

Lu Hsun: Brief Biographical Notes

ORIGINALLY named Chou Shu-jen, Lu Hsun was born in Shaohsing, Chekiang Province, on September 25, 1881. At that time, class contradictions and national contradictions in semi-colonial and semi-feudal Chinese society were extremely intensified.

Until the age of 17, he attended an old-type private school in his home town. He entered the Kiangnan Naval School in Nanking in 1898 and the following year saw him enrolled in the School of Railways and Mines, also in that city. During his four years in Nanking, he had contacts with bourgeois democratic ideas of the West and accepted the viewpoints of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Searching for the truth to save the country and people, he went to Japan in 1902 for further study and enrolled in the Sendai Medical College in 1904. By studying medicine, he hoped to relieve the Chinese people from their sufferings. When he saw a Japanese film eulogizing militarism in 1905, he was profoundly stirred spiritually. In the film, a Chinese accused of serving imperialist Russia as a spy was beheaded while a crowd of other Chinese stood by watching apathetically. From this scene, Lu Hsun realized that without ideological consciousness, no matter how good their health, the people could only be either a public spectacle for the crowd or be disinterested spectators. Thus he decided to give up medicine and took part in the move-



Lu Hsun, a great man of letters, thinker and revolutionary (in Shanghai, 1930).

ment to promote a new literature and art to heighten the people's spirit. While contacting quite a number of bourgeois revolutionary leaders and taking an active part in the bourgeois revolutionary movement, he wrote political essays and those on literature and art and translated literary works of the oppressed nations, calling on the people to rise against the autocratic rule of feudalism and imperialism and criticize bourgeois reformism.

In 1909, Lu Hsun returned to China from Japan, taking up teaching in two schools in Chekiang Province. The revolution led by Sun Yat-sen to overthrow the feudal rule of the Ching Dynasty broke out in October 1911. In active response to this revolution, Lu Hsun organized young people to carry out revolutionary propaganda work. In January 1912, he started working in the Ministry of Education under the provisional government in Nanking and in May moved to Peking together with the ministry.

The 1911 Revolution succeeded in dethroning the emperor, but the situation in China remained very dark and decadent because of the weakness of the Chinese national bourgeoisie. Greatly distressed and full of uncertainty for a time, Lu Hsun pondered the lessons to be learnt from the revolution and studied Chinese history, looking forward to new struggles!

"The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism." (Mao Tsetung: *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*.) Under the impact of the Russian October Revolution, China entered the period of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal new-democratic revolution led by the proletariat. The hitherto reticent Lu Hsun saw the "dawn of the new century." Consciously responding to the call of the revolutionary forerunners, he threw himself into the new cultural movement, issuing a call to arms and supporting the thoroughgoing anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Using the pen-name of "Lu Hsun" for the first time in May 1918, he wrote *A Madman's Diary*, China's first story written in the vernacular. It was the first peal of spring thunder in China's new cultural movement. From that time on, he wrote many short stories and essays and became the standard-bearer of the movement.

The founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921 ushered in a new era in the historical development of China. Lu Hsun threw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary struggles led by the proletariat, actively supporting the revolutionary struggles of the young students; setting up progressive literary and art organizations; editing newspaper supplements, and publishing several volumes of essays and prose and collections of short stories. With fearless heroism and in a

thoroughgoing revolutionary spirit, he waged an uncompromising struggle against the Northern warlords and their government as well as counter-revolutionary factions and groups of all descriptions.

In 1920, he started lecturing in Peking University and later in Peking Women's Normal College, thereby forging a close friendship with the youth and becoming a teacher respected and held in esteem by the progressive youth. He went to Fukien Province in August 1926 to become a professor at Amoy University. In early 1927, he went to Kwangchow, then the centre of the revolution, and served as dean of Sun Yat-sen University. This gave him more contacts with the Chinese Communists.

On April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, the political representative of the big landlords and big bourgeoisie, openly betrayed the revolution and drenched the Chinese Communists and revolutionary masses in a blood bath. In this severe class struggle, Lu Hsun made an ideological leap from the theory of evolution to the Marxist theory of classes. A thoroughgoing democratic revolutionary, Lu Hsun was turning into a staunch communist fighter.

In October 1927, he arrived in Shanghai where he assiduously studied Marxism-Leninism while taking an active part in revolutionary struggles.

When the Chinese revolution was at a low ebb in the early 1930s, the Kuomintang reactionaries launched military "encirclement and suppression" campaigns against the rural revolutionary base areas led by the Chinese Communist Party and cultural "encirclement and suppression" campaigns against the revolutionary cultural movement in the Kuomintang-controlled areas. On the cultural front, Lu Hsun united with all those who could be united with and waged struggles against the Kuomintang reactionaries. Meanwhile, he used the sharp scalpel of Marxism to criticize representatives of the opportunist line, expose "maggots" that had sneaked into the revolutionary camp and tear off their masks. In the midst of the Kuomintang's cultural "encirclement and suppression" campaigns, Lu Hsun "became the giant of China's cultural revolution." (Mao Tsetung: *On New Democracy*.)

National contradictions were further sharpened with the invasion of north China by the Japanese imperialists in 1935. Lu Hsun stood firm on the side of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, resolutely fought the Kuomintang reactionaries' capitulationism and "Left" and Right opportunism, upheld the principle of independence and initiative within the national united front and defended the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in the anti-Japanese cultural united front.

When the Red Army led by Chairman Mao completed its 25,000-li Long March and triumphantly

reached northern Shensi in October 1935, Lu Hsun sent a telegram to the Party Central Committee in which he wrote with deep feeling: "On you is placed the hope of China and mankind." In 1936 when the Trotskyites wrote letters to sow dissension between Lu Hsun and the Party and maliciously attack Chairman Mao's policy of a national united front against Japanese aggression, Lu Hsun openly declared: "I deem it an honour to have as my comrades those who are now doing solid work, treading firmly on the ground, fighting and shedding their blood in defence of the Chinese people." In a clear-cut manner, he defended Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.

Intense struggle and harsh living conditions seriously ruined Lu Hsun's health. He died in his residence in Shanghai on October 19, 1936.

Lu Hsun's life was a revolutionary life, a fighting life. His thinking, action and works shine with inextinguishable radiance to this day. He left behind more than seven million words in his writings and translations.

The great leader and teacher Chairman Mao pointed out long ago: "The chief commander of China's cultural revolution, he was not only a great man of letters but a great thinker and revolutionary. Lu Hsun was a man of unyielding integrity, free from all sycophancy or obsequiousness; this quality is invaluable among colonial and semi-colonial peoples." "The road he took was the very road of China's new national culture." (*On New Democracy*.)