Part Four

Genesis of a Communist
but those events seemed to have had significance for them only collectively, not because they as individuals had made history there, but because the Red Army had been there, and behind it the whole organic force of an ideology for which they were fighting. It was an interesting discovery, but it made difficult reporting.

One night when all other questions had been satisfied, Mao turned to the list I had headed “Personal History.” He smiled at a question, “How many times have you been married?”—and the rumor later spread that I had asked Mao how many wives he had. He was skeptical, anyway, about the necessity for supplying an autobiography. But I argued that in a way that was more important than information on other matters. “People want to know what sort of man you are,” I said, “when they read what you say. Then you ought also to correct some of the false rumors circulated.”

I reminded him of various reports of his death, how some people believed he spoke fluent French, while others said he was an ignorant peasant, how one report described him as a half-dead tubercular, while others maintained that he was a mad fanatic. He seemed mildly surprised that people should spend their time speculating about him. He agreed that such reports ought to be corrected. Then he looked over the items again, as I had written them down.

“Suppose,” he said at last, “that I just disregard your questions, and instead give you a general sketch of my life? I think it will be more understandable, and in the end all of your questions will be answered just the same.”

During the nightly interviews that followed—we were like conspirators indeed, huddled in that cave over the red-covered table, with sputtering candles between us—I wrote until I was ready to fall asleep. Wu Liang-p'ing sat next to me and interpreted Mao's soft southern dialect, in which a chicken, instead of being a good substantial northern chi, became a romantic ghii, and Hunan became Funan, and a bowl of ch'a turned into ts'a, and many much stranger variations occurred. Mao related everything from memory, and I put it down as he talked. It was, as I have said, retranslated and corrected, and this is

On the five or six sets of questions I had submitted on different matters, Mao had talked for a dozen nights, hardly ever referring to himself or his own role in some of the events described. I was beginning to think it was hopeless to expect him to give me such details: he obviously considered the individual of very little importance. Like other Reds I met he tended to talk only about committees, organizations, armies, resolutions, battles, tactics, “measures,” and so on, and seldom of personal experience.

For a while I thought this reluctance to expand on subjective matters, or even the exploits of their comrades as individuals, might derive from modesty, or a fear or suspicion of me, or a consciousness of the price so many of these men had on their heads. Later on I discovered that that was not so much the case as it was that most of them actually did not remember personal details. As I began collecting biographies I found repeatedly that the Communist would be able to tell everything that had happened in his early youth, but once he had become identified with the Red Army he lost himself somewhere, and without repeated questioning one could hear nothing more about him, but only stories of the Army, or the Soviets, or the Party—capitalized. These men could talk indefinitely about dates and circumstances of battles, and movements to and from a thousand unheard-of places,
the result, with no attempt to give it literary excellence, beyond some necessary corrections in the syntax of the patient Mr. Wu:

"I was born in the village of Shao Shan, in Hsiang Tan hsien,\* Hunan province, in 1893. My father's name was Mao Jen-sheng [Mao Shun-sheng], and my mother's maiden name was Wen Chi-mei.

"My father was a poor peasant and while still young was obliged to join the army because of heavy debts. He was a soldier for many years. Later on he returned to the village where I was born, and by saving carefully and gathering together a little money through small trading and other enterprise he managed to buy back his land.

"As middle peasants then my family owned fifteen mou\‡ of land. On this they could raise sixty tan\‡ of rice a year. The five members of the family consumed a total of thirty-five tan—that is, about seven each—which left an annual surplus of twenty-five tan. Using this surplus, my father accumulated a little capital and in time purchased seven more mou, which gave the family the status of 'rich' peasants. We could then raise eighty-four tan of rice a year.

"When I was ten years of age and the family owned only fifteen mou of land, the five members of the family consisted of my father, mother, grandfather, younger brother, and myself. After we had acquired the additional seven mou, my grandfather died, but there came another younger brother. However, we still had a surplus of forty-nine tan of rice each year, and on this my father steadily prospered.

"At the time my father was a middle peasant he began to deal in grain transport and selling, by which he made a little money. After he became a 'rich' peasant, he devoted most of his time to that business. He hired a full-time farm laborer, and put his children to work on the farm, as well as his wife. I began to work at farming tasks when I was six years old. My father had no shop for his business. He simply purchased grain from the poor farm-

ers and then transported it to the city merchants, where he got a higher price. In the winter, when the rice was being ground, he hired an extra laborer to work on the farm, so that at that time there were seven mouths to feed. My family ate frugally, but had enough always.

"I began studying in a local primary school when I was eight and remained there until I was thirteen years old. In the early morning and at night I worked on the farm. During the day I read the Confucian Analects and the Four Classics. My Chinese teacher belonged to the stern-treatment school. He was harsh and severe, frequently beating his students. Because of that I ran away from the school when I was ten. I was afraid to return home for fear of receiving a beating there, and set out in the general direction of the city, which I believed to be in a valley somewhere. I wandered for three days before I was finally found by my family. Then I learned that I had circled round and round in my travels, and in all my walking had got only about eight li\* from my home.

"After my return to the family, however, to my surprise conditions somewhat improved. My father was slightly more considerate and the teacher was more inclined to moderation. The result of my act of protest impressed me very much. It was a successful 'strike.'

"My father wanted me to begin keeping the family books as soon as I had learned a few characters. He wanted me to learn to use the abacus. As my father insisted upon this I began to work at those accounts at night. He was a severe taskmaster. He hated to see me idle, and if there were no books to be kept he put me to work at farm tasks. He was a hot-tempered man and frequently beat both me and my brothers. He gave us no money whatever, and the most meager food. On the fifteenth of every month he made a concession to his laborers and gave them eggs with their rice, but never meat. To me he gave neither eggs nor meat.

"My mother was a kind woman, generous and sympathetic, and ever ready to share what 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

---

\*A hsien roughly corresponds to a U.S. county. It was the smallest territorial unit under the central government, and was ruled by a magistrate.

\‡About 2.5 acres, or one hectare.

\‡One tan is a picul, or 133 1/3 pounds.

---

\*Two and two-thirds miles.
my father was present. He disapproved of charity. We had
many quarrels in my home over this question.

"There were two 'parties' in the family. 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, how-
ever, there was a difference of opinion. My mother advo-
cated 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.

"But when I was thirteen I discovered a powerful argu-
ment of my own for debating with my father on his own
ground, by quoting the Classics. My father's favorite ac-
cusations against me were of unfilial conduct and laziness.
I quoted, in exchange, passages from the Classics saying
that the elder must be kind and affectionate. Against his
charge that I was lazy I used the rebuttal that older peo-
ple should do more work than younger, that my father
was over three times as old as myself, and therefore
should do more work. And I declared that when I was
his age I would be much more energetic.

"The old man continued to 'amass wealth,' or what
was considered to be a great fortune in that little village.
He did not buy more land himself, but he bought many
mortgages on other people's land. His capital grew to two
or three thousand Chinese dollars."

"My dissatisfaction increased. The dialectical struggle
in our family was constantly developing.† One incident I
especially remember. When I was about thirteen my
father invited many guests to his home, and while they
were present a dispute arose between the two of us. My
father denounced me before the whole group, calling me
lazy and useless. This infuriated me. I cursed him and
left the house. My mother ran after me and tried to per-
suade me to return. My father also pursued me, cursing
at the same time that he commanded 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 coun-
derdemands were presented for cessation of the civil war.
My father insisted that I apologize and k'ou-tou* as a sign
of submission. I agreed to give a one-knee k'ou-tou 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 the more.

"Reflecting on this, I think that in the end the strict-
ness of my father defeated him. I learned to hate him,
and we created a real united front against him. At the
same time it probably benefited me. It made me most dili-
gent in my work; it made me keep my books carefully, so
that he should have no basis for criticizing me.

"My father had had two years of schooling and he
could read enough to keep books. My mother was wholly
illiterate. Both were from peasant families. I was the
family 'scholar.' I knew the Classics, but disliked them.
What I enjoyed were the romances of Old China, and
especially stories of rebellions. I read the Yo Fei Chuan
[the Yo Fei Chronicles], Shui Hu Chuan [The Water
Margin], Fan Tang [Revolt Against the Tang], San Kuo
[the Three Kingdoms] and Hsi Yu Chi [Travels in the
West, the story of Hsuan Tsang's seventh-century semi-
legendary pilgrimage to India] while still very young, and
despite the vigilance of my old teacher, who hated these
outlawed books and called them wicked. I used to read
them in school, covering them up with a Classic when
the teacher walked past. So also did most of my school-
mates. We learned many of the stories almost by heart,
and discussed and rediscussed them many times. We
knew more of them than the old men of the village, who
also loved them and used to exchange stories with us. I
believe that perhaps I was much influenced by such books,
read at an impressionable age.

"I finally left the primary school when I was thirteen
and began to work long hours on the farm, helping the
hired laborer, doing the full labor of a man during the
day and at night keeping books for my father. Neverthe-
less, I succeeded in continuing my reading, devouring

---

*Mao used the Chinese term yuen, which was often translated as
"Chinese dollars"; 3,000 yuen in cash in 1900 was an impressive sum in
rural China.

†Mao used all these political terms humorously in his explanations,
laughing as he recalled such incidents.

*Literally, to "knock head." To strike one's head to the floor or earth
was expected of son to father and subject to emperor, in token of filial
obedience.
everything I could find except the Classics. This annoyed my father, who wanted me to master the Classics, especially after he was defeated in a lawsuit because of an apt classical quotation used by his adversary in the Chinese court. I used to cover up the window of my room late at night so that my father would not see the light. In this way I read a book called *Sheng-shih Wei-yen [Words of Warning]*, which I liked very much. The author, one of a number of old reformist scholars, thought that the weakness of China lay in her lack of Western appliances—railways, telephones, telegraphs, and steamships—and wanted to have them introduced into the country. My father considered such books a waste of time. He wanted me to read something practical like the Classics, which could help him win winning lawsuits.

I continued to read the old romances and tales of Chinese literature. It occurred to me one day that there was one thing peculiar about such stories, and that was the absence of peasants who tilled the land. All the characters were warriors, officials, or scholars; there was never a peasant hero. I wondered about this for two years, and then I analyzed the content of the stories. I found that they all glorified men of arms, rulers of the people, who did not have to work the land, because they owned and controlled it and evidently the peasants worked for them.

“My father was in his early days, and in middle age, a skeptic, but my mother devoutly worshiped Buddha. She gave her children religious instruction, and we were all saddened that our father was an unbeliever. When I was nine years old I seriously discussed the problem of my father’s lack of piety with my mother. We made many attempts then and later on to convert him, but without success. He only cursed us, and, overwhelmed by his attacks, we withdrew to devise new plans. But he would have nothing to do with the gods.

“My reading gradually began to influence me, however; I myself became more and more skeptical. My mother

*b*By Chung Kuang-ying, who advocated many democratic reforms, including parliamentary government and modern methods of education and communications. His book had a wide influence when published in 1898, the year of the ill-fated Hundred Days Reform.

became concerned about me, and scolded me for my indifference to the requirements of the faith, but my father made no comment. Then one day he went out on the road to collect some money, and on his way he met a tiger. The tiger was surprised at the encounter and fled at once, but my father was even more astonished and afterwards reflected a good deal on his miraculous escape. He began to wonder if he had not offended the gods. From then on he showed more respect to Buddhism and burned incense now and then. Yet when my own backsliding grew worse, the old man did not interfere. He prayed to the gods only when he was in difficulties.

“Sheng-shih Wei-yen [Words of Warning] stimulated in me a desire to resume my studies. I had also become disgusted with my labor on the farm. My father naturally opposed me. We quarreled about it, and finally I ran away from home. I went to the home of an unemployed law student, and there I studied for half a year. After that I studied more of the Classics under an old Chinese scholar, and also read many contemporary articles and a few books.

“At this time an incident occurred in Hunan which influenced my whole life. Outside the little Chinese school where I was studying, we students noticed many bean merchants coming back from Changsha. We asked them why they were all leaving. They told us about a big uprising in the city.

“There had been a severe famine that year, and in Changsha thousands were without food. The starving sent a delegation to the civil governor to beg for relief, but he replied to them haughtily, ‘Why haven’t you food? There is plenty in the city. I always have enough.’ When the people were told the governor’s reply, they became very angry. They held mass meetings and organized a demonstration. They attacked the Manchu yamen, cut down the flagpole, the symbol of office, and drove out the governor. Following this, the Commissioner of Internal Affairs, a man named Chang, came out on his horse and told the people that the government would take measures to help them. Chang was evidently sincere in his promise, but the Emperor disliked him and accused him of having intimate connections with the mob. He was removed. A new gov-
error arrived, and at once ordered the arrest of the leaders of the uprising. Many of them were beheaded and their heads displayed on poles as a warning to future rebels.

"This incident was discussed in my school for many days. It made a deep impression on me. Most of the other students sympathized with the 'insurrectionists,' but only from an observer's point of view. They did not understand that it had any relation to their own lives. They were merely interested in it as an exciting incident. I never forgot it. I felt that there with the rebels were ordinary people like my own family and I deeply resented the injustice of the treatment given to them.

"Not long afterward, in Shao Shan, there was a conflict between members of the Ke Lao Hui,* a secret society, and a local landlord. He sued them in court, and as he was a powerful landlord he easily bought a decision favorable to himself. The Ke Lao Hui members were defeated. But instead of submitting, they rebelled against the landlord and the government and withdrew to a local mountain called Liu Shan, where they built a stronghold. Troops were sent against them and the landlord spread a story that they had sacrificed a child when they raised the banner of revolt. The leader of the rebels was called P'ang the Millstone Maker. They were finally suppressed and P'ang was forced to flee. He was eventually captured and beheaded. In the eyes of the students, however, he was a hero, for all sympathized with the revolt.

"Next year, when the new rice was not yet harvested and the winter rice was exhausted, there was a food shortage in our district. The poor demanded help from the rich farmers and they began a movement called 'Eat Rice Without Charge.'† My father was a rice merchant and was exporting much grain to the city from our district, despite the shortage. One of his consignments was seized by the poor villagers and his wrath was boundless. I did not sympathize with him. At the same time I thought the villagers' method was wrong also.

"Another influence on me at this time was the presence in a local primary school of a 'radical' teacher. He was 'radical' because he was opposed to Buddhism and wanted to get rid of the gods. He urged people to convert their temples into schools. He was a widely discussed personality. I admired him and agreed with his views.

"These incidents, occurring close together, made lasting impressions on my young mind, already rebellious. In this period also I began to have a certain amount of political consciousness, especially after I read a pamphlet telling of the dismemberment of China. I remember even now that this pamphlet opened with the sentence: 'Alas, China will be subjugated!' It told of Japan's occupation of Korea and Taiwan, of the loss of suzerainty in Indo-China, Burma, and elsewhere. After I read this I felt depressed about the future of my country and began to realize that it was the duty of all the people to help save it.

"My father had decided to apprentice me to a rice shop in Hsiang T'an, with which he had connections. I was not opposed to it at first, thinking it might be interesting. But about this time I heard of an unusual new school and made up my mind to go there, despite my father's opposition. This school was in Hsiang Hsiang hsien, where my mother's family lived. A cousin of mine was a student there and he told me of the new school and of the changing conditions in 'modern education.' There was less emphasis on the Classics, and more was taught of the 'new knowledge' of the West. The educational methods, also, were quite 'radical.'

"I went to the school with my cousin and registered. I claimed to be a Hsiang Hsiang man, because I understood that the school was open only to natives of Hsiang Hsiang. Later on I took my true status as a Hsiang T'an native when I discovered that the place was open to all. I paid 1,400 coppers here for five months' board, lodging, and all materials necessary for study. My father finally agreed to let me enter, after friends had argued to him that this 'advanced' education would increase my earning powers. This was the first time I had been as far away from home as fifty li. I was sixteen years old.

"In the new school I could study natural science and new subjects of Western learning. Another notable thing was that one of the teachers was a returned student from

---

*The same society to which Ho Lung belonged.
†Literally "Let's eat the Big House," that is, at the landlord's granary.
Japan, and he wore a false queue. It was quite easy to tell that his queue was false. Everyone laughed at him and called him the ‘False Foreign Devil.’

“I had never before seen so many children together. Most of them were sons of landlords, wearing expensive clothes; very few peasants could afford to send their children to such a school. I was more poorly dressed than the others. I owned only one decent coat-and-trousers suit. Gowns were not worn by students, but only by the teachers, and none but ‘foreign devils’ wore foreign clothes. Many of the richer students despised me because usually I was wearing my ragged coat and trousers. However, among them I had friends, and two especially were my good comrades. One of those is now a writer, living in Soviet Russia.*

“I was also disliked because I was not a native of Hsiang Hsiang. It was very important to be a native of Hsiang Hsiang and also important to be from a certain district of Hsiang Hsiang. There was an upper, lower, and middle district, and lower and upper were continually fighting, purely on a regional basis. Neither could become reconciled to the existence of the other. I took a neutral position in this war, because I was not a native at all. Consequently all three factions despised me. I felt spiritually very depressed.

“I made good progress at this school. The teachers liked me, especially those who taught the Classics, because I wrote good essays in the Classical manner. But my mind was not on the Classics. I was reading two books sent to me by my cousin, telling of the reform movement of K'ang Yu-wei. One was by Liang Chi-ch'ao,† editor of the Hsien-min Ts'ung-pao [New People’s Miscellany]. I read and reread those books until I knew them by heart. I worshiped K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-ch'ao, and was very grateful to my cousin, whom I then thought very progressive, but who later became a counterrevolutionary, a member of the gentry, and joined the reactionaries in the period of the Great Revolution of 1925–27.

“Many of the students disliked the False Foreign Devil because of his inhuman queue, but I liked hearing him talk about Japan. He taught music and English. One of his songs was Japanese and was called ‘The Battle on the Yellow Sea.’ I still remember some charming words from it:

**The sparrow sings,**
**The nightingale dances,**
**And the green fields are lovely in the spring.**
**The pomegranate flowers crimson,**
**The willows are green-leaved,**
**And there is a new picture.**

At that time I knew and felt the beauty of Japan, and felt something of her pride and might, in this song of her victory over Russia.* I did not think there was also a barbarous Japan—the Japan we know today.

“This is all I learned from the False Foreign Devil.

“I recall also that about this time I first heard that the Emperor and Tzu Hsi, the Empress Dowager, were both dead, although the new Emperor, Hsuan Tung [P'u Yu], had already been ruling for two years. I was not yet an antimonarchist; indeed, I considered the Emperor as well as most officials to be honest, good, and clever men. They only needed the help of K'ang Yu-wei’s reforms. I was fascinated by accounts of the rulers of ancient China: Yao, Shun, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, and Han Wu Ti, and read many books about them.† I also learned something of foreign history at this time, and of geography. I had first heard of America in an article which told of the American Revolution and contained a sentence like this: ‘After eight years of difficult war, Washington

*Hsiao San (Emi Sago). See Bibliography.
†Liang Chi-ch'ao, a talented essayist at the end of the Manchu Dynasty, was the leader of a reform movement which resulted in his exile. K'ang Yu-wei and he were the “intellectual godfathers” of the first revolution, in 1911.

†Yao and Shun were semilegendary first emperors (3,000–2,205 B.C.), credited with forming Chinese society in the Wei and Yellow River valleys, and taming the floods (with dikes, canals); Ch'in Shih Huang Ti unified the empire and completed the Great Wall; Han Wu Ti solidified the foundations of the Han Dynasty, which followed Ch'in and lasted (including the later Han) 426 years.
won 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."

---

**Days in Changsha**

Mao Tse-tung continued:

"I began to long to go to Changsha, the great city, the capital of the province, which was 120 li from my home. It was said that this city was very big, contained many, many people, numerous schools, and the yamen of the governor. It was a magnificent place altogether. I wanted very much to go there at this time, and enter the middle school for Hsiang Hsiang people. That winter I asked one of my teachers in the higher primary school to introduce me there. The teacher agreed, and I 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.

"In Changsha I read my first newspaper, *Min-li-pao* [People's Strength], a nationalist revolutionary journal which told of the Canton Uprising against the Manchu Dynasty and the death of the Seventy-two Heroes, under the leadership of a Hunanese named Huang Hsing. I was most impressed with this story and found the *Min-li-pao* full of stimulating material. It was edited by Yu Yu-jen, who later became a famous leader of the Kuomintang. I learned also of Sun Yat-sen at this time, and of the pro-
program of the T'ung Meng Hui.* The country was on the eve of the First Revolution. I was so agitated that I wrote an article, which I posted on the school wall. It was my first expression of a political opinion, and it was somewhat muddled. I had not yet given up my admiration of K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, I did not clearly understand the differences between them. Therefore in my article I advocated that Sun Yat-sen must be called back from Japan to become president of the new government, that K'ang Yu-wei be made premier, and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao minister of foreign affairs!†

"The anti-foreign-capital movement began in connection with the building of the Szechuan-Hankow railway, and a popular demand for a parliament became widespread. In reply to it the Emperor decreed merely that an advisory council be created. The students in my school became more and more agitated. They demonstrated their anti-Manchu sentiments by a rebellion against the pigtails. One friend and I clipped off our pigtails, but others, who promised to do so, afterward failed to keep their word. My friend and I therefore assaulted them in secret and forcibly removed their queues, a total of more than ten falling victim to our shears. Thus in a short space of time I had progressed from ridiculing the False Foreign Devil's imitation queue to demanding the general abolition of queues. How a political idea can change a point of view!

"I got into a dispute with a friend in a law school over the pigtail episode, and we each advanced opposing theories on the subject. The law student held that the body, skin, hair, and nails are heritages from one's parents and must not be destroyed, quoting the Classics to clinch his argument. But I myself and the antipigtailers developed a countertheory, on an anti-Manchu political basis, and thoroughly silenced him.

---

*The T'ung Meng Hui, a revolutionary secret society, was founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and was the forerunner of the Kuomintang. Most of its members were exiles in Japan, where they carried on a vigorous "brush-war" (war by writing-brushes, or pens) against Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and K'ang Yu-wei, leaders of the "reformed monarchist" party.
†An absurd coalition, since K'ang and Liang were monarchists at that time, and Sun Yat-sen was antimonarchist.
‡An act perhaps more anti-Confucian than anti-Manchu. Some orthodox Confucianists held that man should not interfere with nature, including growth of hair and fingernails.

"After the Wuhan Uprising occurred,* led by Li Yuan-hung, martial law was declared in Hunan. The political scene rapidly altered. One day a revolutionary appeared in the middle school and made a stirring speech, with the permission of the principal. Seven or eight students arose in the assembly and supported him with vigorous denunciation of the Manchus, and calls for action to establish the Republic. Everyone listened with complete attention. Not a sound was heard as the orator of the revolution, one of the officials of Li Yuan-hung, spoke before the excited students.

"Four or five days after hearing this speech I determined to join the revolutionary army of Li Yuan-hung. I decided to go to Hankow with several other friends, and we collected some money from our classmates. Having heard that the streets of Hankow were very wet, and that it was necessary to wear rain shoes, I went to borrow some from a friend in the army, who was quartered outside the city. I was stopped by the garrison guards. The place had become very active, the soldiers had for the first time been furnished with bullets, and they were pouring into the streets.

"Rebels were approaching the city along the Canton-Hankow railway, and fighting had begun. A big battle occurred outside the city walls of Changsha. There was at the same time an insurrection within the city, and the gates were stormed and taken by Chinese laborers. Through one of the gates I re-entered the city. Then I stood on a high place and watched the battle, until at last I saw the Han† flag raised over the yamen. It was a white banner with the character Han in it. I returned to my school, to find it under military guard.

"On the following day, a tutu‡ government was organized. Two prominent members of the Ke Lao Hui

---

*In 1911, the start of the revolution that overthrew the Manchu Dynasty.
†Han-jen means the ethnic descendants of "men of Han," referring to the long-lived Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Europeans derived the name "China" and "Chinese" from the Chin Dynasty which immediately preceded the Han. China was known to Han-jen as Chung-k'o, the "Central Realm," also translated as "Middle Kingdom." In official terminology all its inhabitants, including non-Han peoples, were called Chung-k'o-jen, or "Central-Realm People." Thus the Manchu were Chung-k'ao-jen (China-men) but not Han-jen.
‡A tutu was a military governor.
[Elder Brother Society] were made tutu and vice-tutu. These were Chiao Ta-feng and Chen Tso-hsing, respectively. The new government was established in the former buildings of the provincial advisory council, whose chief had been T'an Yen-k'ai, who was dismissed. The council itself was abolished. Among the Manchu documents found by the revolutionaries were some copies of a petition begging for the opening of parliament. The original had been written in blood by Hsu T'eh-li, who is now commissioner of education in the Soviet Government. Hsu had cut off the end of his finger, as a demonstration of sincerity and determination, and his petition began, 'Begging that parliament be opened, I bid farewell [to the provincial delegates to Peking] by cutting my finger.'

'The new tutu and vice-tutu did not last long. They were not bad men, and had some revolutionary intentions, but they were poor and represented the interests of the oppressed. The landlords and merchants were dissatisfied with them. Not many days later, when I went to call on a friend, I saw their corpses lying in the street. T'an Yen-k'ai had organized a revolt against them, as representative of the Hunan landlords and militarists.

'Many students were now joining the army. A student army had been organized and among these students was T'ang Sheng-chih.* I did not like the student army; I considered the basis of it too confused. I decided to join the regular army instead, and help complete the revolution. The Ch'ing Emperor had not yet abdicated, and there was a period of struggle.

'My salary was seven yuan a month—which is more than I get in the Red Army now, however—and of this I spent two yuan a month on food. I also had to buy water. The soldiers had to carry water in from outside the city, but I, being a student, could not condescend to carrying, and bought it from the water peddlers. The rest of my wages were spent on newspapers, of which I became an avid reader. Among journals then dealing with the revolution was the Hsiang Chiang Jih-pao [Hsiang River Daily News]. Socialism was discussed in it, and in these columns I first learned the term. I also discussed socialism, really social-reformism, with other students and soldiers. I read some pamphlets written by Kiang K'ang-hu about socialism and its principles. I wrote enthusiastically to several of my classmates on this subject, but only one of them responded in agreement.

'There was a Hunan miner in my squad, and an iron-smith, whom I liked very much. The rest were mediocre, and one was a rascal. I persuaded two more students to join the army, and came to be 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.

'The outcome of the revolution was not yet decided. The Ch'ing had not wholly given up power, and there was a struggle within the Kuominthang concerning the leadership. It was said in Hunan that further war was inevitable. Several armies were organized against the Manchus and against Yuan Shih-k'ai.* Among these was the Hunan army. But just as the Hunanese were preparing to move into action, Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shih-k'ai came to an agreement, the scheduled war was called off, North and South were 'unified,' and the Nanking Government was dissolved. Thinking the revolution was over, I resigned from the army and decided to return to my books. I had been a soldier for half a year.

'I began to read advertisements in the papers. Many schools were then being opened and used this medium to attract new students. I had no special standard for judging schools; I did not know exactly what I wanted to do. An advertisement for a police school caught my eye and I registered for entrance to it. Before I was examined, how-

---

*T'ang Sheng-chih later became commander of the Nationalist armies of the Wuhan Government of Wang Ching-wei (see BN) in 1927. He betrayed both Wang and the Reds and began the “peasant massacre” of Hunan.

*Yuan Shih-k'ai, army chief of staff to the Manchu rulers, forced their abdication in 1911. Sun Yat-sen, regarded as "Father of the Republic," returned to China and was elected president by his followers in a ceremony at Nanking. Yuan held military control throughout most of the country, however. To avoid a conflict, Sun resigned when Yuan Shih-k'ai agreed to a constitutional convention and formation of a parliament. Yuan continued to rule as a military dictator, and in 1915 proclaimed himself emperor, whereupon his warlord supporters deserted him. The proclamation was rescinded after a few months, Yuan died, and the Republic (if not constitutional government) survived, to enter a period of provincial warlordism and national division.
ever, I read an advertisement of a soap-making 'school.' No tuition was required, board was furnished, and a small salary was promised. It was an attractive and inspiring advertisement. It told of the great social benefits of soap making, how it would enrich the country and enrich the people. I changed my mind about the police school and decided to become a soap maker. I paid my dollar registration fee here also.

"Meanwhile a friend of mine had become a law student and he urged me to enter his school. I also read an alluring advertisement of this law school, which promised many wonderful things. It promised to teach students all about law in three years and guaranteed that at the end of this period they would instantly become mandarins. My friend kept praising the school to me, until finally I wrote to my family, repeated all the promises of the advertisement, and asked them to send me tuition money. I painted a bright picture for them of my future as a jurist and mandarin. Then I paid a dollar to register in the law school and waited to hear from my parents.

"Fate again intervened in the form of an advertisement for a commercial school. Another friend counseled me that the country was in economic war, and that what was most needed were economists who could build up the nation's economy. His argument prevailed and I spent another dollar to register in this commercial middle school. I actually enrolled there and was accepted. Meanwhile, however, I continued to read advertisements, and one day I read one describing the charms of a higher commercial public school. It was operated by the government, it offered a wide curriculum, and I heard that its instructors were very able men. I decided it would be better to become a commercial expert there, paid my dollar and registered, then wrote my father of my decision. He was pleased. My father readily appreciated the advantages of commercial cleverness. I entered this school and remained—for one month.

"The trouble with my new school, I discovered, was that most of the courses were taught in English, and, in common with other students, I knew little English; indeed, scarcely more than the alphabet. An additional handicap was that the school provided no English teacher.

Disgusted with this situation, I withdrew from the institution at the end of the month and continued my perusal of the advertisements.

"My next scholastic adventure was in the First Provincial Middle School. I registered for a dollar, took the entrance examination, and passed at the head of the list of candidates. It was a big school, with many students, and its graduates were numerous. A Chinese teacher there helped me very much; he was attracted to me because of my literary tendency. This teacher lent me a book called the Yu-p' i T'ung-chien [Chronicles with Imperial Commentaries], which contained imperial edicts and critiques by Ch'ien Lung.*

"About this time a government magazine exploded in Changsha. There was a huge fire, and we students found it very interesting. Tons of bullets and shells exploded, and gunpowder made an intense blaze. It was better than firecrackers. About a month later T'an Yen-k'ai was driven out by Yuan Shih-k'ai, who now had control of the political machinery of the Republic. T'ang Hsiang-ming replaced T'an Yen-k'ai and he set about making arrangements for Yuan's enthronement [in an attempted restoration of the monarchy, which speedily failed].

"I did not like the First Middle School. Its curriculum was limited and its regulations were objectionable. After reading Yu-p' i T'ung-chien I had also come to the conclusion that it would be better for me to read and study alone. After six months I left the school and arranged a schedule of education of my own, which consisted of reading every day in the Hunan Provincial Library. I was very regular and conscientious about it, 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 eat two rice cakes, which were my daily lunch. I stayed in the library every day reading until it closed.

"During this period of self-education I read many books, studied world geography and world history. There for the first time I saw and studied with great interest

*The gifted fourth emperor of the Manchu, or Ch'ing, Dynasty, who took the throne in 1736.
a map of the world, I read Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations,* and Darwin's *Origin of Species,* and a book on ethics by John Stuart Mill. I read the works of Rousseau, Spencer's *Logic,* and a book on law written by Montesquieu. I mixed poetry and romances, and the tales of ancient Greece, with serious study of history and geography of Russia, America, England, France, and other countries.

"I was then living in a guild house for natives of Hsiang Hsiang district. Many soldiers were there also—'retired' or disbanded men from the district, who had no work to do and little money. Students and soldiers were always quarreling in the guild house, 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.

"I had no money then, my family refusing to support me unless I entered school, and since I could no longer live in the guild house I began looking for a new place to lodge. Meanwhile, I had been thinking seriously of my 'career' and had about decided that I was best suited for teaching. I had begun reading advertisements again. An attractive announcement of the Hunan Normal School now came to my attention, and I read with interest of its advantages: no tuition required, and cheap board and lodging. Two of my friends were also urging me to enter. They wanted my help in preparing entrance essays. I wrote of my intention to my family and I received their consent. I composed essays for my two friends, and wrote one of my own. All were accepted—in reality, therefore, I was accepted three times. I did not then think my act of substituting for my friends an immoral one; it was merely a matter of friendship.

"I was a student in the normal school for five years, and managed to resist the appeals of all future advertising. Finally I actually got my degree. Incidents in my life here, in the Hunan Provincial First Normal [Teachers' Training] School, were many, and during this period my political ideas began to take shape. Here also I acquired my first experiences in social action.

"There were many regulations in the new school and I agreed with very few of them. For one thing, I was opposed to the required courses in natural science. I wanted to specialize in social sciences. Natural sciences did not especially interest me, and I did not study them, so I got poor marks in most of these courses. Most of all 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. I remember once, drawing a picture of the 'half-sun, half-rocker,' which I represented by a straight line with a semicircle over it. Another time during an examination in drawing I contented myself with making an oval. I called it an egg. I got 40 in drawing, and failed. Fortunately my marks in social sciences were all excellent, and they balanced my poor grades in these other classes.

"A Chinese teacher here, whom the students nicknamed 'Yuan the Big Beard,' ridiculed my writing and called it the work of a journalist. He despised Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, who had been my model, and considered him half-literate. I was obliged to alter my style. I studied the writings of Han Yu, and mastered the old Classical phraseology. Thanks to Yuan the Big Beard, therefore, I can today still turn out a passable Classical essay if required.

"The teacher who made the strongest impression on me was Yang Ch'ang-ch'i, a returned student from England, with whose life I was later to become intimately related. He taught ethics, he was an idealist and a man of high moral character. He believed in his ethics very strongly and tried to imbue his students with the desire to become just, moral, virtuous men, useful in society. Under his influence I read a book on ethics translated by Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei and was inspired to write an essay which I entitled 'The Energy of the Mind.' I was then an idealist and my essay was highly praised by Professor Yang Ch'ang-ch'i, from his idealist viewpoint. He gave me a mark of 100 for it.

"A teacher named T'ang used to give me old copies of *Min Pao* [People's Journal], and I read them with keen interest. I learned from them about the activities and program of the T'ung Meng Hui. One day I read a copy of the *Min Pao* containing a story about two Chinese stu-

*The reference is to a line in a poem by Li T'ao-po.*
dents who were traveling across China and had reached Tatsienlu, on the edge of Tibet. This inspired me very much. I wanted to follow their example; but I had no money, and thought I should first try out traveling in Hunan.

"The next summer I set out across the province by foot, and journeyed through five counties. I was accompanied by a student named Hsiao Yu. We walked through these five counties without using a single copper. The peasants fed us and gave us a place to sleep; wherever we went we were kindly treated and welcomed. This fellow, Hsiao Yu, with whom I traveled, later became a Kuomintang official in Nanking, under Yi Pei-ch'i, who was then president of Hunan Normal School. Yi Pei-ch'i became a high official at Nanking and had Hsiao Yu appointed to the office of custodian of the Peking Palace Museum. Hsiao sold some of the most valuable treasures in the museum and absconded with the funds in 1934."

"Feeling expansive and the need for a few intimate companions, I one day inserted an advertisement in a Changsha paper inviting young men interested in patriotic work to make a contact with me. I specified youths who were hardened and determined, and ready to make sacrifices for their country. To this advertisement I received three and one half replies. One was from Lu Chiang-lung, who later was to join the Communist Party and afterwards to betray it. Two others were from young men who later were to become ultrareactionaries. The "half" reply came from a noncommital 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."

"But gradually I did build up a group of students around myself, and the nucleus was formed of what later was to become a society† that was to have a widespread influence on the affairs and destiny of China. It was a serious-minded little group of men 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. I was not interested in women. My parents had married me when I was fourteen to a girl of twenty, but I had never lived with her—and never subsequently did. I did not consider her my wife and at this time gave little thought to her. Quite aside from the discussions of feminine charm, which usually play an important role in the lives of young men of this age, my companions even rejected talk of ordinary matters of daily life. I remember once being in the house of a youth who began to talk to me about buying some meat, and in my presence called in his servant and discussed the matter with him, then ordered him to buy a piece. I was annoyed and did not see that fellow again. My friends and I preferred to talk only of larger matters—the nature of man, of human society, of China, the world, and the universe."

"We also became ardent physical culturists. In the winter holidays 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 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 already falling and even in November swam in the cold rivers. All this went on 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 many marches back and forth across South China, and on the Long March from Kiangsi to the Northwest."

*I Li-san later became responsible for the CCP "Li Li-san line," which Mao Tse-tung bitterly opposed. Further on Mao tells of Li's struggle with the Red Army, and of its results. See also BN.
†The Hsin-min Hsueh-hui, New People's Study Society.
Committee; Hsia Hsi,¹ now in the Second Front Red Army; Ho Shu-heng, who became high judge of the Supreme Court in the Central Soviet regions and was later killed by Chiang Kai-shek (1935); Kuo Liang, a famous labor organizer, killed by General Ho Chien in 1930; Hsiao Chu-chang,‡ a writer now in Soviet Russia; Ts'ai Ho-sen, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, killed by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927; Yeh Li-yun, who became a member of the Central Committee, and later 'betrayed' to the Kuomintang and became a capitalist trade-union organizer; and Hsiao Chen, a prominent Party leader, one of the six signers of the original agreement for the formation of the Party, who died not long ago from illness. The majority of the members of the Hsin-min Hsueh-hui were killed in the counterrevolution of 1927.‡

"Another society that was formed about that time, and resembled the Hsin-min Hsueh-hui, was the 'Social Welfare Society' of Hupeh. Many of its members also later became Communists. Among them was Yun Tai-ying, who was killed during the counterrevolution by Chiang Kai-shek. Lin Piao, now president of the Red Army University, was a member. So was Chang Hao, now in charge of work among White troops [those taken prisoner by the Reds]. In Peking there was a society called Hu Sheh, some of whose members later became Reds. Elsewhere in China, notably in Shanghai, Hangchow, Hankow, and Tientsin,§ radical societies were organized by the militant youth then beginning to assert an influence on Chinese politics.

"Most of these societies were organized more or less under the influences of Hsin Ch'ing-nien [New Youth], the famous magazine of the literary renaissance, edited by

¹See BN.
‡Hsiao San (Emi Siao), brother of Hsiao Yu (Salo Yu). See Bibliography.
§Other members included Liu Shaw-ch'ii, Jen Pishih, Li Fu-ch'iiun, Wang Jia, Teng Tai-yuan, Li Wei-han, Hsiao Ching-chiang, and at least one woman, Ts'ai Chang, the sister of Ts'ai Ho-sen. All of these achieved high rank in the CCP. Mao's favorite professor and future father-in-law, Yang Ch'ang-ch'ii, and Hsu Teh-lu, Mao's teacher at the First Normal School, were patrons.
§In Tientsin it was the Chueh-ku Shih, or "Awakening Society," which led in organization of radical youth. Chou En-lai was one of the founders. Others included Teng Ying-ch'iao (Mme. Chou En-lai); Ma Chun, who was executed in Peking in 1927; and Sun Hsiao-ch'ing, who later became secretary of the Canton Committee of the Kuomintang.

Ch'en Tu-hsiu.⁷ I began to read this magazine while I was a student in the normal school and admired the articles of Hu Shih and Ch'en Tu-hsiu very much. They became for a while my models, replacing Liang Chi-ch'ao and Kang Yu-wei, whom I had already discarded.

"At this time 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 antimilitarist and anti-imperialist.

"I had entered the normal school in 1912. I was graduated in 1918."
3

Prelude to Revolution

During Mao's recollections of his past I noticed that an auditor at least as interested as I was Ho Tzu-ch'en, his wife. Many of the facts he told about himself and the Communist movement she had evidently never heard before, and this was true of most of Mao's comrades in Pao An. Later on, when I gathered biographical notes from other Red leaders, their colleagues often crowded around interestedly to listen to the stories for the first time. Although they had all fought together for years, very often they knew nothing of each other's pre-Communist days, which they had tended to regard as a kind of Dark Ages period, one's real life beginning only when one became a Communist.

It was another night, and Mao sat cross-legged, leaning against his dispatch boxes. He lit a cigarette from a candle and took up the thread of the story where he had left off the evening before:

"During my years in normal school in Changsha I had spent, altogether, only $160—including my numerous registration fees! Of this amount I must have used a third for newspapers, because regular subscriptions cost me about a dollar a month, and I often bought books and journals on the newsstands. My father cursed me for this extravagance. He called it wasted money on wasted paper. But I had acquired the newspaper-reading habit, and from 1911 to 1927, when I climbed up Chingkangshan, I never stopped reading the daily papers of Peking, Shanghai, and Hunan.

"In my last year in school my mother died, and more than ever I lost interest in returning home. I decided, that summer, to go to Peking. Many students from Hunan were planning trips to France, to study under the 'work and learn' scheme, which France used to recruit young Chinese in her cause during the World War. Before leaving China these students planned to study French in Peking. I helped organize the movement, and in the groups who went abroad were many students from the Hunan Normal School, most of whom were later to become famous radicals. Hsu T'eh-li was influenced by the movement also, and when he was over forty he left his professorship at Hunan Normal School and went to France. He did not become a Communist, however, till 1927.

"I accompanied some of the Hunanese students to Peking. However, although I had helped organize the movement, and it had the support of the Hsin-min Hsueh-hui, I did not want to go to Europe. I felt that I did not know enough about my own country, and that my time could be more profitably spent in China. Those students who had decided to go to France studied French then from Li Shih-tseng, who is now president of the Chung-fa [Sino-French] University, but I did not. I had other plans.

"Peking seemed very expensive to me. I had reached the capital by borrowing from friends, and when I arrived I had to look for work at once. Yang Ch'ang-chi, my former ethics teacher at the normal school, had become a professor at Peking National University. I appealed to him for help in finding a job, and he introduced me to the university librarian. He was Li Ta-chao, who later became a founder of the Communist Party of China, and was afterwards executed by Chang Tso-lin.* Li Ta-chao gave me work as assistant librarian, for which I was paid the generous sum of $8 a month.

"My office was so low that people avoided me. One of

*The ex-bandit who became military dictator of Manchuria, Marshal Chang held power in Peking before the arrival of the Nationalists there. He was killed by the Japanese in 1928. His son, Chang Hsueh-liang, known as the "Young Marshal," succeeded him.
my tasks was to register the names of people who came to read newspapers, but to most of them I didn't exist as a human being. Among those who came to read I recognized the names of famous leaders of the renaissance movement, men like Fu Ssu-nien, Lo Chia-lun, and others, in whom I was intensely interested. I tried to begin conversations with them on political and cultural subjects, but they were very busy men. They had no time to listen to an assistant librarian speaking southern dialect.

"But I wasn't discouraged. I joined the Society of Philosophy, and the Journalism Society, in order to be able to attend classes in the university. In the Journalism Society I met fellow students like Ch'en Kung-po, who is now a high official at Nanking;¹ T'An Ping-shan, who later became a Communist and still later a member of the so-called 'Third Party'; and Shao P'iao-p'ing. Shao, especially, helped me very much. He was a lecturer in the Journalism Society, a liberal, and a man of fervent idealism and fine character. He was killed by Chang Tso-lin in 1926.

"While I was working in the library I also met Chang Kuo-t'ao,* now vice-chairman of the Soviet Government; K'ang P'e-ch'en, who later joined the Ku Klux Klan in California [!!!—E.S.]; and Tuan Hsi-p'eng, 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 Ch'ang-chi, who had made a great impression on me in my youth, and who afterwards was a genuine friend in Peking.

"My interest in politics continued to increase, and my mind turned more and more radical. I have told you 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-pe'i, who used to visit me, I often discussed anarchism and its possibilities in China. At that time I favored many of its proposals.

"My own living conditions in Peking were quite miserable, and in contrast the beauty of the old capital was a vivid and living compensation. I stayed in a place called San Yen-chaing ["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 people on each side of me when I wanted to turn over. But in the parks and the old palace grounds I saw the early northern spring. I saw the white plum blossoms flower while the ice still held solid over Pei Hai ["the North Sea"].¹ I saw the willows over Pei Hai with the ice crystals hanging from them and remembered the description of the scene by the T'ang poet Chen Chang, who wrote about Pei Hai's winter-jeweled trees looking like ten thousand peach trees blossoming. The innumerable trees of Peking aroused my wonder and admiration.

"Early in 1919 I went to Shanghai with the students bound for 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,' and a fortunate loan of ten yuan from a fellow student, who had got some money from the Auguste Comte School in Peking, enabled me to buy a ticket as far as P'u-k'ou. On the way to Nanking I stopped at Ch'u Fu and visited Confucius' grave. 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 birthplace of Mencius. On this trip I climbed T'ai Shan, the sacred mountain of Shantung, where General Feng Yu-hsiang retired and wrote his patriotic scrolls.

"But when I reached P'u-k'ou I was again without a copper, and without a ticket. 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

*Pei Hai and the other "seas" were artificial lakes in the former Forbidden City.
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. At Shanghai I found that a good sum had been raised to help send the students to France, and an allowance had been provided to help me return to Hunan. I saw my friends off on the steamer and then set out for Changsha.

“During my first trip to the North, as I remember it, I made these excursions:

“I walked around the lake of T’ung T’ing, and circled the wall of Paotingfu. I walked on the ice of the Gulf of Pei Hai. I walked around the wall of Hsuehchou, famous in the San Kuo [Three Kingdoms], and around Nanking’s wall, also famous in history. Finally I climbed T’ai Shan and visited Confucius’ grave. These seemed to me then achievements worth adding to my adventures and walking tours in Hunan.

“When I returned to Changsha I took a more direct role in politics. After the May Fourth Movement* I had devoted most of my time to student political activities, and I was editor of the Hsiang River Review, the Hunan students’ paper, which had a great influence on the student movement in South China. In Changsha I helped found the Wen-hua Shu-hui [Cultural Book Society], an association for study of modern cultural and political tendencies. This society, and more especially the Hsin-min Hsueh-hui, were violently opposed to Chang Ching-yao, then *tuchun of Hunan, and a vicious character. 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 for the students’ opposition, Chang Ching-yao suppressed the Hsiang River Review.

“After this I went to Peking, to represent the New People’s Study Society and organize an antimilitarist movement there. The society broadened its fight against Chang Ching-yao into a general antimilitarist agitation,

*Ch’en Tu-hsiu was born in Anhui, in 1879, became a noted scholar and essayist, and for years headed the department of literature at Peking National University—“cradle of the literary renaissance.” His New Youth magazine began the movement for adoption of the pai-hua, or vernacular Chinese, as the national language to replace the “dead” wen-yen, or Classical language. With Li Tu-chao, he was a chief promoter of Marxist study in China and a pioneer organizer of the Chinese Communist Party. See BN.
led an attack on the provincial parliament, the majority of whose members were landlords and gentry appointed by the militarists. This struggle ended in our pulling down the scrolls and banners, which were full of nonsensical and extravagant phrases.

"The attack on the parliament was considered a big incident in Hunan, and frightened the rulers. However, when Chao Heng-t'i seized control he betrayed all the ideas he had supported, and especially he violently suppressed all demands for democracy. Our society therefore turned the struggle against him. I remember an episode in 1920, when the Hsin-min Hsueh-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 that meeting, but were prohibited from doing so by the police. The demonstrators pointed out that, according to Article 12 of the 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."

"In the winter of 1920 I organized workers politically for the first time, and began to be guided in this by the influence of Marxist theory and the history of the Russian Revolution. During my second visit to Peking I had read much about the events in Russia, and had eagerly sought out what little Communist literature was then available in Chinese. Three books especially deeply carved my mind, 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 afterwards waver. These books were the Communist Manifesto, translated by Ch' en Wang-tao and the first Marxist book ever published in Chinese; Class Struggle, by Kautsky; and a History of Socialism, by Kirkup.

*In October, 1920, Mao organized a Socialist Youth Corps branch in Changsha, in which he worked with Lin Tao-han to set up craft unions in Hunan.

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."*

---

*Mao made no further reference to his life with Yang K'ai-hui, except to mention her execution. She was a student at Peking National University and later became a youth leader during the Great Revolution, and one of the most active women Communists. Their marriage had been celebrated as an "ideal romance" among radical youths in Hunan.
The Nationalist Period

Mao was now a Marxist but not a Communist, because as yet there did not exist in China an organized Communist Party. As early as 1919 Ch'en Tu-hsiu had established contact with the Comintern through Russians living in Peking, as had Li Ta-chao. It was not until the spring of 1920 that Gregory Voitinsky, an authorized representative of the Communist International reached Peking, in the company of Yang Ming-chai, a member of the Russian Communist Party who acted as his interpreter. They conferred with Li Ta-chao and probably also met members of Li's Society for the Study of Marxist Theory. In the same year the energetic and persuasive Jahn Henricus Sneevliet, a Dutch agent of the Third International—Ti-san Kuo-chi, in Chinese—came to Shanghai for talks with Ch'en Tu-hsiu, who was conferring with serious Chinese Marxists there. It was Ch'en who, in May, 1920, summoned a conference that organized a nuclear Communist group. Some members of it became (with Li Ta-chao's group in Peking, another group set up in Canton by Ch'en, groups in Shantung and Hupeh, and Mao's group in Hunan) conveners of a Shanghai conference the following year that (with the help of Voitinsky) summoned the first Chinese Communist Party congress.

When one remembered, in 1937, that the Chinese Communist Party was still an adolescent in years, its achieve-ments could be regarded as not inconsiderable. It was the strongest Communist Party in the world, outside of Russia, and the only one, with the same exception, that could boast an army of its own.

Another night, and Mao carried on his narrative:

"In May of 1921 I went to Shanghai to attend the founding meeting of the Communist Party. In its organization the leading roles were played by Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao, both of whom were among the most brilliant intellectual leaders of China. Under Li Ta-chao, as assistant librarian at Peking National University, I had rapidly developed toward Marxism, and Ch'en Tu-hsiu had been instrumental in my interests in that direction too. I had discussed with Ch'en, on my second visit to Shanghai, the Marxist books that I had read, and Ch'en's own assertions of belief had deeply impressed me at what was probably a critical period of my life.

"There was only one other Hunanese* at that historic meeting [the First National Congress of the Party] in Shanghai. Others present were Chang Ko-t'ao, now vice-chairman of the Red Army military council; Pao Hui-sheng, and Chou Fu-hai. Altogether there were twelve of us. In Shanghai [those elected to] the Central Committee of the Party included Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Chang Kuo-t'ao, Ch'en Kung-po, Shih Tseng-tung (now a Nanking official), Sun Yuan-lu, Li Han-chun (killed† in Wuhan in 1927), Li Ta, and Li Sun (later executed). The following October the first provincial branch of the Party was organized in Hunan and I became a member of it. Organizations were also established in other provinces and cities. Members in Hupeh included Tung Pi-wu† (now chairman of the Communist Party School in Pao An), Hsu P'ai-hao, and Shih Yang (executed in 1923). In the Shensi Party were Kao Chung-yu (Kao Kang†) and some famous student leaders. In [the Party branch of] Peking were Li Ta-chao (executed, with nineteen other Peking Com-

*Ho Shu-heng, Mao's old friend and co-founder of the New People's Study Society; he was executed in 1935 by the Kuomintang.
†Those here noted as "killed" or "executed" were liquidated by warlord regimes if before 1927, and by Nationalist generals if after March, 1927.
‡See BN.
against him. Huang Ai, one of the two workers killed, was a leader of the right-wing labor movement, which had its base in the industrial-school students and was opposed to us, but we supported them in this case, and in many other struggles. Anarchists were also influential in the trade unions, which were then organized into an All-Hunan Labor Syndicate. But we compromised and through negotiation prevented many hasty and useless actions by them.

"I was sent to Shanghai to help organize the movement against Chao Heng-t'i. The Second Congress of the Party was convened in Shanghai that winter [1922], and I intended to attend. However, I forgot the name of the place where it was to be held, could not find any comrades, and missed it. I returned to Hunan and vigorously pushed the work among the labor unions. That spring there were many strikes for better wages and better treatment and recognition of the labor unions. Most of these were successful. On May 1, a general strike was called in Hunan, and this marked the achievement of unprecedented strength in the labor movement of China.

"The Third Congress of the Communist Party was held in Canton in [May] 1923 and the historic decision was reached to enter the Kuomintang, cooperate with it, and create a united front against the northern militarists. I went to Shanghai and worked in the Central Committee of the Party. Next spring [1924] I went to Canton and attended the First National Congress of the Kuomintang. In March, I returned to Shanghai and combined my work in the executive bureau [Central Committee] of the Communist Party with membership in the executive bureau [Central Executive Committee] of the Kuomintang of Shanghai. The other members of this bureau then were Wang Ching-wei* (later premier at Nanking) and Hu Han-min, with whom I worked in coordinating the measures of the Communist Party and the Kuomintang. That summer the Whampoa Military Academy was set up. Galin became its adviser, other Soviet advisers arrived from Russia, and the Kuomintang-Communist Party
entente began to assume the proportions of a nationwide revolutionary movement. The following winter I returned to Hunan for a rest—I had become ill in Shanghai—but while in Hunan I organized the nucleus of the great peasant movement of that province.

"Formerly I had not fully realized the degree of class struggle among the peasantry, but after the May 30th Incident [1925],* and during the great wave of political activity which followed it, the Hunanese peasantry became very militant. I left my home, where I had been resting, and began a rural organizational campaign. In a few months we had formed more than twenty peasant unions, and had aroused the wrath of the landlords, who demanded my arrest. Chao Heng-t'i sent troops after me, and I fled to Canton. I reached there just at the time the Whampoa students had defeated Yang Hsi-ming, the Yunnan militarist, and Lu Tsung-wai, the Kwangsi militarist, and an air of great optimism pervaded the city and the Kuomintang. Chiang Kai-shek had been made commander of the First Army and Wang Ching-wei chairman of the government, following the death of Sun Yat-sen in Peking.

"I became editor of the Political Weekly, a publication of the propaganda department of the Kuomintang [headed by Wang Ching-wei]. It later played a very active role in attacking and discrediting the right wing of the Kuomintang, led by Tai Chi-t'ao. I was also put in charge of training organizers for the peasant movement [the Peasant Movement Training Institute†], and established a course for this purpose which was attended by representatives from twenty-one different provinces, and included students from Inner Mongolia. Not long after my

arrival in Canton I became chief of the agit-prop department of the Kuomintang, and candidate for the Central Committee. Lin Tsu-han was then chief of the peasant department of the Kuomintang, and T'an P'ing-shan, another Communist, was chief of the workers' department.

"I was writing more and more, and assuming special responsibilities in peasant work in the Communist Party. On the basis of my study and of my work in organizing the Hunan peasants, I wrote two pamphlets, one called Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society and the other called The Class Basis of Chao Heng-t'i, and the Tasks Before Us. Ch'en Tu-hsiu opposed the opinions expressed in the first one, which advocated a radical land policy and vigorous organization of the peasantry, under the Communist Party, and he refused it publication in the Communist central organs. It was later published in Chung-kuo Nung-min [The Chinese Peasant], of Canton, and in the magazine Chung-kuo Ch'ing-nien [Chinese Youth]. The second thesis was published as a pamphlet in Hunan. I began to disagree with Ch'en's Right-opportunist policy about this time, and we gradually drew further apart, although the struggle between us did not come to a climax until 1927.

"I continued to work in the Kuomintang in Canton until about the time Chiang Kai-shek attempted his first coup d'état there in March, 1926. After the reconciliation of left- and right-wing Kuomintang and the reaffirmation of Kuomintang-Communist solidarity, I went to Shanghai, in the spring of 1926. The Second Congress of the Kuomintang was held in May of that year, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek.* In Shanghai I directed the Peasant Department of the Communist Party, and from there was sent to Hunan, as inspector of the peasant movement [for both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party].† Meanwhile, under the united front of the Kuomintang-Communist Alliance, a conflict between the Right-opportunist elements of the Kuomintang and the Communists of both the Kuomintang and the Communists of the Kuomintang had been headed by Communists, of whom Mao was the last of five. Mao was first chief of the CCP Peasant Department (May–October, 1926), formed at this time.

---

*Communist and Nationalist cadres in 1925 organized the first Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions, which led to the May 30 demonstration, with demands for an end to extraterritoriality and a return of the Shanghai International Settlement to Chinese sovereignty. British settlement police fired on the demonstrators and killed several, which provoked a boycott of British goods. Leading organizers were Liu Shao-ch'i and Ch'en Yun. See BN.

†In 1925 Mao was director of the Peasant Movement Training Institute, succeeding P'ing P'ai (see BN), who had set it up in Canton in 1924. Chou En-lai also lectured there. Mao's brother, Mao Tse-tung (see BN), was one of his students, who included a large percentage of Hunanese, probably recruited by Mao's provincial Party committee. Their publication was Chung-kuo Nung-min (The Chinese Peasant).

* Mao attended the Second KMT Congress and was re-elected an alternate to the CEC. Communist membership in the Kuomintang CEC at that time was still about one-third of the total.

† Since its inception, the Peasant Department of the Kuomintang had been headed by Communists, of whom Mao was the last of five. Mao was first chief of the CCP Peasant Department (May–October, 1926), formed at this time.
mintang and the Communist Party, the historic Northern Expedition began in the autumn of 1926.

"In Hunan I inspected peasant organization and political conditions in five hsien—Changsha, Li Ling, Hsiang T'an, Hung Shan, and Hsiang Hsiang—and made my report [Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan] to the Central Committee, urging the adoption of a new line in the peasant movement. Early next spring, when I reached Wuhan, an interprovincial meeting of peasants was held, and I attended it and discussed the proposals of my thesis, which carried recommendations for a widespread redistribution of land. At this meeting were P'eng P'ai, Fang Chih-min,* and two Russian Communists, Jolk [York?] and Volen, among others. A resolution was passed adopting my proposal for submission to the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party. The Central Committee, however, rejected it.

"When the Fifth Congress of the Party was convened in Wuhan in May, 1927, the Party was still under the domination of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. Although Chiang Kai-shek had already led the counterrevolution and begun his attacks on the Communist Party in Shanghai and Nanking, Ch'en was still for moderation and concessions to the Kuomintang. Overriding all opposition, he followed a Right-opportunist petty-bourgeois policy. I was very dissatisfied with the Party policy then, especially toward the peasant movement. I think today that if the peasant movement had been more thoroughly organized and armed for a class struggle against the landlords, the soviets would have had an earlier and far more powerful development throughout the whole country.

"But Ch'en Tu-hsiu violently disagreed.† He did not understand the role of the peasantry in the revolution and greatly underestimated its possibilities at this time. Consequently the Fifth Congress, held on the eve of the crisis of the Great Revolution, failed to pass an adequate land program. My opinions, which called for rapid intensification of the agrarian struggle, were not even discussed, for the Central Committee, also dominated by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, refused to bring them up for consideration. The Congress dismissed the land problem by defining a landlord as 'a peasant who owns over 500 mou of land'—a wholly inadequate and unpractical basis on which to develop the class struggle, and quite without consideration of the special character of land economy in China. Following the Congress, however, an All-China Peasants' Union was organized and I became first president of it.

"By the spring of 1927 the peasant movement in Hupeh, Kiangsi, and Fukien, and especially in Hunan, had developed a startling militancy, despite the lukewarm attitude of the Communist Party to it, and the definite alarm of the Kuomintang. High officials and army commanders began to demand its suppression, describing the Peasants' Union as a 'vagabond union,' and its actions and demands as excessive. Ch'en Tu-hsiu had withdrawn me from Hunan, holding me responsible for certain happenings there, and violently opposing my ideas.†

"In April, the counterrevolutionary movement had begun in Nanking and Shanghai, and a general massacre of organized workers had taken place under Chiang Kai-shek. The same measures were carried out in Canton. On May 21, the Hsu K'o-hsiang Uprising occurred in Hunan. Scores of peasants and workers were killed by the reactionaries. Shortly afterwards the Kuomintang at Wuhan annulled its agreement with the Communists and 'expelled' them from the Kuomintang and from a government which quickly ceased to exist.

"Many Communist leaders were now ordered by the Party to leave the country, go to Russia or Shanghai or places of safety. I was ordered to go to Szechuan. I persuaded Ch'en Tu-hsiu to send me to Hunan instead, as secretary of the Provincial Committee, but after ten days he ordered me to return at once, accusing me of organizing an uprising against T'ang Sheng-chih, then in command at Wuhan. The affairs of the Party were now in

*See BN.
†So did Stalin, Mao was not present during the terminal sessions of the Fifth Congress, when a resolution was passed to limit land confiscation only to great landlords who were also "enemies of the people," in line with Stalin's directives.
‡Mao supported (and probably initiated) the Hunan Peasants' Union resolutions demanding confiscation of all large land holdings.
a chaotic state. Nearly everyone was opposed to Ch'en Tu-hsiu's leadership and his opportunist line. The collapse of the entente at Wuhan soon afterwards brought about his downfall."