

After the summer vacation in 1911, Mao Tse-tung arrived in Changsha, and shortly afterward, on the nineteenth day of the eighth month of the old Chinese lunar calendar, the big revolution broke out in Wuchang, the capital of Hupeh Province, and in the neighboring province of Hunan. The rebel leaders very quickly began recruiting students to form a fighting force, and, as soon as news of this appeared in the newspapers, many students from Hunan set out for Wuchang to join the army. Mao, who had already run into financial difficulties in the city, was one of these. However, soon after they arrived in Wuchang, fighting broke out in Hunan. Here the provincial government was quickly overthrown and the commander-in-chief of the army and the high officials sent by the Emperor were killed. A students' army was quickly recruited and I was selected as one of the commanding officers.(16) We were assigned to and placed under the order of a general, a well-known teacher of gymnastics who had taken an active part in the planning of the revolution. Mao Tse-tung and his comrades, who had been unsuccessful in their attempts to enlist in the Wuchang army, heard of the fighting in their own native province and quickly returned to Changsha.(17)

The revolution spread rapidly throughout the whole of China and very soon the Central Government was established in Nanking. Life in the colleges quickly returned to normal, and the student armies were dissolved. Mao Tse-tung had been unsuccessful in his attempts to enlist in either the Hupeh or the Hunan army, and now with the return to normal conditions, he was faced with acute financial difficulties. He lacked sufficient money to remain in the provincial capital where living was expensive, and he could not decide what to do.

One day as he was wandering aimlessly through the streets, lost in his thoughts, he came to the Tien Hsin Ko, the "building which reaches the heart of the sky." The Tien Hsin Ko, which is Changsha's skyscraper, stands on the great wall near the south gate of the city and is a seven-floor tower constructed in the form of a pagoda.

Because he had nothing better to do, Mao Tse-tung climbed up to the top floor in order to admire the splendid view below. He looked out toward the west and his attention was drawn to the Siang Kiang, the most important river of the province, which flows quite close to the city. A few miles beyond was Yao-lu, the "foot of the sacred mountains," which is itself a really high mountain. From this height, Mao was able to follow with his eye the mountain chain for several hundred miles, even as far as Nan-yao, "the holy mountain of the south," which is one of the five great sacred mountains of China. This chain is famous for its awe-inspiring, wonderful landscapes. At the foot of Yao-lu, Mao saw a large white house, the provincial college, previously a famous academy for advanced studies, and which, during the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1276), had had the great philosopher Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200) as principal. Mao gazed at the building for a long time, then turned his eyes to the city itself, which had the appearance of a huge bowl. The numerous roofs of houses below made him think of the scales of a fish and suddenly he realized how high he must be above them; how high he was above all the rest of humanity.

From this reverie and from his fantasies engendered by the view from the west window, he was awakened by the sound of steps behind him. Turning his head, he was happily surprised to see his three comrades, Tan Wu-pien, Liu Hong, and Pung Shih-liang, students whom he had met on his way back from Wuchang to Changsha. Liu Hong, who was quite rich, had promised to lend Mao some money. Mao greeted them enthusiastically, and Liu invited all of them to the tea-room on the floor below. They sat together around the little table while a waiter brought them four cups of the best tea and two large plates of peanuts and watermelon seeds. The four friends chatted happily as they ate.

Tan Wu-pien was a great talker who would carry on all day and all night almost without interruption. Sometimes he became so excited that the saliva ran down from the corners of his mouth without his even realizing it. His surname Tan means Talker and Wu-pien means "he who understands the changes and vicissitudes"; but his friends like to mispronounce this name just a bit so as to make it mean "limitless." Thus he became the limitless talker. Tan was almost as large as Mao, with a big head, broad shoulders, and the beginnings

of a hunchback. His very flat nose almost disappeared between big eyes and mouth when he was talking. Because of this peculiarity his schoolmates called him Wu-pi, which means "no nose" and phonetically sounds very similar to his real name.

Liu Hong, who was very tall and slenderly built, was nicknamed "the bamboo." He had a very amiable disposition and took great pleasure in inviting friends to have meals with him. His friends called these invitations "eating in the bamboo."

Pung Shih-liang, who was undersized, only about half as tall as Mao, was very lively and spirited, and his nickname was "Monkey Pung."

On this particular day they drank "in the bamboos" and almost as soon as they were seated, Tan Wu-pien began to talk. "Now," he said, "our country has become a republic. We no longer have an emperor. We are all equal. The land is ours. We are the masters, and the officials are servants of the state. Even the President of the Republic is just a servant! We could all be President. You and I, we could become President. Let me repeat that, we could be. . . ."

"I would like to be President first!" interrupted Monkey Pung.

"Monkey Pung," reprimanded Tan Wu-pien, "you think I'm just joking; but I assure you, I'm speaking quite seriously."

"No," answered Monkey Pung, "I didn't think you were joking. I know you are speaking seriously. So am I. I seriously want to be President of the Republic first. Can't I be President before you? I promise you solemnly, here in the Tien Hsin Ko, with Liu Hong and Mao Tse-tung as my witnesses, that you will be my Prime Minister when I am President of the Republic!"

Mao Tse-tung, who had been listening to Tan Wu-pien with great interest told Pung, "Let him talk. What he says is all quite true and I am very interested. Let him talk."

Tan was the son of a mandarin and he knew much more about politics, government, and history than his friends did. Mao was completely fascinated. He loved to watch the movements of the wide mouth as Tan talked, and he was absorbed in the subject. Now he asked, "Tell me, exactly what would one have to do to get elected President of the Republic? Would he have to study a lot? Should he learn all about foreign countries after he finishes his studies at the

University? Just what should one do?"

"No," replied Tan, "it is not necessary to study to get into power. Did the rulers of the Ch'in dynasty study, for instance Emperor Shih Huang (246-210 B.C.) or the Empress Han Wu (140-88 B.C.)? Wasn't Genghis Khan (1277-1294) a common soldier? All of us really know a lot more right now than any of them did. To become President you don't have to be a scholar. Politics is a different matter altogether!"

"Well, what does one do then to get political power?" asked Mao.

"Politicians must fight," replied Tan. "A politician must attack fearlessly anyone who attacks or opposes him. Other men also want to become President and he must overcome them. He must fight all who stand in his way and he must win at whatever cost. Sometimes it may be necessary to kill and to become a merciless assassin!"

"But in politics, how does one attack one's adversaries?" asked Mao.

"That is a very important question, Mao," answered Tan. "You can't attack them with your two bare hands. It is necessary for you to have many loyal partisans who march to victory with you and who are willing to work for you. You have to gather these partisans together. In a word, you have to organize a political party!"

Mao Tse-tung took in all this information greedily and very frankly expressed his admiration for Tan's great wisdom.

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Back to School

During the first year of the Republic, 1912, the city of Changsha founded a Fourth Normal School, with Mr. Chen Jun-lin as Director. Mr. Chen was a well-known educator, who also operated a private school, the Ch'u Yi. We became fast friends and about three years later he invited me to accept a position as senior master in the Ch'u Yi private school.

When Mao Tse-tung entered the Fourth Normal, his first teacher was Chen Jun-lin. Among the many deans in this college was one