

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.

## 15

### *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

improvement of each individual, strengthening his moral and spiritual fiber and improving his education, as well as bringing about needed reforms in the country, but without expressing any political opinions nor affiliating with any party. Later, however, Mao Tse-tung and other members of the Association developed political ambitions and they accepted the Communist doctrine. At the present time, a great many of the top rulers in Peking are former members of the old Hsin Min Study Association; while the others, the more scholarly, idealistic element, have remained loyal to the Liberals. Our Study Association must be regarded, therefore, as the embryo of Chinese Communism since, when the Communist doctrine began to awaken active interest, the nucleus of the movement was already in existence in our group. I have called it the embryo of Chinese Communism since I think this is the most appropriate term; although some years later other separate terms appeared, the Hsin Min remained the principal nucleus.(23)

I well remember the spring day when I finished composing the Association's rules. They were only seven clauses and all were very simple. Mao read them over without making any comment and then we rechecked the individual merits of the colleagues we had nominated to be charter members. We agreed that they were all satisfactory. There were nine of them; so all told, our Association consisted of just eleven charter members; but in the ardor of our youth, we considered ourselves eleven "sages," guardians of the wisdom of the ages! We also considered ourselves brothers, who had the same ambitions and ideals, and who felt great respect for one another.

One Sunday morning, in one of the classrooms of the First Normal School, the eleven of us met together very solemnly for the first official meeting. I distributed the printed copies of the rules of the Hsin Min Study Association and asked for suggestions, questions, or comments. There were none. Each one paid the small membership fee and I was elected as their first secretary. We decided not to have a president; so the meeting was closed. Such was the genesis of our New People's Study Association. Although no speeches were made, a closer bond had sprung up among us, and our ambitious ideas and enthusiasm for the movement took on new impetus. All of us felt that from now on, we were carrying the weight of an additional responsibility on our shoulders.

Mao Tse-tung had said nothing at the meeting. We all knew the purposes and what the members were expected to do and we believed that each one should act in a practical manner without any show of empty talk. The Association had only one member who liked to talk just for the sake of talking and this was Ch'en Chang, who was famous for making long speeches. Our schoolmate, Ch'en, who came from the Liuyang District, had struck up an acquaintance with me and we had become close friends. Even he, however, made no speech on Organization Day. He later became one of the early Communist organizers and was shot in 1928 by the Nationalist Government.

After the formation of the Association, meetings were held about once a month. They were not secret gatherings but we tried to make as little show as possible, since, as the membership was strictly limited, it was difficult to avoid having some students feel jealous or slighted because they had not been invited to join. The biggest problem we had to tackle at this time was how to recruit new members of the type we desired. When a potential name was submitted, it was put to a vote and if anyone raised an objection, the proposed member was rejected. To obtain admission to the Association, the membership had to be one hundred per cent in his favor.

Professor Yang Huai-chung, who knew of the Association and of our strict method of selecting members, told me Hsiung Kuang-ch'u and Ch'en Chang had reported that, in the city of Changsha, there were three girl students, Tao Szu-yung, Hsiang Ching-yu, and Jen Pei-tao, who seemed to possess all the attributes required by us, as well as being first-class students. Later I proposed their names at a meeting and they were unanimously voted into membership.

Tao Szu-yung came from the Siangtan District and was one of the kindest, gentlest persons I have ever known. She joined the Hsin Min Study Association in 1914, and about six years later, she and Mao Tse-tung opened a bookstore in Changsha to which they gave the name *Wen Hua Shu Chu* (Library of Culture). They were deeply in love, but because they held different political ideas, she finally left him and founded a school, the Li Ta Hsüeh Yüan, in Shanghai. She died in that city in about 1930. She was one of the first women members of our Association, also one of the first members to reject Communism.

Hsiang Ching-yu was another attractive, intelligent girl. Her literary work and calligraphy were excellent and she possessed a natural gift for speaking. Her fair complexion needed no cosmetics to enhance its natural charm, and she treated her friends with warm affection as brothers and sisters. In 1919, she went to France under the "student-worker" plan and there she fell in love with Ts'ai Ho-shen. She was one of the first women members to accept Communism. As mentioned earlier, she was shot by the Nationalist Army in Hankow, despite my efforts to save her life through an appeal to the French Legation. Her being a Communist did not lessen my esteem for her, and I was deeply moved by her tragic end.

Jen Pei-tao, the third girl, was an unusually fine person, who came from Siangying District. These three girls were just like sisters. Miss Jen, like Miss Tao, rejected Communism in due course. After graduating from the Higher Normal School, Miss Jen went to the United States for further study in an American university. When she returned to China, she worked in many schools both as teacher and director, and today she is not only a member of the legislative body in the government in Formosa, but she holds a professorship there also.

After these three girls had become members of the Hsin Min Study Association, I suggested that Miss Ts'ai Ch'ang, sister of Ts'ai Ho-shen, should also be invited to join us. The others, including her brother, thought she was too young, since she was just fifteen or sixteen, and since she was only in the first year of the Middle School. A few years later, she went to France as a student-worker and then she did become a member. At the present time, she is a leader of one of the Communist women's organizations. We all greatly admired Ts'ai Ch'ang's firm character and her honesty and, as we had great respect and affection for her mother and brother, we called her our "little sister." We treated her, in fact, as if she were our own little sister.

Though I have lost more than a thousand photographs of my original collection, I do still have one group picture which included Hsiang Ching-yu and Ts'ai Ch'ang snapped together at this time.

At the time of the formal organization of the Chinese Communist Party in 1920, the membership of the Hsin Min Study Association numbered more than a hundred. In 1919 and 1920, Ts'ai Ho-shen and I enlisted some thirty new members in France and Mao Tse-tung re-

turned to Changsha where he recruited nearly a hundred new members. His main interest was in creating a strong organization, and as a result, he paid little attention to the qualifications of moral conduct and high ideals on which I had insisted when the movement was in its infancy. He campaigned quite openly and actively and accepted anyone who had ideas similar to his own. He was impatient to put theories into action and started to publish correspondence of the Association in the form of a newspaper. Many of my letters were chosen for this purpose, including one in which I stated that I did not believe that Russian Communism was an adequate means of reforming China. Up to that time, the Hsin Min Study Association had been one united body with all the members completely free to express their own political ideas.(24)

In 1920, the split began to appear. Those favoring Communism, led by Mao Tse-tung, formed a separate secret organization. I was probably the only non-Communist who was aware of what was happening, since Mao told me all about his new organization, hoping that I would join them. At the same time, he was confident that I would do nothing to betray them, even though I was not in sympathy with them.

The new group regarded me very much as a big brother and since they listened very seriously to everything I said, Mao was afraid that I might dissuade some of his new converts to Communism from their convictions. He did not, however, dare to remonstrate with me openly for fear of losing the confidence of the members. He did tell them, when I was absent, that although I was a person greatly to be respected and a good friend of his, that I had bourgeois ideas, that I was not one of the proletariat, and for this reason, that I was unwilling to accept Communism.

A rather amusing but significant incident occurred one day which will illustrate our difference. Ho Shu-heng, whom we called Hu-tzu (The Moustache) because of his thick dark moustache, was about ten years older than Mao and I. Though he was a friend to both of us, he was somewhat more intimate with me because he had been a fellow teacher of mine in the Ch'u Yi School for a couple of years. On this particular day, he told me, "Jun-chih (Mao's other name) is secretly criticizing you among the members, saying that you are bourgeois and

that you don't agree with Communism. What he really means is that he doesn't want them to have any confidence in you, but to follow him alone."

I told Mao what Ho Hu-tzu had said and he confirmed it without hesitation. I asked, "Why do you say I am bourgeois? If I have ever said I did not agree with Communism, you know that it is the Russian Communism that I am opposed to. I am, as you know, very much in favor of the principles of Communism and I believe that Socialism should gradually be converted into Communism."

Mao Tse-tung said nothing for the moment and Ho Hu-tzu laughed loudly, "Siao Hu-tzu" (here the term "moustache" was respectful and intimate), he cried, "When you are not here, Jun-chih (Mao) wants me to go one way, and when Jun-chih is not here, you try to persuade me to go another way; when neither of you is here, I don't know which way to go; and now that you are both here with me, I still don't know which way to go!" This caused a great laugh but it was quite true.

Ho Hu-tzu, although he spoke in jest and only for himself, had, nevertheless, been acting unconsciously as spokesman for practically all the members of the Hsin Min Study Association, since there was a noticeable element of indecision at that time. However, Ho had been the only one who spoke out frankly and sincerely to call attention openly to the division of opinion between the two leaders and the consequent split in the group.

# 16

## *A Summer Vacation in School*

Summer vacation was about to begin. A notice appeared on the bulletin board to the effect that all classes had completed their examinations; that we were to have two and a half months' holiday; and that all the students were expected to leave the school within three days.

Everyone commenced to pack, smiling happily in anticipation of soon being at home for vacation. Books were taken from study halls