

were conquered by the Ch'in Dynasty? That event should more correctly be designated as a failure on the part of the Six Countries than a victory for the Ch'in. The same thing may happen again. If the Communists are successful in China, it will be because their opponents make the same mistakes as did the Six Countries."

Later events proved this to be the case. At the time of this conversation, the Communists did not anticipate that they could ever dominate the whole of China.

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Our All-night Talk on the Miao Kao Feng

The daily routine for students of the First Normal was very rigid and their activities were strictly scheduled to the last minute: the times for entering classrooms, the reading rooms, dining room, and the dormitory were all fixed and were indicated by sharp blasts on a trumpet, in imitation of the army bugle. When the trumpet sounded, the thousand or more students all gathered together like so many ducks and they were directed by ten disciplinary officers. Mao and I strongly objected to what we considered unnecessary insistence upon discipline, and we often failed to obey the trumpet blasts. For a time the disciplinary officers reprimanded us, but finally the Principal conceded that since we were good students, and since our conduct records were good, our failure should be ignored.

Our main reason for completely ignoring the trumpet blasts was our desire to carry on uninterruptedly with our conversations. We felt that these talks were very important and of great significance and that there should be no break in their continuity.

As stated above, we always got together after supper and had long discussions while we walked along the river bank. In the summer time, after the rest of the students went to the big study or to the reading room, we often went out and sat on the grass up on the Miao Kao Feng. The Miao Kao Feng was a small hill about two or three hundred meters in height situated just behind the school, and only

a few minutes' walk from the gymnasium. From this hill we looked down on the tall school building below us and on across to the peak of Mount Yao-lu. Often we went to the top of this hill at night and watched the little lights of the ten thousand homes of Changsha shining below us away beyond the school, as we sat and talked under the moon and stars.

I remember very well one particular occasion which was quite memorable. We had walked as usual up to the top of Miao Kao after supper and had found a comfortable seat on the grass. We were deep in conversation an hour or so later when we heard the trumpet. "They must be going into the Common Room now," we said. Later, the trumpet sounded again. "Now they will be going to the dormitory."



Half an hour later, a final blast of the trumpet: "They'll be putting out the lights now!" And still we sat there talking. Soon the whole school was enveloped in darkness and we knew that we were the only two students not in bed. Later we learned that our absence was noted, but at that time, we were too deeply engrossed in our talk even to think of any consequences of our being out after lights.

This was the period when Yüan Shih-k'ai was President of the Republic and as usual we were discussing the events that were reported each day in the newspapers and trying to forecast China's future. I remember our discussion this night quite clearly. "Just think how Yüan Shih-k'ai could influence the future of China!" I exclaimed. "But he's nothing short of a criminal. And those army chiefs are simply his puppets!"

"Apart from Yüan Shih-k'ai there seems to be no one capable of carrying out the reforms that China needs," Mao pointed out. "K'ang Yu-wei has some good ideas but he's out of date; and as for Sun Yat-sen, he's the real leader of the revolution, but he doesn't have any military power."

"Some brand new influence is needed to reform China!" I said.

"Of course, a new force is required," agreed Mao.

"To reform the country, each individual citizen must be reformed and each one must cultivate his own character," I pointed out.

"It's a matter of many people getting together to work out one predetermined fixed idea," Mao stated. "We two could do almost anything!"

"No, we two are not enough," I replied. "There must be many people, all of whom have the same ideas that we have. We two must organize them. They will be our comrades."

"Let's study our schoolmates first. There are more or less a thousand of them here. We'll see how many we can find to join us."

"We must choose only the best and most intelligent," I pointed out, "only those who have very high ideals."

"We know those who are most intelligent, that's easy," Mao said, "and we are acquainted with their conduct. But it's not so easy to know their ideals."

"You and I will have to talk with them and discuss the problem in a general sort of way and then we must select those whom we con-

sider to be the very best. After that, we can talk with each one individually," I suggested. "For instance, there's Ts'ai Ho-shen in the Higher Normal School. We both know quite well that he shares our ideas. Then again, there's Hsiung Kuang-ch'u and Ch'en Chang and Ch'en Shao-hsiu I'm sure we could count on all of them as our first comrades. In the lower classes, you know the students better than I do and you can select them."

Mao agreed, saying, "Yes, I have one or two fellows in mind now that I can try to talk to."

We were being carried along by our plans, and I continued, "From the thousand students in the school, we should select only ten to start with. We have plenty of choice and the selection must be made very carefully. It will be too bad if we can't find ten among the thousand. We can form an association with this nucleus of ten and when they are well organized, we can start recruiting more members."

Mao suggested, "The association must have a good name. And rules! Why don't you start writing down some rules?"

"Since it is to be an association for the purpose of study, we might call it the *Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui*, The New People's Study Association."

As the night wore on, we continued. "I think the Association should have three aims," I remarked. "First, to encourage good moral conduct among its members; second, to interchange knowledge and third, to form strong bonds of friendship."

"I think you should write the details out in the form of a draft and then we can study them again more carefully," Mao suggested.

We discussed in detail how we should go about increasing our membership in the Association and finally, we decided that there were no more suitable candidates within the school and that we should have to look outside. This would not be easy and we discussed the various possibilities for a long time.

In the end, we decided to write down a summary of our aims, including that of saving our country, and our reasons for forming the Association. We decided that this should be written in very clear and concise form and then sent to the students' associations in other schools for their consideration. Those who agreed with the principles and aims were to write to us and we would go to see them and talk the

matter over with them before they were taken into membership.

Mao was to write a letter which we would have printed and sent to all the schools in Changsha. The letter was short and very simple, the general idea being, "Today our country is in a very critical condition. None of the members of the central government can be depended upon. We want to form an association of all those with views similar to our own. The principal aims of the association will be self-improvement and reform of the country. All those who are interested in this idea are requested to write to us and we shall discuss it personally and make further plans." This was rather an audacious open letter and we were afraid people would just laugh at us. Because we did not think it advisable to sign our own names, we chose a pseudonym, *erh shih pa pi*, the "twenty-eight strokes," in honor of Mao, whose full name is written with twenty-eight strokes. Perhaps this was an omen, since this term *erh shih pa pi* later came to be widely used as a synonym for Chinese Communism, the first ideogram of which is composed by coincidence of the form signifying twenty-eight.

While Mao wrote the first draft of the letter, I jotted down a set of rules for our *Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui*. When we had finished, we exchanged our work, read over what the other had written, and made a few corrections and suggestions. By this time it was dawn and suddenly we heard below us the loud trumpet blast. It was morning. That was the signal to get up; so we set off down the hill toward the school. We had spent the whole night working on the first steps of our project to reform China.

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The Hsin Min Study Association, Embryo of Chinese Communism

The Hsin Min Study Association was organized by Mao Tse-tung and me in 1914. In the beginning, it was merely a society of carefully selected students of good moral character who had ideas and ideals similar to ours. The aims would be stated simply as the betterment or