



The People` Doctor : George Hatem and China` Revolution

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The young George Hatem journeyed to Shanghai in 1933 to practice medicine and see the sights. The deplorable health and social conditions he found there caused his sympathies to veer quickly to the revolutionary efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, and before long he joined underground Party members in conspiratorial meetings and activities. In 1936 he left Shanghai on a secret mission to Chinas Red Army, which was then settling in Shaanxi Province after completing the Long March. For the next fourteen years, Hatem served the Communist troops as physician and advisor. He took the name Ma Haide and became the first foreigner admitted into Chinas Communist Party. After the Communist victory in 1949, he became the first foreigner granted citizenship in the Peoples Republic. Over the next forty years, his reputation grew as one of the leading public health physicians in the world. Along the way he played Ping-Pong with Mao, tended to Zhou Enlais broken arm, cared for Dr. Sun Yat-sens widow on her deathbed, and spearheaded Chinas effort to eradicate leprosy and venereal disease. Until his death in 1988, he showed absolute allegiance to the Party. Few foreigners have been accepted into Chinese society as readily and appreciatively as he and certainly none have had such intimate access to twentieth-century Chinas most powerful figures.

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