# 34

## *How the Movement for Study Abroad Developed*

I taught in the Ch'u Yi for more than two years. During this time, Mao Tse-tung came frequently to see me—often several times a week. All my students got to know him as a close friend of mine, and, since they respected me, they also treated him with respect.

It is impossible to tell here all the various subjects we discussed during this time, but one day the following important conversation took place. Mao Tse-tung was again interrogating me about a teacher's life, when he said, "You seem very enthusiastic about your teaching. Will you be able to stay here long?"

I told him I really did not want to teach much longer. He was visibly surprised and asked, "Isn't your work here in Ch'u Yi less tiring than it was in the Hsiu Yeh School?"

"Well," I said, "I do repetition for the students after classes, and often I have them with me up to ten o'clock in the evening. And apart from the classes, I have to grade their essays, calligraphy, and notebooks. I figure that I work at least twelve hours a day; but I enjoy the work and I don't usually feel at all tired. I don't want to continue with teaching, however, because I have other plans."

"What other plans do you have? I just took for granted that you would continue teaching."

"No," I explained, "I'm thinking of going abroad to study."

"Oh yes?" asked Mao. "To what country, may I ask, are you thinking of going?"

"I don't know yet. To France, America, England, or Japan. I don't know which."

"How are you going to get the money to go abroad?" asked Mao, incredulously.

"The money? I shouldn't have to worry about getting the money. That's a problem for the Hsin Min Study Association. You know, all of us should go abroad to study!" I said.

"Yes, that's very true," agreed Mao, "but we have to work out some practical plan to make it possible."

"The first step should be for us to call a meeting of a dozen or so members to discuss ways and means."

"Very well," said Mao, "you're the secretary. You send out the notices. We'll have a meeting and see what can be done."

Mao Tse-tung and I continued to discuss the problem of how the members of the Hsin Min Study Association could go abroad for study. The first and most difficult problem was how we could raise the necessary funds.

"If we wait until we have enough money to go abroad," I contended, "we shall never get there. First, we must resolve that we are going abroad, and then we can start to talk about the money problem."

Mao Tse-tung insisted that we should call together all the members of the Association to talk it over together. I countered by suggesting that it would be advisable first to talk the question over personally with each member who would be asked to attend the meeting, in order to work up their enthusiasm. Finally Mao agreed to this; so I had a talk with Hsiung Kuang-ch'u and Ch'en Chang.

These two both felt that the plan was good in principle, but Ch'en Chang was an only child and he had no one to look after his family if he went away. He was sorry, but he himself would never be able to go abroad. Hsiung Kuang-ch'u and I advised him to sell his land and to take his wife and child with him, but he said he would not have sufficient money to pay the expenses of all of them. He did not see how it would be possible for him to go abroad! Hsiung Kuang-ch'u, who was one of the oldest members of the Association, was very keen on study, and he would be delighted to go abroad. He said he could get his brother to take care of his wife and son.

Next, I had quite a long talk with Ts'ai Ho-shen, who was also delighted with the scheme. He said it was an ideal which must be put into practice soon. He was all for it and enthusiastically inquired, "What country do you prefer?"

I replied, "My first choice would be France and then America, but I don't think I would care so much for England or Japan."

He said he would like to go to France also, but then he asked, "Where can we get the money?"

"I have heard that there is an organization called the Franco-Chinese Educational Association," I replied, "whose president is the

Rector of Peking University, Mr. Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei. I'm planning to have a talk with him to find out more about it."

"Good!" said Ts'ai, "You and I will work together on this scheme. France is at war now and there are more than a hundred thousand Chinese laborers working there. Many of them have left their wives and children here at home. We could write letters for them. We could also teach the children that are in France. I think we could live that way. If we can just earn our living, we can study."

"Apart from teaching the children," I said, "we ought to get the Chinese laborers together and encourage them to learn French, to study a trade, and to get some knowledge of French social and political organizations. Then when they return to China, they can form the nucleus of a reform movement among the lower classes. We should be able to find many colleagues among these workers for our task of reforming China."

Ts'ai thought this was all very interesting and that we should proceed with our plan to get to France without loss of time. I told him that I was about to send out notices to members of the Hsin Min Study Association to call a meeting for the next Sunday afternoon, for the express purpose of discussing how we were to go about it. I asked him to be sure to come and bring his suggestions.

When the meeting was opened, I told those present, "The purpose of this meeting today is to discuss ways and means of giving members an opportunity to study abroad. We would like all the members of the Association to be able to go abroad, and we would like to know, first of all, what country each individual member would prefer. We will then discuss how the plan can be realized. From now on 'Study Abroad' must be our watch-word. It is our call to arms! We must help every member to go abroad to study!" At this meeting I also added that I had heard said that there was a Mr. C. K. Chang* (Chang Ching-kiang) who had a tea business in Paris and later a very large business in rare Chinese antiques. After having made a

* Mr. C. K. Chang (1877–1950), one of the founders of the Chinese Republic, was a great economist. After having contributed enormously to Dr. Sun Yat-sen and President Chiang Kai-shek, he retired to New York where he died. Ten years after this meeting at which I spoke of him he became one of my great friends. I have much respect and admiration for him.

fortune, he gave freely to Dr. Sun Yat-sen to aid him in the Revolution. "I like this man very much," I told them, "and when I see him, I shall urge him to aid education, to give to the best but poor students as a more fundamental reform of China."

Mao Tse-tung then spoke, "First we must decide on the country, and then on how to get there. We must have everything well organized. I think it is best if our colleagues study abroad in different countries. The chief ones should be America, England, France and Japan."

Ts'ai Ho-shen added, "Mr. Siao and I have decided to go to France. Let us ask Mr. Siao to tell us the details of his plan to go to France."

To which Hsiung Kuang-ch'u said, "I think Mr. Siao's scheme for studying in France is very good. It seems quite practical and many students can go. I have decided to go to France also."

"Several of the members are not aware of all the details of Mr. Siao's plan," Mao Tse-tung interrupted. "I suggest that we ask him to explain."

I told them about the Franco-Chinese Educational Association and about the Chinese laborers, who were working in France during the war. Everybody thought the plan, as I outlined it, was sound and practicable, and, if it proved to be so, they were willing to go to France. Only one member, Chou Ming-ti, said he preferred to go to Japan. Ch'en Chang again said that he had no one to look after his wife and son, so he could not go. However, he said he would stay in Changsha and would help us from there in whatever way he could.

After further discussion, I said, "Professor Yang Huai-chung has gone to Peking where he has accepted a post in the Peking National University. I shall write to him, telling of our desire to study in France and ask him to find out about the Franco-Chinese Education Association from the Rector, Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei. As soon as I receive his answer, I shall call another meeting."