

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

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

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The Chinese Communist Party Is Born

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

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

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

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

Mao replied, "If we work hard, in about thirty to fifty years' time the Communist Party may be able to rule China."

"That all depends upon how you go about it," I said. "I also believe that after a long period of struggle, it may be possible for the Communists to dominate China. But it will not be for the good of the Chinese people; and their domination cannot last forever."

"But if we manage to become the rulers of our country, don't you think that's a great achievement?" Mao asked.

"No, I don't," I replied. "I can best answer your question with a quotation from Lao Tzu: 'Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish.'"

Mao laughed loudly at that. He thought I was joking. He did not know, and he never will be able to realize, that I was speaking very seriously. As a matter of fact, I wholeheartedly agree with Lao Tzu's philosophy, so aptly expressed in the sentence I had quoted.

That afternoon Mao and I left Changsha by the West Gate on the river boat. We occupied the same cabin; I took the upper berth and he the lower. Many friends came down to see me off, as they knew I would soon be returning to France; so we were very busy talking with them all afternoon. In the evening, when the boat sailed, we had a sound sleep. When we entered Lake Tungting, it seemed as if we were on the ocean with a boundless expanse of water all around us. Mao was up first and went to sit on deck. Later I joined him and noticed a small thin book in his pocket. When I asked what it was, he took it out to show me the title, *An Outline of the Capitalist System*. I said jokingly, "Do you have to study capitalism to be able to form a Communist Party?" Mao smiled a little and said nothing. To break the silence, I continued, "I understand you didn't have to study to be a Communist; so you shouldn't need to read books like that. The most important thing is to believe. That's why Communism is like a religion." Mao just smiled again and still did not answer. Finally to break the spell, I asked if he had eaten his breakfast. "No," he replied, "I was waiting for you, so we could eat together."

Soon the boat reached Hankow and we parted. I went ashore while Mao went on to Shanghai, where we arranged to meet. He gave me the secret address where I could find him after I had completed my business in Hupeh and Kiangsi.

When I arrived in Shanghai, I went directly to Valon Street in the French Concession and found the house the number of which he had given me. In the room were two beds, one of which was undoubtedly for me, but Mao was not there. In the evening when he returned, he told me they had had trouble with the secret police who had held them for some lengthy interrogations. Since the schools were on holiday, they had, after some difficulty, obtained the use of a classroom in a girls' college. Although they had locked all the doors for the meeting, the police had traced them and now it would be impossible to meet there again. These French Concession secret police were very smart and now they followed the delegates wherever they went; so they dared not meet again as a whole group. Though they scattered widely and maintained contact only by means of one or two delegates who acted as messengers, after several days' inactivity the police still maintained a close vigilance.(35)

"We've hit on a new plan," Mao announced one day, looking a bit happier than usual. "One of the delegates has a girl friend from Chiahsing in Chekiang Province and she says that on the way from Shanghai to West Lake you pass through Chiahsing. Just outside that city is another lake called Nan Hu (South Lake) and we are going to visit it as if we were tourists and have our meeting on the boat. We shall try to avoid the police, but to make doubly sure, we shall buy train tickets to Hangchow as if we were going to West Lake. There will be lots of tourists on the train and when we get to Chiahsing, we shall get off as if we were going to walk up and down the platform. We shall mix with the crowd till the train leaves. If the police follow us from Shanghai, they will not think of this. Besides, they are not so particular about what happens outside of Shanghai City. I want you to come to Chiahsing with me and after the meeting we'll go and visit West Lake. Since I was a very small boy I have been told about the beautiful scenery there and now, thanks to the Shanghai secret police, I'll see it."

"Very well," I consented. "Tomorrow we shall go and visit West Lake."

Next morning at seven, Mao and I left our room for the station where we bought third-class tickets for Hangchow. As we entered the station about nine o'clock, we saw the name "Chiahsing" in large char-

acters on a big white signboard. When the train stopped, we jumped down and mixed with the crowd on the platform. After a time, as unobtrusively as possible, we made our way out onto the road. As I looked at the waters of the lake so close to the town, I mused that these placid waters were so shortly to give birth to a monster, the Chinese Communist Party. The other delegates had also left the train but, when they met, they gave no outward sign of recognition. Mao and I kept a sharp lookout as we walked, but no one was following us. We found a little hotel on a side street where we engaged a small room for the night.

In the room was one bed and a tiny table. The bed was quite large and occupied a good two-thirds of the floor, leaving barely enough room to move about. The mosquito net was white and clean, so I decided to stay. In the hot summer, a good net is a very important consideration in choosing a room. As soon as we were settled, Mao set off for the meeting place. He took my arm and said, "I would like you to go with me to visit South Lake!"

"No, I'll wait here for you to come back and we will visit West Lake together," I replied. "What time do you expect to return?"

"It is really too bad that you don't want to see South Lake with me," Mao continued. "I expect to return late in the evening. We shall eat on the boat, so don't wait for me for supper."

After saying that, he looked hard at me for several minutes and then left without another word. After writing a few letters, I strolled slowly along the bank of South Lake, watching the boats sailing slowly past. It was a good idea to hold the secret meeting on the boat and I wondered which craft was destined to give birth to the Chinese Communist Party. The muddy waters of the lake made me think of the Deluge, the New Flood which would sweep away old China if the Communists were to dominate the country—turbid, murky, *huo shui* (evil waters).(36)

After supper there was still no sign of Mao Tse-tung; so I took a bath and spent some time looking out of the little window. Lights showed everywhere even though, on the horizon, the sky was still not quite dark. I switched off the room light and got into bed. When Mao arrived two or three hours later, he held open the net and asked, "Mr. Siao, are you asleep already?"



"Yes," I replied, "I was asleep. But please don't hold open the net. The mosquitoes are terrible here and they'll come in! Are you satisfied with the day's work?"

"Yes, very satisfied," Mao replied. "We were able to talk quite freely in the boat, at long last! It's too bad you didn't go."

I answered quickly, "You see you appreciated the 'Freedom'! In Shanghai you were not free to talk with your colleagues. You were not free to hold your meeting. The police followed you everywhere. You didn't like that, yet that situation lasted only a few days; whereas in Russia it's like that night and day, every day, wherever one goes! Where could a group find a 'South Lake' in Russia? How is it that you like your freedom so much and yet you deliberately decide to destroy the freedom of your fellow countrymen, to make China a second Russia? What did you decide at the meeting? What action are you planning to take?"

Mao replied quietly, "We decided that we must make China into a second Russia! We must organize ourselves and fight to the end."

"How are you going to organize?" I asked.

"The delegates are not a bad lot," Mao explained. "Some of them are very well educated and they can read either Japanese or English. We decided that we must first form a nucleus. This nucleus is to be the Chinese Communist Party. Afterwards we shall arrange details of the propaganda to be carried out and the specific plan of action. The main idea is to start off by converting the laboring classes and the younger students to Communism. Then, too, we must be certain to have a sound economic basis. That explains why we must belong to the Third International."

"But," I protested, "the Third International is Russian. Why don't you organize the Fourth International?"

"What is that?" asked Mao.

"The Fourth International," I explained, "is the idealist part of Communism. It is a combination of the ideals of Karl Marx and Prudhon. It is *free* Communism. You remember what I said about the two wheels of the rickshaw? The rickshaw of *free* Communism has both wheels; it needs no force to support it! If you agree to organize your movement along the lines of the Fourth International, I shall dedicate my whole life to it!"

"Let's talk about that again in a thousand years," said Mao sadly, as he opened the mosquito net and got into bed.

What a smell of hot, sweaty, unwashed flesh! I had nevertheless become used to this strong odor. As the Chinese saying goes, "If you stay in the fish market long enough, you don't notice the smell." But I felt obliged to suggest, "Wouldn't you like to have a bath? You can in this hotel. I've just had one."

To which Mao replied, "I feel too lazy to get washed. Let's sleep now and we'll get up early tomorrow and visit West Lake." So saying, he lay down and made himself comfortable, but inevitably, the eternal discussion of Communism and freedom, state or individual, commenced again and it was almost dawn before we stopped talking. Mao was a sound sleeper, never restless, and in the big bed, I did not feel his presence.

The sky was bright and clear when I awakened. Mao was still sleeping; so I lay quite still. After a time, he opened his eyes and I called him, "Jun-chih, it's broad daylight. Let's get up!"

"What time is it?" he asked. "Can't I sleep just a little longer?"

I told him he could and I got up as quietly as possible. Half an hour later he awakened and got up immediately, saying, "What time is it? Have we missed the train?"

"No, don't worry," I told him, "it is still early. There are many trains to West Lake each day from here."

The weather was beautiful and a gentle breeze wafted the sweet perfume of summer flowers from the banks of South Lake. I stood looking at the lake for a long time. There were no tourist boats yet and all was peaceful; but I thought of what had taken place on those serene waters the day before—waters of bitterness, poison juice. I turned away sadly.

Since there were few people on the train, we had another long talk of several hours, but it was rather disorderly, without going deeply into any topic. Mostly we criticized Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the leader of the Communist movement, because he was too much of a scholarly type and rather bourgeois in outlook. Li Ta-chao seemed to us a more appropriate choice, but apparently the Russians favored Ch'en Tu-hsiu and he had been the chief organizer in the South Lake meeting.

In the afternoon we arrived at Hangchow, capital of Chekiang

Province, and the houses, roads, and gardens along the lake shore formed a scene of indescribable beauty. I thought of the saying that Hangchow was one of the earthly paradises, and realized that it was no exaggeration: "Above there is Heaven, below there is Soo and Hang" (Soochow and Hangchow). *Shang yu tien tang, hsia yu su hang*.

Mao and I visited many famous spots but despite the splendor of the outer world, we were not happy. At one time I said, "Look at these marvelous gardens. How could they have been made, and how could people come here to enjoy them without money?"

Mao Tse-tung replied, "This is a criminal production. Many people use their money for criminal purposes!"

"Well, we shall be two temporary little criminals today," I smiled.

"Tomorrow we must get away from here quickly!" said Mao.

Next day we took the train back to Shanghai and soon Mao returned to Changsha. I remained for a week to finish my business and then returned to Peking.

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"Before the World Comes to an End."

Up to this time Mao had kept no secrets from me as regards his Communist activities; indeed, he had told me many things in confidence of which I had breathed not a word to anyone! After we separated in Shanghai, we wrote to each other frequently, sometimes using secret language which only we could understand. When I returned to France several months later, our letters took ten to twelve weeks to reach their destination, since there was no air mail service then. It was fortunate for Mao's pocket that air service was not available, because his writing was so big and clumsy and his letters were always so long, that he would have had to spend a fortune on stamps!

When I returned to China late in 1924, I lived in Peking. Since I could not go to Changsha to meet with Mao Tse-tung and the other members of the Hsin Min Study Association, we exchanged letters