

FOREWORD

When our friend and colleague Hsia Tsi-an was one of us and shared his studies and ideas in the discussions of the Modern Chinese History Project, there was always the problem of holding to the topic at hand this brilliant and sparkling mind, which was forever looking beyond the issue of the discussion. Hsia Tsi-an's search for knowledge and understanding and his realization of the interrelationship of all the topics he was dealing with led him across a wide field of personalities and their problems. In this search, the burning issue which occupied our friend among all others was the survival of the spark of intellectual and emotional freedom under the pressure of totalitarian attempts to remake man in the image of a preconceived doctrine. The scope of Hsia Tsi-an's thinking was such that he attempted to fathom the thought and emotions of the people he studied, as well as the realities of the politics of that crucial period during which much of Chinese intellectual tradition—cut off from the sources of its past—was diverted to the political purposes of the Communist organization. For communism used the critical faculties of the writers to attack the past and thus clear the field for its own system, which these writers saw only as an idealized promise for the future rather than in its reality.

Hsia Tsi-an attacked this vast issue of the totalitarian scheme and its victims through studies of individuals, their role and their fate—studies which, combined, were to illustrate the complex human reactions to this Communist method of penetrating and using the human mind for its preconceived order. Approached in this way, Hsia Tsi-an's task was limitless. His fertile imagination, his quick grasp of problems, led him to include more and more people, more and more situations and political

issues of the time in the scope of his investigations. And it was not easy for his friends to help him in rounding out his series of studies into one book of interrelated essays without curbing his drive, imagination, and willingness to explore other aspects of that overall problem. We felt there was time for the work to grow and never imagined that Tsi-an's early and unexpected death would leave us only those parts of the whole story that he had been able to touch on. He could not give us the connecting link of his introduction which he planned to expand, he could not restate or rewrite his separate pieces, let alone undertake that second volume of further studies that we talked about.

The essays that Hsia Tsi-an wrote and that form the content of this volume approach the main theme through people of very different character and importance and through the treatment of many aspects of the problem of doctrine and freedom. The cast assembled by Hsia Tsi-an for his dramatic story does not consist of great writers, with the one exception of Lu Hsün. In fact, several of Hsia Tsi-an's characters were not really writers at all but rather political agents. And even Lu Hsün in the last period of his life (*Lu Hsün and the League*) is no longer truly a writer but rather a tortured person, agonizingly searching for his and the writer's role in the revolution in which he believed. His creativity had ended much earlier—in 1926—according to the study by William Schultz to which Hsia Tsi-an refers and with which he agrees. The twilight zone is dealt with by Hsia Tsi-an in his piece “Aspects of the Power of Darkness in Lu Hsün,” and the title which his brother selected for the book, “The Gate of Darkness,” echoes this theme. But what then becomes really the subject of Hsia Tsi-an's concern is the personal problem of attitude and conscience of representative figures in the group of writers of the time and of their relationship to the party and its purposes, rather than the problem of the writing itself.

It is an odd and uneven fellowship of people that Hsia Tsi-an brings together to cover the whole scope of the problem as he sees it. There is Ch'ü Ch'iu-po, the “tenderhearted Communist,” a schizophrenic person who tries to retain a little islet of individualism when surrendering himself to the party. Ch'ü's writings on his trip to Russia demonstrate his melancholy emotions, linked to nature. The feelings he expresses in describing the scenery through which he passed show that “his creative genius was never fully engaged in the reports on one of the greatest human dramas enacted right before his eyes.” Indeed, it is surprising to

see the hesitations of this man during what was still an early stage of communism, when the illusions of many were still intact and the chaos that Ch'ü Ch'iu-po witnessed might still have been regarded as constructive. The romanticism of Ch'ü's emotions, to which he returned in his testament before his execution, expresses a mold of thought that prevented him from becoming a hardened fighter for the cause—a true Communist. To Hsia Tsi-an this was shown in the “feebleness, perfunctoriness, or rather half-heartedness with which he wrote.” And it is of historical interest that Ch'ü Ch'iu-po's “Superfluous Words” were published in the same journal, *I-ching*, that had contained the “confessions” of earlier condemned Chinese revolutionaries. It was this half-heartedness that not only prevented him from surrendering his mind to the revolutionary purpose with which he played but also kept him from applying the harshness of the Comintern's verdict of deviationism against a Communist colleague, Li Li-san, when the latter strayed from the path. Ch'ü Ch'iu-po's inability to forget his instincts kept him from success in Communist leadership and led eventually to his destruction.

The last of the essays written by Hsia Tsi-an and the one which he had no time to polish before his death was a study of a very different figure. Chiang Kuang-tz'u was a hack writer, shallow and pompous, who was popular at the time because his display of emotions appealed to the “barely literate youth.” In Hsia Tsi-an's view, Chiang was not much worse than other such popular authors of the time, whose romantic personalities rather than their faulty technique helped them to sell their stories. Chiang Kuang-tz'u's unwillingness to submit to the party and its discipline led to his being condemned as bourgeois; but his name was later, after his death, restored to the list of literary worthies who helped the revolution. To describe his usefulness from the party point of view, the Communists in an ideologically fitting explanation, spoke of the “petit-bourgeois” contribution that he had made to the revolution. Chiang Kuang-tz'u's attempt to combine his desire for personal license with a romantic participation in revolution led to conflict. This conflict in itself might have been a subject for literary treatment, but Chiang Kuang-tz'u was obviously too bad a writer to bring this out. His is the story of a popular author who did not fit into the pattern but was useful to the Communists at that time for his romantic appeal.

The “Enigma of the Five Martyrs” deals with five Communist

agitators, executed by the Nationalists, of whom only one could possibly be described as a writer at all. To claim them as martyred writers was a Communist device to use these men's fate for propaganda among intellectuals, always willing to fight for that freedom of the writer which communism, once in power, would never grant. The political aspect of this story, the indication that these "martyrs" had been betrayed and led to their death by the Communists themselves wanting to get rid of members of a dissenting faction, adds a particularly sinister note of double intrigue applied for the glory of the party.

The central piece among these essays and Hsia Tsi-an's main topic is the story of "Lu Hsün and the League of Leftist Writers," told in two sections. It reveals the Communist use of a man who was without doubt the outstanding writer of the time in China and who was used to bring as many of the secondary figures as possible into line through the organization of a writers' group that served the Communist purpose. Lu Hsün was then discarded when his limited, direct, and naïve approach to the doctrine he had learned kept him from understanding or following the new twist of the line. Through some of its leading literary representatives, the party had earlier flattered Lu Hsün and humored him along. But when the leadership moved to Yen-an, this contact was disrupted, and the local party hacks in Shanghai did not have the touch that could sway the man and overcome his self-assertion. The frustration and bitterness in the last period of Lu Hsün's life are clearly shown in the account by Hsia Tsi-an, who seems to believe that it was this break that may have helped to hasten Lu Hsün's death. Lu Hsün died in time to remain the intellectual hero of the Communist revolution, the role for which he had been singled out by being given the accolade of Mao Tse-tung's own words. If he had lived, he would probably sooner or later have had to be condemned and purged. As it was, he became the prime example of a writer with little insight into the strategy and politics of the time but with a naïve faith in the doctrine and a willingness to use it for the principles of intellectual freedom in which he believed and to whose destruction he unknowingly contributed. The League had served its purpose. The united front demanded new symbols and the temporary use and exploitation of broader concepts of nationalism which Lu Hsün could not reconcile with his own revolutionary faith.

To those of us who believe in the indestructibility of the human spirit, Tsi-an's story has not ended here. To his friends he himself represented that spark that will live on. He had that extraordinary combination of an understanding of the great Chinese heritage and of the modern emancipation movement that made him a proof of the writer's role in our time. Even though he was not able to give the final touch to his essays or to his own introduction, Tsi-an left us a piece of work that clearly shows the theme with which he was concerned and his own spirit and approach. In our plans to publish it as a memorial to our friend, we have turned to friends who have shared the loss and with whom we wanted to join in our effort. It was with his brother that Tsi-an corresponded about his work and plans, and we have asked his brother to give the book, in his introduction, that meaningful connection and personal intimacy with Tsi-an's thought that only a brother could provide. He has added his own profound knowledge of the time and its problems to the story of Tsi-an's description of his own work.

The fate of the writers and intellectuals in modern China is an issue that concerns not only those of us interested in the story of Communist China and its problems. What Hsia Tsi-an deals with is a major problem of our time in a world in which totalitarian control has been extended over many countries, threatening the survival of a most basic human freedom—the freedom of creative thought. In this book Hsia Tsi-an has probed the effect this system had on a number of its victims, and in so doing he has given us a work that combines the results of his scholarly research with his own perceptive contribution as a writer in the modern Chinese literary tradition which communism attempts to destroy on the mainland today.

Franz Michael
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