

The meeting of our Association which took place in June, 1918, just before the summer vacation, marked the practical beginning of the student-workers' movement in France. During the first year alone there were more than two thousand student-workers who took advantage of this scheme, and among them were about twenty of the chief actors in the Peking scene today, such as Li Wei-han, Li Fu-ch'un, Li Li-san, Chou En-lai, Ch'en Yi, Yao Su-shih, Hsu T'e-li, and Ts'ai Ch'ang.

About a week after the meeting, I received "Confucius" Yang Huai-chung's reply to my letter. It was a postcard addressed to me personally. He was very fond of writing postcards. The text was brief and to the point. He said, "Yesterday I received your letter and today I went to see Rector Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei. He said he was President of the Franco-Chinese Educational Association and that there were student-workers in France now grouped together in an association. Your plan to go to France on a work-study basis can be realized. . . ." (26)

I was naturally very happy to get this news and immediately went off to see Mao Tse-tung. He, too, was delighted, and he laughed and smiled for a long time with pleasure after reading the card. Next I went to see Ts'ai Ho-shen across the river.

I gave him the card to read and he exclaimed, "You see, your plan is successful! The student-workers' organization is the solution! Mother (his mother and sister sat there beside us), do you and Sister want to go to France with us? There are now no unsurmountable difficulties! This is excellent news!"

Miss Hsiang Ching-yu, his sweetheart, was there also when I arrived, and now a happy smile disclosed her beautiful, even, white teeth, as she said quietly, "Mr. Siao, I have also decided to go to France." I told them not to be late for the meeting which we would hold next day in the First Normal School at three o'clock.

At the meeting, everyone read Mr. Yang's postcard. It could not

have aroused more enthusiasm if it had been a winning lottery ticket! All of them were concentrating their every thought on the idea of going to France, thinking that very soon we should all be together in Paris! I said, "First, we must go to Peking to see Mr. Yang and Rector Ts'ai. I have to return home next week, but when I get back to Changsha, I shall be able to leave almost immediately for Peking. Who wants to go with me? Who needs train fare?" I asked, because I knew that I was the only one teaching and the only member with a fixed income. I knew that Ts'ai Ho-shen and Mao Tse-tung, who would want to go, had no means of paying train fare to Peking.

Before he left to teach in Peking, Mr. Yang Huai-chung had unconsciously influenced us in many ways into conceiving this plan to study abroad, not only by his remarks, but also by his own trip overseas. He had taught in Changsha for six years and the post he had accepted in Peking represented quite a considerable advancement. We attributed his success to his studies abroad, and this was one big reason for our desire to emulate him. Not only that, but it was largely as a result of his assistance that we were finally able to put the plan into practice. We did indeed have every reason to be grateful to him.

That summer, the end of July or the first of August, ten of us went to Peking.(27) Mr. Yang kindly allowed Mao Tse-tung, Hsiung Kuang-ch'u, Ch'ang K'ung-ti and me, who arrived first, to live for a time in his house outside the back gate in Tou Fu Ch'ih Hutung. Afterwards we rented a two-room house in Three Eyes Well Street quite near the University.

One room in this house we used as a study and the other as a bedroom. The bed was a k'ang, a Manchurian-type stove bed, made of bricks and heated by a fire underneath. In the icy winter weather, seven of us slept on this big bed, huddled together to keep warm, because we had no fire underneath. We had a very small stove in the room on which we cooked our meals. We did everything cooperatively. In winter, the Peking climate is extremely cold, but the seven of us had only one coat among us; so we took turns going out during the spells of particularly low temperature. By the end of the year, the one coat had increased to three, but Mao Tse-tung never did manage to buy a coat for himself.(28)

Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, the Rector of Peking National University, held

the highest educational degree obtainable, the *Han Ning*, conferred by the Emperor. He had also studied philosophy in Germany. Later, he took part in the revolution and with the establishment of the Republic, he became the first Minister of Education. Later, he again took a trip abroad, this time to France, for educational research, and on his return, he was nominated Rector of the National University in Peking. He was the recognized leader in educational circles at that time and he was both wise and erudite. During our visit we were struck especially by his modesty. He was truly a great scholar and sage, and he made a very deep and lasting impression on me.

At two o'clock on the day following our visit, I went to call on Mr. Li Yü-ying, with a letter of introduction furnished by Rector Ts'ai. Mr. Li lived in the Sui An Po Hutung. He was not at home, but the doorkeeper said he would return by five. I called again at five o'clock, but he had not returned; so the servant asked me to wait. Soon Mr. Li arrived. He was around forty years of age and had a moustache. I asked him many questions about our plan to study in France. He told me that some time previously they had encouraged students to save money to go to France and, since the expenses were naturally much greater than for Japan, to learn to live as cheaply as possible. More than a hundred had gone and they had achieved very satisfactory results.

"More recently," he continued, "Rector Ts'ai, Mr. Wu Che-fei and I organized a student-worker group to go to France to study. We have all the details written out, but there are very few members and the student-worker system has to be developed and put into practice. You people from Hunan are noted for your perseverance and your endurance; so I think you might be able to make a success of the scheme. I advise you to start learning French right away. Also, learn some trade or handicraft—drawing, for example, or a general idea of foundry work. The war will soon be over and then you will be able to go. You should get yourselves well organized and I'm sure your project will be a success."

As soon as I returned to our rooms, I told my companions all that Mr. Li had said and they were delighted with the optimistic opinion he had expressed. When they asked what sort of impression he had made upon me, I said he seemed to be a shrewd type of person, who

thought things over very carefully before expressing an opinion. He was quite different from Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, since the Rector was a typical Chinese gentleman, while Li Yü-ying gave one the impression of being a Chinese who had studied a long time in foreign countries. Again, Rector Ts'ai looked like a professor, but Mr. Li looked like a revolutionist. He promoted liberal thought and internationalism and I agreed with his principles.

Ts'ai Ho-shen, Hsiung Kuang-ch'u and I set about organizing classes for students to study French and to learn a trade. All the members for the Hsin Min Study Association were expected to attend.

One day, discussing our plans with Ts'ai Ho-shen, I remarked, "The World War will soon be over and France will be victorious. Then there will be an enormous amount of reconstruction work to be done and there is certain to be a shortage of workers in France. Not only the members of our Study Association, but many others, could go on a half-day work, half-day study basis. This movement could spread and I think many young people should be encouraged to go. Why, just think how many students there are who are anxious to go abroad, but cannot for lack of funds. This way they could all go! A thousand—ten thousand—of them can go! And China will reap the benefit of the knowledge they will bring back!"

My enthusiasm was contagious and Ho-shen said, "Yes, I agree with you entirely. From now on we will do all we can to spread our movement so that more people can go to France!"

Before we started, however, there were still two important problems to solve. First, the cost of the voyage from China to France must be greatly reduced, and, second, after our arrival in France, there would be a preliminary period in practically all cases during which the students would need money to pay for board and lodging until remunerative work was found. The Franco-Chinese Educational Association would have to help at the start. I talked these two problems over with Rector Ts'ai and Mr. Li at great length several different times, and eventually we worked out a satisfactory solution. The French steamship company agreed to grant us special rates: we would be referred to as fourth class passengers and we would pay only one hundred *yuan* (Chinese dollars) as compared with the normal third-

class rate of more than three hundred *yuan*. On arrival in France, the Franco-Chinese Educational Association would look after us until we became acclimatized. They would arrange for students to attend schools in the provinces to learn French and they would help them to find suitable jobs. Their expenses and the fees for attendance at the schools would be paid by the Association.

Once we had this assurance, we set to work on intensive propaganda to arouse wider interest in the scheme. But a great deal of our time was still taken up with the details of organization. In the beginning, only forty students were taking preparatory French classes in Peking, but soon a second and then a third class had to be started, until eventually there were over four hundred pupils.

In November the World War ended and all of us thought that we would very soon be sailing to France! I was engaged by the Franco-Chinese Educational Association as a secretary, and in 1919, I went with Mr. Li to Shanghai and from there, we left for Paris. At that time Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei was Chinese co-President of the Association and Mr. Li was Head Secretary. They asked me to help them not only with the affairs of the student-workers, but also with the education of the Chinese laborers who had been working in France during the war. Of these, there were more than one hundred thousand.

In China the Association was not very well organized. The students who were going to France were grouped by provinces, so that the groups varied in size. For example, one group would have fifty persons, while another would number one hundred and twenty. The students were given no preparatory training in China, nor did they have enough money to sustain them after reaching their destination. The Association, therefore, had a very busy and difficult time trying to look after all of the students. Many of the things we did at first proved to be most unsatisfactory, but that was inevitable.

The student-worker plan had got so well under way that within a year more than two thousand students had arrived in France. My Province of Hunan was best represented with more than five hundred, then came Canton and Szechwan, each with about three hundred, and Chekiang and Kiangsu with more than two hundred each. Other provinces were represented, but in lesser numbers. All these people were distributed to schools in various parts of France

and factory work was found for many of them.

A big percentage of these young people whose studies were organized by our office later assumed posts of considerable importance back in China, such as ministers, ambassadors, regional governors, professors, artists, heads of industry, and a good many now hold high positions under the Communists as political leaders, army generals, and the like. Of the early members of our Hsin Min Study Association, Ts'ai Ho-shen, his mother, his sister, Ts'ai Ch'ang, and his sweetheart, Hsiang Ching-yu, were sent to Montargis Middle School, which developed into a center of Communist propaganda for Chinese students.

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Mao Tse-tung Remains Behind

While Ts'ai Ho-shen, Hsiung Kuang-ch'ü, and others worked with me to organize the student-workers' preparatory classes, Mao Tse-tung was helping, but after several discussions with Ho-shen and me, Mao finally decided not to go to France, saying he preferred to remain behind in Peking.

He gave four good reasons for this decision. First was the problem of passage money. Mao had no money at all and despite the appreciably reduced fare, a couple hundred *yuan* represented a very large sum for him, and he knew no one who might lend him that much. Second, he was by no means proficient in languages. At school he had not been able to manage even the very simplest forms of English pronunciation. Third, in Peking, he could carry on with his studies and would at the same time be able to recruit new members for our Hsin Min Study Association, and, of course, we who went to France would need a reliable contact in Peking. Fourth, he had always remembered the almost prophetic words of Tan Wu-pien that day in the Tien Hsin Ko, "the building which reaches the heart of Heaven." Tan had said that to be successful in politics, study or learning was of itself not too much help, that the essential thing was one's ability to organize a party and to gather together a great number of faithful