

STORM  
ON THE  
HORIZON

a novel by  
MICHAEL SCHEFFEL

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For,

my Mother,

you have inspired, encouraged and motivated me in every way  
imaginable. None of this would  
have been possible without you.

Thank you.

# STORM ON THE HORIZON

# CHAPTER ONE

## CONSPIRACY

July 1

0300 Hours UTC+8

CSP Headquarters

Beijing, People's Republic of China

Rifle reports echoed within the concrete-walled courtyard. The nine man firing squad was called to attention by its commanding officer. Boot heels clicked as hands slapped rifles into position.

The officer, satisfied with the performance of his men, marched forward from his position at the left of the firing line. Stopping three feet from the first hooded and bound figure lying on the graveled ground with a blood-stained hole in the center of its back, he drew his sidearm, an unlicensed copy of a popular Sig Sauer model. After a brief moment of hesitation, the import of the moment testing his self-control, he aimed and fired a single bullet into the

hooded head. Moving to his right down the line, he fired eight more bullets into eight more hooded heads. Finished, he turned to face his men and snapped to attention.

On cue, a physician, employed by the Chinese Secret Police, left his place behind the firing squad and walked forward. In turn, he checked each corpse for signs of life. Satisfied all were dead, he nodded to the officer and stood next to him.

Observing from a guard tower, in addition to being convenient for executions the courtyard was an exercise area for special prisoners, General Li Feng drew on a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Although CSP was outside the defense ministry's chain of command, its commander owed his rank and position to Li's patronage; therefore, the man's loyalty and cooperation had been a foregone conclusion. General Li had other men, similarly under his thumb, strategically placed throughout the hierarchy that ruled China. He had spent years and a considerable sum of his own money positioning himself for this moment. His moment.

General Li Feng was China's deputy defense minister. He was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the People's Liberation Army, Navy and Air Force. He was also a devote student of Sun Tzu and Chairman Mao. Like his personal idols, he believed China's power and greatness in the world were undeniable facts. His nation possessed the knowledge and tools to realize Marx's dream of a world united under the banner of communism. Chinese Communism. All that was missing was the political will to

act.

Exhaling a stream of bluish smoke, he dropped his cigarette on the floor and congratulated himself. Nine weak men content to corrupt Mao's glorious revolution for their own gain lie dead below. Those *traitors* to communism had been the final obstacles blocking his plan and China's path to glory. *In a few hours, eight true communists will be elevated to the Politburo and demand that I serve as their General Secretary. Nothing can stop us. The world is ours.*

Li clasped his hands behind his back and said, "You know what to do. Fail me and you will join them."

"It will be as you wish, sir."

Li continued to watch, as the firing squad finished loading the corpses into a truck driven into the courtyard for that purpose. Then, the CSP soldiers, their officer and the doctor boarded a second truck, and the small convoy drove away.

Three hours later, a turboprop transport aircraft carrying the dead Politburo ministers and their executioners crashed in a remote locale of China's vast interior.

Just minutes after receiving a visual confirmation of the crash, the deputy minister of information released a statement announcing a national tragedy. *The General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and eight senior Politburo members died on the first leg of a military inspection tour, when their aircraft lost power and crashed. The flight crew, a CSP security detail and a physician, attached to the entourage, also*

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*perished. This is a day of mourning for all Chinese.*

In addition to being continuously broadcast throughout the country, the statement was made available to foreign news agencies. Voluminous requests, by international news media, for more information were answered with a universal, *no comment*.