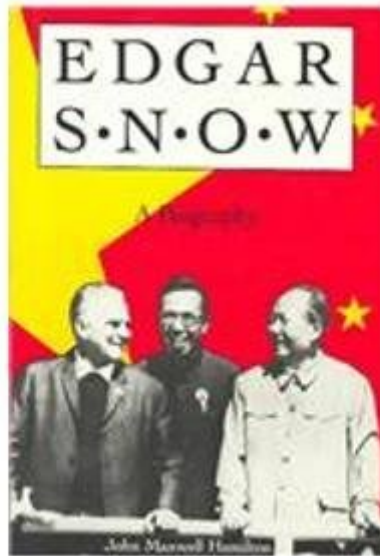
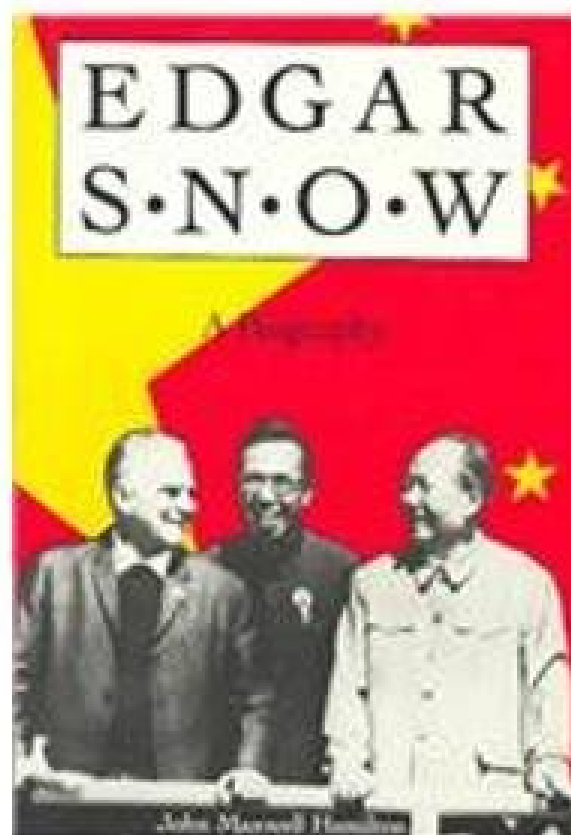


EDGAR SNOW: A BIOGRAPHY BY JOHN MAXWELL HAMILTON



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From Publishers Weekly

Snow's classic *Red Star Over China* was a journalistic coup. Based on interviews with Mao Zedong and his followers, who were in hiding, cut off from Western observers for a decade, his bestseller revealed that Chinese Communism was a cohesive popular movement, not a ragtag army of bandits. But Snow (1905-1972), the adventurous reporter from Kansas City, Miss., and stowaway to the Far East, told Americans things they did not want to hear. The Cold War public ignored his measured portrayal of a protectionist Soviet Union crippled by WW II and not bent on spreading communism. During the McCarthy witch-hunt period, this romantic idealist, who once called Mao an agrarian democrat, was blamed for misleading Americans. Even as Snow's political opinions matured, his message that China wanted closer ties with the U.S. went unheeded. Written by a journalist who worked in the U.S. Agency for International Development, this serviceable biography is as plainspoken as its down-to-earth subject. The early chapters on Snow's incredible adventures across Asia are the best.

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Review

"A better-than-fiction tale of the adventures of a remarkable American and a portrait of Asia in transition from the colonial period."

About the Author

John Maxwell Hamilton is author or coauthor of five books, most recently *Casanova Was a Book Lover: And Other Naked Truths and Provocative Curiosities about the Writing, Selling, and Reading of Books*. He is dean and Hopkins P. Breazeale Foundation Professor of Journalism at Louisiana State University and a longtime commentator on Public Radio International's Marketplace.

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"Hamilton's book illuminates the career of Edgar Snow... a fine job of relating Snow's remarkable story and his role in America's relations with China." -- J. William Fulbright

"Hamilton's well-informed biography scrutinizes both Ed Snow's career and the America that lionized him in World War II and ostracized him during the Cold War.... Hamilton's objective and scathing critique of America's anti-communist obsession makes one hope that publication of this book marks our entrance into a more constructive era in international relations." -- John K. Fairbank

"Snow's classic Red Star Over China was a journalistic coup.... But Snow... told Americans things they did not want to hear....[Edgar Snow: A Biography] is as plainspoken as its down-to-earth subject." -- Publishers Weekly

"... superb... [Hamilton's] writing style is a delight." -- Kansas City Star

"[A] vivid, discerning biography... Hamilton... has written the most comprehensive of the biographies of Snow. The result is a better-than-fiction tale of the adventures of a remarkable American and a portrait of Asia in transition from the colonial period.... tells us more about the realities and illusions of United States-China relations than most formal histories." -- New York Times Book Review

"... a remarkable and thorough job in bringing to life the adventures and writings of the independent Snow." -
- Editor and Publisher

"... superb new biography... " -- Los Angeles Times

"... thoughtful new biography of the first man to report on Mao Zedong and the Chinese revolution that would change much of the world." -- Jay Mathews, Washington Monthly

"Well written and researched, Hamilton's book should help provide Snow with a richly deserved exemplary place in history." -- Robert Stevens, Missouri Historical Review

A study of the most important western journalist to work in and on China in both the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods.

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- Published on: 1988-12-22
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- Number of items: 1
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- Binding: Hardcover
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4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

"Snow" of China

By John Richard Schrock

"Edgar Snow: A Biography" by John Maxwell Hamilton was published by Indiana University Press in 1988, 343 pages hardcover. Having long ago digested one of the 1.6 million copies of Snow's "*Red Star Over China*," a classic and required reading for anyone trying to understand the founding of modern China, I was long overdue for digging into the background of this journalist that China still considers perhaps the only honest Western reporter and whom they reverently call "Big Snow."

So many of the better "China hand" reporters came from the U.S. Midwest-Plains region. Hamilton summarizes: "Snow distinguished himself from many Americans in recognizing that the United States enjoyed exceptional advantages that did not apply abroad. He did not believe that other countries could copy the United States any more than they should emulate the Soviet Union. China and others had to find their own way. But the belief that truth did not lie on one side of the river, as Snow liked to say, did not stop him from believing in American superiority in another way. The extraordinary conditions that gave rise to the United States, he thought, should also produce a people more tolerant than others.... But could it [United States] learn to help others prosper and to apply its ideals in such a way that other countries would rally around them? Could Americans come to understand other countries' perspectives, to anticipate their actions, to work together with them? Or would Americans only see the world through the prism of their hopes and fears, and try clumsily to impose their will unilaterally?...."

"Miracles are not forecast for tomorrow," Snow said. "Each generation is doomed to learn for itself that the

new print cannot altogether obscure the underlying `old misunderstandings.'"

The need has never been greater for another Snow, another reporter with objective integrity to "tell it like it is" in China today. Snow died barely three days before Nixon's plane left Andrews Air Force Base for his historic first visit in Peking. Edgar Snow was a Missourian who was followed by the Kansas City Star, and whose final papers were archived at the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

Hamilton's biography is fair-handed and, unlike some biographies of him, is not politically biased. As China rises in economic prominence, the drumbeat of our anti-China press is ominous. We need more reporters in the mold of Snow.

John Richard Schrock

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Good enough to read but not a keeper

By Nyle C. Monday

Another thrashed ex-library copy, heavily stamped, marked, etc. Good enough to read but not a keeper. Disappointing.

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