

Party took him to "decorate" their party as an old combatant. Ts'ai Ch'ang, Li Wei-han, Chou En-lai, Li Li-san, Li Fu-ch'un, Ch'en Yi, Jao Su-shih, and many others also were among the several hundred whose names were on the secret registers of Chao and Jen.

Thus did those first germs of Communism spread among the Chinese in France.

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The Meeting in the Forest

By October of 1920 the activities of the Franco-Chinese Educational Association had increased to such an extent that it became necessary to send a delegate back to China. It was decided that I should return to discuss certain matters with Rector Ts'ai and Mr. Li Yü-ying. When I knew I was going, I wrote letters to both Ts'ai Ho-shen and to Mao Tse-tung. In his reply, Ts'ai said that before my departure we should call a general meeting of Hsin Min Study Association. He suggested that it should be a sort of farewell or *bon voyage* party for me, and that we should discuss together what methods should be adopted to carry out the revolution in China, and finally whether or not Russian-style Communism was a practical system for China.

As yet the power of the Moscow-controlled CY was not strongly felt among the Chinese in France; so we considered ourselves quite free to discuss whether or not Russian Communism was suitable for China.

The majority of the Hsin Min members lived in Montargis; so the date was set for the meeting to be held in that town. I left Paris at four o'clock on the day before the meeting and even before the train entered the Montargis station, I made out Ts'ai Ho-shen with his mother, Auntie, and Hsiang Ching-yu, and many others who were waiting for me on the platform—about twenty of them altogether. I shook hands with all of them, and then Ts'ai and Hsiang Ching-yu invited me to a café near the station. I suggested that I would prefer to find a hotel first and then we could go there to talk where it would be much quieter. However, Hsiang Ching-yu said, "Ho-shen and I have already found you a room. It's in a hotel quite close to our school."

As we set off for the hotel, I asked, "Where are we having the meeting of the Association tomorrow?"

"We really haven't decided yet," Ts'ai Ho-shen replied. "As you know, there are more than thirty members here in France, but some of them live too far away from here to be able to come. However, there will probably be about twenty of us here. We can't use the classrooms in the school, because there are classes all day long, and besides there are fifty or sixty Chinese students living there who are not members."

Hsiang Ching-yu suggested, "Can't we hold the meeting in Mr. Siao's hotel?"

To which Ts'ai replied quickly, "If a large group of yellow-skinned Orientals suddenly descended upon the hotel for a couple of days, the French people would think it was very strange. Also, the proprietor would probably not allow it, or if he did, he might present us with a bill for our stay. And you know we have no money to pay any such bills!"

"How about the Municipal Park?" I asked.

But Hsiang pointed out, "This park is not very big and all the seats are often occupied. Besides, our own Chinese schoolmates spend quite a lot of their free time there."

Then Ts'ai's face brightened. "When you mentioned the park just now, I had an idea. There is a big forest just outside the town. Why shouldn't we go there and sit on the grass for our meeting? Don't you think that's the solution?"

"That's an excellent idea," Hsiang agreed. "But if it rains, the Hsin Min Study Association's big meeting in France will never be held!"

"If it rains, it will be an omen that the gods do not wish for us to reform China! I'm sure it will be a fine day," I declared.

Hsiang smiled, "Very good, Mr. Siao. If it is raining tomorrow, that will mean that the gods do not agree with our plans. If the sun is shining, we will take it to mean that they do want us to reform China!"

The next morning when I awakened, the bright sunbeam was playing directly on my bed. I bounded up and dressed hurriedly, and very soon Ts'ai Ho-shen, his sweetheart, Hsiang Ching-yu, and about ten others came to my room. Hsiang Ching-yu greeted me delightedly, "Come on, Mr. Siao! Let's go at once and reform China! We have had

no sunshine for several days and suddenly it is shining brightly. How good it is!" We all left the hotel together and in about ten minutes we were in the forest.

Thinking back on that moment, I seem to smell again the delightfully exhilarating perfume of that early morning forest glade. We chose a low grassy bank, so soft and green that it seemed we were seated on a velvet sofa. But it was still quite damp and chilly; so we decided to take a short walk before opening the meeting. As soon as the sun shone on the grass and all the members had arrived, we sat down in a circle and I declared the meeting open. Hsiang Ching-yu stood up and said, "First we want to say goodbye to Mr. Siao and wish him a pleasant trip back home. Then we will ask him to talk to us. We all have great hopes for Mr. Siao's trip to China."

Then Ts'ai Ho-shen said, "I saw Mr. Siao's agenda for this meeting. The first item was a discussion of what is the most suitable plan for the revolution; second, the introduction of new members; and third, his own report of his duty and his plans on his return to China. I want to suggest at this time that we give the third item first place, since all of us are anxious to hear from him and to know what he plans to do. Also, the first item will require much more time and it should be last."

Since everyone agreed to this plan, I told them a bit about my plans and what I intended to do in China. Then Ts'ai Ho-shen introduced the new members. The first two were Li Fu-ch'un and Li Li-san. Li Fu-ch'un was small and quite young. We all knew him and had a very good opinion of him. He was an excellent speaker, with clear, considered diction and a good voice. Later he was to become Vice Governor of Manchuria and Vice President of the National Council in Peking, of which Chou En-lai is President. Li Li-san was a very different type of person. He was large, coarse, and loud-speaking. He had a habit of making jokes which were not always in good taste. At one time during the meeting, he yelled out, "Li-san Road!" at the top of his voice, indicating presumably that we should all follow his lead. Many of us considered this childish and in very poor taste. Several other new members were also introduced, the men by Ts'ai Ho-shen and the women by Hsiang Ching-yu. Among the women was Ts'ai's young sister, Ch'ang who is now the President of the Communist Women's Association. At the same meeting Liao Yi-nan and Chou



En-lai were proposed as new members by Ts'ai.

After the lunch period we all gathered again on the grassy slope and now the subject for discussion was the question of adopting Russian Communism as the political system for the new China. Ts'ai Ho-shen maintained that Russian Communism should be adopted unreservedly. On the other hand, I stated that though I agreed fully with the principles of Communism, I did not favor the Russian type for China. The members were divided in their opinions. Some agreed with Ts'ai, others took their stand with me. Ideas and opinions were expressed and discussed calmly and quite dispassionately. At five-thirty we had to stop for the day so that those who lived in the school would not miss their evening meal, and it was decided that we would meet again the next day at eight-thirty in the morning to resume our discussion.

After dinner a large group came over to my hotel room to chat informally. Most of them left by ten o'clock, but Ts'ai Ho-shen, Hsiang Ching-yu, and Ch'en Shao-hsiu stayed to continue the discussion of Russian Communism and whether it was good or bad! Before we realized it, we had talked till two o'clock in the morning. It was too late for them to return to the school and we didn't want to bother the proprietor to get in the hotel; so we finally decided that we could all sleep cross-wise on the bed. It did not even enter our minds that Hsiang Ching-yu was a girl and I am sure that she herself did not at the time think of the fact that she was of the opposite sex. It was not till later that I was impressed by the purity of mind and the high idealism which we demonstrated on that day.

The whole of the next day's sessions were spent in discussion, but the fundamental problem remained unsolved. Finally it was decided that after my return to China I would have further talks with the members there, and that I should write to Mao Tse-tung, giving him full details of the two-day meeting so that he could circulate it among our friends. Afterward my letter was published by Mao Tse-tung in the *Hsin Min Study Association Journal*, Number 3.