Historical Commentary and Notes
While working on a Chinese leadership study some years back I was struck with the fact that it is often extraordinarily difficult to find material about the early lives of important political figures—even those like Mao Tse-tung who are still alive. Once such men are dead, and as year after year folds over them, the problem becomes increasingly difficult. Legends about a great man’s youth are soon elaborated upon, and even his enemies may join in making a good story of it.

With Communist leaders the task of the biographer or the historian is further complicated by the demands of ideology: if the hero was not born a worker or a peasant, his early life is often retailed by official record keepers to make him one—the poorer and more exploited the better.

What the biographer and historian never give up hoping to find, of course, is “hard” documentation such as village records, family papers, and other archives. Materials of this sort seldom provide more than the barest elements of the story, however, and in the case of a revolutionary leader even these may be wholly unavailable. Sooner or later, therefore, the scholar begins looking for other data—anything at all that will help him to reconstruct the details of a birth and a period of growing up that took place many years before. With such material, much of it unreliable, he does the best he can.

In the case of Mao Tse-tung’s origins there is not much documentation of the “hard” sort available to us, but fortunately the pages of this book will add important dimensions to what has been set down in retrospect about the early life of the man. From the recollections of Siao-yu (in earlier years known as Siao Shu-tung) we can perceive from one more
vantage point how a small boy in revolt against his father has come to lead
a nation in revolt against itself—and against much of the world as we in
the West have known it.

The chief English language sources for Mao Tse-tung's life are Robert
Payne, Mao Tse-tung, Ruler of Red China (New York: Henry Schuman,
Inc., 1950); Emi Siao, Mao Tse-tung, His Childhood and Youth (Bombay:
People's Publishing House Ltd., 1953); and the story which Mao
dictated, partly with the aid of an interpreter, to Edgar Snow in 1936. This
last material appeared in Mr. Snow's book Red Star Over China (New
York: Random House, 1938), and also in The Autobiography of Mao
Translated back into Chinese, the Autobiography served for some time as
the only source of any considerable length available in the Chinese
language.

All three of these books emerge from recollections rather than from
documents of the time or other contemporary evidence, and one is forced,
therefore, to use them with even more caution than is usual for secondary
sources, because of the possibility of partisan political propaganda. It is
clear, also, that the Autobiography has served as a partially hidden source
for the other two. In Mao Tse-tung, Ruler of Red China, for example, Mr.
Payne draws from talks he had with Hsiao San (Emi Siao) in Kalgan, who,
in turn, has very obviously refreshed his memory and supplemented
it by reading the Autobiography.

Like these other sources, Mao Tse-tung and I Were Beggars rests wholly
upon recollections—both Siao-yu's recollections of personal experiences,
and his recollections of what third persons told him about Mao Tse-tung,
particularly for that portion of his life before their friendship began. One
recognizes many delightful similarities between this book and the story
which Mao Tse-tung gave Edgar Snow, as in the parallel accounts of the
way Mao and his friends packed themselves in bed and had to warn each
other before turning over. There are discrepancies, too, but on the whole I
think these tend to enhance the integrity of the book as an independent
source.

The account also includes a further rare dimension in that Siao-yu and
Emi Siao are bitter political antagonists—and also brothers.

Emi Siao, whom Mao knew in boyhood days as Siao Chih-fan, called
himself Emil through deep admiration for Jean Jacques Rousseau. In later
years he went to the Soviet Union, where he achieved recognition as a
translator of Chinese poetry into Russian, and also as a poet in his own
right. Here is what the author says about him: "You have asked about Emi
Siao, which should be written Emil Siao. He was my brother, two years
younger than me. He was with me at the First Normal School, and also a
member of the Hsin Min Study Association. In 1919 he also went to
France [as part of the worker-student movement], where he made friends with the French Communists. When I returned to China, he had already inscribed in the French Communist Party. I completely broke relations with him forty years ago. My family is like China, divided into two, Nationalists and Communists. . . ."

So it is that the two unreconciled brothers emerge as the chief chroniclers—aside from Mao Tse-tung himself—of the Chinese Communist leader's early life. The story is a revealing one, and I commend it to all readers who search for some understanding of what has happened in China.

Robert C. North
Stanford University, California
May 25, 1959
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(1) Siao-yu gives Mao Tse-tung’s birth date, November 19, according to the lunar calendar, but “if one wishes to write it in the solar calendar, it is 26 December, 1893.” At the time of Mao Tse-tung’s birth, Chinese society had been grinding toward revolution for at least half a century.

In the course of the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644) Chinese emperors developed a highly institutionalized pattern of relationships with other states, and with relatively minor adaptations it was this same pattern that the Ch’ing, or Manchu, Dynasty (1644-1912) adopted. This diplomacy depended upon the imperial tributary system which had emerged, in turn, from ancient assumptions of Chinese superiority over foreign barbarians.

Until the Opium War of 1839 China had lived in virtual isolation, and the Chinese people had come to view their empire as the only world order that really counted. The society was one of the most ancient on the earth, and its political, economic and social structures were almost wholly self-contained. Generally speaking neither the emperors nor the state officials, nor the people at large saw any reason for meeting foreigners except with the condescension which great empires traditionally have displayed toward barbarians on distant frontiers.

Western penetrations of East Asia gave rise to relations of a different sort. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Chinese empire was face to face with what amounted to the challenge of foreign conquest—though it looked more like economic and technological invasion than the threat of military power. For the Westerner won ground less by force of arms than by building railroads and floating loans. The great campaigns were construction jobs rather than military expeditions, and the old Empire found itself nearly helpless against this kind of onslaught. Neither the Chinese government nor any other part of the society had effective counter-weapons, nor could they be obtained except from foreign sources.

In the course of the nineteenth century representatives of various European states succeeded in persuading the Manchu Empire to open a number of Chinese ports to foreign trade, and then, from these footholds, they worked their way inland—leasing, building railways, obtaining concessions, and lending more and more money. For many Chinese there seemed to be no way out of the dilemma. If China were to rebuild itself into a great power along Western lines, the country needed both money and technology, but these could be acquired only from the West, and each new agreement brought further indebtedness and deeper entrenchment of foreign influence.

As time went on, the Manchu government increasingly revealed its inability to administer the affairs of the nation effectively. The leadership was generally ineffectual, and there was virtually no concept of individual re-
responsibility within the government. The civil service system became more and more corrupt, and even the examination system—upon which the whole administration of the Empire depended for its integrity—became increasingly debased. Toward the end of the nineteenth century it often appeared that China was on the verge of disintegration—and of partition among the western powers.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century various European states began competing with each other for political and economic advantage in China. Approaching the country by sea, Great Britain, France, Germany, and other states moved from the treaty ports into the interior, while Tsarist Russia, advancing overland, tried to halt British influence along vast Russian frontiers from Turkey and Iran and Afghanistan to Tibet and Sinkiang, and on to Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea. It was also vital for Imperial Russia to obtain warm-water ports on the Pacific and to protect its Far Eastern flank against Japan.

China, under these circumstances, became more and more an economic and political jousting ground for the great powers of Europe—and also, as time went on, for Japan.

Individual Chinese leaders differed in their reactions to the Western challenge. Some hoped to withstand the shock through an inflexible preservation of the traditional structure; others wanted to keep the structure, but adapt it to cope with new conditions and foreign influences; still others came to the conclusion that the old society must be done away with and a new one built after Western models; a few—including Mao Tse-tung, as he grew into young manhood—began to reject the past of China and the West alike and to dream of something wholly new.

So it was that under foreign impact the old society began to fracture along lines of political, economic, social and intellectual cleavage—much as a huge rock is known to fracture under the point of a stone mason's chisel.

It was in a society of these many deepening cleavages that Mao Tse-tung was born and brought up.

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(2) The village of Shao Shan, scattered along ten li, or nearly three and a half miles of countryside, commands a fine view of the hills and waters about. The houses, in times past, were few and widely spaced. There is a stream with a stone bridge across it, and nearby, in Mao's boyhood, stood a few small shops where meat, salt and other simple commodities were kept on sale. Most of the inhabitants of the village were honest, hard-working peasants.

Even today there stands near the stream a plain, tile-roofed house with high-walled courtyard and double wings where, at the turn of the century,
the Mao and Tsou families lived. The house was sparsely furnished, but red peppers hanging from the roof beams gave the interior a touch of color, and the place was kept scrupulously clean. In those days the boundary line between the two families passed through the precise center of the living room.¹

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(3) Mao Tse-tung’s father, who had once attended school for two years or so, knew a few characters and enough arithmetic to keep simple accounts. Mao’s mother was wholly illiterate.²

Born a poor peasant, Mao Jen-sheng had been forced to join the army while still young because of debts. After several years as a soldier, he returned to Shao Shan to enter into small trading and other petty enterprises. Saving carefully, he managed eventually to buy back his land and, with 16 mou (1 mou = 1/6 acre), to achieve status as a middle peasant. On this acreage, Mao Tse-tung recalled years later, the father was able to raise sixty picul (1 picul = 133⅓ lbs.) of rice per year.

With five members—Mao Tse-tung, his parents, his grandfather and his brother—the family regularly consumed about thirty-five picul a year. Through sale of the surplus and by purchasing grain from his poorer neighbors, transporting it to the city, and selling it at a higher price, the elder Mao gradually accumulated further capital and bought seven more mou, which gave the family the status of rich peasants. The farm now yielded some eighty-four picul annually, and Mao Jen-sheng began to buy mortgages on other men’s land. In this fashion he accumulated what, in Shao Shan, was a considerable fortune.³

Mao Tse-tung’s grandfather died after a time, but then another boy was born, and later, a girl. All members of the family were expected to work on the farm. As he achieved rich peasant status, according to the Autobiography, Mao Jen-sheng kept a full-time laborer, and in winter, when the rice was being ground, he even took on a second hired hand. The family worked hard and ate frugally—though always enough.⁴

The elder Mao was a formidable man—tall, sturdily built, bearded in his later years,⁵ and increasingly cantankerous. “He was a severe task master,” Mao Tse-tung recalled years later. “He hated to see me idle. . . . He was a hot-tempered man and frequently beat both me and my brothers.”⁶

³ Ibid., p. 5.
⁴ Ibid., p. 3.
⁵ Ibid., p. 2.
⁶ Autobiography, p. 4.
The old man gave his children no money at all, according to Mao, and only the most meager food. "On the fifteenth of every month he made a concession to his laborers and gave them eggs with their rice," Mao records, "but never meat. To me he gave neither eggs nor meat." As a small boy Mao was somewhat frail physically, and this may have been an element in his father's seeming dislike of him.

Mao Tse-tung's mother, on the other hand, had a placid, handsome round face and tender eyes. Surnamed Wen, she was a native of Tangchiationuo, a district of Siangsiang. Her duties were those of any other peasant woman—cooking, rearing children, collecting firewood, spinning, mending, starching and washing. Through the years she won for herself the reputation as a good woman and a thrifty housewife. A Buddhist in her faith, she was deeply religious and opposed to violence and any sort of killing. “My mother was a kind woman,” Mao remembered in later life, “generous and sympathetic, and ever ready to share whatever she had. She pitied the poor and often gave them rice when they came to ask for it during famines. But she could not do so when my father was present.”

Old Mao Jen-sheng, who disapproved of charity, kept close account of the rice, and whenever he found that some had been given away, he burst into a temper. “We had many quarrels in my home over this question,” Mao Tse-tung told Edgar Snow in 1936.

Inside the house Mao's mother kept a bronze Buddha; squatting on a blackwood table, it occupied a special place of honor. For years during his childhood Mao Tse-tung went with his mother to Buddhist ceremonies and learned to sing Buddhist hymns. In those days he believed that it was a crime to kill any living thing. But as the boy grew older he became more and more skeptical, and his mother was finally left to hope that, if he was not destined for the priesthood, he might at least become a teacher.

The father had other ideas. By the age of six Mao Tse-tung began working on the farm where he helped to plant rice seeds or sat on a wicker platform in the fields to frighten birds away—a small boy with a shock of black hair and blue linen trousers. Two years later he entered

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7 Ibid., p. 4.
9 Emi Siao, pp. 5–6.
10 Payne, p. 25.
11 *Autobiography*, p. 4.
12 Payne, p. 25.
13 *Autobiography*, p. 4.
14 Payne, p. 25.
15 Ibid., p. 27.
16 *Autobiography*, p. 3.
17 Payne, p. 28.
a local primary school, which he attended until he was thirteen, but in the early morning and at night his father saw to it that he did chores about the farm. As soon as the youngster had learned a few characters, it occurred to Mao Jen-sheng that his son could be very useful at the abacus and at keeping the family books. "As my father insisted upon this," Mao recalled later, "I began to work at those accounts at night." 18

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(4) "There were two parties in the family," Mao told Edgar Snow. "One was my father, the Ruling Power. The Opposition was made up of myself, my mother, my brother, and sometimes even the laborer. In the 'united front' of the Opposition, however, there was a difference of opinion. My mother advocated a policy of indirect attack. She criticized any overt display of emotion and attempts at open rebellion against the Ruling Power. She said it was not the Chinese way." 19 Again and again Mao was distressed by his mother's helplessness, and the inequality he saw between man and wife, according to Emi Siao, "sowed the seeds for his later all-out rebellion against the oppressive character of the feudal patriarchal system." 20

As the boy grew older, he found that his two brothers and sister were useful allies in his continual conflict with their father.21 "The dialectical struggle in our family was constantly developing," Mao told Edgar Snow. "One incident I especially remember." 22

When Mao Tse-tung was about thirteen years old, he and his father fell into violent argument in front of guests. "My father denounced me before the whole group," Mao remembered years later, "calling me lazy and useless. This infuriated me. I cursed him and left the house. My mother ran after me and tried to persuade me to return. My father also pursued me, cursing at the same time that he demanded me to come back. I reached the edge of a pond and threatened to jump in if he came any nearer. In this situation demands and counter demands were presented for cessation of the civil war. My father insisted that I apologize and k'ou-t'ou as a sign of submission. I agreed to give a one knee k'ou-t'ou if he would promise not to beat me. Thus the war ended, and from it I learned that when I defended my rights by open rebellion my father relented, but when I remained meek and submissive he only cursed and beat me more." 23

At about this same time Mao discovered that he could neutralize much

18 Autobiography, p. 4.
19 Ibid., p. 5.
20 Emi Siao, p. 16.
21 Ibid., p. 27.
22 Autobiography, p. 5.
23 Ibid., p. 5.
of his father’s scolding with quotations from the Classics. When Mao Jen-sheng accused his son of laziness and unfilial conduct, the boy recited passages which urged older people to be kind and affectionate toward their children and exhorted them to set an example by working harder than their juniors. The father being three times older than the son, Mao argued, should do proportionately more work.24

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(5) So the struggle between father and son continued. With passing years, however, Mao Tse-tung became more and more skillful, attacking and feinting and quietly sabotaging, while the old man pored over his accounts or sat grumbling by the stove in winter and hurling maxims of Confucius at his unwilling listeners.26 "I hated Confucius from the age of eight," Mao confided to a friend in later years. "There was a Confucian temple in the village, and I wanted nothing more than to burn it to the ground." 26

In his detestation of Confucius, as with his rebellion against patriarchal authority, the boy did not stand alone, but was simply one individual in a rising tide of protest. China, under influence of Western technology and Western thought, was rapidly breaking loose from tradition and authority—and this meant the traditional family and the traditional philosophies quite as much as the authority of the state.27

The elder Mao mellowed somewhat as he grew older, and a kind of weariness and resignation seemed to settle over him. In time he even developed a concern for religion, and more and more frequently he could be seen bowing before the bronze Buddha, a gaunt old man destined to live out his remaining years in a rebellious household. In time, too, the son became less and less concerned with the father, who began somehow to merge, perhaps, with the image of a larger adversary—the ancient and outmoded social and political order.28

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(6) At school young Mao read the Confucian Analects and the Four Classics. In those days the students were expected to commit long passages to memory, whether or not they had any notion of the meaning, and long hours were devoted to parrot-like recitation. Mao’s teacher in Shao Shan

24 Ibid., p. 5.
25 Payne, p. 27.
26 Ibid., p. 30.
28 Payne, p. 27.
was harsh, frequently beating his pupils, and because of this the boy, at the age of ten, ran away from home.

Afraid to come back lest his father give him an additional beating, young Mao set out in the direction of the city, which he believed to be located in a valley nearby. According to the *Autobiography*, he wandered for three days before he was found by his family. Then he discovered that he had been circling about and, in all his travels, had never proceeded more than about three miles from his home.

In school Mao Tse-tung became rather proficient in the Classics, but as Siao Shu-tung points out, it was the romances of Old China—and especially the stories of rebellion—that particularly interested the boy, and also books about the “new” China that was just beginning to emerge. In the farmhouse at night he used to cover his window, so that his father would not see the candle burning, and read long after he was supposed to be asleep. His favorites among the authors were old “reformist” scholars—men who believed that China’s weakness emerged from her lack of Western railways, telephones, telegraphs and steamships, which they wanted introduced as a first step in developing the country.

The first attempts at reform were made during the period 1862-1894 by a number of high-ranking officials—including Tseng Kuo-fan, Tso Tsung-t’ang, and Li Hung-chang—who still had confidence in the old political system and thought that the introduction of Western technology would suffice to restore China to a position of power and eminence. The inadequacy of this approach became painfully evident with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the ignominious Chinese defeat.

In the wake of the Sino-Japanese War a number of scholars—particularly K’ang Yu-wei and his disciple Liang Ch’i-ch’ao—began to argue that China, if it were to survive as a sovereign nation, must undertake a wide sweep of reforms in administration, industry, agriculture, education and other fundamental spheres of life.

Born in 1858, K’ang Yu-wei was educated in the traditional manner, but at the age of fifteen he revolted against writing an eight-legged essay in the classic form, and somewhat later he began to read about the outside world and the history and geography of modern nations. In 1894 he organized a study group called the Society for Studying How to Strengthen the Nation. Among the young men who came under his influence was Liang Ch’i-ch’ao. Born in 1873, Liang became active in various groups that

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* Emi Siao, p. 8.
* *Autobiography*, p. 4.
were interested in Western ways, and in 1895 he started a daily paper in order to discuss democratic ideas and argue for a constitution.33

K'ang and Liang advocated the gradual establishment of a constitutional monarchy which would provide a sufficiently modified structure for the carrying out of necessary reforms. Many younger officials in the Empire sympathized with the suggested changes—though some of them were less enthusiastic when they perceived that the reforms could not be achieved without cost to the privileges of the official and scholarly elites.

In 1898 the young Emperor, Kuang-hsü, was introduced to K'ang Yu-wei by his imperial tutor, and it was from this meeting that the so-called Hundred Days of Reform emerged. Deeply impressed by K'ang Yu-wei, the Emperor came under the scholar's dominance, and the two of them embarked upon an extensive program of reform. During that summer a whole series of edicts were issued to abolish time-honored sinecures, to reorganize the military forces, to alter the educational and examination systems, and to make other changes that were long overdue.34

Serious opposition to the reforms began to appear almost immediately, and in time the Empress Dowager, Tz'u-hsi, who had supposedly "retired" to the Summer Palace, began to intervene actively. The young Emperor was persuaded to move against Tz'u-hsi, and Yu-an Shih-k'ai, former Chinese Resident in Seoul and later President of the Chinese Republic, was brought into conference with the reformers on the mistaken assumption that he was sympathetic. Instructed to put himself in command of troops at Tientsin, march on the Summer Palace and seize the Empress Dowager, he united his forces, instead, with those of a relative and devoted supporter of Tz'u-hsi and proceeded, under her orders, to seize the young Emperor, who was then kept in confinement until his death ten years later. This action put an end to the Hundred Days of Reform.

The reform movement had emerged as a reaction against the inability of a decaying order to deal effectively with rapidly changing conditions of domestic life and the active intrusion of foreign powers. When the conservatives came back into control, they had only one solution to offer—the restoration of isolationism and the traditionalism of the old order. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising, perhaps, that they tried to divert attention from their own shortcomings and impotency by encouraging antiforeignism.

During 1899 there were antiforeign outbreaks in nearly all parts of the country, and in most instances the incidents took an anti-Christian as well

33 See Ralph Levenson, Liang Chi-chao and the Mind of Modern China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

as an anti-Western course. Indeed, many of the initial hostilities were directed against Chinese Christians rather than against foreigners. Of the various organized groups responsible for these hostilities, the most notorious was the “Society of Harmonious Fists,” or Boxers, which had strong support from the Court in Peking and from many officials in the provinces.

As the Boxers achieved more and more control in Peking, the foreign legations found themselves in what amounted to a state of siege, and attempts were made by the respective powers to send more troops into the capital for the protection of their nationals. The siege lasted from June to August, when an allied expeditionary force finally came to the relief of the foreigners. Boxerism then collapsed, and China was forced to accept an indemnity charge secured on her Maritime Customs and certain domestic taxes; the punishment of some of her officials; the permanent quartering of foreign troops in Peking as legation guards; and various other obligations.

It was against this background that the Empire was forced into a program of educational reform. Beginning in 1901, the old system of examination was abolished, the provincial schools for older students were changed into colleges, the prefectural schools were transformed into middle schools, and the county schools became primary schools. With fond hopes and driving aspirations students poured into the schools from all parts of the country. In 1905 there were only about one hundred thousand students in modern schools; by 1911 the number had increased to more than two million; ten years later there were six million. In these schools, moreover, they came under the influence of teachers who had studied abroad—and had brought with them a whole spectrum of new ideas from the West.  

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(7) In spite of certain moves made toward reorganizing some aspects of government administration, modifying the civil service examinations, and establishing a modern educational system, the despotic nature of the Empire was not altered, and many urgent reforms were further delayed until after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.  

Many Chinese were coming to believe that the chief explanation for Japan’s success against Tsarist Russia lay in the new governmental efficiency which became evident under the newly adopted Japanese constitution. More and more Chinese students were attracted to Japan for study, and in June, 1905, the Imperial Government sent five high-ranking officials abroad to study constitutional government and see how it functioned

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in other nations. On their return the regime proclaimed its intention of establishing a constitutional government, and a number of preparatory measures were subsequently undertaken.\(^7\)

In 1908 the Imperial Government promulgated the proposed “Principles of Constitution” and a “Nine Year Program (1908–17) of Preparation” which projected the year-by-year accomplishment of reforms in administration, taxation, auditing, budget formulation, the development of educational facilities, the introduction of local self-government and so forth.\(^8\)

On October 3, 1910, a National Assembly convened for the first time, and this body, together with various provincial assemblies, was able to prevail upon the Imperial Government to promise the convening of a Parliament as early as 1913. On May 8, 1911, the formation of a cabinet was announced, but the new body was dominated by the Manchu Court, and the National Assembly had no control over it. Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that those who looked for substantial reforms were further frustrated.

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(8) In the days of Mao Tse-tung’s boyhood very little news reached communities like Shao Shan except by word of mouth. Imperial rescripts were posted from time to time and read aloud by the schoolmaster, but these usually dealt with taxes, the conscription of soldiers from among the people, and the celebration of special events such as the Empress Dowager’s birthday.\(^9\)

On October 10, 1904—when Mao was eleven years old—the Empress Dowager’s birthday was celebrated in the usual fashion. Incense was burned, local dignitaries made the usual speeches. But Mao, playing outside the little school in Shao Shan along with the other children, noticed a number of bean merchants returning early along the road from Changsha.\(^10\)

On the same days columns of soldiers began moving through the countryside on the way to the city,\(^11\) and rumor had it that there had been an uprising. A delegation of starving people had approached the civil governor in Changsha, according to report, and had begged relief from famine that was sweeping the land. “Why haven’t you any food?” the governor was said to have asked. “There is plenty in the city. I always have enough.”\(^12\)

Anger flared up, and there was a mass demonstration. Then word came to Shao Shan that Huang Hsing, a young Hunanese revolutionary, had

\(^7\) China Year Book, 1912, p. 353.
\(^8\) For English versions, see Ibid., pp. 359–61.
\(^9\) Payne, p. 28.
\(^11\) Payne, p. 28.
\(^12\) Autobiography, p. 8.
attacked the yamen, or governor's residence, in Changsha with a band of peasant guerrillas.

A returned student from Japan, Huang Hsing had taken a teaching post in Hunan and then, in his off-duty hours, he had organized a secret society and a Japanese language school, which was used as a center for revolutionary propaganda. Revolution was in the air, and tens of thousands of Hunanese joined the group. A rebellion was then organized for October 10, 1904—the sixtieth birthday of the Empress Dowager. The plan was to capture Changsha and destroy the whole Provincialdom.43

According to word reaching Mao and his schoolmates in Shao Shan, the young revolutionary leader had succeeded in fighting his way into the yamen, only to be captured and thrown into a dungeon. Then, by some incredible subterfuge, he had managed to escape in disguise, and the city was thrown into an uproar. Martial law was proclaimed in Changsha, and soldiers began a systematic search of the villages nearby.44

The officials lost track of Huang Hsing, but in subsequent years he was to turn up again and again. Having escaped down the Siang River, he went to Hong Kong and thence to Japan, where he worked out a new set of plans. Some months later, in February, 1905, he proceeded up the river again by boat with forty-three rifles and some ammunition. Trouble started as soon as customs officials boarded his boat, and he fled once more to Japan. In ensuing years Huang Hsing, with help from Sun Yat-sen and the T'ung Meng Hui, or forerunner of the Kuomintang, undertook further rebellions in Hunan and later in southwest Kwangtung along the Indo-Chinese border.

According to Robert Payne's account, young Mao was not much impressed by Huang Hsing's first insurrection. At this time he still had much of the peasant's "contempt for disorder," and his loyalty to the monarch remained unshaken.45 The Autobiography maintains, on the other hand, that it was the Changsha revolt which first stirred the boy's political consciousness. About that time, according to the Autobiography, he came upon a pamphlet which made a deep impression on him. Opening with the sentence, "Alas, China will be subjugated," this pamphlet described Japan's occupation of Korea and Formosa and of China's loss of sovereignty over Indo-China, Burma and elsewhere. Mao felt depressed by what he had read, and he began to feel that it was the duty of all Chinese people to help save their country.46

43 Hsueh Chun-tu, "Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution," a Doctoral Dissertation Submitted to and Accepted by the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University, 1958, pp. 24-37.
44 Payne, p. 28.
Shortly after the Changsha uprising a conflict arose in Shao Shan between members of the Ke Lao Hui, a peasant secret society, and a local landlord who brought the dispute to court. Since he was a powerful man in the countryside, the landlord was able to secure a favorable decision, whereupon the Ke Lao Hui members, rather than submit, struck out against him and against the officials. Withdrawing to a nearby mountain called Liu Shan, they fortified themselves against attack. The landlord, according to Mao Tse-tung, spread the story that they had sacrificed a child when they raised their banner of revolt. The authorities dispatched troops against them, and the leader was subsequently beheaded. Mao remembers, however, that among the students this man became a hero.\(^{47}\)

There were more troubles and more famine in the countryside. Both the poverty of the people and spirit of insurrection among many of them were unmistakable. A group of peasants again assaulted the yamen, and several of their leaders were executed. The whole province of Hunan was in ferment.

The effect on Mao this time was profound. How could innocent peasants be executed—officially and in broad daylight—by a monarchy which was supposed to have the interests of the people at heart? Discussing these things with other students in the small school, Mao found his belief in the monarch and his faith in Buddhism deeply shaken. He grew increasingly uneasy about his own family's comparative wealth, and even his delight in learning was somewhat subdued. What could he believe in now? \(^{48}\)

Page 11.

(9) Mao's father, according to the Autobiography, had decided to apprentice his son to the proprietor of a rice shop, but the boy had heard about a "modern" school in Siangsiang where his mother's family lived. A cousin, who was studying there, had told about the "radical" methods which put less emphasis upon the classics and more on the "new knowledge" of the West.\(^{49}\)

At first Mao Jen-sheng forbade his son to go, but the boy rebelled and reminded the old man that it was wholly proper for a young Chinese to emulate Confucius. A young scholar could find service in the Imperial Government and even reach high office, perhaps, and bring fame to his parents and to the village.\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) Autobiography, p. 12.
\(^{48}\) Payne, p. 29.
\(^{49}\) Autobiography, pp. 9-10.
\(^{50}\) Payne, p. 33.
Page 12.
(10) So the boy set out on foot, a bundle of clothes and other odds and ends on his back, and made his way toward Siangsiang, which lay some fifteen miles up river from Shao Shan.

Page 18.
(11) Leaving the city of Siangsiang, one passes through the Wangchun Gate and goes on down a stone terrace toward a river, the Lien Shui, where ferryboats are busy carrying people across. On the far bank one proceeds along a gravel path to a woody hill. Not far from the foot of the hill—and surrounded by a high, circular brick wall with thick, black-lacquered double doors—stands a neat and comfortable-looking house known formerly as the Tungshan Academy and later re-named the Tungshan High Primary School.

Page 23.
(12) Mao Tse-tung was sixteen years old when he registered at the school. Having heard that the place was open only to local residents, he claimed at first—according to Emi Siao’s account—to be a native of Siangsiang, but it turned out that admission was open to all, and so he was admitted as a Siangtan boy. He paid 1,400 coppers for five months’ board, lodging and all the material needed for study, and in due course he was registered along with a maternal cousin named Wen, who had been admitted the previous year.

Page 24.
(13) Both students and teachers began to notice Mao Tse-tung within a few days after his arrival. Many of his schoolmates, belonging to landlord families, were richly dressed in long gowns and dark jackets over colorful waistbands. Many of them wore leather-soled brocade shoes to match. Mao, on the other hand, had only one suit of clothes—trousers and a jacket of blue cloth, homespun and exceedingly plain. He was a slender boy with friendly eyes and intelligent face. His accent betrayed the fact that he was not from Siangsiang.

Until that time, Mao had never seen so many children together in one place. “Many of the richer students despised me because of my ragged suit and trousers,” Mao told Edgar Snow many years later. “However, among

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81 Emi Siao, pp. 17-18.
82 Emi Siao, p. 18.
83 Autobiography, p. 10.
84 Emi Siao, pp. 18-19. According to the Autobiography, p. 10, only the teachers wore gowns.
85 Emi Siao, p. 19.
them I had friends, and two especially were my good comrades. One of these is now a writer living in the Soviet Union."

The friend who later lived in the Soviet Union was Siao Chu-chang (often written Tzu-chang) sometimes called Siao San, the son of a well-to-do farmer in Siangsiang and the brother of Siao-yu whose school name was Siao Shu-tung. Two years younger than Mao, the boy was elegant and delicately boned with high forehead and slender, expressive hands. In subsequent years, as the translator of Chinese poetry into Russian, he became famous in the Soviet Union as Emil Siao.\(^5\)

In the school, Mao recalled later, it was very important to be a native of Siangsiang. Indeed, it was important to come from a certain district in Siangsiang. "There were upper, lower and middle districts," according to Mao, "and the lower and upper were continually fighting on a regional basis. Neither could become reconciled to the existence of the other." \(^6\) In retrospect, Mao considered that he "took a neutral position in this war," and consequently all factions despised him. "I felt spiritually very depressed," he told Edgar Snow in the Autobiography.

It appears that some of his experiences, at least, were not unpleasant. "In the evening," according to Emil Siao, "the cone-shaped Tungtaishan and a white, tapering, seven-storied pagoda were shimmeringly reflected in the round pond near the school. There, newcomer Mao Tse-tung would frequently loiter with his young friends. Leaning against the stone balustrade

\(^5\) Autobiography, p. 10.

\(^6\) Payne, p. 34. One of the problems which confronts historians is the multiplicity of names by which a Chinese, particularly a person of importance, may be known. He may acquire four or five names in a lifetime and two after death. A child is called by his "milk" name until he enters school, when he receives a school or "book" name which is analogous to what we in the West term "Christian" name. According to Han Yu-shan (see Elements of Chinese Historiography, Hollywood, California: W. M. Hawley, 1955, pp. 13–16) a courtesy name (tzu) is given at the time of a capping ceremony when a man reaches age twenty. "This name is often a literary, ethical, geographical, historical, or philosophical derivative of his book name. A second courtesy name, used as commonly as the first, is given by a friend or chosen by the person himself." Siao-yu, the author, had the school name of Shu-tung and his second name was Tzu-cheng. Siao-yu says of his brother: "Emil Siao, whom Mao knew in boyhood days was Siao Chih-fan, second name Tzu-chang. (My second name is Tzu-cheng.) Our father gave us these names which have a profound signification. Emil Siao used his name Chih-fan at the First Normal School and later in France. Then Siao Tzu-chang became more known than Siao Chih-fan, for he signed very often with his second name. That is to say that Siao Tzu-chang eventually became his official name. Siao San (Siao-the-Third) was originally his pseudonym, which he used when he wrote some articles in Chinese and did not wish to sign his true name. For articles in other lands he used the pseudonym Emil Siao." Emil is a corrupted form of Emil which the Communist writer chose out of admiration for Jean Jacques Rousseau's Emil.

\(^6\) Autobiography, p. 10.
of the bridge, they would talk and look at the fish darting to and fro in the water. A little further off, on the playground, students were swinging, doing gymnastics, running, laughing. . . .” 59

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(14) Yet Mao seems to have done well at the Tungshan School. Most of the teachers liked him, and he was known for writing good essays in the classical manner. 60 But his mind was not on the classics. Day by day he continued his life-long habit of doing his own reading on the side, and although Chinese history—especially the history of rebellions—was his favorite field, he also dipped into the history and geography of foreign countries. 61 He was particularly impressed by two books presented to him by his cousin Wen 62—one on Kang Yu-wei’s Reform Movement of 1898, and the other was a bound volume of the New People’s Miscellany edited by Liang Ch’i-ch’ao. These two books Mao read again and again, 63 and he was very grateful to his cousin, whom he then “thought very progressive, but who later became a counter-revolutionary, a member of the gentry, and joined the reactionaries in the period of the Great Revolution of 1925–27.” 64

By this time much of China was in political and social ferment. In recent years the war with Japan (1894–1895), then the Boxer Uprising (1900) and finally the Russo-Japanese War had stirred much of the nation. China, of course, had been deeply humiliated by her own military defeats, but this sense of humiliation had encouraged in the country a genuine admiration for Japan and a widespread determination on the part of young Chinese to follow the Japanese example in adopting ways of the West. What Japan could do, China could also do, and it was in this spirit that more and more young Chinese began going both to Japan, as well as to the West, for study. 65

One of the teachers at the Tungshan School was a returned student from Japan who wore a false queue now that he was back once more in his own country. 66 Mao, according to Emi Siao, had already cut off his queue as a protest against the monarchy. Indeed, he had been among the first at Tungshan to do it. “He and another student who had done the same thing

60 Emi Siao, p. 18.
61 Autobiography, p. 11.
62 Emi Siao, p. 19.
63 Autobiography, p. 11.
64 Emi Siao, p. 20.
65 Autobiography, p. 11.
67 Autobiography, p. 10.
began to work on others,” Emi Siao records, “and clipped off the queues of more than ten people who had previously entered into a ‘queue-clipping pact’ with them but lost courage at the last moment.” 67

It is no wonder then that Mao had only contempt for the teacher who wore a false queue. “It was quite easy to tell that the queue was false,” Mao remembered later. “Everyone laughed at him and called him a False Foreign Devil.” 68

The Emperor Kuang Hsü and the Empress Dowager Tz’u-hsi both died in 1908. The Emperor’s death was of no particular significance, but the Empress Dowager, who had ruled China since 1860, was a remarkable woman, and now there was no one to take her place. Prince Ch’un, who was named Regent, was a man of good intentions, but he possessed neither the knowledge nor the strength to save a rapidly disintegrating state. The only strong man left to the Manchus was Yüan Shik-k’ai, and he was in retirement. Because of his participation in the coup d’etat of 1898, Yüan had won the enmity of Kuang Hsü and the hostility of influential members of the Court. The Emperor, on his death bed, had demanded Yüan’s life, and although Prince Ch’un had no intention of carrying out the order, he did not feel free, either, to make use of the man’s undeniable talents.

It was at the Tungshan School that Mao heard for the first time that the Emperor and the Empress Dowager were both dead—although the new Emperor had already been ruling for some time. In the Autobiography Mao himself maintains that he was still not yet an “anti-monarchist”68—however much he may have been moved by poverty, famine and disorder in Hunan. “I considered the Emperor and most officials,” he told Edgar Snow, “to be honest men, good and clever. They only needed the help of K’ang Yu-wei’s reforms.” Emi Siao recalls, however, that the schoolmaster used to give a little talk each morning when the students had gathered for roll-call. On these occasions he would speak of China’s decline and of her “being bullied” by foreign powers, and many of the students were fired with indignation.70

In the course of his reading at Tungshan Mao began forming his early images of the West. Emi Siao tells one story this way:

“One evening when the children were through playing and were crowding into the study room at the sound of the bell, Mao Tse-tung found himself in the company of another boy as he made his way towards the second gate of the school. The boy was holding a book in his hand.

“What do you have there?” asked Mao Tse-tung gently.

‘Heroes and Great Men of the World.’

67 Emi Siao, p. 25.
68 Autobiography, p. 10.
Ibid., p. 11.
70 Emi Siao, p. 19.
"'May I have a look?'

'A few days later, Mao Tse-tung returned the book. His manners were apologetic. 'Forgive me for smearing your book.'

'The curious student opened the book and found many passages marked out with circles and dots. The most heavily marked were the biographies of Washington, Napoleon, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Wellington, Gladstone, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Lincoln.'

The owner of the book, apparently, was Emi Siao. Later Mao told him, 'We need more great people like these. We ought to study them and find out how to make China rich and strong and so avoid becoming like Annam, Korea and India. . . .'

Mao himself, in later years, had a similar recollection. 'I had first heard of America,' he told Edgar Snow, 'in an article which told of the American revolution and contained a sentence like this, 'After eight years of difficult war, Washington won a victory and built up his nation.' In a book called Great Heroes of the World I read also of Napoleon, Catherine of Russia, Peter the Great, Wellington, Gladstone, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Lincoln.'

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(15) Mao stayed at the Tungshan school about a year, according to Emi Siao, when a strong desire to travel seized him. "I began to long to go to Changsha," Mao told Edgar Snow, "the great city, the capital of the province, which was 120 li (about 40 miles) from my home." The city was known to contain many people, numerous schools and the yamen of the governor. From one of his teachers Mao obtained a letter of introduction. Then he and Emi Siao headed for a senior primary school in Siangtang but, because of Mao's height, the principal there rejected him. So the two of them took a crowded little Siang River steamer third class to Changsha where there was a secondary school for children of Siangsiang. Mao was "speechless with excitement on seeing the city bustling with activity and immense crowds thronging the streets. For a while he was haunted by the fear that he might not be allowed to enter the Provincial Siangsiang Secondary School of which he had a high opinion. . . ."
tan, but records merely that he “walked to Changsha, exceedingly excited, half fearing that I would be refused entrance, hardly daring to hope that I could actually become a student in this great school. To my astonishment, I was admitted without difficulty. But political events were moving rapidly, and I was to remain there only half a year.” 78

This was 1911, the year of the Great Revolution that overthrew the Manchu Empire.

In Changsha young Mao saw a newspaper for the first time. Called People’s Strength, it was financed by Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary organization, the T’ung Meng Hui. Mao was deeply stirred by one article about seventy-two martyrs who had sacrificed themselves in an armed revolt in Canton against the Manchus. At the same time, he read the political platform put forward by Sun Yat-sen, and he was so impressed that he wrote an article himself and posted it on the school bulletin board. He proposed that Sun Yat-sen be called back from Japan to become President of a new government and that K’ang Yu-wei be made Prime Minister and Liang Ch’i-ch’ao be appointed Foreign Minister. “Needless to say,” wrote Emi Siao in later years, “he had at that stage not grasped the difference between Sun Yat-sen’s views and those of K’ang and Liang, but he did have a distinct feeling that all those who worked for the Reform and the Revolution should unite together in combatting the cowardly and despotic Manchu regime.” 79

In 1905 Sun Yat-sen had organized his followers into the T’ung Meng Hui, or Alliance Society, which became the forerunner of the Kuomintang. The organization promised to “oust the Manchus, regenerate China, establish a republic, and equalize land ownership.” Members of the organization were recruits, for the most part, from Chinese living overseas, from students studying abroad, and from various secret societies which had existed for a long time—especially south of the Yangtze. Among the members drawn from secret societies there were few who had any clear notion of republicanism or democracy. Their interest in the revolution was largely anti-dynastic—or, more specifically, anti-Manchu—and in subsequent years Sun Yat-sen found it increasingly difficult to win their support for the sort of program he himself had in mind. 80

By tradition, the province of Hunan had always been the scene of fierce struggles between the old and the new, and now, on the eve of the 1911 Revolution, Mao Tse-tung found himself in the center of political and social ferment. DRIVE OUT THE MANCHUS . . . SET CHINA

78 Autobiography, p. 12.
79 Ibid., pp. 12–13; Emi Siao, p. 23.
FREE . . . ESTABLISH A REPUBLIC . . . EQUALITY IN LAND RIGHTS—these were only a few of the slogans that swept the countryside.

Much of the ferment arose in the army.

Until after her defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, China had possessed no army in the modern sense. Reforms were attempted in 1895 and again in 1901, but it was not until Yüan Shih-k’ai began organizing the New Model Army between 1903 and 1906 that real progress was made. Four of Yüan Shih-k’ai’s original six divisions were placed under a new Ministry of War in 1906, and a plan was developed for the training of a National Army of thirty-six divisions, which were to be ready by 1912.

By 1911 the various revolutionary movements had made considerable headway in propagandizing and infiltrating the New Model Army stationed in southern China—especially in Wuchang, Hankow and Nanking. Therefore, when groups of local gentry in Szechwan Province began opposing the Peking Government’s railway nationalization program, revolutionary groups in Hankow and Wuchang felt strong enough to start a revolt. On October 9, 1911, a bomb explosion in the Hankow headquarters of a local revolutionary group led to an investigation and the execution of several plotters. On the following day their fellow revolutionists among New Model Army troops in Wuchang—just across the Yangtze—raised the banner of revolt and forced their commander to assume leadership. Within the next two days rebel forces had seized control of Wuchang, Hankow and Hanyang.

The revolution spread to other parts of China, and when Nanking fell into rebel hands, it was decided to proclaim that city as the seat of a new Provisional Government. Sun Yat-sen, who had been in Denver, Colorado, when the Wuchang Revolution broke out, returned to China at this juncture, and on December 29, 1911, he was elected Provisional President. Huang Hsing and eight other revolutionaries were then appointed heads of departments by the new President, and the Provisional Government of the Republic was duly proclaimed.

In Changsha on October 10, 1911, the atmosphere was tense. The governor of Hunan had proclaimed martial law, but the revolutionaries continued their secret activities inside the city walls—and without. Some gave pro-Han, anti-Manchu lectures in the schools, and others worked on army units stationed outside the city, inciting the men to mutiny.

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(16) One day a revolutionary came to the school where Mao was a student and, with the permission of the principal, made a speech which fired the whole audience with excitement and fervor. A number of students bitterly denounced the Manchus and called for the establishment of a
Mao Tse-tung, deeply stirred by the speech, decided to join the revolution.  

After some days' reflection, Mao made up his mind to enlist in the Revolutionary Army under the command of Li Yuan-hung, who was governor of Hupeh. Borrowing money to travel from fellow-students, Mao and several friends set out for Hankow. Since they had heard that the streets were wet there, someone suggested that they should wear oilskin shoes. Mao Tse-tung remembered that he had a peasant friend who possessed a pair of such oilskin shoes. His friend, who came from the same village as he himself, was then a soldier in the New Model Army encamped outside the walls of Changsha. He called on him but was stopped by garrison sentries.

There were new elements of excitement and suspense in the air. Members of the T'ung Meng Hui and other insurrectionists had already infiltrated units of the New Army stationed outside the city, and soon the 29th and 50th Brigades joined the revolution. As Mao arrived at the encampment, the two brigades had just received their ammunition and were preparing to march into Changsha.

"It was a Sunday morning," Emi Siao recorded many years later. "The New Army marched from their review ground outside the city towards one of the gates of Changsha. After firing a series of volleys, they sent one unit to take the arsenal at the 'Lotus Pond,' while the main body of troops entered the city through the gate and made its way directly towards the Governor's House. The guards did not put up any resistance, and the Governor was forced to surrender. A huge white flag was hoisted atop the Governor's House. Soon white flags of various sizes appeared over all the schools, offices and shops. By the time Mao Tse-tung returned to school, a white flag had already been hung over the gates, with a few soldiers on guard outside. Hunan declared itself independent of the Manchu government."

News came in the afternoon that two members of the Ke Lao Hui of Hunan had been elected Governor and Vice Governor of the Province. "It was a cloudy day," Emi Siao recalled subsequently, "and people felt nervous and tense. But soon everybody brightened up—who had expected the revolution to 'come through' so easily?"

The Governor and Vice Governor did not last long, according to Mao, who saw their corpses lying in the street a few days later.

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82 Autobiography, p. 14; Emi Siao, p. 26:
83 Emi Siao, p. 27.
84 Loc. cit.
85 Autobiography, p. 15.
The Manchu regime had not been overthrown, and the war continued. Changsha buzzed with excitement and activity. Revolutionary leaders proposed to dispatch troops in support of Wuchang and to recruit new soldiers. A number of enthusiastic youngsters began to form a student army, but Mao was not much interested in it. According to Emi Siao, this was the way he reasoned it out: for a revolution to succeed, fighting was necessary and the best way to serve the revolution was to become a soldier—a soldier in the regular army.86

A student army had been organized to Changsha, and many of Mao's classmates were joining it. But Mao himself considered the student army "too confused" and decided to join the regular army instead—"to help complete the revolution." 87

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(17) Mao Tse-tung, now eighteen years old, had grown tall, and his height, which had been a liability when the principal of the Siangtan senior primary school turned him down, now proved to be an advantage. The army wanted tall men and he was accepted. Emi Siao records that "The company to which he belonged was quartered inside the Court of Justice which had not yet begun operating. Besides regular training, these new soldiers had to do all sorts of curious minor duties. They had to carry bed-boards, bedding, clothes-baskets, and other things for their officers when they moved to new quarters. On top of all this, some of them had to make daily journeys to the White Sand Well outside the city to fetch water for the mess as well as for the officers' tea." 88

Mao's pay amounted to seven dollars a month—a small sum by Western standards, but "more than I get in the Red Army now," Mao told Edgar Snow in 1936.89

Most of the soldiers spent their money as soon as they had received it, eating, drinking and otherwise amusing themselves. Mao, on the other hand, was careful with what he earned. Each month he spent two dollars for food and a small amount for water—since he bought water from professional carriers rather than going to the White Sand Well himself. Newspaper subscriptions were his single luxury, and careful reading of the news became a lifetime habit. "He would read through all the four pages of an edition without skipping a word," Emi Siao recorded. "The variety of material contained in the newspapers especially delighted him—news items, commentaries on current affairs, miscellaneous articles and what not. He acquired quite a bit of useful knowledge through newspaper reading.

86 Emi Siao, p. 28.
87 Autobiography, p. 15.
88 Emi Siao, p. 28.
89 Autobiography, p. 15.
Most important of all, it led him to apply himself to the study of current affairs and social problems.90

During these days, Emi Siao recalls, Mao came upon an article about socialism, and somewhat later on he found some pamphlets on the same subject. These materials were sketchy and poorly written, according to Emi Siao, but still, "to Mao Tse-tung, with a sharp sense for what was new and his courage to stand by what he thought was the truth, they were a source of joy and inspiration. He immediately started discussing Socialism with other soldiers, holding it to be the best theory so far advanced for the salvation of the world and mankind."91 He even wrote to some of his old friends at Tungshan and told them about the principles of Socialism.

Among the men in Mao's squad were a Hunan miner and an ironsmith, whom he liked, but the others he considered mediocre and, he recalled later, as rascals. "I persuaded two more students to join the army," Mao told Edgar Snow, "and became on friendly terms with the platoon commander and most of the soldiers. I could write, I knew something about books, and they respected my 'Great Learning.' I could help by writing letters for them or in other such ways."92

The momentary successes of the Revolution convinced students throughout much of China that their wildest expectations had come to pass. Excitement spread like fever through their ranks. They cut off their queues. They tore down the dragon flags of the old regime and ran up new banners in five colors representing "Benevolence, Righteousness, Harmony, Wisdom and Truth." They poised themselves—alert and ready for whatever might come next.

What came next was confusion ... chaos.93

As the revolution proceeded, Yüan Shih-k'ai commanded Imperial forces—but attempted at the same time to maintain negotiations with the rebels, who were beginning to run short of funds. Toward the middle of January Sun Yat-sen, apparently on his own initiative, wired Yüan Shih-k'ai an offer of the Presidency if he would accept the Republic and persuade the Manchu Government to abdicate. Settlement terms were reached on February 12, 1912, the dynasty abdicated, power was transferred to Yüan Shih-k'ai, and Sun Yat-sen, resigning from the Presidency, himself advised the Nanking Assembly to elect the former Imperial general as provisional President of the Republic of China.

So it was that the first phase of the Chinese Revolution came to its somewhat anti-climactic finish.

90 Emi Siao, p. 29.
91 Ibid., p. 30.
92 Autobiography, p. 15.
93 Wang, pp. 95-96.
On achieving the Presidency, Yüan Shih-k'ai tried to restore law and order, but he did not have at his disposal sufficient strength to disband the various nearly independent bodies of troops that had sprung up—nor the funds to buy them off. In order to bring these bands under some sort of control, therefore, Yüan legalized the positions of various commanders by giving them the official rank of Governor in the respective provinces. From this point on the warlords and Military Governors became powers to be reckoned with in the unstable circumstances of twentieth-century China.

In the meantime, Yüan Shih-k'ai used the Presidency to strengthen his personal position while plotting to restore the monarchy with himself as emperor. In late 1913, with the concurrence of his Cabinet, he ordered the dissolution of Sun Yat-sen's party on the grounds that it was a seditious organization, and this, for all practical purposes, brought an end to the new parliamentary government. Yüan's death on June 6, 1916 put a finish to his ambitions, but released a monotonous series of struggles for power on the part of various warlord factions.

Sun Yat-sen had been appealing to European countries and to the United States for support, but it soon became clear that aid was not likely to be made available in either quarter. He and his followers, reorganized as the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, made a number of abortive attempts against the ever-changing coalitions of warlords in Peking, but Sun Yat-sen had few funds and no troops that could be counted upon. As time went on, the procession of military men who gained and lost and regained power in Peking began to resemble a game of musical chairs.

It is small wonder that students and intellectuals in China became more and more disillusioned with events as they unfolded.

With the Chinese Revolution of 1911, indeed, a new kind of young scholar began to achieve prominence in the country. Inspired by “modern” schools and ideas from the West, these youngsters became the driving force of various new reform movements. They led attacks against almost every aspect of the old order—against Confucianism, the patriarchal family, ancestor worship, the old father-son relationship, the traditional role of women, and countless other aspects of the old society. 84

“Our Chinese family is the source of all evils,” one young man wrote. “. . . Political revolution is of no use; it is a failure! . . . The fundamental way to attack the evils in society is to begin with the ‘family revolution.’ ” 85

As leaders of the various movements suffered further disillusionment with the post-revolutionary government, they turned their attention more and more to the students with the hope of rebuilding the nation through

84 Ibid., pp. 91, 103–104.
85 Ibid., p. 104.
them. The National University of Peking became the center of this effort.

Organized after the Sino-Japanese War, the university had become a training school for officials, but during the next two or three decades it became even more famous as the birthplace of revolutionary movements. Members of its faculty were returned-students from the greatest universities of the world, and to their classrooms they brought ideas which they had absorbed in France and England and America.\textsuperscript{96}

The whole of China seemed to be caught up in a renaissance which Hu Shih described as a new attitude—an attitude of criticism against the past. All the gnawing questions which had been raised since the turn of the century were asked again—bitter questions about the old customs, the inherited teachings, and all the most widely recognized beliefs and practices. In Nietzschean terms, it was a “transvaluation of values,” and nothing was taken for granted. The ultimate purpose was to raze the old culture of China and rebuild it after the Western pattern.\textsuperscript{97}

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(18) After his brief experience in the army, Mao spent six months as a student in the First Middle School of Changsha, but the curriculum was limited, and he found the regulations objectionable. He decided that he could make better progress by reading and studying alone.\textsuperscript{98}

While carrying on a program of independent study, Mao began to watch school advertisements in the newspapers. In those days the papers carried advertisements for all sorts of schools—law schools, business school, police academies, schools for soap-makers, and so forth. To be on the safe side, Mao paid application fees to five or six different institutions. The advertisement for the soap-making school was especially “attractive and inspiring.” There was no tuition, board was free, and a small salary was provided. The advertisement described the great social benefits of soap-making and told how the country and its people could be enriched. Mao, who had been considering a police academy, now decided to become a soap-maker. In the end, however, he entered a business school—a provincial institution with good courses under respectable teachers.\textsuperscript{99} As Mao sent in his application, he wrote also to his father, who was delighted, of course, to see his son embarking on a business career, and consented immediately.

It turned out, however, that the courses were conducted in English, and since Mao Tse-tung did not know the language well, he withdrew after a month’s instruction.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p. 110.
\textsuperscript{97} Kiang, p. 24–25.
\textsuperscript{98} Autobiography, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p. 17; Emi Siao, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p. 17; Emi Siao, p. 35.
An old building on a small hill in Changsha had recently been converted into a provincial library—the first provincial library in Hunan. It had been opened to the public only a short time, and so far there were not many regular readers, but there was one whom the librarians had already come to count upon. Every day, as the library opened, a tall and plainly-dressed young man went in, found the book he wanted, sat down at a table in the reading room, and read almost without interruption until closing time.101

This faithful reader, of course, was Mao Tse-tung. "I was very regular and conscientious about it," he told Edgar Snow, "and the half year I spent in this way I consider to have been extremely valuable to me. I went to the library in the morning when it opened. At noon I paused only long enough to buy and consume two rice cakes, which were my daily lunch. I stayed in the library every day reading until it closed." 102

During the course of this independent study Mao read Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, Darwin's Origin of Species, and "a book on ethics by John Stuart Mill." He also read from the works of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Spencer, and Huxley. Beyond this, he "mixed poetry and romances and the tales of ancient Greece with a serious study of history and geography of Russia, America, England, France and other countries." 103

Mao was fascinated by a huge map of the world which hung on the library wall, and he often stood studying it, oblivious to everything else.

He was living at this time in a guild house for natives of Siangsiang. Many of the other lodgers were disbanded soldiers who had neither work nor money. "Students and soldiers were always quarreling in the guild house," Mao recalls, "and one night this hostility between them broke out in physical violence. The soldiers attacked and tried to kill the students. I escaped by fleeing to the toilet, where I hid until the fight was over." 104

Old Mao Jen-sheng was not pleased to find out that his son was neither studying regularly at school nor working at a job, and so he cut off the young man's allowance. Without any source of income, Mao saw his funds running low, and soon he found it impossible to meet his rent payments. He began searching the newspapers again, hoping to find a teaching job, perhaps, or some other means of support. Finally he came upon an encouraging advertisement:

First Normal School of Hunan
Tuition and Board Free
Educational Work after Graduation
Education Lays the Foundation of a Country, etc.

101 Emi Siao, pp. 35–36.
102 Autobiography, p. 18.
103 Loc. cit.
104 Loc. cit.
Mao Tse-tung was overjoyed: this seemed to be the answer. He took the school’s entrance examination and was admitted forthwith.\footnote{Emi Siao, p. 37.}

Page 32.

(19) While Mao Tse-tung was a student in the First Normal School (1912–1918), according to Emi Siao, he devoted much of his time to the natural sciences, but Mao himself insists that he did not like these courses, which were required, and that his marks in them were poor. “Most of all,” he told Edgar Snow, “I hated a compulsory course in still-life drawing. I thought it extremely stupid. I used to think of the simplest subjects possible to draw, finish up quickly and leave the class.” During one class he drew a simple oval and labeled it an egg. His final grade in the class was 40—an utter failure—but his marks in the social sciences were near the top, and in this fashion he was able to get by.\footnote{Emi Siao, p. 46.}

Throughout his years at the Normal School Mao continued his practice of independent reading, and each day he paid particular attention to the newspapers. During the whole of this period, Mao recalls, he spent only \$160—including his registration fees—and of this amount a third must have been spent on newspapers. Old Mao Jen-sheng cursed his son for this extravagance and complained about money wasted on paper.\footnote{Emi Siao, p. 37.}

Emi Siao writes that Mao, after reading a newspaper through with great care, would snip off the blank margins and fasten them together. Then, on these long, slender strips he would note the geographical names he had found and, with help from a map, he would write them out in English. If a friend asked what he was up to, Mao would explain that he was practicing the writing of English. “‘Also, I want to memorize all the important cities, ports, oceans, rivers and mountains in the world. . . . I want to accumulate my general knowledge, as newspapers are a source of living history.’ ”\footnote{Autobiography, p. 19.}

Frequently Mao engrossed himself in a newspaper for hours. With a Chinese atlas on one side and a world atlas on the other, he made a point of looking up every place he found a reference to. “He has a retentive memory,” Emi Siao records, “and if one brings up the name of a place now he can immediately tell in what province and in what hsien of China it is, or its precise location in a foreign country. . . . In making a special study of geography, he used the same methods with which he studied history—grasping the crux of the matter, collecting extensive data but never flying off on a tangent. . . . This tireless pursuit of knowledge characterized Mao Tse-tung from the very early days, and his painstaking meth-
ods of study and research eventually made him a man of immense erudi-
tion." \(^{109}\)

Page 35.

(20) It was during his years at the First Normal School from 1912 to 1918 when he took his degree that Mao’s political views began to take shape, and it was at this time, too, that he had his first experience with “social action.”

There was a special study hall for the students, and often in the evening, when it was ablaze with lights, one could find Mao browsing there among the newspapers. World War I had broken out, and China was already beginning to feel the impact. In 1914 Japan took possession of German holdings in Kiaochow and Tsingtao, and in 1915 she sent the Twenty-one Demands, which China was forced to accept.\(^{110}\)

“At this time,” Mao recalls, “my mind was a curious mixture of ideas of liberalism, democratic reformism and Utopian Socialism. I had somewhat vague passions about ‘nineteenth-century democracy,’ Utopianism and old-fashioned liberalism, and I was definitely anti-militarist and anti-imperialist.” \(^{111}\)

Emi Siao remembers, however, that Mao could explain “in a clear and analytical manner” the situation facing both China and the world in general, which he knew “like the back of his hand.” His fellow students listened to him as though to a formal weekly report on current military and political affairs. “He went into everything: how the Crown Prince of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire was assassinated at Sarajevo; how Kaiser Wilhelm II mobilized his army; how war was declared between Germany and Russia, between Germany and France, and between Germany and England; how a pitched battle was fought at Verdun; how Japan seized the opportunity to impose the Twenty-one Demands, designed to subjugate China, and so on and so forth.” \(^{112}\)

It was also during his years at the First Normal School that Mao’s genius at organizing first began to be apparent. When others talked he listened, Emi Siao remembers, “with his head slightly inclined, often confining himself to monosyllabic answers like ‘um’ or ‘yes.’ Afterwards he would make an orderly analysis, pick out the important points and sum up the problem on hand, all with a minimum of words. His remarks were all to the point and always inspiring. People often came to him with problems. After a brief talk with him, things seemed to clear up and straighten themselves out marvellously.” \(^{113}\)

\(^{109}\) Ibid., pp. 46–47.
\(^{110}\) Wang, p. 160.
\(^{111}\) Autobiography, p. 22.
\(^{112}\) Emi Siao, p. 45.
\(^{113}\) Ibid., p. 49.
Even in those days he had an ability to spot, encourage and develop other people's possibilities. "There are two kinds of people in the world," Mao told one of his school mates, "those who are good at individual things and those who are good at organization. There are more of the former than the latter. However, everyone has his strong points. He should be encouraged to develop and put to good use these strong points however limited they may be. . . ." He explained, "Even the lame, the dumb, the deaf and the blind could all come in useful for the revolutionary cause." 114

In addition to his friends at the First Normal School, Mao began making contacts elsewhere. "Feeling expansive and the need for a few intimate companions," he told Edgar Snow, "I one day inserted an advertisement in a Changsha newspaper, inviting young men interested in patriotic work to make contact with me. I specified youths who were hardened and determined and ready to make sacrifices for their country. To the advertisement I received three and one-half replies. One was from Liu Chiang-lung, who later was to join the Communist Party and afterward to betray it. Two others were from young men who later were to become ultra-reactionaries. The 'half' reply came from a non-committal youth named Li Li-san. Li listened to all I had to say, and then went away without making any definite proposals himself, and our friendship never developed." 115

Gradually, in this way Mao Tse-tung built a group of students which became the nucleus of a larger society. "It was a serious-minded little group of men," Mao recalls, "and they had no time to discuss trivialities. Everything they did or said must have a purpose. They had no time for love or 'romance' and considered the times too critical and the need for knowledge too urgent to discuss women or personal matters." 116 In later years Mao told Edgar Snow how, when he was visiting in the house of another young man, his host began to talk about the problem of buying some meat. "I was annoyed and did not see this fellow again. My friends and I preferred to talk only of large matters—the nature of men, of human society, of China, the world and the universe!" 117

In those intense days, Mao told Edgar Snow, he was not even interested in women. "My parents had married me when I was fourteen to a girl of twenty, but I never lived with her—and subsequently never did. I did not consider her my wife and at this time gave little thought to her." 118 The problems of mankind loomed much larger.

114 Loc. cit.
115 Autobiography, p. 20.
116 Ibid., p. 21.
117 Loc. cit.
118 Loc. cit.
Page 38.

(21) A native of Changsha, Yang was deeply rooted in the Chinese Classics and had made the philosophers of the Sung Dynasty his specialty. Among Western philosophers Kant, Spencer and Rousseau were his favorites. In the First Normal School he taught ethics, logic, psychology, and education. “He was not a brilliant speaker,” Emi Siao recalls, “but neither did he have tiresome mannerisms, and his audience was always most respectfully attentive. His enthusiasm for learning drew around him a circle of thoughtful, studious young men among whom were Mao Tse-tung, Ts’ai Ho-shen and Ch’en Chang.”

Yang had a powerful influence upon the way his students lived, as well as upon their academic interests. In rejecting traditional customs, he advocated living in a new, “democratic” and “scientific” manner. He thought that breakfast should be omitted and urged his students to go in for deep breathing, meditation and year-around cold baths. Mao Tse-tung, Ts’ai Ho-shen, and a number of other students accepted Yang as their model. “In the winter holidays,” Mao told Edgar Snow, “we tramped through the fields, up and down mountains, along city walls, and across the streams and rivers. If it rained, we took off our shirts and called it a rain-bath. When the sun was hot we also doffed our shirts and called it a sun-bath. In the spring winds we shouted that this was a new sport called ‘wind-bathing.’ We slept in the open when frost was still falling and even in November swam in cold rivers. All this went under the title of ‘body-training.’ Perhaps it helped much to build the physique which I was to need so badly later on in my marches back and forth across South China, and on the Long March from Kiangsi to the Northwest.”

One year, Emi Siao records, Mao, Ts’ai Ho-shen and a student named Chang Kung-ti shared a pavilion on the top of Yao-lu Mountain, on the river bank opposite Changsha. They dispensed with both breakfast and supper, and their diet consisted largely of fresh broad beans. Each morning early they climbed to the hilltop in order to meditate, and then they

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119 Emi Siao, p. 39, 57–58. Ch’ en Chang was an outstanding debater, and in later years he made a name for himself as a political agitator. “He was arrested after the defeat of the Revolution,” Emi Siao records, “but before he met his death he made a fiery speech in which he lashed the Kuomintang executioners and called on the people dauntlessly to carry on the struggle.” Ts’ai Ho-shen, who was one of Mao’s closest friends at the First Normal School, was a native of Siangsiang. Born of a poor family, he was unusually studious, and later on he went to France and organized Communist groups there among Chinese laborers and students. Upon his return to China, he became a propagandist for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Arrested in Hong Kong in 1931, he was extradited to Canton and executed for his revolutionary activities.

120 Autobiography, p. 21.
came down for a cold swim in a pond or in the river nearby. Another hobby was "voice training," Emi Siao recalls. "They would go to the hills and shout, or recite the poets of the T'ang Dynasty, or climb up the city walls and there inflate their lungs and yell to the roaring winds." 121

During their stay in the pavilion each of the students possessed little more than a towel, an umbrella, and a minimum of clothes. Mao, at that time, usually wore a long, gray gown which set him apart from the rest.

Even when they later returned to school, Mao and his friends slept out on the playground until winter set in.122

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(22) Emi Siao remembers Yang K'ai-hui as a "very quiet, serious-minded girl" who had been given an excellent education by her parents. Mao and K'ai-hui were married in Changsha.123 Some years later, when Mao was organizing his guerrillas in the mountains, his wife stayed behind in Hunan, was arrested by Nationalist authorities and executed.

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(23) As he built up his correspondence with students and friends in other towns and cities, Mao began to realize the importance of a more closely knit organization. "In 1917 with some other friends," he told Edgar Snow, "I helped to found the Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui (New People's Study Society). It had from seventy to eighty members, and of these many were later to become famous names in Chinese Communism, and in the history of the Chinese Revolution. Among the better-known Communists who were in the Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui were: Lo Man, now secretary of the Party Organization Committee; Hsia Hsi, now in the Second Front Red Army; Ho Hsien-hon, who became high judge of the Supreme Court in the Central Soviet regions and was later killed by Chiang Kai-shek; Kuo Liang, a famous labor organizer, killed by General Ho Chien in 1930; Hsiao Chu-chang [Emi Siao], a writer now in Soviet Russia; Ts'ai Ho-shen, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, killed by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927; Yeh Li-yün, who became a member of the Central Committee and later 'betrayed' to the Kuomintang, and became a capitalist trade-union organizer; and Hsiao Ch'en [Hsiao Chung-chen?], a prominent Party leader, one of the six signers of the original agreement of the formation of the Party, but who died not long ago from illness. The

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121 Emi Siao, p. 41.
122 Ibid., p. 42.
123 Emi Siao, p. 65.
majority of the members of the Hsin Min Hsiieh Hui were killed in the counter-revolution of 1927." 124

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(24) The Hsin Min Hsiieh Hui was only one of numerous such organizations that were coming to life among the Chinese at this time, and sooner or later nearly all of them were profoundly influenced by a magazine known as La Jeunesse published by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, a newly returned student who had recently been appointed Dean of the National University in Peking.

The appearance of Ch'en Tu-hsiu's first article, "My Solemn Appeal to Youth," marked the beginning of a new movement which spread far and wide over the face of China.

"Oh, young men of China!" wrote Ch'en Tu-hsiu. "Will you be able to understand me? Five out of every ten I see are young in age, but old in spirit; nine out of every ten are young in health, but they are also old in spirit. . . . When this happens to a body, the body is dying. When it happens to a society, the society is perishing. Such a sickness cannot be cured by sighing in words; it can only be cured by those who are young, and in addition to being young are courageous. . . . We must have youth if we are to survive, we must have youth if we are to get rid of corruption. Here lies the only hope of our society." 125

The appearance of this single article had the effect of a bombshell. Copies were snatched up wherever they appeared, and students rushed to the publishers or sent orders off posthaste to Peking. It is now difficult to establish how many times the first issue was reprinted, but the number of copies circulated probably ran into the hundreds of thousands. "I began to read this magazine when I was a student in the normal college," Mao Tse-tung recalls, "and admired the articles of Hu Shih and Ch'en Tu-hsiu very much. They became for a while my models, replacing Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and K'ang Yu-wei, whom I had already discarded." 126

The influence of Hu Shih and Ch'en Tu-hsiu was enormous. The former, of course, became a leading literary figure of post-World War I China, while the latter founded the Chinese Communist Party and became its first General Secretary.

In its attacks on the old social structure and its customs and institutions

124 *Autobiography*, pp. 21-22. Mao also refers here to the Social Welfare Society of Hupeh, which contributed substantially to Communist leadership. Among these men were Wen Teh-ying, the Society's leader, who was killed by Chiang Kai-shek's forces in 1927; and Lin Piao, who later served as president of the Chinese Red Army Academy and as an outstanding general.


126 *Autobiography*, p. 22.
the youth movement was bitter and relentless. "In order to support Mr. Democracy," wrote Ch'en Tu-hsiu before he had become a Communist, "we are obliged to oppose Confucianism, the code of rituals, chastity, traditional ethics, old politics; and in order to support Mr. Science, we are compelled to oppose traditional arts, traditional religion; and in order to support Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, we just have to oppose the so-called national heritage and old literature. . . ."

(25) On one occasion Mao read a story about two Chinese students who had made their way across China to the borders of Tibet. Traveling caught his fancy, and he wanted very much to make a similar trip himself, but having little money to spend, he decided it would be better to see Hunan first.

The following summer he and Siao-yu set out across the province on foot. "We walked through . . . five counties without using a single copper," Mao told Edgar Snow. "The peasants fed us and gave us a place to sleep; wherever we went we were kindly treated and welcomed." 128

In the course of another summer Mao and Ts'ai Ho-shen made a similar journey over the countryside—"each armed only with an umbrella, a towel wrapped around it, and a pair of sandals." Before they left, Ts'ai told his mother and his sister Ts'ai Ch'ang (later Chairman of the All China Democratic Women's Federation), "We'll be back in two or three days." But they did not reappear until almost two months later. 129 During their wanderings they investigated the manners and customs of the various villages, observed the life of the peasants, and inquired into rent conditions, relations between landlords and tenants, and the poverty and destitution of the landless peasants. Often, according to Emi Siao, the peasants would offer them food and lodging, but more often they slept out in the open and subsisted on hill haws and berries. 130

(26) As early as 1912 several returned-students from France had organized an association to promote "frugal study" in that country. Normally the costs of studying abroad were almost prohibitive for a Chinese student of moderate circumstances, but the founders of this organization proposed a program of strict frugality which would make it possible for larger numbers of Chinese to attend universities and other institutions in France.

127 Quoted in Kiang, p. 25.
129 Emi Siao, p. 44.
130 Ibid., p. 44.
Within a year more than eighty students went and undertook such a program under the association's auspices. In 1915 a second organization was established in order to combine work and study in France. Under this plan, Chinese students were encouraged to secure work in French factories and use their earnings in order to complete their studies. Special arrangements were made in order to enable these students to make the journey to France and return at very low cost.  

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(27) As Mao Tse-tung was preparing to graduate from the Normal School, according to Emi Siao, "some printed matter about a self-help program for studying in France came to Hunan." To Mao Tse-tung and his friends, and also to many other young Chinese like them in neighboring provinces—all of them anxious to continue their studies, but lacking the funds to do so—this seemed to afford a magnificent opportunity. Therefore, "Mao Tse-tung, Ts'ai Ho-shen and others started a campaign in Hunan and organized a lot of young people. The plan provided that they first go up to Paoting or Peking to acquire a smattering of French. Then they would travel to France on a French liner in the so-called 'fourth class cabin' (i.e., the steerage)."  

Mao traveled to Peking with some of the Hunanese students who were bound for France, but he himself had decided not to study abroad. "I felt that I did not know enough about my own country," Mao told Edgar Snow, "and that my time could be more profitably spent in China." He made the trip to Peking by borrowing money from friends, and on his arrival he had to look for work at once. The capital seemed to be an extremely expensive place indeed.

By that time Yang Huai-chung had moved from the First Normal School to the faculty of Peking National University in Peking. Mao went to him for help in finding a job and was introduced by the professor to Li Ta-chao, the university librarian, who later became one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party and was strangled to death, after the Peking raids of 1927 by Chang Tso-lin.

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(28) Mao remembers the experience this way: "My own living conditions in Peking were quite miserable, and in contrast the beauty of the

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131 Kiang, p. 19.
132 Emi Siao, p. 62.
133 Autobiography, p. 23.
134 Emi Siao, p. 65.
136 Emi Siao, p. 65.
old capital was a vivid and living compensation. I stayed in a place called San Yen-ching (“Three Eyes Well”), in a little room which held seven other people. When we were all packed fast on the k’ang there was scarcely room enough for any of us to breathe. I used to have to warn the people on each side of me when I wanted to turn over.”

Actually, Mao spent much of his spare time in the parks and in the grounds of the old imperial palace where “I saw the early northern spring, I saw the white plum blossoms flower while the ice was still solid over the North Sea.” He watched the willows with ice crystals hanging from them and remembered a description of the same scene by a T’ang Dynasty poet, Ch’en Tzu-ang, who wrote about winter-jeweled trees looking like ten thousand peach trees blossoming.

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(29) The job provided a salary of eight dollars a month. “My office was so low,” Mao told Edgar Snow, “that people avoided me. One of my tasks was to register the names of people who came to read newspapers, but to most of them I did not exist as a human being.” Some of those who came to read had names that were famous in the renaissance movement. “I tried to begin conversations with them on political and cultural subjects,” Mao remembers, “but they were very busy men. They had no time to listen to an assistant librarian speaking southern dialect.”

Mao was not discouraged, however. He continued his independent studies—reading, studying maps and asking questions, and Professor Yang introduced him and several of his student friends from Hunan to some of the foremost intellectuals in Peking. He joined the Philosophical Society and the Journalism Society in order to be able to attend classes in the university, and through these organizations he met fellow students like Ch’en Kung-po, who became a high Kuomintang official; Tan P’ing-shan, who later emerged as a leading Communist and still later as a prominent member of the Third Party; and Shao P’iao-p’ing, a lecturer in the Journalism Society who was killed by Chang Tso-lin in 1926. “While I was working in the library,” Mao told Edgar Snow, “I also met Chang Kuo-t’ao, now vice-chairman of the Soviet Government, K’ang P’ei-ch’en, who later joined the Ku Klux Klan in California (!!!—E.S.); and Tuan Hsi-
MAO TSE-TUNG AND I WERE BEGGARS

p' en, now Vice Minister of Education in Nanking. And here also I met and fell in love with Yang K'ai-hui. She was the daughter of my former ethics teacher, Yang Chen-ch'i [Yang Huai-chung] who had made a great impression on me in my youth. . . .” 144

The intellectual life of Peking began to have its effect upon Mao. "My interest in politics continued to increase," he records, "and my mind turned more and more radical. I have told you some of the background for this. But just now I was still confused, looking for a road, as we say. I read some pamphlets on anarchy and was much influenced by them. With a student named Chu Hsun-pei, who used to visit me, I often discussed anarchism and its possibilities in China. At that time I favored many of its proposals." 145

Page 174.
(30) Mao began devoting a large part of his time to student politics. He was active in organizing the Hunan Students' Association and soon became editor of its news organ, the Hsiang Chiang Review. The foreword of the Review, written by Mao, took up more than half the space of the periodical, and according to Emi Siao, its fiery eloquence held the readers spellbound. "As a publication which opposed imperialism and warlordism and advocated democracy, science and the new culture, the Hsiang Chiang Review greatly stimulated the student and youth movements in Hunan and elsewhere and influenced all intellectual, academic and educational circles in Hunan in their great march of progress and revolution." 146

Page 174.
(31) The Hunanese warlord, Chang Ching-yao, opposed the various movements, whereupon, according to Mao, "we led a general student strike against Chang, demanding his removal, and sent delegations to Peking and the Southwest, where Sun Yat-sen was then active, to agitate against him. In retaliation to the students' opposition, Chang Ching-yao suppressed the Hsiang Chiang Review." 147 Mao then returned to Peking as representative of the Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui, which began organizing an anti-militarist movement, and there he became head of the society's news agency. Chang was overthrown by another militarist, T'an Yen-k'ai who, in turn, was driven out of Hunan somewhat later by a warlord named Chao Heng-t'i. The whole countryside was in political tumult.

146 Emi Siao, p. 70.
At the close of World War I the Chinese Renaissance with its uncritical enthusiasm for the West began to suffer a series of rude and embittering shocks.

For many young Chinese, Woodrow Wilson had seemed to be speaking with the voice of a prophet when he condemned secret covenants and forced agreements and when he called for self-determination among all peoples and peace for the world. In the new postwar era that was coming, they told themselves, it would be possible at last for less powerful nations like China to develop their cultures, their industries and their national welfare and take their places in the sun.\textsuperscript{148}

Chinese hopes remained high during Armistice negotiations, but the Peace Conference brushed aside a Chinese request for the cancellation of Japan's Twenty-one Demands. The issue, according to Western nations, lay outside the area of consideration which the Conference had set for itself. Yet Japan—which, from the Chinese viewpoint, had taken advantage of the war to rob China of its territory—was nevertheless allowed to retain special rights which Germany had previously enjoyed in Shantung.

"... when the news of the Paris Peace Conference finally reached us," a Peking University student wrote in \textit{The Renaissance}, "we were greatly shocked. We at once awoke to the fact that foreign nations were still selfish and militaristic and that they were all great liars. I remember that in the evening of May 2 [1919] very few of us slept. I and a group of my friends talked almost the whole night. We came to the conclusion that a greater world war would be coming sooner or later, and that this great war would be fought in the East. We had nothing to do with our Government, that we knew very well, and at the same time we could no longer depend upon the principle of any so-called great leader like Woodrow Wilson, for example. Looking at our people and at the pitiful ignorant masses, we couldn't help but feel that we must struggle."\textsuperscript{149}

On May 4, 1919 five thousand students and citizens demonstrated in Peking. Shouting slogans, they advanced into the legation quarter to demand the intercession of American and European diplomats against the aggressive policies of Japan. "Cancel the Twenty-one Demands," they shouted, "Down with power politics" and "Down with Japan." Denied admission to the legation quarter, they marched toward the homes of Chinese Cabinet members who were supposed to be the tools of Japan. "Down with all traitors," they shouted, "We will not sign the Peace Treaty." The house of Ts'ao Ju-lin, the Minister of Finance and the most notorious of the pro-Japanese Cabinet members, was partially wrecked

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\textsuperscript{148} Kiang, p. 36.
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\textsuperscript{149} As quoted in Kiang, p. 37.
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while the Minister himself made good his escape and took refuge with the Japanese.

Police began rounding up the students, but disorders continued—even after the jails were filled. For every student who was imprisoned, a dozen or more were ready to continue the demonstrations. "The movement electrified the whole country," according to Emi Siao. "Students of Tientsin, Shanghai, Nanking and Wuhan, in the provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Fukien, Shansi, Chekiang, Kiangsi and Hunan and in the Northeast rose in indignation. Strikes, protest meetings and the boycott of Japanese goods spread like wildfire. Students and intellectuals from every corner of the country threw themselves into this anti-Japanese movement. The demand for organization and action was universal." 150

It was often difficult for the observer to determine how much of this anger was directed against Japan and how much was deflected against countries of the West.

The implications of the Russian Revolution began to dawn on many Chinese intellectuals just at the moment when disillusionment with the West was thus reaching a climax. Men like Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao hailed this event as the beginning of another "New Tide" in thought. The real victory, according to Li Ta-chao, had been won by Lenin, Trotsky and Marx rather than by Woodrow Wilson, and supporters of the new Bolshevism hailed it as a gospel of salvation. 151

"It was at the summons of this world revolutionary upheaval, of the Russian revolution, and at the call of Lenin," Mao wrote years later in the *New Democracy*, "that the 'May 4th' movement actually took place." 152

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(33) Sometime early in 1919 Mao went to Shanghai with a student who was on his way to France. "I had a ticket only to Tientsin, and I did not know how I was to get any farther. But, as the Chinese proverb says, 'heaven will not delay a traveler. . . .'" 158 A fellow student loaned him ten dollars which was sufficient to take him as far as P'u-k'ou [Pukow]. On the way he stopped at Ch'ü-fou [Kufow] and visited the grave of Confucius. "I saw the small stream where Confucius' disciples bathed their feet and the little town where the sage lived as a child. He is supposed to have planted a famous tree near the historic temple dedicated to him, and I saw that. I also stopped by the river where Yen Hui, one of Confucius' famous disciples, had once lived, and I saw the birth-

150 Emi Siao, p. 69.
151 Kiang, p. 76.
153 *Autobiography*, p. 25.
place of Mencius. On this trip I climbed T'ai Shan, the sacred mountain of Shantung. . . .” 154

On reaching P'u-k'ou, Mao found himself penniless again. “Nobody had any money to lend me; I did not know how I was to get out of town. But the worst of the tragedy happened when a thief stole my only pair of shoes! Ai-ya! What was I to do? But again, Heaven will not delay a traveler, and I had a very good piece of luck. Outside the railway station I met an old friend from Hunan, and he proved to be my 'good angel.' He lent me money for a pair of shoes, and enough to buy a ticket to Shanghai. Thus I safely completed my journey—keeping an eye on my new shoes.” 155

In Shanghai Mao learned that a considerable sum of money had been raised for sending students to France and an allowance set aside to cover his own return to Hunan. So he saw his friends off on their ship bound for France, and then set out for Changsha. Upon his arrival there he found lodgings across the Siang River from the city and returned to his old austere life of one meal of broad beans and rice a day—and took up political activities again.156

Somewhat later in 1919 Mao made a second visit to Shanghai, where he discussed with Ch'en Tu-hsiu the possibility of organizing a League for Reconstruction of Hunan. “Then I returned to Changsha and began to organize it. I took a place as a teacher there, meanwhile continuing my activity in the Hsin Min Hsüeh Hui. The society had a program then for the 'independence' of Hunan, meaning, really, autonomy. Disgusted with the Northern [Peking] Government, and believing that Hunan could modernize more rapidly if freed from connections with Peking, our group organized for separation. I was then a strong supporter of America's Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door.” 157

Group by group, Chinese students were still leaving Shanghai for study in France. As one of Hunan's groups happened to be leaving at the time of Mao's second visit to Shanghai, he went down to the dock to see them off. "The sun," according to Emi Siao, "was shining on the rippling waves in the Whangpoo River. Both those who were leaving behind their Motherland and those who had come to say goodbye felt sad. They found it hard to raise their heads, but they kept looking at each other for a long time. . . . Mao Tse-tung, in a pale blue gown, waved briefly to those on deck. Then, without waiting for the boat to weigh anchor, he turned around and went up the sloping jetty. Soon he was lost in noisy, jostly crowds of people.” 158

154 Ibid., p. 25.
156 Emi Siao, p. 67.
157 Autobiography, p. 27.
158 Emi Siao, p. 70.
Page 188.
(34) Sympathy for the Russian Revolution was growing in many parts of China. "I remember an episode in 1920," Mao recalls in the Autobiography, "when the Hsin Min Hsieh Hui organized a demonstration to celebrate the third anniversary of the Russian October Revolution. It was suppressed by the police. Some of the demonstrators had attempted to raise the Red flag at the meeting, but were prohibited from doing so by the police. They then pointed out that according to Article 12 of the (then) Constitution, the people had the right to assemble, organize, and speak, but the police were not impressed. They replied that they were not there to be taught the Constitution, but to carry out the orders of the governor, Chao Heng-t'i. From this time on I became more and more convinced that only mass political power, secured through mass action, could guarantee the realization of dynamic reforms." 159

It was during the winter of 1920 that Mao, beginning to organize the workers, was guided for the first time by Marxist theory and by the example of the Russian Revolution. During the course of his second visit to Peking he read about developments in Russia and made every effort to lay hands on what little Communist literature was then available in Chinese. "Three books especially deeply carved my mind," Mao told Edgar Snow in 1936, "and built up in me a faith in Marxism from which, once I had accepted it as the correct interpretation of history, I did not afterward waver. These books were The Communist Manifesto, translated by Ch'en Wang-tao, the first Marxist book ever published in Chinese; Class Struggle, by Kautsky; and a History of Socialism, by Kirkupp. By the summer of 1920 I had become, in theory and to some extent in action, a Marxist, and from this time on I considered myself a Marxist. In the same year I married Yang K'ai-hui." 160

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(35) Many years later another participant, Ch'en T'an-ch'iu, wrote an account of the meetings for The Communist International: 161

"In the second half of July, 1921, nine guests unexpectedly arrived at a private Ladies' School in Pubalu Street on the territory of the French Concession in Shanghai. They all settled in the top story of this school. On the ground floor, there was nobody with the exception of the cook who was at the same time the watchman, since the students and teachers had left for their summer holidays. On instruction from an acquaintance, the watchman prepared dinners for the newly arrived guests every day. In

159 Autobiography, p. 28.
160 Ibid., p. 28.
addition to this it was his task to see that no outsiders entered the school. If his acquaintance had not explained who the guests were, he would not have known, since he did not understand their dialect. Some spoke Hunan dialect, others Hupeh dialect, while others spoke Peking dialect.

"The arrivals were the representatives of the Communist circles of various districts in China. They came to Shanghai with a view to officially organizing the Communist Party of China. . . . The Congress lasted four days. The following questions were discussed there: (1) the current political situation; (2) the basic tasks of the Party; (3) the Party statutes; and (4) organizational questions.

"During the discussion of these questions, serious disagreements arose, particularly on the question of the basic tasks of the Party and organizational principles. On the one hand a tendency of legal Marxists headed by Li Han-tsin [Li Han-chün] came to the fore, which considered that the Chinese proletariat was too young and did not understand the ideas of Marxism, and required a lengthy period of propagandist and educational work. On this basis Li Han-tsin did not consider it necessary to establish a real proletarian party, and declared himself against the dictatorship of the proletariat, and for bourgeois democracy.

"He asserted that it was possible within the bounds of bourgeois democracy legally to organize and educate the proletariat, that therefore there was no reason for immediately proceeding to build up workers' trade union organizations, and that it would be better to direct all our strength to the development of the student movement and cultural educational work. Li Han-tsin declared that what was first of all necessary was really to organize the intellectuals, and arm them with Marxist theory, and then when Marxism had won the minds of the intellectuals, it would be possible with their assistance to set about organizing and educating the workers. Therefore, he did not consider it necessary to have a disciplined and fighting party of the proletariat, and as against that proposed the unification of the advanced intellectuals, and a legal organization of a wide peaceful party to occupy itself with the study of the theory of Marxism.

"Making this his starting point, he came to the conclusion that anybody who recognizes and spreads the principles of Marxism may be a member of the Party. He considered that it was not obligatory for a member to belong to a definite party organization and to take part in its practical work. The line of Li Han-tsin was also supported by Li Ta and Chen Chun-bo [Ch'en Kung-po].

"Another line was an extremely "Left" one. It was headed by Lu Chen-tsin [Liu Jen-ch'ing] who considered the dictatorship of the proletariat to be the immediate aim of the struggle, and opposed all legal forms of work. He relegated the whole of the intelligentsia to the role of ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie, and considered it necessary as a rule to
refuse to accept them into the Party. Bao Hwei-shen [Pao Hui-seng] also declared himself in agreement with this point of view.

“The majority of the delegates of the Congress opposed both incorrect points of view. At last the general line was accepted, in which the main task of the Party was recognized to be the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In defining the tactics of the struggle in the transition period, it was pointed out that the Party not only cannot reject but, on the contrary, must actively call on the proletariat to take part in and to lead the bourgeois democratic movement as well. The line was adopted demanding the organization of a militant and disciplined Party of the proletariat. The development of the trade union movement was put forward as a central task of the work of the Communist Party. In relation to legal forms of work, it was stated that the Party should make use of them under definite circumstances beneficial to the proletariat. As regards the organizational principles and conditions of the acceptance of membership to the Party, it was decided to make use of the experience of the Russian Bolshevik Party.

“The adoption of these lines laid the basis for the establishment of a Bolshevik Party in China. The final endorsement of the Party statutes was transferred to the fourth day of the Congress. On this day, however, after supper, when the delegates gathered together at eight o'clock in the evening in Li Han-tsin's apartment, and the chairman announced the continuation of the work of the Congress, a suspicious person in a long coat appeared in a neighboring room. Li Han-tsin was sent along to find out who was the unknown. This person replied that he was seeking for the chairman of the Association of Social Organizations, Wan by name, and then said he was mistaken and speedily left. It is true that the Association of Social Organizations was three houses away from Li Han-tsin's apartment, but everybody knew that it had no chairman, and least of all one named Wan. The appearance of this person appeared suspicious to us, and so we quickly gathered together our documents and disappeared. Only Li Han-tsin and Chen Chun-bo stayed behind, and it was a fact that before ten minutes had passed after our departure, nine spies and policemen turned up at Li Han-tsin's apartment to institute a search. Apart from legal Marxist literature, they found nothing there, and were therefore unable to arrest anybody.

“Each of us, however, had to search for a night's lodging. We could not return to the Ladies' School, since we presumed that spies had discovered our Congress by traces leading from the school.”

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(36) Years later Ch'en T'an-ch'iu described the event for The Communist International:
"At the beginning we counted on finishing the work of the Congress in seven days, but in connection with this incident it was decided to cut the time down to five days. However, we could not find a suitable place in which to continue the work of the Congress in Shanghai. It was decided to move to Sihu (the Western Lake) in Hanchow, but before our departure we came to the conclusion that Sihu was not a suitable place, since many holiday-makers come there. We therefore decided on Naihu [Nan Hu], which is close to Tsiasin [Chiahsing], 300 li away from Shanghai. Lovers of nature also come to this place, but in smaller numbers. When we arrived at this place we hired a big boat, bought food and wine, and carried through the work of the Congress in a boat, under the guise of having an outing on the lake.

"This was the last day of the Congress. Li Han-tsin [Li Han-chün] and Chen Chun-bo [Chen Kung-po] did not attend on this day, since a watch was kept on them after the search had taken place. The weather that day was dull. However, many holiday-makers appeared after eight o'clock. And this, of course, made our work more difficult. At half past nine a light rain began. The holiday-makers departed and this made it easier for us to continue our work in peace. We discussed the questions facing us during the whole day, until eleven o'clock at night. Apart from the final endorsement of the Party statutes, we discussed the question of our attitude towards Sun Yat-sen, the question of the establishment of a temporary Central Bureau of the Party, and then carried through the elections to the Bureau. The question of Sun Yat-sen gave rise to a small discussion. Bao Hwei-shen [Pao Hai-seng] considered that the Communist Party and Sun Yat-sen represented two diametrically opposed classes, between which there could be no compromises, and therefore the attitude towards Sun Yat-sen must be the same as towards the Beiyan militarists, and even still more negative, since he confused the masses by his demagoguery. This conception was rejected by the delegates of the Congress. The following line was adopted towards this question: In general a critical attitude must be adopted towards the teachings of Sun Yat-sen, but his various practical and progressive actions should be supported, by adopting forms of non-Party collaboration. The adoption of this principle laid the basis for further collaboration between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang and for the development of the anti-militarist and anti-imperialist movement. . . ."

162 Ibid., p. 1364. The list of those present is believed to comprise Chang Kuo-t'ao, Ch'en Kung-po, Ch'en T'an-ch'iu, Chou Fu-hai, Ho Shu-heng, Li Han-chün, Li Ta, Liu Jen-ch'ing, Mao Tse-tung, Pao Hui-seng, T'eng En-ming, Tung Pi-wu and Wang Ch'iu-meng. Also present was Hendricus Sneevliet (Maring), who represented the Comintern.