



Pearl Buck and China: Once Rejected, Now Revered

Pearl S. Buck International, July 28, 2005

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Once Censured, Pearl S. Buck is now being embraced by the Chinese government. This story highlights a recent symposium held in Zhenjiang, China that focuses on education and multi-cultural understanding. Also featured in the story is the collaborative efforts between China and Pearl S. Buck International.

PR9.NET July 28, 2005 - An exile in 1934 and refused re-entry into the country during President Nixon's official visit in 1972, Pearl Buck is now honored and respected by the people of the land she grew up in and loved.

This past June 26th through the 28th, over 125 people from around the world gathered for the Pearl S. Buck International Symposium in Zhenjiang, China - the hometown of Pearl S. Buck for 18 years of her life. The symposium commemorated the 113th anniversary of her birth and celebrated the 60th anniversary of Chinese victory in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. 49 scholars presented papers exploring Pearl Buck's role in promoting exchanges between diverse cultures; her humanitarian endeavors; and her role in the Chinese War of Resistance.

The event also included the naming of a public park in Zhenjiang as "Pearl Square" and the unveiling of a large "Pearl S. Buck Symposium Monument." Meanwhile, at the Zhenjiang #2 Middle School (comparable to U.S. high school grades) another monument was unveiled in her honor. This was the school that Ms. Buck attended as a child and taught in as an adult.

The house she lived in as a child is now operated as a museum by the Zhenjiang Foreign Affairs Office. A summer home on Lushan Mountain, formerly a Presbyterian enclave for missionaries, where Pearl S. Buck spent many summers has also been restored and opened as a Pearl S. Buck public tourist area by the local government there as well.

What makes all this so remarkable, is the following reply by the Chinese government to her request for a visa in 1972, the year before her death:

"Your letters have been duly received. In view of the fact that for a long time you have in your works taken an attitude of distortion, smear, and vilification towards the people of new China and their leaders, I am authorized to inform you that we cannot accept your request for a visit to China."

Now over 30 years later, the Chinese have acknowledged Pearl S. Buck's role in not only opening up Chinese culture to an ignorant West, but as an accurate documenter of rural Chinese life during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time in Chinese history, scholars and writers did not acknowledge or write about their own farmers or peasants so scholars and historians now eagerly study her works.

Pearl S. Buck International (the combination of Welcome House*, the adoption program she founded in 1949 and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, founded to provide humanitarian support to mixed-race children and their communities in 1964) continues the connection with Zhenjiang. In addition to sending a delegation to the symposium, the nonprofit organization is beginning its third year of a "Teacher Ambassador Program" which recruits American citizens to teach oral English to students in Zhenjiang.

The nonprofit organization is also working to raise money to subsidize the "Pearl S. Buck Class" in the #2 Middle School. This class of over 100 academically motivated students comprised of orphans and other rural children from poor families who would otherwise not have the opportunity to complete their education. In China, compulsory education and government funding for tuition ends after the 9th grade.

Another humanitarian project funded by Pearl S. Buck International rests in the Zhenjiang Social Welfare Center. The organization has raised money to purchase new stainless steel cribs and mattresses and also helped to fund new heating and cooling equipment for the building.

It is interesting to note that while literary interest and name-recognition in the first woman to win both the Pulitzer and Nobel (Literature) Prizes wanes in the country where she spent the last 39 years of her life, recognition and popularity of her achievements and written work rises in the land where she spent the majority of her first 41 years - China.

Resources for your use

Interviews available with Pearl S. Buck International symposium delegates

Interviews available with other delegates from the U.S. and China

Photographs of the symposium and monuments available by email or CD

www.pearlsbuck.org

Peter Conn. "Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography." (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 1996)

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About Pearl S. Buck International

Pearl S. Buck International (PSBI) is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization headquartered in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Its mission is to promote the legacy and dreams of the founder, Pearl S. Buck. These include a commitment to improving the quality of life and to expanding opportunities for children; and promotion of the values and attributes of other cultures, the injustice of prejudice, and the need for humanitarianism throughout the world. This mission is common to the three distinct functions of the organization:

The Welcome House* Adoption Program, the preservation and educational interpretation of the National Historic site, and the International Programs designed to aid children of the world most in need. For more information please call 1-800-220-2825.

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