

# Anna Louise Strong: Three Interviews with Chairman Mao Zedong

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Anna Louise Strong was part of the first generation of those westerners who reported extensively and sympathetically on socialist revolutions. Born in Nebraska in 1885, she obtained a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1908, became involved in the labour movement in Seattle where she helped organize the general strike in 1919 and went first to the Soviet Union in 1921 on the advice of Lincoln Steffens. She became during the 1920s and 1930s probably the best-known American journalist reporting on the domestic policies of the Soviet Union. Her reportage was unswervingly sympathetic – what doubts she had were hidden in letters to friends, in strained disavowals, in odd turns of phrase in her many articles and books.

Early on she sought to follow the revolutionary fires wherever they kindled; her attention was thus easily turned to China. She first went to China in 1925 where, with the help of the Borodins and Song Qingling she crossed the blockade into “Red Canton,” as it was popularly known. Two years later she returned to China shortly after the Shanghai massacre of the Communists; she made her way to Mikhail Borodin in Hankow and fled with him by open car across the Gobi desert.

She did not return to China until 1938, in great part because her role as the editor of the *Moscow Daily News* took most of her time and energy; furthermore, official communist policy was somewhat distanced from the more revolutionary elements in China. In 1938, however, she went back and spent some time travelling with General Zhu De and the Eighth Route Army. It was on this trip that she first made the acquaintance of Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, Lin Biao and other top leaders. She was back two years later, this time meeting semi-secretly with Zhou in Chongqing. Zhou entrusted her with a secret set of documents detailing the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) version of the deterioration of relations with the Kuomintang (KMT), suggesting that some of the high leaders of the KMT were in league with the Japanese, and predicting some major disaster. She was ordered not to use the documents until word came permitting it.

The disaster predicted by Zhou was not long in forthcoming. On her way back to the United States the South Anwei incident occurred. Back in America she received a letter from Liao Chengzhi (Liao Ch’eng-chih) asking her to publish what she knew. The news caused some considerable stir since the official version of events in the United States at that point had the KMT contending with stray “bandits.”

Her fifth trip to China took place in 1946 and 1947 during which time she stayed six months in Yan’an. It was there she first met Chairman Mao and it was over the course of several interviews that he enunciated to her the concept that “all imperialists are paper tigers.”<sup>1</sup>

1. The notes for these interviews and their sequential versions as Lu Dingyi vetted them are in the authors’ possession.

While on her way back to China in 1949 she was arrested in the Soviet Union as “an American spy” – most likely because both in the U.S. and in Moscow she had been loudly touting the praises of the Chinese, even to the point of suggesting that the revolutionary torch had changed hands. She was expelled after six days in jail and returned home to find that most of her erstwhile friends toed the Moscow line. In 1955 she was rehabilitated in the aftermath of Stalin’s death; her passport was returned in 1957 and she herself returned to China one last time in 1958, at the age of seventy-two. She remained there until her death in 1970, writing books and a widely distributed “Letter from China” that eventually appeared in 40,000 copies in seven languages. She is buried in the Babaoshan Cemetery on the outskirts of Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of 1980 we visited China to do research on Anna Louise Strong with the explicit intention of writing a biography. It was the period when Liu Shaoqi was being rehabilitated. Anna Louise – in part because of age, in part because of good sense – had had little actual involvement with the Cultural Revolution. She had been a special friend of Zhou as well as of Mao. Zhou, in fact, had come to her funeral and wept publicly. With all of these factors working together in addition to a family connection (one of us is the great-nephew of Anna Louise), the Chinese authorities were extremely helpful in setting up interviews, assisting in our work with her archives there, and generally making our stay profitable. We photocopied these interviews and any other material we wished.

It was known both to those Chinese with whom Anna Louise associated and to her foreign friends there that she had written up three interviews she had had with Mao, the first in 1959, the second in 1964, the third in 1965. She had not received permission to publish any of these at the time they had been conducted; in 1967 she wanted to publish them as a bloc but with the chaos of the Cultural Revolution could find no one to give her permission. She wrote to Mao on 23 September but the letter went unanswered. Friends tried to dissuade her from the project. She was adamant and wrote to Tang Mingzhao, her political adviser and bridge partner, that “I am aware that you are against my writing anything at all, but I nonetheless intend to put this material in the best shape I can, while my memory is still clearer than it may be in another year, because I consider it a duty I owe to future history.”<sup>3</sup> On National Day itself she approached Kang Sheng on the high dais at Tiananmen with her request. He said he would look into it, but even after she sent him her manuscript (the one that follows here) on 11 October nothing came of it.

In her archives in the Beijing Library we found the manuscript of the interviews as well as the notes she took on the first two. A description of the circumstances surrounding each of these interviews may be found in our book, *Right in Her Soul: the Life of Anna Louise Strong* in Chapters 14 and 15.

2. The complete story of her life can be found in our book, *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1984).

3. Anna Louise Strong (ALS) to Tang Ming-chao, [Tang Mingzhao] 27 August 1969 (Beijing Archives). The letter to Mao is also in the archives.

What follows below is the text of those interviews as Anna Louise Strong wrote it. Important variants from her field notes are in footnotes. Appended to her text is a section entitled "Remarks on Khrushchev" that Anna Louise held aside, probably fearful of interfering with the developments of Chinese policy towards the Soviet Union. By and large the manuscript Anna Louise Strong sought to publish is very close to the notes she took and the first write-up for herself. There is little sign of an internal or external censor. In the interests of space we have left unimportant variants unmentioned. We have retained her modified Wade-Giles transliteration.

### Three Talks with Mao Tsetung by Anna Louise Strong

A talk with Mao Tsetung is always memorable, partly because of the wide range of his world outlook and partly because of a certain stimulating directness in his approach.

The wide range of his world outlook includes not only China, not only the world revolution as it exists at present, not only the history of the human race, but even the emergence of life on our planet, since fish came out of the sea and evolved into men.

His direct approach is personal by asking a question or tossing a remark that provokes controversy or even perhaps resistance. His comment is never malicious but like the comment of a teacher who asks in order to stimulate thought and provoke a reply. Such was the comment with which he opened my birthday party, on my 80th birthday in Shanghai, when he remarked that there were two factions present, the smokers and non-smokers, and that he was of one faction and Comrade Strong was of the other. Such was also his first remark to me in the small group of Americans that he called to meet him in January, 1964, when he told me that they had refused to take me with them when they left Yen-an in 1947 but had later found that they might easily have done so; and I wondered if ten years of my life had been based on a mistake.

In the past decade in China I have had three long talks with Mao, all of them memorable. These were, in chronological order, the talk that I shared with Dr. Dubois and his wife Shirley Graham Dubois, which was held at East Lake near the Wuhan cities of Central China in early March, 1959, a talk on January 17, 1964, held in Peking, to which several American friends were also invited, and a talk on November 24, 1965 when Mao gave me a birthday party in Shanghai, where, as we later learned, he had gone to launch the Cultural Revolution which he could not launch from Peking.

I shall take these talks in their order.

#### I

The talk held with Dubois and his wife was by far the longest and in some ways the most significant. It was the first interview granted to any Americans since Mao had left Yen-an more than a decade earlier. Many things had occurred in the meantime – both domestic and international – on which it would be interesting to get Mao's view. The growth and problems of the people's communes in China, the opposition of the United States expressed through John Foster Dulles, the war in Korea were only a few.

I had asked for an interview with Mao the previous October and had no reply.

Then suddenly in March a phone call came asking if I could join with Dr. and Mrs. Dubois in the south and meet Mao together with them. Our party that left Peking contained four people: Tang Ming-chao of the All China Peace Committee who often arranged such trips for foreigners; Pu Shou-chang, whom I had met as Chou En-lai's interpreter and who went south to interpret for Mao; my own interpreter, Chao Feng-feng and myself. Pu's presence suggested that Mao, traveling within China to communes and factories, would not need an interpreter and probably was traveling without a large retinue, talking with peasants, workers and local Party leaders. This proved to be the case.

Another fact became clear on our journey. We were not told where we would meet Mao until we actually saw him coming down the steps of a small stone villa to greet our arriving autos in the East Lake resort outside Wuchang. East Lake was one of the boasts of the Wuhan cities. In the years since Liberation they had reclaimed a swampy lake and made it into a park suitable both for excursions from the triple city of Wuhan and also for rest-homes, hotels and hospitals.

Our party spent two nights in an excellent resort hotel which was somewhat better supplied than the usual American hotel in that it offered not only a bed, a desk and a private bathroom, but also a larger package of soap, a new comb, a toothbrush, a large tube of toothpaste, a bathrobe of toweling and bedroom slippers, all immaculate. The desk held writing paper in decorative floral designs; this I had already found customary in China's hotels.

During the day, while waiting for Mao to fix the exact time for our visit, I walked around an arm of the lake to a two-story pagoda that I saw from our hotel and that was less than a mile away. I found that it had been built since Liberation to honor a man named Chu Yuan who lived some 2,500 years ago. He had been a poet, a patriot and a magistrate who tried to prevent corruption and failed, and who therefore committed suicide by jumping into the lake. Only now since Liberation has this long neglected poet-patriot been honored by a pagoda.<sup>4</sup>

The next morning – it was Friday, March 13th – we were told at breakfast: "The Chairman will receive you at ten." Till then there had been no indication as to whether Mao was in the immediate vicinity or some hours journey away. I myself had visited East Lake some months earlier and had lunched at a stone club house on the lake and knew that there were villas not far from the club house. So I was not surprised when a fifteen minute drive brought us to such a villa and we saw Mao coming down the steps in a well tailored suit of grey wool.

He moved swiftly, with energy and even buoyancy. He seemed not only very fit but unworried, almost in a joking mood. He expressed surprise at Dubois' color and held his own hand to compare color, saying: "Who could tell which of us is the darker? You are no darker than I am." And indeed Mao's hand, tanned by the sun, was as dark as Dubois' hand, pale from age. As he shook hands with me he said: "How do you do?" in English and laughed when I said at the same time: "Nin hao" in Chinese.

As we went up the steps, Mao remarked to me that it was a long time since we had had our last talk in Yen-an. As he began to count the years, I said: "Twelve years" and he replied: "Quite right." He said he had received my letter in October and had wanted to answer but had not had time. I remarked that I thought this was the first interview he had granted to any Americans since that talk of mine in Yen-an. After a moment's thought he agreed that this was true. I myself was thinking that his statement that he had been busy was the understatement of the year.

We entered a large, light room with glass on three sides looking out towards the lake. Mao sat down on one side of a long, narrow table covered with maroon felt.

4. In fact, Chu Yuan (Qu Yuan) was never as neglected as ALS indicates.

Dubois took the seat directly opposite Mao, just three feet away, while Shirley Graham and I took seats on the two sides of Dubois with a diagonal view of Mao. Tea was brought.

The seats had been taken automatically, for Dubois was the senior visitor. Mao then made the seating explicit by saying to me: "You are the old friend. You have been here a long time and are now Chinese. You are the hostess. They are the new friends; they are the guests." Since by Chinese custom the guest is always honored above the host, Mao was telling me very politely that Dubois and not I had the first right of talking and asking questions. Fortunately I already understood this.

The talk began with personalities and continued in a half-serious, half-joking vein. Mao asked my age, and learned that it was 73, while his was 66 and Dubois was 91. "Three generations," Mao commented; I replied that it was only two and a half. Mao waved this comment aside and said that Dubois was old enough to be Mao's father.

"Even I feel my years," said Mao, implying a compliment to Dubois for carrying his own 91 so lightly. "But I have still spirit and some strength. And with spirit and strength I can still every year swim the Yangtze. This is my swimming partner," he presented the first secretary of the provincial Party organization who sat beside him. He added that he liked swimming and had swum other rivers in China and hoped to swim more.<sup>5</sup>

"If you three do not object," he continued, "I should like to swim the Mississippi. But I think another three might object, Mr. Dulles, Mr. Nixon and President Eisenhower." Mao sent a questioning glance at Dubois.

"On the contrary," replied Dubois, a bit grimly. "Those three would probably like to see you swim the Mississippi, especially near its mouth."

"Really?" replied Mao, in apparent delight. "In that case I could leave in a few days. Just as a tourist. I would not talk any politics;<sup>6</sup> I would just swim the Mississippi. Then, if he permits, I would watch President Eisenhower play golf. And then perhaps visit Mr. Dulles in the hospital."

Dubois replied drily that it might give Dulles a stroke. Mao at once protested that this was very far from his desire. "I hope very much for Mr. Dulles' health," he said. "As Secretary of State he is very useful to us. He is also useful to the people of the United States and to the working people of the world."

Detecting a questioning look on the faces of his auditors, Mao continued: "This is quite true. Dulles is useful because he sticks to his principles. He is against communism, against the Soviet Union, against China. To this end he suppresses people and sends troops and establishes military bases all over the world. All this is useful to the whole world. Do you believe this?" he shot at Dubois.

Dubois replied that it depended on how many people were intelligent enough to understand what Dulles was doing. He thought that intelligent people were very befuddled by Dulles. "I don't want this situation to go on too long" he said.

"I disagree," retorted Mao. "The period is not too long; it is too short."<sup>7</sup> He

5. In the notes Mao mentions The Pearl River near Canton and the Heilong Jiang. ALS remarks that he would be then in Russia. Mao looks at her as if receiving new information and says "Ah, you are quite right." Mao's "swimming partner" was evidently Wang Renzhong, then Hubei First Party Secretary.

6. In her notes Anna Louise has the following exchange here: Anna Louise: "Like Mikoyan [who had just visited the U.S.]. Mao: "Oh no! Mikoyan talked politics. I would not talk any politics."

7. The notes have here: Dubois says: "You have not suffered the disadvantages of this period as long as I have." After Mao's comment about ten more years, Mao says then: "We very much hope that for ten years we will have no diplomatic relations with the United States and no trade. This will be very beneficial to us."

hoped that Dulles might continue his policy for ten years. The American troops are occupying China's Taiwan, and will eventually have to leave it. But the longer the U.S. Seventh Fleet is right in front of China, the more it educates the Chinese people and the world's people.

Mao added other comments on Dulles. He noted that "events in the Middle East" are "very educational." He had hoped that the U.S. troops would stay longer in Lebanon. "Why," he asked, "did they pull out so soon?"

"Maybe some of them got smart," suggested Shirley Graham.

"That is so," replied Mao, in good-humored resignation. "Even if we ask them, they won't stay." He continued, still in half-serious raillery: "All this international tension that Dulles creates is to our advantage. The more tension he makes, the easier it is to mobilize the world's people. Everyone is forced to face the question of war. Dulles himself begins to realize this and to ask if the tension thus created is to his advantage or to the advantage of the East."

Mao next listed twelve world events that he considered had occurred in the recent fourteen months as a result of tension caused by Dulles. First the revolt in Venezuela, next the visit by Vice-President Nixon to eight Latin American countries, "where most people welcomed him with eggs and spit." Third, the revolution in Iraq on June 14th of the previous year, and fourth, the landing of U.S. troops in Lebanon on June 15th. Fifth was China's shelling of Quemoy.

"Our war with Chiang has lasted thirty years" said Mao. "But the U.S.A. sent half its aircraft carriers just because we shelled Quemoy, our own town. However," he added "they stuck to their 'brink of war' policy. They escorted Chiang's ships but they always stayed three miles away from them and watched while we shelled Chiang's ships. They stopped at the brink."

"So now we regard Dulles as our teacher and we also stop at the brink. We bombarded Chiang's transport. The Americans had huge flags which they stretched on their ships so that we could easily distinguish their ships from Chiang's. We did not bombard the American ships. We learned from Dulles to avoid the brink of war."

Mao illustrated the point by making a diagram on the table with a big tea cup, a small square ash tray and a packet of cigarettes, to illustrate the position of the American ships and Chiang's ships off Quemoy.

Dr. Dubois interrupted<sup>8</sup> by raising the question of the sufferings of the people in war. The people in Taiwan suffer and the Negroes in America suffer. He even feared the Negroes in America might be exterminated.

Mao reassured him. "There are eighteen million Negroes in America," he said. "It is impossible to exterminate them. It is the bourgeois that will be exterminated, not you. The bourgeois are already gone from the U.S.S.R. and soon will be from China. Imperialism, colonialism and capitalism are going to be exterminated. The communists and the peace-fighters will never be exterminated. The world belongs to them. But Dulles and his kind will be exterminated. Dulles is doing all he can to exterminate himself. That is why I appreciate him so much."

"Would you advise me to vote for Dulles?" asked Dubois drily. Mao laughed at the direct question and replied with equal directness that he would not vote for Dulles himself.

Dubois persisted that many of his own friends had been exterminated.

Mao gravely but calmly replied that six of his own family had been killed. His brothers, his first wife, his sister and the only son of his younger brother had been killed by the Kuomintang. Then his oldest son was killed in Korea by Truman.

8. In the notes Dubois is portrayed throughout as perturbed by Mao's apparent levity.

"Only two of my family remain, myself and another son." (This apparently referred to his first family and not to the present wife and her children.)<sup>9</sup>

"In spite of this," he went on, "they can never kill all the communists. There are fewer of my family but in China there are many more communists. Take Pu here," he indicated his interpreter who had studied in two colleges in the United States. "The U.S. imperialists trained them against us but he came to work for our side. The more communists they kill, the more there will be."

It may have been in this context that Dubois remarked that both his friends and his enemies thought he was a communist but the Communist Party knew that he was not.<sup>10</sup>

Mao replied: "You are 91 years old and in another 91 years you will be meeting Marx and I think he will accept you as a comrade. It is always possible," he added, "that I may precede you, in which case I shall be glad to recommend you to Marx."

The conversation returned to the various world events created under the tension made by Dulles. Mao listed "the American elections last November in which the Republicans had a big defeat,"<sup>11</sup> He referred to "the economic crisis in the U.S.A. in the last half of 1957" from which, he admitted, "there has been some recovery." He mentioned "the increase of friction in NATO," which he said was "going to pieces under the conflict of interests of Britain, France and Germany with those of the U.S.A." He noted Khrushchev's proposal to make West Berlin a "free city" which "put the West in an awkward position." He mentioned also the fact that the U.S.S.R. had "added a new planet to the solar system," a reference to the Sputnik, the first satellite to be launched around the earth. He noted also that the U.S.S.R. had announced its seventh Five Year Plan.<sup>12</sup>

Mao especially stressed the importance of "the revolution in Cuba." On this considerable discussion took place. "Cuba," said Mao, "is a very small nation, only six million people, only one third as many as the Negro population in the United States. Cuba is very near the United States, right under it. Yet the Cubans did not worry about A-Bombs and H-Bombs. To the Cubans these didn't mean a thing."

This led into a discussion of smallness versus bigness, in which Mao remarked: "Many illnesses come from germs. Germs are so small that you cannot even see them while a man is big, possibly one hundred and fifty pounds. The man's size does not worry the germs; they just go in and multiply."

In another connection he remarked: "Our people in the past feared American imperialism; this was a disease. They also admired U.S. imperialism which was another disease. When fear and admiration are combined, this becomes worship. The landlords, the bourgeois, the Kuomintang in China were smitten with this worship; even the Chinese working people were somewhat affected. In the past nine years we have been able to change this mentality."

9. Mao was indeed referring to his son Mao Anqing by his first wife Yang Kaihui.

10. Note by ALS: Dubois later joined the Communist Party of the U.S.A. after he went to live in Ghana.

11. In the notes Mao adds: "Possibly our bombarding of Quemoy may have been a volunteer service to the Democrats. Just before the election Dulles tried to get a joint statement with Chiang which would show the Republican policy in a favorable light. But we bombarded Quemoy just then."

12. At this point the notes have: "Glancing cheerfully around the table he [Mao] commented: 'Now here we are, three different races, one Caucasian, two Negroes, some Chinese. But if we had a Pacific pact together, we'd have much better unity than they can because they each try to swallow each other.'"

Mao declared that the same worship of power affects other people, the American people and even the Negroes among them. Dubois replied that he thought the working people in the U.S.A. were not affected by fear and admiration as much as they were by income. Argument followed as to whether the economic factor was stronger than "the power of superstition." Mao said that working people whose class position should lead them to take one side were often affected by superstition to take the side that was opposed to their interests.

This led into a discussion of "superstition," in which Mao introduced the "eating of dog-meat." Most people, he said, "would feel unhappy if offered dog-meat" because they thought beef, pork and mutton better. He himself had also once had this idea. However, during the revolutionary war he had had to eat dog-meat because there was no other meat available. At first he had tried it with great discomfort but then he had found that it tasted better than other meat. He added, "In Canton people even eat snakes. People eat eels; why should they not eat snakes?" In all these choices, he said, one saw the force of social custom.

Mao returned to the theme that many world events have been affected by Dulles and we should welcome him for awakening the people. I remarked that two of the events he noted had not been caused by Dulles. In what way was the "Sputnik" or the seventh Five Year Plan of the U.S.S.R. caused by Dulles?

Mao looked at me and laughed. "That's your problem," he said. Then he added: "Let's go out for a walk." He rose.

We went out and walked across the grass, first near the lake, then down the hill and swung around by paths until we reached the front door again. Partners changed often; sometimes Mao walked near Dubois, sometimes near Shirley Graham, sometimes near me. As we passed small houses, people came out, especially children, to look at Mao. Nobody approached or intruded. When we reached the front door, I thought it the end of our visit. Mao led the way in and we found he had prepared for a meal.

We had two more hours with Mao in which we were offered many kinds of food, including "sea-cucumbers" which I refused, saying that I did not like them. Mao asked whether my refusal was due to superstition or experience. I replied that I had tried them once. I admit that I lied. I had never tried them but they looked like sea slugs and sickened me.

During the walk I had commented to Mao on his habit of visiting farms and factories outside of Peking, and had said that most Americans thought that a small group in Peking thought out policies and enforced them on the Chinese people. Mao at once replied that it would be impossible for a small group in Peking to invent policies that the Chinese people would accept. It was needed to keep in touch with people in all parts of China to know what the people want and what they will do. "You cannot make things in a factory without raw material. You cannot make plans unless you make them out of the demands of the people. Even then the factory has to work to change the raw materials into products. It takes much analysis and thought to work out plans that fit the demands of the people. Both the analysis and the people's demands are needed."

At a different time I asked if the people's communes were developing as he expected and what he thought of their future. Mao replied that they were doing about as expected and there were two possibilities in the future. They would either grow and strengthen and consolidate or they would disintegrate. However, since the peasants had demanded them and wanted them he thought they would not disintegrate. Their rough edges would be smoothed out and their difficulties overcome.

What, I asked, were the difficulties? Mao replied that there were some difficulties of organization but these were being rapidly overcome. The communes had been organized very fast and questions of how big each commune should be, what areas it should include and what new industries it should develop had been hastily determined. Sometimes the decisions on these matters had been correct and had worked smoothly. Sometimes they had not worked and would be changed. These organizational difficulties he thought would be corrected within the year of 1959, for inspectors had been sent out "to tidy up" details.

The greatest difficulty, he said, was the lack of steel in China. The steel drive in 1958 had been a good beginning and now in 1959 the aim was higher. If the steel goal for 1959 is met then in following years it should be possible to give as many as six million tons a year to farm implements and machinery. In that case, farming should be fairly well mechanized in three or four years.

"Do the communes mean that China's industrialization will follow the line of decentralization?" I asked. "Of course," said Mao. "Every part of the country should have industry; all sections of the people should have industrial 'know-how'. Big central industries would be needed for projects of national importance, such as steel rails for railways. But every locality should be industrially developed." When I asked whether one aim of this policy was to avoid the creation of a big, centralized, bureaucratic machine, whether in government or industry, Mao replied that this was indeed one of the benefits sought.

During lunch I raised the question why it is that in the West people fear a third world war, both the reactionaries and the progressives fear it, and scientists say there are already enough nuclear bombs to destroy mankind, and these might be loosed by mistake or accident, while China does not seem at all troubled by such fears.

Mao replied that if fear of a world war made people in the West try to curb the war-drive of the imperialists, then such fear was a very good thing. China did not need such fear because nobody in China was thinking of starting a war. He himself did not believe there would be a third world war though wars as such would probably continue for years to come and in some of these wars nuclear weapons might be used. That all the stockpiles of bombs could be set off by accident he did not believe, nor did he believe that they would destroy the human race. Even if that should happen, it was impossible for all the thermonuclear bombs together to destroy all life on the planet and if the human race were destroyed, evolution would produce a human race again.

This, however, was not at all likely to happen because of the strength of the peace-demanding forces of the people. The socialist lands would not start wars. "It is not we who have our fleet on the Americans' coasts but the Americans who have their fleet in our waters. The imperialists would start wars but even they were being restrained by the pressure of the people as when the Americans had withdrawn so quickly after seizing Lebanon.

"So one should not fear. To fear the imperialists only provokes them to action. One should oppose them, but with care."

Mao added: "I am sixty-six years old. I might die of disease or in an airplane accident, or by some agent of Chiang's coming to kill me. But I still think it possible that I may live to see the end of imperialism. That is what I wish and hope."

**[Note by TBS and HK: That night Anna Louise wrote up her notes and added an interesting reflection – for herself and not for public consumption:**

Nobody on earth is as easy to listen to as is Mao, but few people do I find as hard to put down on paper. I can explain this most easily by a comparison to

Chou En-lai. Chou has specialized in interpretation, so that he puts his ideas in foreign terms and only the bare words need translation. But Mao, beginning as a peasant of China and becoming a poet, a philosopher, a Marxist, a leader of armies and of government, still specializes, by constant contacts and conscious effort, as the soul and analyzing brain of the Chinese people. In talking with Mao, one feels a great expanse of vision, a lightning thought that flies easily over the world, a philosophy that accepts life and death and the long travail of man through countless ages and countless millions of human beings, a hard-won, costly advance, always imperiled by accidents of nature and conflicts of men, yet always moving forward in a reach that may conquer the stars. One becomes aware of the many thousand years in which the Chinese peasants revolted against oppression and were bloodily suppressed by the millions, yet arose again. And beyond this, of the millions of years in which man rose from the naked link between man and ape – “Humanity is only in its childhood,” he once said . . . Always one feels that this is the scale of reality in which Mao is thinking: that he knows from childhood the Buddhist thought and from student days the Taoist thought and now he has accepted the Marxist thought on this ultimate reality and has found his own place in this reality, both his unimportance as one individual and his supreme importance as the carrier forward of life. Because of this he talks easily and lightly about serious things and seriously about trivial things. But his thought, whether joking or serious is always Chinese.]

[Anna Louise was obviously excited about all of this material. She wrote up a draft with the assistance of Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein and submitted it to Wang Tso-liang for clearance. He made some “suggestions” for revisions. A revised version, written almost exclusively for Anna Louise, was submitted but no answer was forthcoming. In retrospect, it seems likely that the problem lay with those forces on the Central Committee who opposed Mao.]

## II

The second long talk I had with Mao Tsetung came as a surprise. It was after lunch on January 17 [1964] and I was told “The Chairman will see you this afternoon.” So between 4 and 5 o’clock I found myself meeting Mao Tsetung in one of the many rooms of the old winter palace which are today reserved for reception rooms and interviews with China’s leaders. There were several other American friends present<sup>13</sup> and also a group of Chinese including Kang Sheng, one of the Party leaders.

Mao did not look his 71 years. He was bronzed and sturdy, relaxed and slow-speaking, bringing an easy and comradely atmosphere into the talk that I recalled from the caves and open-air terraces of Yen-an. This communicated itself not only to the Americans present but to everyone there, including the young interpreter and the attendants who brought us tea and paused to listen. There was no pomp or outer indication of the fact that the man with whom we were talking was the leader

13. These were Rewi Alley, Frank Coe, Israel Epstein, Solomon Adler and Sidney Rittenberg. ALS runs their nationalities together. Alley is a New Zealander; Adler, English and Epstein, a Chinese citizen.

of one fourth of mankind in a process of self-transformation that is also changing the world.

The Chairman passed from subject to subject and from person to person in an easy, conversational manner. I especially recall the sudden remark which Mao addressed to me personally fairly early in the general conversation.

"We wouldn't let you go with us into the hills," he said, alluding to the early months of 1947, when the Communist forces were evacuating Yen-an. I had asked to go with them but was told that it would be too difficult and dangerous and that I had now seen many of their "liberated areas" and should take the news out to the world. I had therefore left Yen-an by one of the last planes and had remained for some time in Shanghai, writing a book about what I had seen in China's liberated areas, especially in Yen-an.<sup>14</sup>

Actually, Mao explained with a smile, the campaign had not been as hard or as dangerous as they expected. "The Kuomintang forces would be marching up a mountain, thinking they were pursuing us and we would be behind them marching up the mountain they had left. How was this possible? Because the people were with us; they would give information to us and not to the Kuomintang. Hu Tsung-nan came against us with 450,000 men and we had perhaps 45,000 – only one tenth as many. They occupied all the county towns and penetrated practically every village. The local people, however, were on our side."

"Some of our friends, both in China and abroad," Mao added, "thought it was all up with us when we lost Yen-an." He said that there was no need to fear any reactionary force, no matter how powerful. They always have to split up. If they put all their forces on one front, they could not win a war. When they split their forces, "this provides us with the chance to concentrate a force far superior to theirs at some given point and thus wipe their forces out at one point after another."

Hu Tsung-nan, said Mao, "came out of Sian stretching out both his arms and spreading all the fingers of both hands to grab all North Shensi. We watched until one of these fingers would get into an awkward position and then we bit it off. When even one finger is bitten off it gives a shock to the whole body. We did this in a number of places so that in about half a year our local forces recaptured Yen-an. We ourselves never went back there. We went on gradually to victory all over the country."

Mao gave a humorous example of a man trying to catch ten fleas by using all ten fingers, each finger to hold down one flea. He suggested we try it and find that one could not catch fleas in that way. The way to catch fleas, he said, is to use all ten fingers on one flea and catch them one at a time in succession. In some countries, he said, the comrades who are fighting revolutionary war have not yet understood the principle of concentrating an overwhelmingly superior force to wipe out the enemy at one point after another. They will learn it from their own experience.

Mao related this thesis to his general philosophical principle that "one divides into two," a principle which he called "the heart of dialectical materialism." Take the atom, he said. It used to be thought the ultimate particle of matter. Then people found that the atom could be split into nucleus and electrons and they

14. [Note by ALS]: This book was first published in India under the title of "Dawn out of China", February, 1948, by the People's Publishing House, Bombay, later in France and finally in the United States it was rearranged, expanded and brought up to date for Doubleday & Co., New York, under the title, "The Chinese Conquer China" in 1949. [The history of this book is more complex and political than she lets on. See *Right in Her Soul*, Chapter 12.]

learned how to liberate the electrons and utilize electronic energy. Later it was discovered that the nucleus could be split into a number of particles which liberated even more energy – nuclear energy. “Can the electrons be split? I am not a natural scientist and the laws of the electronic world have not yet been discovered. But I think the electron will be split too.”

I fear I did not grasp all that Mao was saying about the electrons. I was thinking in more personal terms. The discovery that I might have gone with the Chinese Communists from Yen-an and had been prevented by a mistake hurt me; it seemed to wipe out ten years of my life. I argued about those years. I reminded Mao that he had told me a reason for leaving Yen-an: to take word out to the world.

“I still think it was a good reason,” I insisted. “That is what I have been doing all this time.”

“If you had gone with us, you would have had some experiences,” Mao replied, smiling.

“I did have some experiences,” I insisted, referring to my arrest in Moscow. Then I conceded. “Of course if I had been allowed to go with you, I would have learned Chinese.”

Mao returned without a break to the theme of revolutionary war and its history in China. How are revolutionaries made? he asked. How do they learn from defeat to win victory? How does a revolutionary party expand its ranks, correct mistakes and keep expanding its forces?

Mao replied to these questions from his own experience. Revolutionaries, he said, do not start out to become revolutionaries. They are forced into it by the reactionaries.

“I myself was a primary school teacher in Hunan Province. I didn’t know a thing about Marxism and had never heard of a communist party. Still less did I dream of becoming a soldier and organizing an army to fight. I was forced into it. The reactionaries killed too many people.”

He illustrated this by a phrase from an old Chinese novel which appears in English under the title “Water-Margin.”

“Every rebel is forced to go into the mountains.”

“He doesn’t want to go,” said Mao, “but the oppressors leave him no other way.” Like many of Mao’s comments this remark applied a quotation from past history to a situation Mao himself had experienced. When his “Harvest Uprising” in Hunan was beaten in the autumn of 1927, he went to Chingkan Mountain where the fragments of his followers joined the remnants of Chu Teh’s army and set up the historic base in the hills where China’s Red Army began and from which it later moved to the “Central Base” in Kiangsi. Only after nearly a decade of struggle in South-Central China did the famous Long March to Yen-an begin.

Not all who start in the revolution remain in it, said Mao. He recalled that in 1920 somebody proposed forming a League of Socialist Youth – “which we did” – and in 1921 “twelve of us met in Shanghai and founded the Communist Party of China with sixty or seventy members.” Of these first twelve, he said, “only two of the survivors are still in the ranks, Comrade Tung Pi-wu, at present Vice-President of our People’s Republic, and myself.” Of the rest, one became a Trotskyist and two became puppets of the Japanese under the Kuomintang traitor Wang Ching-wei in the war of resistance to Japan. However, as some fell away many new people joined, mostly ordinary men who saw no way but to fight.

There were very few educated people in the early days of the Party, said Mao. “if you take the present commanders of the military zones in China, – in Peking, in the Northeast – in Tsinan, in Nanking, in Fukien, in Tibet – these were all poor peasants or soldiers when they began. None of them had any education when they

joined the Red Army. Some had been for a short time under the old fashioned Confucian village teacher; that was about their limit. Liu Yu-liu, who now heads our air-force, was considered then very accomplished because he had actually finished primary school. It was these uneducated men who defeated the flower of Chiang Kai-shek's crack Whampoa Military Academy."

A few of the revolutionaries were minor intellectuals. He listed himself, Chou En-lai, Lin Piao, Chu Teh and Kang Sheng.<sup>15</sup> "We had had some secondary education. Today I am rated as a revolutionary intellectual" – he said this with an ironic flourish – "but I certainly didn't rank as an intellectual then. At most some people might have called me a 'petty intellectual.' Such persons formed one or two percent – at most three percent – of the revolutionary Party. But they were nonetheless indispensable."

"We had practically no college students," Mao continued. "These joined us in numbers only in 1937 in our war with Japan." Turning to Kang Sheng, Mao said, "I believe you went to college."

Kang Sheng replied apologetically, "Only for a year."

When the rebels have been somewhat organized and driven into the mountains, Mao continued, then they still have to learn to fight. "Only after considerable fighting did we learn three great principles of warfare: Men must eat; Men must walk; Bullets kill people."

We all laughed at this but Mao went on with a slight twinkle in his eyes: "You think I am joking? Not at all? These are serious matters. Right in our Party there were leaders who ignored them.

"They set tasks for our troops as though they could go without food for weeks. They drew routes of marches as though we could fly and not walk. If you argued with them, they would admit at most half of the third principle, that our bullets could kill Kuomintang soldiers. But if you said that the enemy bullets could kill our men, they said you lack revolutionary spirit.

"This is all very fine, but the results of it was that we lost our Central Base in Kiangsi and had to start on that Long March, and before we were through, we had walked 25,000 li" (over 8,000 miles).

"We stopped on the way in a place called Tsunyi in Kweichow and held a meeting of our Political Bureau and changed the leadership.<sup>16</sup> We did not change the Central Committee but we changed the line. We were able to do this because the members had seen the tragic losses under the wrong line, first in the cities and then in the rural areas, and because there was a correct Marxist-Leninist line opposing the wrong line.

"After we reached Yen-an," he concluded, "we spent three and a half years on a rectification campaign to solve this problem thoroughly. It takes time."

We asked Mao how the Chinese Party had developed this method of rectification campaign, in which there is inner-Party struggle, errors are sharply exposed and overcome, but very few people are lost to the movement.

Mao replied, "There was no other way. We had to abandon the wrong line and adopt the correct one and this cannot be done by force. The only way is to persuade people. We have to unite the whole Party on the basis of the correct line

15. In her drafts of 1964 ALS also notes Mao as mentioning Liu Shaoqi first, before Zhou Enlai. He also mentioned Luo Ronghuan and Lu Dingyi among those few to have been to university. ALS omits their names for obvious reasons when she writes up this material in 1968.

16. [Note by ALS]: The Tsunyi Meeting established the leadership of Mao Tsetung and his line in the Party.

to fight against the enemy, and the only possible way is to lay out the facts and argue things out on the basis of the facts.”

The first thing they did, he explained, was to publish a big book of documents concerning the two lines. This set out the statements of both sides. “We found that many comrades who wouldn’t be persuaded by arguments were convinced when they read and compared the two positions. Many ‘left opportunists’ had forgotten what they themselves had said a few years earlier. By showing them their own past writings, most of them were convinced of their error. There were a few individuals, like Wang Ming, who never admitted that they were wrong. That didn’t matter; we didn’t expel him. He remained in our Central Committee.”

This rectification campaign changed not only the general line but also the method of inner-Party struggle. The “left opportunists” had the slogan, “ruthless blows and relentless struggle.” Mao’s view was: “treat the disease and save the patient, correct past errors to avoid their repetition, clarify thinking and unite all comrades.”

“Some of the ‘left opportunists,’” said Mao, “did not believe that we’d stick to our slogans but when they saw that at the Congress in 1956 all the ‘left opportunist’ leaders without exception were re-elected to the Central Committee, then they were convinced that we meant what we said.”

Turning to the contemporary scene (1964), Mao said: “Don’t think that nobody today opposes us in China. There are many who did not at first accept socialism who accept it now. But some still don’t accept it. Some accept it in words but not in their hearts. Of course they are a minority. There are also some who want socialism in their hearts but their idea of it is not real or scientific.

This kind of situation will still be with us ten thousand years from now. Do you think that when we have reached the higher stage of communism, the economic system will forever stay the same? I don’t believe it. Of course we don’t raise such questions now because they are not practical questions for us today. But I don’t believe that under communism<sup>17</sup> there will be no more opposition, no more political struggle, no more social revolution in any form. People will always polarize into advanced, middle and backward, and the advanced elements will always find it necessary to do political work. In any society there is the division of one into two.”

One of us<sup>18</sup> remarked that without struggle life would become very dull. Mao laughed. “Yes, people like us would find very little to do,” he said. “Would we then be unemployed? Is communism only the piling of brick on brick? Is there no work to be done with man?”

This was a thought to recall a few years later when the Cultural Revolution began.

The talk then turned to the world situation and the question how revolutionaries develop against U.S. imperialism.

Mao launched the subjects. “Some think the United States sees the Soviet Union as its main military target. Others say it is China. What do you think?” He seemed to be addressing me.

I replied that it did not look as if Washington wanted any big war against a socialist country, but rather local wars to take over smaller, under-developed nations to get their wealth and use them as bases in a future larger war. In an election year – like 1964 – no one in Washington would want to commit American troops. Another of the Americans present said that the U.S. was already finding it

17. The notes have here: “if we ever reach it.”

18. The notes indicate that this speaker is ALS.

hard to handle small wars, such as Vietnam, and was being forced on the defensive. Hence it was more likely the U.S. would try to gain ground in East Europe by subversion rather than by war, and some countries there were vulnerable to such subversion. Still a third quoted what was a common theme in the Western press, that the U.S.A. regarded the U.S.S.R. as the immediate foe and China as the long range one.

Mao replied that all these views were very interesting but it seemed to him that some other points deserved attention. In the U.S.S.R. Washington sees another nuclear power. "As for China, they look down on us because we have no nuclear bombs, only hand-grenades. Their contempt does us no harm. In fact, it has advantages. The imperialists are pragmatists in philosophy. They take their immediate enemy more seriously than they do the prospects of future change.

"As for the long range," he added definitely, "imperialism has no long range."

Turning to East Europe and the U.S.S.R. Mao declared: "It is impossible to believe that the people of the U.S.S.R. and East Europe will not resist U.S. imperialism when the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America and even in the big capitalist countries are doing so. I am not speaking of the revisionist leaders but of the people in those countries," he elucidated.

"Even Khrushchev has to stand up to U.S. imperialism at times," he went on. "Not long ago he arrested that American professor-spy Barghoorn. Wasn't that resistance? Of course he let him go in a few days but that's the kind of resistance you expect from revisionists. There is no over-all deal yet between the U.S. and Khrushchev," Mao judged, and added: "That is because he cannot give them Eastern Europe which is what the Americans want."

**[The following "Material on Khrushchev" was intended for this spot but written up separately.]**

In discussing Khrushchev and modern revisionism, the Chairman made a number of statements which I shall give in the order the events he mentioned occurred.

Mao said that at the time of the 20th Congress<sup>19</sup> of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., the Chinese Party would have to struggle with him. After this, he said, the development was complex. For a time it was felt necessary to give Khrushchev some support in public. If one did not support the leaders of the Soviet Union, whom was one to support? But China made her objections known in inter-Party discussions.

The first "face to face clash" with Khrushchev was in 1958. There had been clashes in previous negotiations but this time Khrushchev came to Peking to press a demand for naval bases in China. When Mao refused, Khrushchev pressed his demands harder, until Mao ironically told him that he had "better take the whole sea-coast of China." Khrushchev asked what Mao would do in that case, and Mao replied he would again go into the hills and fight guerrilla war. Khrushchev retorted that "guerrilla war is no use in the modern world," to which Mao

19. [Note by ALS]: This was the Congress in 1956 at which Khrushchev made the bitter attack on Stalin which disquieted all the Communist Parties of the world. I was in the United States at the time and well remember the shock felt by the American Party. I wrote my book, "The Stalin Era" to contest Khrushchev. The Chinese Party published at the time two articles: "Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and "More on the Historical Experiences of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" which defended Stalin as a man who, though making many grave errors, was basically a sincere and effective revolutionary leader. This also had been my view. When I reached China in 1958 I learned that the Chinese had translated and published my book. [This is half accurate. See *Right in Her Soul*, pp 282-284].

answered that if Khrushchev “insisted on stopping China’s nostrils, what else could be done?”

In 1959 Khrushchev again came to Peking after having talked with Eisenhower at Camp David in the U.S. He reported to Mao that he had brought “good news”; he had “found a way to solve the problem of Taiwan.” Mao asked what he recommended and Khrushchev replied that “Taiwan should be handled in the same way that Lenin handled the Far Eastern Republic.”<sup>20</sup> Mao retorted that the Far Eastern Republic had been set up by Lenin and was then controlled by the Soviet Party. He asked whether Khrushchev imagined that Taiwan was today controlled by the Communist Party of China?

At this time Khrushchev also demanded that China release certain American spies who had parachuted into Northeast China during and after the Korean war. Mao replied: “That would be rather difficult. You know, we have laws in our country.” Khrushchev got red in the face and insisted that the men must be released because he had promised Eisenhower that they would be. Eisenhower had said that he feared Khrushchev would be wasting time in taking these demands to China. So, how would it look now if he, Khrushchev, were refused?

Khrushchev thus failed in his mission for Eisenhower. He also failed in the mission he undertook for Nehru. He tried to give Nehru a stretch of China’s territory by saying that “it was just a frozen waste where nobody lives.”<sup>21</sup> Khrushchev argued that if Mao would yield this territory to India, he might “win Nehru to fight imperialism.” Mao replied that the basic issue was one of systematic aggression against China’s territory by Indian armed forces, that he himself had been unaware of the extent of these activities, as was also the garrison commander in Tibet, Chang Ching-wu, until persistent reports from Tibetan herdsmen about Indian troops . . . caused them to send out patrols to investigate. The patrols found the situation was very grave, and so the Chinese Government had to send formal protests to India and take steps in self-defense.

The talk turned from Khrushchev to the general question of the international struggle against revisionism.<sup>22</sup> Mao said that in their attitude towards small countries, the revisionists (the U.S.S.R.) were about the same as the imperialists (the U.S.A.). He compared the present international struggle with China’s earlier

20. [Note by ALS]: The Far Eastern Republic was a short-lived creation by Lenin, which enabled local patriots, distant from Moscow, to fight foreign invaders and local capitalists. It was at all times under Moscow’s control, modified only by difficulties of distance. When these were removed by victory or persuasion, the Far Eastern Republic almost automatically re-joined the rest of the Soviet Union. Taiwan, of course, is an island under the hostile control of Chiang Kai-shek, backed by the military forces of the U.S.A. The contrast could not be more complete.

21. [Note by ALS]: This was an allusion to the Himalayan slopes claimed by Nehru as being on the Indian side of the notorious MacMahon Line, a line no Chinese government ever recognized and a territory that even Britain never held. See my chapter on the “Indian Border Clash,” [in the third volume of her autobiography that she never finished. See *Right in Her Soul*, pp 316–318.]

22. According to rough notes of ALS, Mao declares “The problem with the socialist countries is that Khrushchev wants them to stick to a one-sided economy producing to meet the needs of the Soviet Union.” Commenting that this cannot make them happy, he adds in a telling metaphor, “It’s hard to be the son of a patriarchal father.” Mao continued: “Khrushchev has said that we have one pair of trousers for every five people in China, and sit around eating out of the same bowl of watery cabbage soup. According to that, we here should be wearing one and a half pairs of trousers between us. Actually, when he said that, his own economic situation was getting worse, and he said it for the Soviet people to show how well off they were. Now they are getting shorter on trousers and their soup is getting more watery. Actually, the livelihood of the people in the Soviet Union now is not much better than that of our own people.”

domestic struggle. At first the revolutionary forces were on the defensive; later they went over to the counter-attack. "The turning point in the struggle with revisionism," he said, "was the all-out attack on China and Marxism-Leninism made by the 'Open Letter' of the Soviet Party on July 14, 1963.

"Since then we've been like the Monkey King Upsetting Heaven," said Mao. He laughed and then added seriously: "We've thrown away the Heavenly Rule-book! Remember this: never take a Heavenly Rule-book too seriously. One must go by one's own revolutionary rules."

The talk turned to the part Mao himself was playing in the polemics with the Soviet Party,<sup>23</sup> which were already being called "The Great Debate." Mao smiled and said: "I have done very little in this fight. I have only a few poems. I myself have no other personal weapons."

"Now that we are answering them," Mao continued, "they want to stop the debate. But we haven't finished answering. Besides, it is doubtful whether Khrushchev could stop the debate because he cannot restrain himself. Moreover, it is no longer a question for our two Parties to decide. They insisted on dragging in all the other Communist Parties. So now the only way is to get an agreement which all the world's Communists support."

Mao told us that the previous March (1963) he had been visited by a Soviet comrade who brought a letter from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and who said: "Comrade Chairman, we Soviet Communists have at times been too severe in our criticism of the Chinese Party; at times we have gone too far."

Mao had replied: "Not at all; I can't agree. Just think: 'Trotskyists, dogmatists, sectarians, great-nation-chauvinists, willing to see half the world perish in war, racists.' Shouldn't such people be criticized? If we are guilty of all these crimes, then you certainly should criticize us."

The Soviet comrade said: "This is a grave matter. If the debate continues, the world movement will be plunged into confusion." Mao replied: "Don't worry, comrade. A war of pen and ink doesn't wound the human body." He quoted a line of poetry: "There are at least four things I can guarantee. No matter how you criticize us, the sky will not fall in, mothers in China will not stop bearing children, the trees and grass will not stop growing and the fish will not stop swimming in the rivers."<sup>24</sup>

Summing up this part of the talk, Mao added: "It looks as if we'll have to struggle with modern revisionism for another ten or fifteen years."<sup>25</sup>

**[This is the end of the material specifically on Khrushchev.]**

23. In the notes this is spoken of as "the fight against revisionism" and it is not at all clear that only the Soviets are meant. In the second version Mao's comment about the small role he is playing is deleted as one of Wang Tso-liang's "suggestions." At about this time the group moves into lunch and the conversation does not have the flow that ALS gives it. At lunch Mao picks up the Khrushchev theme again and begins to rehearse the arguments he will later publish in *Khrushchev's Phony Communism*.

24. In the notes: The Russian looked surprised and Mao said: "You don't believe me? Get to some river and see yourself. Are the fish still swimming or not?"

25. In the notes: Mao complains that the CCP response to Soviet attacks was not printed in *Pravda*. Kang Sheng indicates that it was but only in the edition that goes to the embassies and for export. Someone jokes that the export product is always better. Mao responds: "Not necessarily. There were three distinguishing features of the things that Khrushchev exported to us - they were high in price, low in quality, and came in incomplete sets. They would say it was a complete set but we would find some key part missing which had to be supplied from the Soviet Union and which they would not tell us how to make ourselves. Please don't think I'm speaking for the capitalists, but between ourselves the capitalists are more trustworthy in trade dealings, because they have to be."

Someone raised a question about the so-called "intermediate zone," referring to capitalist states in West Europe.

"China didn't invent this zone," Mao declared. "In point of fact it exists. De Gaulle wants to lead it. The first intermediate zone consists of various nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are revolutionary allies against imperialism. The second zone consists of capitalist countries in Western Europe, Canada, Oceania and elsewhere. Their ruling groups exploit their own people. But even the ruling groups are exploited, bullied, dominated and interfered with by U.S. imperialism. So they resist it in varying degrees."

"All over the world," he continued, "the imperialists are driving people into the mountains to become rebels. Just now the United States is making life impossible for Cambodia, so Prince Sihanouk stands up to resist."

"The world in general is in an excellent situation," Mao summed up with confidence. "Take South Vietnam. It is small but there is nothing the U.S. can do to put down its people. And this year, 1964, is only a few days old but already we have had two claps of spring thunder, in Panama and Zanzibar. Spring thunder is not yet spring, but it means that big storms are on the way."

Some friends, Mao added, advised him not to pay so much attention to the small demonstration in Panama. "They tell us it is a matter of a few people demonstrating and yelling: 'Yankees, go home!' It is not a revolution, not even a change of regime. So why, they ask, do twenty million people in China – twenty times Panama's population – make a demonstration in Panama's support? And why did China issue statements of solidarity?"

"I disagree with these friends," Mao stated. "In Panama we saw the masses standing up directly to U.S. armed force. We think this is of utmost importance. Wherever it happens, we will give those who do it all possible support for as long as they may need it."

Discussion kept on for Chiang Ching, Mao's wife, came in and invited us to dinner, which was being prepared in an adjoining room. Talk during the meal turned especially to the campaign against modern revisionism; China had just published the Sixth Comment of nine political comments which were to be made in what was later called "The Great Debate." Discussion also continued about U.S. imperialism and the threat of war.

At one point Mao remarked that "the revisionists call us racists, but this is not at all true. If we were racists, then we Chinese should combine with Chiang Kai-shek, which [*sic*] is also Chinese, and you Americans should combine with your President Johnson. This is not what happens; we are combining with you Americans against U.S. imperialism and against the threat of war."

In the end the Chairman saw us out, as Chinese hospitality is said to demand, and stood outside in the cold January night without either overcoat or cap. One of us remarked to an attendant that he should bring the Chairman's coat. The attendant replied: "He wouldn't put it on; he never does, even in the coldest temperatures."

So he stood as our cars left, erect, robust and in excellent health.

### III

[This interview took place on her 80th birthday, 24 November 1965. Shortly before, the Shanghai *People's Daily* had published an attack sharply critical of a 1961 play, the production of which had been seen as a veiled attack on Mao's policies. Shanghai was the centre of forces that supported Mao; Beijing the centre of those hostile to him. The episode was arousing considerable discussion in China.]

The third talk I had with Mao Tsetung in the past decade was on my eightieth birthday, November 24, 1965. I never know in advance what kind of celebration my Chinese friends will give me or whether they will even notice my birthday. I was therefore surprised when in late November, two days before the actual date, I was told: Chairman Mao wants to see you on your birthday. Naturally, I was pleased.

Since Mao was not in Peking, but traveling somewhere else in China, as he did much of the time, I found myself on November 23rd on a chartered plane with over thirty friends, American and Chinese, bound south for a destination we did not precisely know until we arrived. My chief worry that evening, by which time we were all in a good hotel in what clearly was Shanghai, was whether the Chairman would receive all this large group who seemed so quickly and casually gathered and how I would make my peace with them if he didn't.<sup>26</sup> I need not have worried; he did.

Next day we were all collected at noon on the ground floor of a nearby building, seated in a big oval for informal conversation with Mao Tsetung. At 2 p.m. it suddenly became a luncheon party. On the following day we were the top news item in the Chinese press with headlines, photograph and names, as if our talk with Mao had been a most important world event. It made me a bit dizzy and I thought about it for a week, wondering why we were thus featured.

I noted that in that same week in November the U.S. warlord, McNamara, made his seventh flight to Saigon to plan a ruthless escalation of the Vietnam war while the peace forces in America made a March on Washington which much of the press called "the biggest peace demonstration Washington has ever known." Four times that week China's newspapers had front page stories on America's demonstrations.

So it occurred to me that while Mao might have invited me to lunch on my birthday under any conditions, the inclusion of so many American friends and the publicity given was his way of saying to 700 million Chinese and to any others who listened in: "Now, while the Washington warlords escalate war and threaten to bomb us, take note of the difference between the imperialist warlord and the American people with whom we must be friends."

The Chairman seemed very well and cheerful. He received us precisely at noon on November 24th in the outer hall of a building near our hotel. It is Chinese courtesy for the host to be thus waiting. Then he opened another door and ushered us into a large reception room where comfortable seats for more than thirty persons had been placed in a large oval on a big rug. He waved me across the open space to some arm chairs upholstered in white covers that marked the head of the oval and I sat down in one of these top chairs. Mao remained briefly at the door until everyone had been presented to him by name and then came to the chair that had been left empty beside me with his interpreter standing just behind us both.

Mao began speaking before he was seated and continued as he sat down.

26. The hotel was the Jin Jiang. Guests accompanying Anna Louise included all those mentioned *supra* fn. 13, David and Nancy Milton, and most of the English speaking foreign community in Beijing. Also present were the editor of the *Peking Daily*, and several members of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee. David and Nancy Milton have published an account of this dinner in their *The Wind Will Not Subside* that is in substantial agreement with the account that ALS gives. According to Sidney Rittenberg Anna Louise was told that at first Mao would receive only her and the others would attend the banquet that Zhou Enlai was to give. He indicates that ALS demurred and insisted on all or none. Others present indicate that Mao wanted to give ALS and Frank Coe a private interview before the banquet and accuse Rittenberg of playing on ALS's fears to get her to insist that all of her friends be present all the time. See *Right in Her Soul*. pp. 331ff.

Glancing over the group he remarked that he already knew some of the Americans present – to each of these he tossed an individual remark – but that most of the present guests were new. Then, lighting a cigarette he remarked jokingly that he, as a smoker, was of one faction whereas Comrade Strong – he gave me a teasing look – was of the opposite faction, a non-smoker.

Put off balance, as I often have been by Mao's approach, I was rescued by Dr. Ma Hai-teh who challenged Mao directly: "Are you making this a factional affair?"

"Certainly," retorted Mao. "Between me and the doctors. The doctors say I should not smoke; I say I do."<sup>27</sup> Thus encouraged, several others lit cigarettes.

For nearly two hours, Mao led the group in a conversation which the news report next day described accurately but inadequately as "a cordial talk with foreign friends in a friendly and pleasant atmosphere." I sigh at those words; they sound so dull and thus become contrary to fact. For the talk was full of humor, repartee and constant surprises.

Mao took the initiative, but not aggressively. He seemed to dominate less than anyone. He leaned back, relaxed with his cigarette, and began drawing people out one by one, sometimes by a compliment to an individual's country – not only North Americans were present but a few from all the five continents – but more often by a needling question or teasing comment, provocative but good humored, like the challenge he flung at me as a non-smoker and at Ma as a doctor. His repartee was instantaneous and his mind was clearly the liveliest in the group, taking everything and everyone lightly and yet seriously at once.

Once when I said: "We would like to hear more of the Chairman's view of the world situation," he evaded with: "I would like first to hear the others: democracy." He added with a smile: "Give us your opinions and your questions."<sup>28</sup> To each individual in turn he became careful and active listener, calling attention to some detail in their remarks which they had omitted or some interpretation which they had not seen. At no time did he press a point or build it into a dogma; he was content to flash a comment and pass on.

Only once did he seem about to give the general summary of the world I had asked for. Turning to me, he said: "Since we last met with a smaller number (this was in early 1964) some new events have occurred. The comrades here have said many things about them; I agree with them all." He repeated and reinforced some of the things the others had said.

Then suddenly he interrupted himself by saying to Dr. Ma: "Your health department folks don't look after people's health. See how late it is for eating. My wife has invited us all to luncheon." Indeed, Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, a slender attractive woman in slacks and jacket whom I had met long ago in Yenan, was standing to tell us to go to our rooms to wash and return at once for luncheon at 2 o'clock in another building.

Throughout nearly two hours of conversation and the lunch that followed, Mao

27. Rittenberg indicates that this exchange was in classical highly allusive and cryptic Chinese. He says that Mao added: "How many of you people smoke? Let the smokers raise their hand with a cigarette. To have a cigarette in hand will be taken as a sign of a smoker." He then chuckles: "Well, it seems that in this too I am in the minority" and concluded by urging those present to do as he did and smoke.

28. According to some present, the group pressed Mao for his thoughts. He responded, again in classical diction: "I see that you have held a meeting in advance and have passed a resolution on how to handle me. It would have been nice to have had a divergent opinion." He then looked over at the officials from the Propaganda Department in the corner and continued: "But since you all have such a firm front against me, I have no choice but to tell you what I think."

looked and acted like a man without tension, without even any worries, heavy duties or responsibilities, though he certainly must have all three. His liveliness both in serious comment and in teasing seemed the cheerful play of a mind whose base was a deep tranquility that took in the wide sweep of mankind and its history, past, present, and future, from the time when creatures not yet men came out of the sea to the time, ages hence, when man and the earth as we know them shall cease to be. Long ago he had said: "Mankind is only in its childhood now." This is the reality of which he knew himself and each of us to be a creative part, to analyze and to act in our moment of time and space.

He was clearly optimistic about mankind's future and about the eventual triumph of revolutionary struggle, however dark the storms of any given moment might be. His method was that of a philosopher and teacher who stimulates thinking and himself takes part in thinking and learns from discussion, while he rests in a basic philosophy that he is willing to share but imposes on nobody, confident that it will eventually be proved.

Afterwards it became clear that Mao had said much more than I realized at the time. He had made no general summary of the world but had some ideas which kept one thinking afterwards for days.

**[The meeting was broken up by Liao Chengzhi insisting that it was time to leave for another engagement even in the face of Mao's grumpy opposition.]**

After the talk we all went sight-seeing and shopping. I had two more birthday parties on following days at one of which Premier Chou En-lai presided while our thirty-odd guests were expanded to include an equal number of "Young Japanese" who were touring China and who met Mao the day after I did. This time toasts were made to the friendship of all the peoples, especially the American, Chinese and Japanese, and songs were sung by all parties, to which we Americans contributed "Solidarity Forever" in several different versions at once but more or less the same tune. The birthday cake was the biggest I ever saw for it had to serve over a hundred people.

We got back to Peking by different planes after five or six days. It took another week to catch up with the world news, to unwind from the excitement and adjust to daily life. It took longer to finish the thinking stimulated by our talk with Mao. But it was not very long before I knew that my birthday party had been held in Shanghai because Mao had gone there to launch the Cultural Revolution which he was unable to start in Peking.<sup>29</sup>

29. In fact Anna Louise spent the next month in bed, exhausted, with an inhaler and under medication. She was not well enough to travel until January. It was the beginning of a slow decline that ended with her death in March 1970.