

Mao Tse-tung and I indeed had a whole chain of problems to discuss. Often during this period we talked all night forgetting about sleep. Sometimes our talks made us very sad, even to the point of shedding tears, since we were unable to find a basis for mutual cooperation. I was unable to accept Mao's reasoning, but neither did my answers satisfy him. During the months consumed by these fruitless discussions, we never expressed a word of anger; rather it was a cause of genuine disappointment and sadness to both of us that we were unable to work out a common plan of action. Although our major premises were poles apart, our friendship was very precious to us. However, I could not overcome my presentiment that a revolution on the lines Mao wished would have unhappy results for the people of China.

After each period of intense sorrow, we encouraged each other to renew the discussion which only led to further sorrow and disappointment, and so on in cycles, from laughing to crying and from crying to laughing, a never-ending spiral. Such patience and untiring effort to convince each other were a great tribute to the deep bonds of friendship which united us. Mao realized that I was not arguing for my own selfish interest, but right or wrong, that I was motivated by a sincere love for the people of China and indeed for humanity itself.

The pith of our discussions may be summarized briefly. Once I started out with a simile: "Two wheels or one wheel?"

"Humanity," I said, "could be compared to a rickshaw which runs on two wheels. With two good wheels it will run smoothly, but if one wheel is taken away, it will fall over and become quite useless and incapable of movement. The only way to make it move on one wheel is to hold up the other side by hand, to lift it by brute force. This force must be maintained constantly and evenly to keep the vehicle in movement. Now the two wheels of humanity," I pointed out, "are Freedom and Communism." I was against capitalism and agreed entirely with the principle of Communism, but if people were to be

governed by Russian Communism, the rickshaw would lack the wheel of freedom and would therefore require superhuman pressure to maintain its equilibrium. Communist leaders could perhaps maintain this pressure on the people for many years but when it ceased, the vehicle would fall over. I said that the principle involved was fundamentally wrong.

Mao understood quite well what I meant but he answered without hesitation that he was entirely in agreement with the application of pressure.

"Pressure," he said, "is the very essence of politics. If you are successful in keeping up the pressure, that means that your politics are good. In the final analysis political influence is quite simply the constant maintenance of pressure."

"If you are right," I said, "then I want nothing more to do with politics."

Another time I suggested that we look at Freedom and Communism as two roads.

"Now we are at a fork or at the crossroads," I said. "After the struggles and bloodshed of the past few centuries, man has finally gained a certain degree of freedom and that freedom is a very precious treasure to be guarded jealously. Both roads lead to death, the inevitable end awaiting each individual. Why then should we choose the path of Communism over Freedom? Mankind has two primary or basic desires, to exist and to be free, and only with freedom can civilization flourish."

Again Mao Tse-tung's answer was simple, "The implantation of Communism did not mean that the people would not be free."

I said, "There are several kinds of freedom, the freedom which can be enjoyed by human beings, and that which is accorded to domestic animals such as pigs and chickens. Pigs are free, but only within the boundaries of their sty. Chickens are free only within their run. It is true that the Communist State grants freedom to people, but it is the freedom of chickens and pigs. Russian Communism is like a religion: one must believe blindly in its doctrine and never discuss whether it is right or wrong. There is in that sort of religion no freedom of thought. Communists say they believe in freedom, but they do not allow people to live freely. There is no freedom for gatherings, for

organized associations, for the making and publishing of free speeches. Is that the 'freedom of the people'?"

Mao replied in general terms to the effect that the public must be controlled by laws, even if they are arbitrary. The individual must obey the State and, if necessary, he must make sacrifices for the good of the country.

When we discussed the relation between the State and the individual under Communism, I said, "The power of the State is too great. It is omnipotent as the gods, while the individuals in the State are like flies and ants. If the State orders certain people to kill others, they must kill them. If the State wishes persons to be burned at the stake, they must be burned. If the State wants people to eat less food, they must eat less food. If the State wishes people to die, they die. Compared with the State the individual is nothing. People laughed when Louis XIV proudly proclaimed, 'I am the Nation!' because they thought the nation was something superior. I say you can also laugh at this because it is just as fallacious! Since the advent of democratic systems the power of the State has greatly decreased, and the individual, conversely, has increased in importance. However, today, Russian Communism, under the guise of Socialism, has returned the power to the State, which controls absolutely the daily life of its people."

In answer to this, Mao maintained that Communist countries must practice a "new democracy."

Continuing, I proposed a fifth point for discussion: new democracy or new despotism? In my opinion the Russian Communist system came much nearer to a "new despotism" than to a "new democracy."

"In our country," I said, "from ancient times, the Emperor has represented the old-fashioned despot. The Russian Communist Party, however, has now put into practice a new scientific form of absolute despotism! In the early history of China there were many emperor-despots who were excellent rulers, practicing the principle of 'loving the people as their own children.' They ruled much better than the majority of the monarchs in smaller kingdoms. Today the leader of Russian Communists is vested with a thousand times more arbitrary power than the worst of the *bad* Chinese emperor-despots!"

To which Mao replied, "If the leaders have no power, it is impossi-

ble to carry out plans, to obtain prompt action. The more power the leader has, the easier it is to get things done. In order to reform a country one must be hard with one's self and it is necessary to victimize a part of the people."

Next we discussed the sixth problem, victimizing the people for the good of the State. I told Mao quite plainly that I did not agree with the principle of victimizing one sector to help others, nor with the idea of victimizing everyone to a greater or lesser extent for the hypothetical good of future generations. He answered that if we were to be sentimental about such matters, the ideals of the social revolution could not be attained in a thousand years! And so to the seventh point of discussion: a thousand years or ten thousand years?

"If we are able to achieve the ideal social structure within a thousand years," I said, "that could be considered very satisfactory. Even if it took ten thousand years, it would still be satisfactory. For the individual a hundred years, or a thousand years is a very long time—it seems endless; but for a country, or a nation, it is not long; and in the whole history of mankind it is a very short time. Communism, in theory, is an excellent principle and it should certainly be put into practice. But this must take time. The Russian revolutionary method was an artificial forced growth. It was, to use a Chinese saying, like "possessing a beautiful woman on sight."

Mao said, "I admire your patience in being willing to wait a hundred or a thousand years. I cannot wait even ten years. I want us to achieve our aims tomorrow!"

The eighth point we considered was, should we be guided by individual standards or by those of society? I contended that if he wanted to see the Communist principles put into practice tomorrow, he was being guided by his own individual standards.

"This is the principle of doing apparently fine things for the present with no regard for its effect on the future," I said. "It is like the deeds of the so-called heroes of history. The heroes were fond of interfering with the business of others and were, in the final analysis, undesirable persons. The hero idea is out of date and should be eliminated. We have proof of the ill-bestowed glory accorded to these heroes in such material symbols as the Arc de Triomphe. Only symbols of eternal ideals, such as the temple of Confucius, should be preserved. If the

aims of reforming society are sincere, then they must be carried out always with an eye to the future. Permanent improvements must be brought about through better education, freely available to each individual, and by a continual increase of culture. But all this will take a long time."

To this Mao replied that the reformation of society must really be carried out through military power and political action.

The ninth problem was: education or politics?

I maintained, "Changes brought about through the use of military power can only result in tyranny; while reforms through education, in the widest sense of the word, are peaceful and enduring. They are 'silent changes' and of course, for visible, immediate results, cannot be compared with those enforced by the power of arms."

Mao said, "I like to see things happen before my very eyes. Frankly, your ideas do not appeal to me at all!"

Next was a discussion of the interests of the individual. I contended, "If you follow the lead of the Russian Communists, after a struggle lasting ten years, or twenty years, you may one day be successful in imposing the system upon the country. Such success may not even be particularly difficult to achieve. But neither will it be a valuable achievement. If Russian Communism is eventually established, it will be a very sorry day for China! *Your* ideas do not appeal to *me*! In accepting them, I would have no further peace of mind. You remember Mencius: 'There are three things capable of rendering the sage very happy, and being an Emperor is not one of them.' He was speaking from his heart when he said that. Think also that mighty struggles such as that of Liu Pang and Hsiang Yü* are, in the eyes of Christ and Buddha, like two street urchins fighting for an apple."

Mao commented, "What a pity that you disagree with the theory of Karl Marx!" to which I replied, "What a pity that you do not agree with Prudhon's theory!"

We talked of idealism and materialism. We discussed topics without stopping, but the more we talked, the more unanswerable questions popped up. Mao was emphatic in his belief that answers were not necessary. Only action was necessary to achieve success. To this I

* Two rival war-lords at the beginning of the Han Dynasty.

would counter that with such a disastrous success as the aim, it was preferable not to act!

We talked along these lines, always in an atmosphere of intimate friendship, until the day of the formal establishment of the Chinese Communist Party. That last night we slept together in the same bed, talking till dawn, and Mao still begged me to attend the meeting at which the fateful decision was to be made.

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The Chinese Communist Party Is Born

In the spring of 1921, I lived in Changsha for about three months because I had many things to do before I returned to Peking. As I was returning to Peking, I went to Shanghai, visiting on the way the President of the Educational Association of Hupeh and the Governor of Kiangsi Province. Some days before I was to leave Changsha, Mao Tse-tung suggested that he would accompany me, saying, "I want to tell you, in the very strictest confidence, that in Peking, Kwangtung, Shanghai, and in fact everywhere, Communist groups have been formed and over a dozen delegates are due to gather in Shanghai for a secret meeting. The purpose of this meeting is formally to establish the Chinese Communist Party. I am the delegate for Changsha and I would very much like to have you go with me to this meeting."

I told him, "We can go to Shanghai on the same boat, but I do not want to attend your meeting."

He insisted, "Go on! You go there and meet these colleagues. Listen to their ideas. Talk with them!"

However I asked, "What's the good? Your meeting is not a discussion group. Everything has already been decided and now the Chinese Communist Party is to be established. If I were to attend that meeting, I should be one of the founders of Chinese Communism! I should then be responsible in the eyes of the Chinese people for a hundred, a thousand years, and I should be responsible before humanity for ten thousand years. I tell you, I am not prepared to have any part in the formation of the Communist Party!"