

(Thunder 29 September 1962)

Editor's Notebook:

CHAIRMAN MAO

By Janet Jagan

Mao Tse Tung, leader of the Chinese people and architect of their new democracy, is known affectionately as "Chairman Mao." I had not anticipated, while in China, of having the opportunity to meet such a great person. To begin with, he is very busy and has many responsibilities. Also, it is known that he does not meet many visitors from outside the country.

During the last week of my trip to China, I was visiting a women's hospital in Peking. I was to be shown the operating room and was putting on the required garments to protect the operating wing from infection— not only a gown, cap and mask, but also canvas overshoes.

These, I had just put on and was proceeding to leave when my interpreter came and told me that "Chairman Mao would see me at 4.10 p.m." It was then 3.50 p.m. and I had to quickly remove all the hospital garments and leave for this appointment.

Memorable experience

Meeting Chairman Mao was a memorable experience. He is as he looks in the photos one sees. He is a quiet-spoken, calm and patient man. He is a thinker and a poet as well as a great leader. When the visitor to China sees some of the recent achievements, like the massive bridge at Wu-Han, one is always proudly shown the monument to commemorate this achievement. And more often than not, painted or engraved on this monument is a poem from Chairman Mao, composed for the occasion.

One of the greatest

I spoke to a member of the British diplomatic corps in China, who told me that Mao Tse Tung was possibly one of China's greatest poets, and he was speaking not of contemporary poets, but of the sum total of the country's poets.

So, in my brief chat with Chairman Mao, I could not help but being aware that this was a mind, creative in the fullest sense — a great humanitarian.

The Prime Minister

I was doubly honoured while in China of having the opportunity of meeting not only Chairman Mao, but the Prime Minister, Chou-en-lai. I attended a reception given by the Vietnam Ambassador. Present were representatives of all the countries having diplomatic relations with China, as well as the press. I saw there the representatives of Ceylon (whom I had met previously at the United Nations,) India, Ghana, Indonesia, Great Britain, etc. Toasts were made to the anniversary of the Vietnam Republic and it was then that I was introduced to the Prime Minister of China, Chou-en-lai. He greeted me very warmly speaking in English, and expressed his desire to meet me before I left.

As he is a very busy man, the appointment was finally fixed for 9 p.m., the night before I departed from China.

Man of action

Mr. Chou-en-lai, as a person, is quite the opposite from Chairman Mao. Although only about five years younger than Chairman Mao, he looks and speaks like a man in his forties. He has a fascinating personality and talks with great charm and ease. He, of course, is more the man of action. He expressed keen interest in the affairs of British Guiana and hoped for our early independence. We chatted for two hours. It was then 11 p.m. and the Prime Minister looked fresh and spirited, although I knew that he had been in conference from early morning.

With such capable and dedicated leaders, and a people devoted to their ideals, I felt that China, with its 700 million people, would, not so far from now, be one of the most prosperous and influential nations of the world.

Han Suyin

I had heard that Han Suyin, the noted woman author, was in Peking and I was hoping to see her, but did not have the courage to ask, figuring that she was bothered enough by fans. But then I received word that she would like to meet me, and so, one morning I called at her hotel.

Han Suyin, who is half-Chinese, is the authoress of *Love is a Many Splendoured Thing*, which, as a film, has been very popular. In fact, I think it was again playing in the Georgetown cinemas when I left. She has also written "*Destination Chunking*" and "*And the Rain My Drink*."

Besides being a writer, Han Suyin is a doctor (she studied in London) and up until last year has been practising as well as lecturing (medicine) at a university in Malaya, where she resides.

She was in China, doing research into her own family history, in preparation for a novel or a series of novels showing the various changes in China during the past century. It was an exciting experience meeting her, not because she is famous, but because she is such a wonderful, alive person.

Commonwealth leaders

In London, Guiana's Premier, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, has been having talks with a number of the Commonwealth leaders. Notable among those he has had special meetings with are Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus, Pandit Nehru of India and the Finance Minister of Ghana, Mr. F.K.D. Goka. He has met the Executive Committee of the BG Freedom Association and a social in his honour was given by the Guiana Circle at the Royal Commonwealth Society Hall.

Waiting for the Premier one morning at Marlborough House, I was introduced to Tom Mboya of Kenya, who is also attending the Prime Ministers' Conference. He told me how happy he was to meet me and expressed his thanks for the interest shown by the PPP in the struggles in Kenya. He referred to a small donation which the PPP had made

to the Kenya struggle some time ago and said that the fraternal wishes expressed had made a great impression on his people.

Dr. Jagan also addressed the West Indian Students' Union.