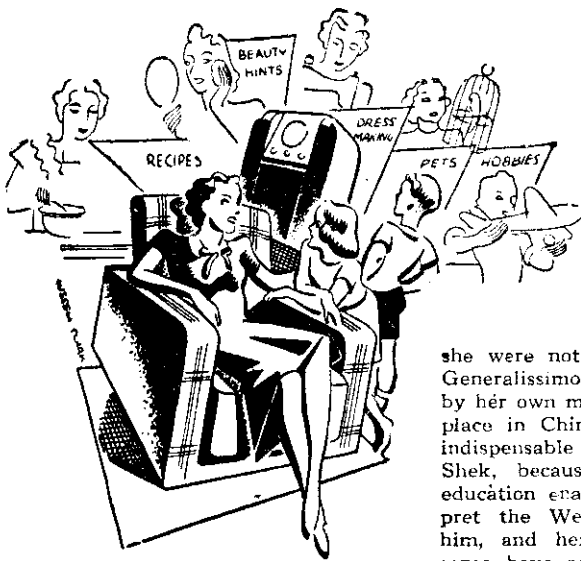


# Women and the Home

Radio is the slender wire that brings the world and its affairs into the tiny kitchens and living rooms which hitherto had isolated so many housekeepers in the performance of their duties  
—Margaret Bondfield



## INTERVIEW

# 230,000,000 WOMEN!

**"I** FELL in love with China in 1922," said Miss Moncrieff. "I went to Peking as New Zealand's representative to the World Conference of the Student Christian Movement. I was so impressed by the eagerness and enthusiasm and general aliveness of the young men and women of China that I wrote to the Y.W.C.A. of New Zealand asking if I could work for them in China. So I've been there more or less ever since."

We were sitting in the lounge of the Y.W.C.A. Miss A. M. Moncrieff is the General Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. in China, and has been recuperating in New Zealand after 15 years of strenuous work, the last few, at any rate, years of crisis and personal danger. But she does not give the impression of needing a rest. I have seldom met anyone who gave me so strong an impression of being in full control of her own destiny. Her impressive height and calm dignity reminded me strongly of the Winifred Holtby whom Vera Brittain knew and loved, and whom she depicted so clearly in *Testament of Friendship*.

"Usually," went on Miss Moncrieff, "one thinks of a student as being immersed in his work and in the happenings of a fairly circumscribed world. In China, the work of the students is a source of inspiration to the whole country. They throw themselves heart and soul into the struggle. Near the headquarters of the Communist Army in the North there's even a 'Resist Japan' University. In China to-day, all education is directed to this one end."

### The Generalissimo's Wife

"What part are the women of China playing in the struggle?" I asked.

"They are undertaking every possible kind of activity," said Miss Moncrieff. "With the coming of war, women's organisations were formed all over the country. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the wife of the Generalissimo—"

I interrupted, "What kind of a person is she, really?"

"I think she is perhaps the most intelligent woman I have met. She has such a grasp of practical detail and such organising ability combined with the gift of attracting people to her. Even if

she were not the wife of the Generalissimo, she would win by her own merits a prominent place in China to-day. She is indispensable to Chiang Kai-Shek, because her American education enables her to interpret the Western outlook to him, and her tact and good sense have so often been the means of maintaining that united front upon which China's success depends. You see, the Japanese invasion interrupted a ten years' civil war between Chiang Kai-Shek, the leader of the People's Party, and the Communists. The Japanese are naturally doing their best to foster this old enmity."

### Education for Unity

"I suppose the only way to prevent this disruption is to educate the people in the need for unity?"

"Yes, and that's one of the things the women of China are doing. There is a mass education movement, the aim of which is to educate the whole of China. At present, only 20 per cent of the people of China are literate. The services of every educated woman are in demand to teach in the air-raid shelters where large numbers of the people, like their fellow men in England, are forced to spend a fair proportion of their time.

"Women in China are performing work of which they would never have been thought capable," went on Miss Moncrieff. "Since the beginning of the war, there has been a vast trek westwards away from the Japanese-occupied areas. Women under the auspices of organisations such as the Y.W.C.A. have dealt with many of the problems which such wholesale migration entails—the establishment, staffing and general organisation of vast refugee camps, the care of war orphans (these include the children who are separated from their parents as well as those whose parents have been killed, so you can imagine the difficulties), and the evacuation of wounded soldiers from threatened towns. Since war began in 1937, tens of thousands of women have been trained in home nursing and first-aid."

### The Women's Army

"What about the Chinese Women's Army?" I asked.

"I haven't actually come in contact with the Women's Army," said Miss Moncrieff. "They are fighting mostly in the north with the Fourth Route Army, and my war years were spent in Hankow and then in the capital, Chungking. But I have heard that they are excellent fighters, particularly in guerilla warfare,



Brotham Studios, Melbourne

MISS A. M. MONCRIEFF

"China's liberation depends on her women"

which is a specialty of the Fourth Route Army.

"New factories are now being built in the west, and it is China's women who are staffing these factories. They have to start from scratch, too, as most of them have had no education, and the co-operative system on which most of the factories are run, demands considerable knowledge of things like handling accounts."

### All or Nothing

"From what you had said," I remarked, "I gathered that most of the women who were working for China to-day were all highly educated and overwhelmingly intelligent. That isn't so, is it?"

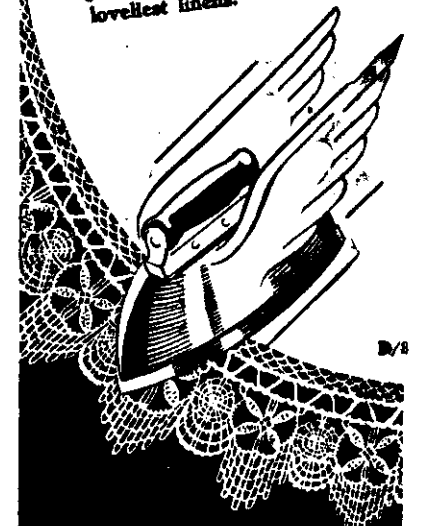
Miss Moncrieff laughed. "I'm afraid that the educated Chinese woman is in the minority. Fully 85 per cent of the women are illiterate. But this state of affairs is rapidly changing. In China you receive either a very good education or none at all. Nearly all the women I work with are college graduates, and Chinese universities rank with the world's best. Numbers of the students have majored in economics or sociology at the most exclusive American colleges. And when you realise that Chinese women have great practical ability as well as scholastic brilliance—plus an almost super-human capacity for hard work—well, you realise that I have to call up all my reserves of intelligence and energy so as not to show up in too unfavourable a light!"

Miss Moncrieff went on in a more serious vein: "It is these educated women

upon whom the future of China depends. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek is at the head of a large body of women known as the 'New Life Movement.' These women form an advisory committee to the central government. Within the movement, all shades of political opinion are represented." (Women in China, I thought, *do* have political opinions, which is more than can be said of many of us). "We have one object"—an added fervour crept into Miss Moncrieff's voice—"a personal approach to each of China's 230,000,000 women, so that we can interest and educate them in their country's advance. Through the women in China, China will receive her two-fold liberation—liberation from the domination of Japan and from the illiteracy of her masses."

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