helene Keyssar, finely documents the life of this remarkable American woman.

Anna Louise Strong was the initiator of and participant in major social projects in three countries -- the United States, the Soviet Union and China. She was a fabulous and purposeful traveler. She was a foreign correspondent and writer for a wide variety of publications. She was an insistent searcher for facts about people's revolutionary struggles. She was a prodigious writer of articles, pamphlets and books. She was an internationally known speaker who indefatigably and courageously shared her observations, insights and commitments.

Anna Louise Strong was an outdoor enthusiast. She organized mountain summer camps. She led groups in mountain climbing in her homeland and never lost an opportunity to climb mountains in countries she visited.

Well schooled by her upbringing in American political traditions she plunged into the thick of labor struggles and child welfare work and was much involved on the national political front.

She suffered through (and eventually surmounted) many ostracisms. As a precocious youth she felt rejected by fellow students. As a social activist she was rebuffed by Seattle's elite society. As a journalist she suffered expulsion from the Soviet Union -- an act which led to her being excluded by much of the American left.

She knew great failures as well as great successes.

Though motivated by her family's Christian traditions she moved steadily toward embracing people's revolutionary struggles.

Each of these facets (and many more) of Anna Louise Strong's life are richly detailed in the Strongs' "Right In Her Soul." Each aspect could fill a volume.

Far East Reporter review of the Strongs' book takes up but one aspect of the life of this pathfinding American woman; her unfailing sense of social responsibility and her persistent use of her skills for the building of a better American society.

Anna Louise Strong was truly an American pioneer. Her life can be epitomized in two statements she made in letters to the Committee For A Democratic Far Eastern Policy;

"I want my stuff to be as widely useful as possible."

"Better get to work."

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THE INDOMITABLE ANNA LOUISE STRONG

"Right In Her Soul: The Life Of

Anna Louise Strong"

A Review

This is a frank and absorbing story of the life of an American woman, born in 1885. On April 2nd, 1970, a meaningful ceremony was held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, honoring this American woman. Beneath a huge portrait an inscription hung across the front of the hall:

May

Anna Louise Strong

Live Forever In Our Memory

The billion people of China have reason to cherish the memory of this American friend. She understood their struggle against an old oppressive society. She contributed, through her writings and lectures -- informed by her experiences in China -- to the building of international understanding of China's struggle for a new kind of society.

The Chinese recognized Anna Louise Strong not only as "a genuine and devoted friend of the Chinese people, but also as a fine daughter of the American people who have always showed a deep concern for the revolutionary struggles of the American people." Rewi Alley wrote of "her long life, charged with meaning as she grew in sympathy with the working class...ever pondering how to use her talent for the people. She saw the rise of the first socialist state and told about it in a stream of books; and she tirelessly lectured in her native land. She represented the best of the American people."

The American people too have reason to cherish the memory of Anna Louise Strong. She was a feisty American activist, wanting and long devoted to working for a new kind of society for her own country. What she observed and learned from other peoples' revolutionary struggles, especially in Russia and China, served to illumine and inform her actions as a socially concerned citizen.

Tracy B Strong and his wife, Helene Keyssar, have written "Right In Her Soul -- The Life of Anna Louise Strong," helping to insure that the memory of his great-aunt will "live forever" among the American people as a source of pride and, for American youth, an example and inspiration as they too struggle for a better society.

Anna Louise Strong's vigorous citizenship concern had a long Protestant religious background -- dating from her early-17th century ancestors to her socially-concerned preacher father.

She started graduate study in 1906 but before taking her PhD degree she "wanted to come up against life." So she started working in a canning factory in Chicago at \$5.50 a week and "moved with enthusiasm into the life of the urban working class and admired the women with whom she worked." In 1905 she had started going to a settlement house, then described as "an establishment in the poorer quarters of a large city where educated men and women lived in daily contact with the working class."

She was then a do-gooder but slowly moving from a personal politics of goodwill to a more socially based vision of the United States. In her twenties she had a social work job in which she could fire people, even if it meant unemployment for them. Recalling one such instance with a draftsman whose work she admired, she wrote, "How did it chance that I, a girl in my twenties, had the power to refuse him the right to a living? His wife, his babies, had nothing to say about it, but I, an outsider, had. What monstrous thing was this?" She was becoming increasingly concerned about the effects the American economic system was having on the workers.

Her PhD thesis (1908), "A Consideration of Prayer From The Standpoint of Social Psychology," argued that the self was essentially social and emerged at those points where instinct failed to gain satisfaction; hence, the self developed mainly from conflict and frustration; that unless there were new problems there would be no self. Mao Tse-tung was, years later, to concretize for her this still undeveloped thesis.

In 1914, invited to Ireland to help organize a child welfare exhibition, she came out strongly against British separation of Protestant Northern Ireland. She addressed a group of 350 Irish volunteers, an illegal body; this led to her being interrogated by the police, suspicious that she might have some connection with gun-running from the United States. When she was, not giving speeches she wrote fervent articles, subsequently published in her book, "On The Eve of Home Rule," -- taking her readers with her to see and hear what she saw and heard -- setting a style that characterized her later work.

After receiving her PhD degree in 1908 she began her civic activities in Seattle. An early project there was "Know Your City" -- to "make citizenship conscious of bringing out constructive criticism and giving publicity to Christian social ideas." Also, her religious motivation as a do-gooder and reformer led to involvement in union activities. Her association with the IWW newspaper, "Daily Call" and her reports on strikes in the Seattle area branded her as "a Bolshevik" and led to a recall election that removed her from membership on the Seattle school board. A fiery Anna Louise Strong editorial in the "Union Record," inciting to revolutionary labor power, had devastating results so far as the strike effort was concerned; but it educated Anna Louise Strong and began to direct her interest in the Soviet Union and to relate her to lecturers on the Soviet Union -- such as Raymond Robbins, Louise Bryant, Albert Rhys Williams.

Later, her social work position with the National Child Labor Committee, involving her in association with nationally-known social workers, widened her social thinking. But, as one of her friends commented, "She was not cut out to be a social worker." Another friend recalled, "She had a philosophical-ethical outlook on social forces and larger ideas than doing good to disadvantaged people."

A suggestion from Lincoln Steffens that she go to the Soviet Union both as a social worker and as a part-time newspaper reporter led to her becoming a famine relief worker there and a correspondent for Hearst's International Magazine (which sought to "promote international peace through understanding".) All this was the beginning of her more than twenty years of living and working in the Soviet Union.

Following her tempestuous years of learning about revolutionary society in the Soviet Union she spent twelve more-relaxed years in the People's Republic of China, continuing participation in the people's activities (as she had in the Soviet Union) -- observing, learning and reporting.

Anna Louise Strong's thinking and activities were constantly fructified by her wide variety of relationships with leaders and workers in many, many fields -- fields far wider than the social work field. Her reli-

gious impulse as a do-gooder and reformer led to relationships with union leaders and settlement houses. Her Protestant background and upbringing made for warm and constructive relations with such religious leaders as the Unitarian preacher, Stephen Fritchman, with the Episcopalian Bishop Roots of China, with the Ethical Culture Society founder, Felix Adler. Her social work in the United States involved working association with such outstanding social workers as Jane Addams, Roger Baldwin, Leonard Ayres, Luther Gulick, Florence Kelley, Judge Ben Lindsay, Owen Lovejoy, Julia Lathrop, Lillian Wald -- to name a few. As a writer she was in cooperative (and oftentimes controversial) relations with many liberal, conservative and radical editors and publishers. She sought and received advice from such American business leaders as Frank Vanderlip and Gerald Swope.

While living and working abroad and lecturing in the United States she also spent time being involved in American politics -- in association with such political leaders as C B Baldwin, Henry Wallace, Norman Thomas, Eleanor Roosevelt, Senator Borah and others. She was a delegate to the Progressive Party convention. She consulted with such Communist Party leaders as Earl Browder, Eugene Dennis, Dorothy Healy, Mother Bloor, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, William Foster.

She knew these well-known and famous people, not in terms of social gatherings, or in passing, nor as a source of name-dropping but in terms of action on their common concern for a better society.

During the years of her living and working in the Soviet Union and China Anna Louise Strong did an amazing amount of purposeful travel to other countries; England (1923), Japan (1925), Mexico (1927 and 1953), France (1927), Spain (1937), Lithuania (1939), Germany (1939), Poland (1944), Korea (1949), Guatamala (1954), Laos (1961), Vietnam (1961 and 1964). She also visited Yugo-Slavia and Czechoslovakia.

In these many countries she talked with and learned from workers and peasants and with such famous leaders as Ho Chih Minh, Dolores Ibarruri ("La Pasionaria"), Andre Malraux, Diego Rivera, Bertrand Russell, Alfaro Siqueros, Lombardo Toledano, H G Wells, J B Haldane, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, Sir Stafford Cripps, Alvarez del Vayo, Cedric Belfrage, Carols Contreras



(Vittorio). She went to see these countries and meet these people not as a tourist but as a learner about people's struggles for a better life. Michael Borodin (her editor-in-chief on the English language newspaper, Moscow Daily News) and her husband, Joel Shurbin, both observed that her real job was "revolution wherever it flamed."

It is needless to chronicle her relationships with many, many of the leaders in the Soviet Union and with almost all of China's national leaders. Details of these relationships fill pages and pages of Tracy Strong's book.

Six times Anna Louise Strong visited China, beginning in 1925. During the war against Japanese aggression she made two visits to China. On her 5th visit in 1946 Chairman Mao received her and made public the celebrated thesis "All reactionaries are paper tigers." In 1958 she went to China for the sixth time, at the age of 72, and lived there until her death in Beijing in 1970.

In 1949 she was in Moscow trying to arrange for passage to China. Suddenly she was arrested, with no charge being made at that time. (Later she was charged with being "a spy" but the Soviet Union subsequently dropped that charge). She was expelled from the Soviet Union; she returned to the United States where she spent some unhappy nine years of alienation from her erstwhile progressive and left friends and organizations. After thirty years of earning a living as a writer and lecturer she was no longer bringing in enough to make ends meet; in search of income she turned to real estate.

Her writings -- books, pamphlets, poems -- were voluminous. In addition there were innumerable articles in magazines -- monthlies and weeklies -- and newspapers. She had also served as co-editor of the Moscow Daily News in the Soviet Union and as co-editor of union publications in the United States.

Though her contact with the American public was much curtailed following her expulsion from the Soviet Union and her return to the United States, she kept up on daily events; and she did have a circle of friends, principally in the Unitarian Church in Los Angeles. A speech on the Korean War given to a Unitarian Church audience led to her publishing a monthly newsletter, "Today," analyzing Russian, American and Chinese politics. Her old fire returned. Soon there were 3000 subscribers. In China, to which she returned in 1958, she began publishing her occa-

sional "Letters From China" -- seventy issues which ran from 1961 to 1970, the year of her death. These Letters had a readership of some 40,000.

Her learnings from her work and living in the Soviet Union and China and from her visits and contacts in many countries were always immediately channeled -- through her writing and lectures -- to her unflinching effort to inform, invigorate and mobilize her fellow American citizens. She never lost sight of her basic goal or deviated from her commitment to the struggle for a better United States.

Was Anna Louise Strong a Communist? In 1929 her father had asked her this question. Her answering note was "Not a Party member; will not deny much sympathy with communist ideas, even agreement often. What is a Communist?" In 1935, seeking membership in the Party, Browder thought she would be more useful outside the Party, as a non-Party Bolshevik. He finally gave in to her insistence and accepted a check. Thereafter she thought of herself as a member though she never had a membership card or was ever assigned to a Party unit. In 1949, in the final hearing by the grand jury she was asked if she were a member of the Party. She responded: "I don't know." The reaction of the Party in the United States to her expulsion from the Soviet Union indicated to her that she was no longer a member; she made no attempt to rejoin.

The political Anna Louise Strong should live forever in our American memory. The other side of Anna Louise Strong, her personal character and relationships, can well be forgotten. The authors of this biography, "Right In Her Soul," make no effort to hide what every one who knew Anna Louise Strong experienced; her imperiousness, her self-centered insistence on getting what she wanted, her selfishness, her rudeness, her angry outbursts, her tantrums, her concern about money. This biography is replete with these unhappy experiences of relatives, friends and associates and acquaintances. These exasperating traits were of course balanced by many acts of helpfulness. Both in her personal and in her political life she was an indomitable fighter. No hardship, no obstruction, no opposition ever got her permanently down. Overall, as a devoted and responsible American citizen, Anna Louise Strong was "right in her soul."

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