

19. EXCERPTS FROM: *MY CHEQUERED LIFE AND MY TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF EXILE IN PEOPLE'S CHINA*

[All proper names are spelled as they are in the original French.]

CHAPTER IV THE UNDERGROUND KINGDOM OF SIAM

XI

When King Ananda reached his majority (*sui juris*), I invited him to return to Siam to fulfil the function of head of state. The king arrived in Bangkok on 5 December 1945. Hence my function as regent was automatically ended. The king conferred on me the title of "senior statesman" which is a purely honorific title with no executive power. That allowed me to take rest, which I had desired so much after my painful and difficult work throughout the war and the three months following.

On the recommendation of the government installed after the war, the National Assembly was dissolved. After the general election, a government was installed in which the prime minister and other ministers were reactionaries. Disputes between progressive and reactionary MPs multiplied in the parliament. The government resigned. The king asked me to form a government in which I would be prime minister. With the support of the progressive majority of the Assembly, a new constitution was passed, according to which parliament would be composed of a Senate and a chamber of representatives, with all the members elected by the people.

The disputes between progressives and reactionaries in no way diminished. On the contrary, they increased from the fact that the Supreme Court had acquitted Field Marshal Pibul by invoking the non-retroactivity of the law (promulgated after the war) on war crimes.

Hence Pibul at freedom resumed his vengeful political course in collaboration with the reactionary elements.

XII

Some months later, that is on 9 June 1946, King Ananda died in his bedroom in the royal palace from a revolver shot in his head. After police investigation, and on the recommendation of the king's uncle, a communique was issued by my government announcing that the king had died accidentally from the bullet of a revolver which belonged to him.

Hence, I recommended to parliament to give its approval for the sole brother of the king to ascend the throne, under the name King Bhumibol. As the new king was still a minor, a Regency Council presided over by the king's uncle himself was nominated by the National Assembly. This Regency Council then requested me to form a new government.

After the partial parliamentary election at which I was elected MP without opposition in my constituency, I voluntarily resigned as prime minister. A new democratic government was installed composed of progressive and democratic ministers. But the reactionaries accused the new government of being my protégé. For this reason, the reactionaries directed their attacks against me personally by making campaigns of slander against me—among other things, that King Ananda had not died accidentally, but that the former secretary and valets, of whom I was an accomplice, had killed the monarch. These slanders were destined to deceive the people in order to prime the way for the reactionary coup d'état of which we will speak in chapter 7.

CHAPTER VII

THE REACTIONARY COUP D'ÉTAT AND MY FIRST ESCAPE FROM SIAM TO SINGAPORE AND CHINA

I

In November 1947, a military coup d'état supported by the ultra-conservatives and chauvinists, overthrew the legal government of Admiral Thamrong who was accused of being my protégé. They attacked my house in a merciless attempt to kill me along with my wife and my young children. They considered me an obstacle to their rise, and an accomplice in the killing of King Ananda. Field Marshal Pibul, who had been released some months earlier on grounds of the non-retroactivity of the law on war crimes, was nominated by the makers of the coup d'état as supreme commander of the armed forces, with total power of command over the authority of the state. The makers of the coup d'état proclaimed a new constitution according to which the senators were no longer elected by a two-stage indirect

election, but were directly nominated by the head of state; and this nomination had to be countersigned by the leader of the coup d'état. The minimum age for electoral candidates for the chamber of representatives, formally fixed at twenty-three years, was pushed back to thirty-five years, thus corresponding to the minimum age for senators in the United States. Anyway, this measure was only temporary, as later Siam was governed over several changes by other constitutions which were fascist, semi-fascist, or neo-fascist. In addition, this constitution suppressed many political liberties. A new government was installed, with a majority composition of ultra-conservative elements. But some months later, the military asked this government to resign and Field Marshal Pibul again became the prime minister.

The night of the coup d'état, I made a miraculous escape from the soldiers who surrounded my house, and remained for some time with some naval friends in the base at Sattahip. Foreseeing a civil war, I decided to leave my homeland and take refuge initially in Singapore while awaiting a favourable moment for my peaceful return to Siam.

With my travelling companions, I went to see a friend who had fought under the command of Lord Mountbatten during the war, Captain Stratford Dennis RN, who had become naval attaché in the British embassy, to ask him to contact his ambassador to communicate my wish to go to Singapore as a political refugee. Thus Dennis, with the cooperation of his colleague, Captain Gardes USN, the American naval attaché, was charged with conducting us from the quay of the port of Bangkok to the high seas in a small motorboat belonging to Gardes, crewed by himself, his wife, and his sister-in-law. Then we embarked on a British oil tanker bound for Singapore. The captain and officers of the oil tanker received us cordially and provided us with every facility.

II

At that time Singapore was part of the British colonies. Although the British government had granted me political exile, I understood well that this would last until the day when it recognized the new regime in Siam. To that end, I had asked our ambassadors in London and Nankin (in disagreement with the new regime in Siam) each to provide me with a diplomatic passport with visas allowing me to enter various foreign countries. The two ambassadors agreed. Thus I had been able to obtain diplomatic visas from the embassies of China, USA, France, etc. I remained seven months in Singapore waiting for a favourable moment for my return to Siam. I then learnt that a certain number of my friends were secretly preparing a revolutionary uprising against the

reactionary regime, which required a certain time before being executed. Thus I left Singapore to visit other countries while waiting for the event.

III

At the end of May 1949, I left Singapore to go to Hong Kong where my Siamese friends, including the temporary consul general of Siam, received us cordially.

From Hong Kong we went to Shanghai where our Chinese friends, born in Siam, as well as some members of the Siamese embassy at Nankin, welcomed us.

Sanguan Tularaks, the former Siamese ambassador to Nankin, and myself went to the house of the Mexican ambassador to ask him for a visa which would allow us to visit his country—which he granted us without the least difficulty.

We thought of going to Mexico with a stop by San Francisco. While we were presenting our passports to the Chinese official in charge of immigration, a young American called Norman Hannah, vice-consul in Shanghai, arrived in a rush, wrenched my passport from the hands of the Chinese official, and cancelled the American visa given me by the American embassy in London. I then realized that a young American vice-consul had full authority over a Chinese official, and even over the American ambassador (later I learned that this vice-consul was a CIA agent). Besides that, I understood that the medal and citations bestowed on me by the American government were of no value, but in fact I was considered as a criminal on the accusation of their own enemies during the war (Pibul), in refusing me a transit stay of a few hours on American territory.

The Americans in Shanghai tried to contact me to clarify the incident, but I refused to meet them.

One day, one of my American friends, who had worked with me at the time of the resistance against the Japanese, invited me to dine with him in the name of friendship. I was surprised to meet there the American consul general who expressed his regrets for the incident of the visa and informed me that Marshal George Marshall, the American secretary of state, had commanded that the American visa should be replaced in my passport. A little later, the former American vice-consul, Norman Hannah, was transferred to Bangkok. It was the CIA which encouraged the reactionary Siamese police to arrest my wife and eldest son who were in Bangkok during my absence. My wife was then "interned" in the police headquarters for eighty-four days, while my eldest son Parl, aged twenty, was tried and condemned to twenty years imprisonment for a so-called plot against the security of the state. (He was released under a general amnesty law at the time of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha).

Hannah was transferred to Afghanistan for a short period, and then again transferred to Bangkok as counsellor of the American embassy. One day the former Siamese ambassador in Paris gave me a copy of Hannah's report relating the incident of the visa. This report contained many lies. Among others, he wrote that after having cancelled the American visa in my passport, he came to see me at my hotel, that I received him amicably, and that we had dinner together.

Before Buddha, I swear that I have never seen Hannah's face again since the day of the incident.

I learnt that eventually at the end of 1970, Hannah left his post in Bangkok to return to the USA.

I have no rancour against Hannah. I would simply like the American tax payers to realize that the sums of money used for the petty expenses of the CIA correspond sometimes with the false reports on which basis decisions are taken which are prejudicial to the interests of the Americans themselves.

IV

Chiang Kai-chek, having been informed of the incident at the airport, expressed to me his desire to grant me hospitality in China, assuring me that he would not forget my contribution to the cause of the Allies during the war and that he would never extradite me, for he remembers that the Pibul government had acted with dishonesty and without scruple vis-à-vis China. As a result, he commanded some of his officials to grant me facilities for my stay in China.

V

On 1 October of the same year, I learnt that the Siamese government, thanks to the betrayal by one member of a revolutionary group, had arrested many officers and politicians who would make a revolutionary uprising on the following day. This rebel movement was led by General Netr Khema-yothin, former pupil of the Higher Staff College of France, who had been one of the members of the "Free Thai Movement" during the war. A certain number of my brothers were attached to this new rebel movement. This attempted uprising has been called the "Rebellion of 1 October 1949".

Those who were able to escape arrest sent their representative to discuss with me about establishing another plan for revolution against the reactionary regime. We agreed that I should personally lead another uprising in cooperation with our friends in the royal navy, my students from Thammasat University, some democratic elements, and some patriotic soldiers

and police including some admirals and a general, the former head of the general staff of the royal army dismissed by the reactionary coup d'état.

When my friends in Siam advised me that the moment was favourable, we hired a boat of twenty tons to go secretly from the Chinese coast to the eastern coast of the Gulf of Siam.

CHAPTER VIII THE DEFEAT OF THE GRAND PALACE REBELLION (26 FEBRUARY 1949)

I

On 26 February 1949 around 9 P.M., accompanied by my friends I left the house where I was hiding in Bangkok to go to Thammasat University where the revolutionary advance party, consisting of a certain number of my students and other patriots, was waiting for me. I gave the order for our advance party to go and disarm the company of soldiers guarding the Grand Palace so that we could occupy it. The king had not lived in this palace for over a hundred years. It served only for grand ceremonies, official and religious. This palace consisted of the throne hall, former royal residences, the Buddhist temple housing the emerald statue of the Buddha, the Finance Ministry, the strong-room of the State Treasury, the Royal Secretariat, and a division of the Government Secretariat.

The commander of the palace guard was not able to resist the surprise attack of our advance party. Thus after fifteen minutes we controlled the whole palace. Simultaneously, our light mortar launched its projectiles on the headquarters of the reactionary forces. The first infantry regiment of the enemy tried to leave their barracks and were stopped by the shells of our grenade-launchers. The government radio station was occupied by our unit commanded by a colonel (a former fighter in our resistance movement during the war). Through the night from 26 to 27 February, there was sporadic fighting between the revolutionaries and reactionaries.

II

Unfortunately our reinforcements promised by the naval division were stopped by forces loyal to the new regime.

Around six o'clock in the morning of 27 February, the troops of Field Marshal Pibul, commanded by General Sarit Thanarat, received the order to bombard the Grand Palace which we were occupying.

Seeing that our reinforcements had not arrived in time, and to avoid destruction of historic buildings and objects of great value to the nation found in the Grand Palace, I commanded our forces to withdraw into the headquarters of a naval command situated on the bank of the great river beside the Grand Palace. From there, I explained to my companions in arms that they must cross the river on boats placed at our disposal by an admiral, commander of a naval unit, while I remained in the headquarters of the naval detachment to await our reinforcements.

During this time, the government troops regained control of the whole capital. This was hence the defeat of my uprising of 26 February, named later the "Grand Palace Rebellion".

The government officers who took part in the struggle against our rebellion were promoted to higher ranks, notably General Sarit became field marshal in 1954. In 1957, the latter succeeded in making a coup d'état against Field Marshal Pibul, his own master, who took refuge in the USA and then Japan. At first, Sarit did not himself openly take the power of government. He entrusted the post of prime minister to his subordinate, General Thanom Kitikhachorn. A year later, Sarit made a new coup d'état and overthrew the Thanom government. He himself became prime minister and governed Siam until his death in 1962 [actually 8 December 1963]. Then when General Thanom Kitikhachorn, the subordinate of Sarit and Pibul, became prime minister again, he was promoted to the rank of field marshal and continued to govern Siam until our time, at first under another dictatorial constitution created by Field Marshal Sarit, later under another constitution according to which the Senate was nominated by the king on the recommendation of the prime minister. In November 1972, the constitution promulgated by Thanom himself was suppressed and replaced by a dictatorial regime.

III

On 27 February towards midnight, the frigate captain Manas Charubha conducted me to a secret place. From there my wife and my son Parl helped me go to the house of a patriot who kindly granted me hospitality for five months, even though the government had promised a large reward to whoever revealed our hiding place. This patriot had no inclination for this reward.

Two years later in 1951 the frigate captain Manas and another captain Anond Puntharikapa organized another uprising known as the "Manhattan Rebellion" because a detachment of sailors led by Manas boarded the American ship Manhattan during the ceremony in which the American ship would be presented to Siam in the presence of Field Marshal Pibul, the American ambassador, and leading figures of both countries.

Manas and his detachment arrested the field marshal under the eyes of the Americans and went on board a Siamese gunboat, the *Sri Ayudhaya*. Then a battle broke out between the marines and navy loyal to the revolutionary cause on one side, and the army and air force loyal to the reactionaries on the other. At first, it seemed that the revolutionary forces controlled the capital, but the air force sent aircraft to bombard the gunboat, the headquarters of the rebellion, without pity for Field Marshal Pibul who was there and who appealed to his loyalists not to use arms and to negotiate peacefully with the rebels. The aircraft bombarded the gunboat anchored in the middle of the great river, which soon sank. Field Marshal Pibul miraculously escaped by jumping into the river, and made it to the bank where he was welcomed by elements who were loyal to him. He was thus able to return to the headquarters of the government forces.

Other army units from neighbouring provinces joined up with those of the government and succeeded in fighting back against the naval units. Finally the government forces were able to retake control of the capital.

The government police arrested several naval officers including the navy commander in chief, along with some civilians suspected of having participated in the rebellion.

Captain Manas and Captain Anond, along with another army officer who was involved in the rebellion, were able to escape secretly and take refuge in Burma. Similarly a certain number of patriots were able to take refuge in Laos, Cambodia, and Singapore.

Some months later, Captain Manas returned secretly to Bangkok to take part in another rebel organization known as the "Peace Rebellion".

On this occasion Manas was arrested at the same time as my son Parl and my wife. Anond stayed in Burma and did not return to Bangkok until recently, thinking that he could benefit from the amnesty law which freed Manas, my son, and some other rebels. But unfortunately, the government authorities arrested him and tried him in the criminal court which condemned him to twenty years imprisonment, the same as Manas, etc. Then his penalty was reduced, and finally he was pardoned by the king in August 1972.

IV

After the defeat of our Grand Palace Rebellion on 26 February 1949, the police arrested every person suspected of having participated. Among them were some who were completely unknown to this rebellion. The criminal court condemned around fifty of our comrades to nine years imprisonment, and acquitted many others for lack of proof. Many comrades succeeded in escaping arrest and took refuge either in the countryside of Siam, or in

neighbouring countries, or even better remained in Bangkok in full daylight with a certain nerve, thinking that no witness could testify having seen them taking part in the rebellion which took place during the night of 26 up to the morning of 27 February.

However, four former ministers were arrested—Tong-In, Thavil, Chamlong, Tong-Pleow—who did not take part in the actual rebellion, that is, at the time we occupied the Grand Palace.

On the eve of the rebellion, Tong-In, Thavil, and Chamlong were warned that they should remain in their houses and not enter onto the scene until after the success of the rebellion. For this reason they remained peacefully at home. As Pibul and the reactionaries wanted them for always being opposed to their government, they arrested them. Another former minister, Tong-Pleow, was in Penang (in Malaya) several months before the rebellion, and I never asked him to take part in our rebellion. However, Pibul's police reported having seen this man and sent him a false telegram under the name of one of his wives telling him to return to Bangkok. Far from imagining the subterfuge, he returned to Bangkok and on arrival was arrested by the police.

These four former ministers underwent torture by the reactionary police to the point they were going to die from wounds inflicted by lashes of the whip and blows from fist and foot. To disguise the wounds, on a particularly dark night the police placed these half-dead men in a truck guarded by soldiers with machine guns, followed by another police car commanded by a police colonel. When the truck arrived at a certain point around twenty kilometres from Bangkok, the two vehicles stopped, the police got out and machine-gunned the four innocents. On the following day, the police announced that during the transfer of the accused from one police post to another, Chinese bandits from Malaya had fired on the police to seize the prisoners. The police were thus obliged to respond using their machine guns, and bullets had mortally struck the four accused. Nobody in Siam gave any credence to this account for the simple reasons that the Malay rebels (at that time) were around a thousand kilometres away from Bangkok.

V

Everything I have just related also accords with the official report of the police and the registered depositions of witnesses in the case of the rebels charged before the criminal court of Bangkok.

However, eighteen years after the defeat of the Manhattan Rebellion, or exactly twenty years after that of the Grand Palace, that is in 1969, an American named William Warren, employed as a teacher by one of the universities in Bangkok, wrote a book on the story of Jim Thompson known as the

king of Thai silk, and in a passage about the death of the former ministers, he accused me of having jumped into the river to save my skin, abandoning my companions, at the time Pibul's troops attacked my headquarters.

This teacher spoke of me because his friend Jim Thompson knew me. He thought that his friend knew Siamese history well. However, Jim Thompson arrived in Siam several months after the capitulation of the Japanese and not during the war as W. Warren claimed. In addition, he confused me with Field Marshal Pibul who jumped into the water to save himself when the gunboat where he was interned during the Manhattan Rebellion was hit by the aerial bombs of his own troops. It was equally regrettable for Siamese students that this teacher was so unsuitable in carrying out his duty. In effect, he directed students in preparing their theses, which required a certain amount of research on facts and authentic documents such as the judicial files open to the public, but this teacher was content with simply the hearsay of the reactionaries of the same type. This might cast doubts on his own education.

CHAPTER IX THE ADVENTURES OF MY SECOND ESCAPE FROM SIAM TO PEOPLE'S CHINA

I

I hid at a patriot's house, as I have already mentioned in section 3 of the previous chapter, for five months with no possibility of organizing another rebellion. I decided then to leave Siam for Pei-ping which had just been liberated by the Chinese liberation army under the Chinese Communist Party.

I entrusted my wife with the difficult task of arranging my escape and those of my other companions, by asking the assistance of our loyal Siamese and Chinese friends.

The government had the land borders under strict surveillance. Thus we chose the maritime route for our escape, although this route presented many risks, for we would have to cross various surveillance posts established at several places at the mouth of the great river "Menam" which we would have to pass through to reach the sea. Besides, in Siamese territorial waters there were the government's naval patrols. Similarly there were control posts on the coasts of British Malaya and the Indonesian islands which at that time were Dutch colonies. We would have to take further new risks before our secret embarkation on an ocean-going steamer to Hong Kong, and from

there, take another steamer to go to Tsing-Tao, occupied by the people's forces of China.

A friend placed at our disposal a little motor trawler of five tons displacement. A patriot loyal to the cause of the people, a retired naval ensign, voluntarily requested a leave from the shipping company where he worked in order to help us by himself taking command of the little trawler.

My wife asked a non-communist Chinese friend, who after the war had been under our protection against the threat of death by extremist nationalist Chinese, to kindly help us organize secretly our embarkation on a steamer at Singapore to go to Hong Kong. From there a representative of the Chinese Communist Party had to help us change steamers bound for Tsing-Tao. The steamer had to manoeuvre as well as possible to avoid the naval patrols of the nationalist Chinese who still controlled the south of China at that time, and made its wake across the China sea.

My wife had thus agreed with our overseas Chinese friend that if ten days after my departure from Bangkok, he had received no news of our arrest, that meant we had already passed the limit of Siamese territorial waters. Then our Chinese friend would tell his faithful secretary to take the plane to Singapore where he would meet us at an assigned rendezvous, so that the British authorities would know nothing of our presence in Singapore.

II

On 6 August 1949 around 6 P.M., we embarked on our little trawler. We had chosen this time in order to arrive at the first customs post at nightfall and a few minutes before it closed, so we would not run the risk of being inspected minutely. In fact we passed through without any difficulty. Our little trawler continued its course right in the centre of the estuary of the river where a government torpedo-boat was anchored to check on boats. With cool nerves our captain brought our little trawler alongside the torpedo boat, and two sub-officers came down to examine our boat. They found nothing abnormal in respect of contraband goods, and their captain ordered that our boat should be allowed to pass. Our trawler thus continued on its voyage by following the coast towards the south.

As the Siamese law does not allow fishing boats of less than five tons displacement registered in Bangkok to go beyond 250 kilometres along the maritime coast of the south, we would have to break the law to go even beyond 1,500 kilometres. This obliged us to take all sorts of precautions to avoid being intercepted by a naval patrol. One fine morning when we had reached around 800 kilometres from Bangkok, I saw that there was a government gunboat ahead of us, anchored at the mouth of a small river on

the coast. In such a situation, we were in great difficulty. If we continued on our route, we would doubtless be arrested by the gunboat. If we went back towards the north, the gunboat could be suspicious of us and fire on us. In both cases, we risked being arrested by the gunboat. Fortunately, by a miracle, a fishing boat came out from the coast in the direction of stakes where traps were fixed for catching fish. These stakes were situated between the gunboat and our trawler. Our captain steered our boat in the direction of the buoys where we made fast while waiting for the arrival of the fishermen.

When they arrived, we bought some fish so that the gunboat would be convinced that we had come solely to do business with the local fishermen. After this camouflage, we turned our boat northwards to give the appearance of returning to Bangkok.

In fact, after we had travelled ten kilometres, we stopped at a curve in the coast which hid us from the gunboat until 11 P.M. Then we decided to take the risk of going eastwards onto the high seas, outside Siamese territorial waters. Fortunately that night the sea was very calm, and when we had gone sufficiently far, we turned towards the south, and on the following day, reaching the limit of the Siamese maritime frontier, we turned east [he must mean west] and entered the territorial waters of British Malaya.

There we followed the eastern coast of Malaya and stopped at an islet for rest, and then left towards the south. At nightfall there was a storm. We were obliged to land our trawler near a village on the coast of British Malaya. Some Malay policemen came to examine our boat and threatened to arrest us. After we talked with them and gave them a bribe, they allowed us to remain during the storm. We thought that they would inform against us despite this, but that there was no risk of being taken during the storm. Thus even before the storm had completely abated, we left the coast to sail on the high seas, outside the territorial waters of British Malaya. From there we continued our route towards the south and at the end of two days reached the territorial waters of Singapore. As our trip had lasted less than ten days and our Chinese friends would not yet be at the rendezvous, we went to the island of Balaik in Indonesia which was under Dutch administration. This island was a smuggling centre where the Dutch administration provided facilities for boats of any nationality. We remained there for two or three days until the delay of ten days was up. From this island we returned to the port of Singapore to meet our friend. While approaching the port we were examined by two patrols commanded by the Malays, but they found nothing abnormal concerning our merchandise. With cool nerves throughout, our captain anchored our little trawler in the roads of Singapore, and our Chinese friend from Bangkok met us there to discuss the plan for our journey to Hong Kong. While waiting, we

disembarked on the island and were put up at a friend's house situated near the police headquarters, without them knowing anything.

Some days later, with the aid of our Chinese friends (non-communist) we secretly took the steamer for Hong Kong.

III

At Hong Kong, the representative of the Chinese Communist Party sent Sun, an overseas Chinese, to wish us welcome and to accompany us on our future voyage up to Pei-ping. Sun is the brother of the former nationalist officer Liang, to whom the Chinese nationalist government had entrusted the care of entertaining our missions sent to Chungking during the war, and who is in fact a communist sympathizer about whom we have spoken in chapter 4, paragraph 6.

We were put up in an apartment rented by the former Siamese ambassador Tularaks, where Admiral Thamrong, the former prime minister of Siam, had taken refuge after the defeat of the rebellion of October 1948.

On the morning of 12 September of the same year [1949], my four companions and myself embarked on a steamer of three thousand tons displacement belonging to Chinese merchants but registered under the formality of an English vessel. So that the steamer would not be seized by the navy of the Chinese nationalists, the British authorities gave a "port clearance" indicating that the port of destination for this voyage was Inchon in South Korea.

Other travellers—Chinese democrats from Hong Kong invited by the CCP to participate in the consultative political conference of the Chinese people—gradually embarked on the same steamer.

Some travellers knew how to come to an arrangement with the customs officers. As for us, believing in the honesty of the British customs and immigration officers, we had let them search our baggage in our cabin, thinking that the Hong Kong customs men would not dare to abuse the situation in front of their British superiors. They scattered our things around a bit and when they had left the cabin, we ascertained that some rare medicines which were very expensive at that time and which we had bought for our stay in China, had disappeared.

The customs men not only stole our precious medicines, they also threatened to inform the immigration authorities that we were suspected of being communists and would have to pay them at least five hundred dollars per person. Sun thus had to contact the representative of the CCP to take care of them. A Chinese democrat from Hong Kong who travelled on the same steamer with me told me that there were many cases of corruption by

the British officials in this colony, especially in the immigration service and the customs. The money that we would have to pay to these officials was known as "tea money". Later when the British government of Hong Kong established the lottery in the colony, friends who lived there told me it was well-known in Hong Kong that, if someone won the grand prize in the lottery, he could sell his winning ticket to the agents of these corrupt officials for a price higher than the prize itself. For example, if one won the grand prize of a million dollars, one could sell the ticket for 1,200,000 dollars. These officials bought the winning tickets to justify the amount of money which they transferred to England so that the British authorities would not pursue them for corruption.

Returning to the account of our voyage, before leaving the port of Hong Kong, some minutes after the payment of the "tea money", two other Chinese came on board the steamer. They threatened Sun that they would denounce him at immigration so that he could not travel further unless he gave them a sum of money. Sun gave them all the remaining money in his pockets, but the two gangsters were not satisfied. Sun was obliged to let them search his clothing, while asking them to leave him a few dollars to "buy some tea" in the course of the voyage.

IV

Another representative from the Chinese Communist Party who was responsible for our voyage and that of all the Chinese democrats on the steamer, seeing that the plan for the voyage would run aground if they continued to load cargo, thus asked the captain of the steamer to leave the Hong Kong roads as quickly as possible, leaving the remainder of the cargo for another steamer which would come the following day. It was thus that, paying no attention to the bad timing, our steamer left the Hong Kong roads in the afternoon of the same day.

The captain of the steamer specified to us that in the event we were inspected by a Chinese nationalist ship, we should tell them we were going to South Korea and not to the part of Chinese territory under the control of the communists.

When our steamer was outside the territorial waters of Hong Kong, the captain received a radio communication reporting a big storm. To avoid this danger, the captain had immediately to steer the steamer between an islet and the Chinese coast still held by the nationalists. We had to remain there around twenty-four hours before continuing our voyage.

One fine morning when we had reached the China sea, I observed on the horizon a black speck having the shape of a naval vessel coming in the

direction of our steamer. The captain informed all the passengers that they must hold themselves ready to be inspected by a nationalist naval vessel. As a result, those who possessed documents or papers which the nationalists could make use of to suspect that one or other of them was a communist or simply a sympathizer, had to destroy them immediately, otherwise the owner of such documents could be arrested and taken to Taiwan. Many passengers thus burnt their documents in the boiler of the steamer's engine, but we did not do the same for we thought that in case of inspection we would show our Siamese passports while explaining that we were going to Inchon in South Korea and not to the Chinese territory under communist control.

The warship approached closer and closer to our steamer. When it was around four hundred metres from us, we observed the British colours painted on its side. The officer of the warship announced by loudspeaker that he surveyed this area to protect British commercial shipping and that if our steamer were intercepted by the nationalist patrols, we should inform them immediately by long wave so they could come to our aid. Everyone was relieved. However a Chinese professor from Hong Kong expressed to me his regrets for having hastily burnt his precious documents including several volumes of his private journal which he had kept since his youth.

One fine morning, that is to say on 18 September 1949, our steamer entered into the roads of Tsing-Tao, where communist officials of the port came on board to welcome all the passengers. After some formalities, our steamer was moored at the quay. The other Chinese, invited to participate in the consultative political conference of the Chinese people, rushed to continue their journey by railway to arrive at Pei-ping in time for the opening of the conference on 21 September.

We others, on the invitation of comrade Ma (the communist mayor of Tsing-Tao) prepared ourselves to visit the recently liberated town. He put us up in a grand hotel of the town.