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The Chinese Revolution

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Part II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power



Folk artist, Scenes of struggle and victory



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1932-1936

Victory in defeat: *revolution and protracted warfare*

Between 1934 and 1936, the various Red Army groups left their bases in southern and central China, heading for the Shaanxi Soviet Area, where they arrived one by one.¹ The perilous, heroic and truly epic journey became known as the Long March. The price of this survival operation was high. On the eve of the great trek, total Red Army forces were estimated at 300 000; only 30 000 ultimately came together in northwestern China.

The 86 000-strong First Front Army left the Ji-angxi base area on October 16, 1934, together with the CCP central leadership. It was to travel 10 000 kilometers and overcome many trying moments: repeated engagements with the Guomindang troops, the hostility of non-Chinese peoples, fearsome natural obstacles and the eroding morale of its own fighters. In fact, one of the most difficult tests for the Red Army was dealing with the demoralization of soldiers who had been hounded from their native province, cut off from their family and village, thrust into provinces whose language and customs were alien, and set on what seemed, for a long time, a haphazard quest for a more sheltered base area.

Only 4000 of them, including Mao Zedong, reached Wuqi, North Shaanxi², one of the last stops on the way to Yan'an, the new "red capital," on October 19, 1935.

¹ See map of the Long March in Volume I, NSR n°2, p. 15.

² The figures above are those of Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Long March*, London/Sydney: Pan Books, 1986, p. 23. For propaganda reasons, the Communist Party had inflated the figures of the First Front Army, dubbed "The Army of 100 000." But the rolls of the Red Army give the following figures, including enrollment in progress: 19 880 for the First Army Group, 17 805 for the Third, 12 168 for the Fifth, 10 922 for the Eighth, 11 538 for the Ninth, 4695 for the Military Commission Column, 9853 for the Central Column. See Salisbury p. 31 and footnote 7, p. 353. When comparing the figures on departure and arrival, account must be taken of the fact that thousands of recruits were added during the Long March itself. Losses include those killed, wounded and not transportable, deserters, etc.

But the Long March was not just a physical, military and moral trial; it was also a tough political test for the Communist Party. Its apparatus was weakened by violent factional conflicts. The very existence of the CCP was at stake in several ways.

"The Long March," Harrison Salisbury notes in a paraphrase of general Qin Xinghan, "was not just guns and bullets; it was three battles in one - the battle with Chiang and his regional warlords, the battle against nature and the elements, and key of keys, the battle within the Communist Party, the battle of leader against leader and policy against policy."³

Mao emerged from it all at the head of the CCP. Before 1935, one could refer to a Maoist faction inside the CCP, much as people had talked about the "Zhu-Mao Army"⁴ in the days of the Jingtangshan and Jiangxi in the late 1920s. After 1935, one is compelled to recognize the existence of a Maoist party leadership, a team that is still challenged by some but whose scope goes far beyond that of a mere regional faction.

1932-1935: Mao's demise and comeback

Mao Zedong's comeback is particularly noticeable because he had lost most of his power by the eve of the great exodus, in 1934. His downhill slide had begun in 1932, when first Zhou Enlai, then Bo Gu and Luo Fu (Zhang Wentian), two of the "28 Bolsheviks" faction's main representatives, arrived in his Soviet Republic, with the backing of Otto Braun⁵, the "military adviser" sent

³ Salisbury, p. 91. General Qin Xinghan, when interviewed by Salisbury, was assigned to the Military History Museum.

⁴ Zhu De was one of the main leaders of the Red Army Group since the early heroic days of the Jingtangshan. The two men were so closely associated in popular imagery that some believed they were a single person: Zhu Mao.

⁵ Otto Braun, probably a German, used the party name of Li De and the pen name of Hua Fu. He arrived in Jiangxi in spring 1933 and became in practice the main leader of the region. He participated in the Long March, even after losing

by Moscow.

Mao's formal position remained quite high during that period. He had lost his post as an alternate member of the Political Bureau (PB) in 1927 after the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising. But he regained it in 1931 and became a full member of the PB in 1934. Nevertheless, his authority was undermined and his associates threatened; he was becoming increasingly isolated. Maoist conceptions on strategy were subjected to systematic criticism during a violent controversy over military affairs. Leadership was in the hands of the troika of Otto Braun, Bo Gu and Zhou Enlai.

By 1934, Mao's position seemed as desperate as it had seemed strong in 1932. Most of the red generals sided with Zhou Enlai or Otto Braun. When the Long March began, the PB assigned cadres of the Maoist faction to take charge of the rear; few of them survived the "mop-up" operations launched by the white armies in the red zone now emptied of its main defenses.

To break out of the enemy ring, the Red Army had to smash through four lines of bunkers. It managed to cross the first three with relative ease, thanks to secret compromises with local warlords. But it paid very dearly its passage through the fourth line, on the river Xiang. The Communists were slowed down by long columns of porters and could not escape beyond the reach of the white armies. Their losses (both casualties and desertions) soon rose to 50 000; by January 1935, the First Army only numbered 30 000.

These events undermined the authority of Otto Braun—in title a mere "adviser," in fact the party's main politico-military leader—among the cadres of the Red Army. This context

the proconsular powers he wielded for a time, and remained in China until 1939, at which point he left for the Soviet Union. It seems that friends advised not to return to base too fast: this is how he escaped the fiercest period of the purges, in which many Stalinists who knew too much lost their lives. He retired in East-Berlin and wrote his memoirs, "Von Schanghai bis Janan", *Horizont* (East-Berlin), n°23-38, 1969. He died in 1974.

enabled Mao to reassert his leadership. In December 1934, during the conference of Tong-dao (a town near the border of Hunan and Guizhou), he was reinstated into the central military commission, from which he had been expelled in 1932. A week later, on December 18, Mao bolstered his position during an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau held in Liping, the thriving seat of a county in southeastern Guizhou.⁶ By mid-January 1935, Mao asserted his preeminence over Otto Braun and Bo Gu at another enlarged meeting of the PB, held in Zunyi, an urban center of the same province.

Mao succeeded in consolidating his political power throughout 1935, despite a grave military setback suffered under his newly-acquired command, immediately after the Zunyi conference. The incident occurred in late January, as the Red Army attempted to cross the Yangtze river at Qinggangpo, and came close to total disaster. In the event, Mao seems to have committed one of the very mistakes against which he had often warned: engaging in battle without sufficient information on enemy forces.⁷ Maoist historiography has piously forgotten this nearly fatal blunder. This defeat, and the subsequent retreat and many exhausting forced marches, fostered disquieting complaints among the commanders of the Red Army: even Lin Biao, then a young general who had supported Mao during the dog days of 1932 to 1934, gave voice to this discontent.⁸

Despite this failure, the quality of Mao's command at a time when the relationship of forces was particularly unfavorable, compelled recognition. The Red Army, now numbering only 20 000, was forced to face a new encircling maneuver. Chiang Kai-shek had assembled between 500 00 and 750 000 troops and blockaded all escape routes. But Mao took advantage of the contradictions among the various warlords, used the extraordinary speed of his own troops, and carried out a multiplicity of diversionary maneuvers to

⁶ See Salisbury, pp. 109-113

⁷ Idem, pp. 145-153

⁸ Idem, pp. 188-192

deceive his enemies, break out of their net and achieve the reputedly impossible feat of seizing the Luding bridge: in late May 1935, with only 12 000 to 13 000 people left, he again escaped extermination by successfully crossing the Dadu river.

Mao's Red Army was now sheltered from White attacks for a while. But Mao then had to lead his exhausted troops, natives of the tropical South, up and across the Great Snowy Mountains and through the Grassland, a vast steppe of desert swamps in which the Red fighters, accustomed to densely populated areas, marched for days without meeting a soul. This was the far-end of the world, a psychological as well as a physical trial.

Having overcome this obstacle, Mao had to face a new political challenge. In June 1935, his First Front Army, now down to 7000 or 8000 troops, joined forces at Maogong, Sichuan, with the Fourth Front Army, which comprised 70 000 troops and was led Zhang Guotao, one of the leading members of the PB.⁹ Zhang's forces were not only ten times stronger than Mao's but far fresher.

The junction of the two Communist task forces triggered a new faction fight. Zhang Guotao laid claim to leadership. The showdown focused on the route to be followed by the Red

Army: north, as advocated by Mao, into Han country¹⁰, to be able to regain the initiative when the opportunity would arise (the war with Japan...); or ever further west, into Tibetan lands, as argued by Zhang Guotao, to get closer to the Soviet borders, at the risk of isolation from "useful" China?

The political clash was becoming quite bitter—or worse for Mao, who was surrounded by Zhang's supporters. But the adversaries simply broke off: the Fourth Army withdrew into Xikang while the First Army maneuvered to regain a foothold in Han country. Mao Zedong was apprised of the existence of a red base in North Shaanxi. After a few more engagements with the whites, Mao and 4000 followers finally arrived intact in their new haven.

Meanwhile, the Fourth Army faced hostile Tibetan populations and was driven further and further into the Northwest. In the end, it was cut to pieces in the far reaches of Gansu and Xinjiang by the Moslem horsemen of Ma Pufang. When Zhang Guotao and the survivors joined Mao's now substantially restored forces, in 1936, they did so as vanquished.

The new Maoist leadership

Mao Zedong thus emerged for the first time as the central figure of the Chinese Communist Party in 1935-1936. But he had achieved more than simply asserting his own preeminence: by rallying around him, or neutralizing, key cadres of the rival factions, by attracting independents, and by progressively his scattered former comrades who had survived the purges and warfare, he had succeeded in building a new and real leadership team for the party.

The composition of this new Maoist leadership team shows that his take-over went far beyond the mere victory of one faction over the others; indeed, what actually took place was a complete realignment of the apparatus reflecting a deep process of political recomposition inside the CCP.

⁹ Zhang Guotao was born in 1897 in Jishui (Jiangxi) and died in 1979 in Canada. He was one of the founders and first leaders of the CCP. Opposed to the CCP's entry into the Guomindang, he lost his seat on the Central Committee in 1923. He was reinstated in 1925. During the Second Chinese Revolution, he was invested with major responsibilities in the Peking labor movement. Removed from the leadership once again after the fiasco of 1927, he was compelled to make a self-criticism in the USSR. Sent back to China by Moscow to fight the Li Lisan leadership, he settled first in Shanghai, then, in 1931, in the red base area of Eyuwan, on the border of Hunan, Hubei and Anhui. The base had to be evacuated in 1932. Zhang Guotao and the Fourth Front Army set out on their Long March, in early 1935, from northwestern Sichuan. Zhang Guotao broke with the CCP in 1938. He took refuge in white territory, then, in 1949, in Hong Kong, and finally, in Canada.

¹⁰ The Han are the main ethnic group inhabiting China.

In the early stages of the Long March, Mao, who, being ill, was transported in a litter, developed relations with Luo Fu and Wang Jiaxiang, two of the main leaders of the Moscow-trained "28 Bolsheviks" faction. Luo Fu had actively contributed to the anti-Maoist purges carried out in 1933 during the campaign against the Luo Ming "deviation."¹¹ In 1932, he is even reported to have asked that Mao be expelled from CCP membership. As for Wang Jiaxiang, he had replaced Mao in the leadership of the Army's General Political Department. Nevertheless, Mao was able to form a factional bloc with them, known alternately as the Central Team (in the Maoist version) or the Central Triad (in Otto Braun's version).

At the Zunyi conference, Zhou Enlai agreed to a full-scale self-criticism of the military orientation pursued under his leadership. He was then integrated into the new leadership team. On the other hand, the other two members of the old governing troika, Bo Gu and Otto Braun, refused to make amends. They were isolated: the generals supported Mao.

The new Maoist leadership was shaped at this time. Still fragile, it was to consolidate over the next fifteen years of revolutionary struggle and to withstand the stresses of victory for a entire decade. Only in the late 1950s (with the failure of the Great Leap Forward) and 1960s (during the Cultural Revolution) would this team finally shatter.

The new leadership was built around Mao: he had been right before others; he had pursued a difficult fight on several fronts almost single-handedly; he had known how to listen to former adversaries and even turn them into his collaborators. Intimately involved in all the activities of the leadership he demanded allegiance from his followers: a relation of personal loyalty emerged which paved the way for the rise of a personality cult, begin-

¹¹ Luo Ming was interim secretary of the Fujian provincial committee in 1932-33. He had opposed the conclusions of the August 1932 Ningdu Central Committee dominated by Zhou Enlai.

ning in 1942. Only in the 1960s, when Mao proved in-capable of defining a viable orientation, was the relation of personal loyalty broken and did the crisis of the Maoist leadership become acute, leading to the Cultural Revolution. Thus Mao's political death preceded his physical death in 1976, and marked the end of an epoch for the CCP and the People's Republic.

Mao Zedong held a particular, preeminent position within the Political Bureau. It seems that from 1935, the former members of the "28 Bolsheviks" faction, elements who had "returned from Moscow" and joined the new leadership, no longer played a truly central role.¹² But the national leaders of the CCP included many others, with strong personalities. They were by no means simple stooges of the Great Helmsman!

The leadership team put together in 1935-1937 was impressive in many ways. It included the talented Zhou Enlai, known for his sense of party—and later state—discipline, yet quite prepared to assume responsibility when the need arose, as he had in the past when he gave the signal for the Nanchang insurrection against Stalin's formal order, as transmitted by Lominadze, on the eve of the uprising.¹³

It included Liu Shaoqi, who probably participated in the beginning of the Long March, then took his assignment in North China, and became the regime's Number Two before perishing in the Cultural Revolution; Chen Yi, one of the Maoists left behind in Jiang-xi, who only managed to resume contact with the CCP leadership in 1937; Deng Xiaoping, who had already then survived one purge (for Maoism that time!), and was to become one of the main political commissars of the Red

¹² Luo Fu became general secretary of the party after the Zunyi conference; the position, however, was far less important than the title may imply. As for Wang Jiaxiang, he was to head up Kangda University, in Yan'an, during the Sino-Japanese war. After the 1949 victory, Wang became the first ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Moscow (Luo Fu succeeded him in that position). Both collaborated with Zhou Enlai in the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

¹³ According to Salisbury, *op.cit.*, p.21

Army; generals and future marshals who had supported Mao in the 1932-1934 military controversy, such as Lin Biao, famous for his flanking attacks, or who had criticized him in no uncertain terms, such as Liu Bocheng, the One-Eyed Dragon, and the very professional Peng Dehuai, famous for his frontal attacks, or who had stood half-way, such as the popular Zhu De, the comrade in arms of the early days...

How could Mao, after being stripped of his power on the eve of the Long March, rally around him such a powerful team of veterans from such diverse factional backgrounds?

Mao had not been completely defeated between 1932 and 1934; he retained the —discrete— support of a section of the army around Lin Biao. He was protected by the prestige he still enjoyed, the friendship of Zhu De, the cautiousness of Zhou Enlai, and even Moscow's calculations that it was best to keep more than one egg in its basket and therefore rejected Bo Gu's and Otto Braun's injunctions that Mao be purged.

Mao was thus able to hold on to a few positions in 1932-1934. But his extraordinary political recovery cannot be explained by the protection he received, his strong character, ambition, factional know-how and military qualities alone. He was able to bring together cadres that were too different, through a series of trials that were too fierce, too varied and too numerous, for his success in 1935 to be attributed to chance alone, a simple rebound of the CCP's internal power struggles. The causes of the Maoist faction's defeat in 1932-1934 and of its victory in 1934-1935 must be investigated in greater depth.

The formation of a Chinese leadership

At the Zunyi conference, the CCP cadres had regrouped in opposition to Otto Braun and the main representative of the "28 Bolsheviks" on the spot, Bo Gu— the secretary and nominal leader of the CPP who, probably because of his own political inadequacy, had surrendered his tasks to the Comintern envoy. The new leadership was formed against the Stalinist faction properly speaking. It emerged at a time when relations with

Moscow were materially interrupted. The center in Shanghai, in charge of international links, had fallen under the blows of repression; the Red Army's transmission equipment was not powerful enough to keep in touch with receivers beyond the borders of China. During the Long March, a crucial formative period, no one could appeal to the Comintern to intervene directly or influence the party's internal struggles. Moscow was presented with accomplished facts. The faction fight was far from over; the new leadership team was still politically unstable. But the relationship of forces had tipped to the other side. More importantly, the nature of the factions at hand had changed.

Before 1935, the Maoist faction only encompassed a minority of the truly representative cadres of the CCP. The Comintern was still able to impose discipline and obtain the support of central figures of the party despite the defeat of 1927: a Li Lisan or a Qu Qiubai lent their services to the Stalinist effort to bend the CCP to its norm. They applied the line without drawing any of the lessons of the defeat. Nevertheless, they were not simple creatures of the apparatus that Moscow was building on an international scale. Each represented an aspect of the history of Chinese communism: Li had assumed major tasks in workers' struggles in the 1925-1927 period and Qu played an outstanding role on the cultural front.

Paul Pickowicz has noted the ambivalent history of Stalin's chosen leaders, with respect to the case of Qu Qiubai: "The most characteristic feature of Ch'u's [Qu's] political behavior in the 1924-1930 period was unquestionably his unwavering support of the various strategies for revolution in China mapped out by the Comintern in Moscow. No Chinese Communist worked more closely with Comintern representatives than Ch'u during the United Front with the Guomindang, the May Thirtieth Movement, the Northern Expedition, and the Wuhan period.... But Ch'u's views began to change in the spring of 1928...."

Made into a scapegoat, summoned to Moscow, Qu remained in the USSR for two years; there, he ran up against the reality of Stalinism. "Ch'u's worst experience was his attempt to prevent Pavel Mif,

Stalin's leading China hand, from installing Wang Ming and his followers as the new leaders of the Chinese Communist Party."¹⁴ Although he and his wife were persecuted, Qu managed to get back to China where he stood by his opposition to the "28 Bolsheviks" faction. He was expelled from the Political Bureau.

Politically exhausted and isolated, Qu Qubai withdrew into the cultural arena where he was to emerge as a radical figure searching for an identity that was at once proletarian and national-Chinese—in the literary movement of the 1930s. In Pickowitz's opinion, Qu should be considered as the foremost non-European Marxist literary thinker.

The "coup" engineered in 1931 by Pavel Mif in the CCP signaled the seizure of power by cadres cast in a new mould, the prototype of which was Wang Ming: they had been trained by and in the international Stalinist apparatus; their homeland was the Kremlin. Henceforth, Moscow's emissaries began replacing national leaders, instead of supplementing them as they had previously. Even then, Moscow still retained the loyalty of valuable cadres, products of the history of Chinese communism, such as Zhou Enlai. The PB was thus still able to keep the Maoist faction's representation down.

The year 1935 marked a decisive turning point in this respect: legitimacy changed sides. Previously, with the blessing of Moscow it had laid with the anti-Maoist bloc. Now, with the test of events, it switched to Mao's side. The Wang Ming wing was reduced to a particular faction whose influence derived mainly from its Stalinist backers. The change-over began at the Zunyi conference. The cadres in attendance recognized that Mao was the leader who was building an adult, Chinese leadership, free from the financial, psychological and political tutelage of Moscow, and determined, not to break with the "great Soviet rear," but to maneuver to preserve the CCP's autonomy in action.

Therein lay one of the sources of Mao's preeminence. He had drawn one of the key lessons of the 1927-1930 defeat, in

his own fashion, but more radically and earlier than many others. For until late 1934, most CCP leaders refused or failed to do so; their reaction to the debacle and confusion had been to pin their hopes once again on the instructions of the parent-party, the Russian party. One can only be astonished by the ease with which Otto Braun, who failed to learn the Chinese language, did not know the country and did not respect the Red Army's customs, was able to impose his authority on already quite experienced political and military cadres.

In 1935, the nature of the relations between Moscow and the Chinese leadership changed. Mao Zedong did not break with Stalin, the USSR and the Comintern. Rather, he asserted the political and organizational autonomy of the Chinese leadership within the international Stalinist movement. He ended the relation of direct, bureaucratic subordination which Pavel Mif had tried to foster by thrusting Wang Ming and his "28 Bolsheviks" onto the party. But Mao preserved the CCP's alliance with Stalin, both because he continued to identify with the socialist camp and the advances of the Soviet Union and for reasons of realism. Nevertheless, the naive trust of the first years was dead. It had given way to cynicism and maneuver.

The deeper meaning and considerable impact of this shift was not understood by the Trotskyist movement at the time. Although Trotsky urged caution on a few occasions,¹⁵ the Trotskyist movement, both through lack of information and political

¹⁵ In a January 8, 1931 letter to the Chinese Left Opposition, Trotsky urged his Chinese comrades to send a few of their members into the main detachments of the Red Army: "..., it is very desirable to have our people, Oppositionists, at least in the larger divisions of the 'Red Army,' to share the fate of these detachments, to observe attentively the relations between these detachments and the peasantry, and to keep the Left Opposition informed." ("To the Chinese Left Opposition," *Leon Trotsky on China*, p. 494. One should note however, that Trotsky does not display the same concern with respect to the CCP as such, as he does with respect to the peasant movement and the Red Army. Moreover, he considered the "peasant degeneration" of the proletarian Red Army as inevitable short of a rapid resurgence of urban workers struggles.

¹⁴ Paul G. Pickowitz, *Marxist Literary Thought in China, The Influence of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 95-96.

short-sightedness,¹⁶ considered the CCP after 1927 as a mere docile instrument in the hands of Stalinist diplomacy, much like what other Communist parties in other parts of the world had become. This was perhaps one of the errors of the Trotskyist movement in China with the gravest consequences, for it prevented it from understanding in time the revolutionary dynamics of the CCP-led struggles of 1937-1945 and 1946-1949.

Only after 1949 did the Fourth International begin to reevaluate the history of the CCP and Maoism¹⁷ through a long and many-sided discussion, never finally concluded. The Chinese Trotskyist militants themselves drew divergent lessons from the victory of 1949.

Peng Shuzi continued to uphold his earlier analyses. In 1974, in his "Introduction" to the writings of Leon Trotsky on China, he presented a periodization of the Chinese CCP's history from its foundation to the Sino-Japanese war, noting: "It is especially worthwhile to point out: from the sixth period on (after the defeat of the revolution¹⁸), the Chinese Communist Party became Stalinist, both politically and organizationally. Its leadership by then had become a tool for the blind carrying out of Stalin's policies."¹⁹ For Peng, then, the CCP had become Stalinist in the precise sense of the term in 1927: that is, subordinated politically and organizationally to the Soviet bureaucracy. In his opinion, it was to remain so to the very

¹⁶ The magnitude and nature of the faction fights taking place within the leadership was one of the best kept secrets of the CCP. Nevertheless, over the years, it was possible to detect the existence of this conflict and to realize the political determination of the Maoist leadership.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Ernest Mandel's 1950 articles on the Third Chinese Revolution reprinted in *La Longue Marche de la Révolution*, Paris: Editions Galilee, 1976, pp. 125-201, and the resolution of the Eleventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International of June 1952 (*Quatrième Internationale*, volume 11, number 1, pp. 52-57). It is impossible to summarize this complex debate here.

¹⁸ That is, from 1927 onwards.

¹⁹ Peng Shu-tse "Introduction," *Leon Trotsky on China*, p. 96. Peng's judgement applied to all the leaderships of the CCP after 1927, including the Maoist leadership.

end.

Wang Fanxi also describes the Maoist leadership as Stalinist, but in the ideological sense of the term.²⁰ In his memoirs written in 1957, he presents the deeper meaning of the faction fight that erupted at the Zunyi conference: "Mao Zedong won against Wang Ming as the genuine leader of the Party. This represented a victory of the 'indigenous' Communists over Stalin's representatives in China."²¹

The significance of Mao's victory at Zunyi is particularly clear because it came as the conclusion of a sharp struggle over politico-military orientation.

The debate over military policy: protracted warfare

From 1932 to 1935, the debates in the CCP over what orientation should be adopted, took the form of a long controversy over military affairs. The political and organizational survival of the Communist forces was being determined very directly in the field of armed resistance to the annihilation campaigns launched by the Guomindang. Underlying the tactical or conjunctural differences, quite distinct overall approaches began to emerge. The military debate was at root a deep political debate.

The written polemics were conducted in veiled terms, often using allusions rather than a frank and open statement of the problems. But the stakes were no less important. The "Russian orthodoxy" of the national leadership was counterposed to the "Chinese archaism" of Maoism. General Liu Bocheng, the One-Eyed Dragon, opened fire on Mao in 1932, with an article analyzing tactics and strategy from feudal to modern times: "Liu stressed," Hu Chi-hsi notes, "the limits and archaic nature of the military art of Sun Zi, the famous military theoretician of the fifth century BC. By contrast, he emphasizes the importance of the experience acquired by the Soviet Union's Red Army and criticizes sharply the Chinese Red Army's insufficient knowledge of modern strategy and tactics. His attacks against Communist leaders who persist in trying to apply, in ossified fashion, Sun Zi's

²⁰ We shall return to this question.

²¹ Wang Fanxi, op.cit., p. 180.

military art and the war ruses described in the *Novel of the Three Kingdoms* were aimed particularly at Mao."²²

Four years later, Mao, having won the argument, denounced the "incorrect view" which we "refuted long ago" that "it is enough to study Russia's experience of the revolutionary war or, specifically, that it is enough to follow the laws that guided the Civil War in the Soviet Union and the military directives published there. They do not see that these laws and directives in the Soviet Union embody the special characteristics of the Civil War and the Red Army of the Soviet Union; if we copy them and apply them mechanically, allowing no change whatsoever, it will also be like whittling down our feet to fit the shoes and we shall be defeated.... They do not see that although we must value Soviet experience, and even value it somewhat more than experiences in other countries throughout history, because it is the most recent experience of revolutionary war, we must value even more the experience of China's revolutionary war, because there are a great number of conditions special to the Chinese revolution and the Chinese Red Army...."²³

It is clear that the debate over military policy was one of the facets of the

²² Hu Chi-hsi, *L'Armée rouge et Vascension de Mao*, Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1982, p. 68. The article by Liu Bochong summarized by Hu was originally published in August 1932 Sun Tzu's (Sun Zi's) *The Art of War*, is published in English, in London, by Oxford University Press, 1963 and 1971. In an enthusiastic foreword to the book, B. H. Lid-dell Hart writes that "Sun Tzu's essays on The Art of War' form the earliest of known treatises on the subject, but have never been surpassed in comprehensiveness and depth of understanding. ... Among all the military thinkers of the past, only Clausewitz is comparable, and even he is more 'dated' than Sun Tzu, and in part antiquated, although he was writing more than two thousand years later. Sun Tzu has clearer vision, more profound insight, and eternal freshness." (Op.cit.,p.5)

²³ Mao Zedong, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," 1936, in Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 276. Mao modified the end of this paragraph in the 1951 edition to give greater weight to the Russian experience.

broader debate over "the Chinese road." It had in fact begun as early as 1927. It was opened again in the Jiangxi Soviet Republic in 1932, when the Central Committee conference held at Ningdu put the military policy advocated by Mao on trial. And it concluded in 1935, at the Zunyi conference when Mao, in turn, was able to level a severe indictment of his adversaries' military conceptions.

Mao Zedong drew a balance sheet of the military leadership of the party in 1933-1934 in a resolution written in the heat of action, at a key turning point of the CCP's internal political struggle; his resolution was endorsed by the Zunyi Enlarged Political Bureau meeting.²⁴ Some historians consider this resolution as a mere factional exercise in which Mao attempted after the fact to claim that he had been correct, whereas he had, in reality, been no more clear-sighted than the others. But Hu Chi-hsi has uncovered an article by Lin Biao, dating back to July 1934, which confirms that the Maoist faction had already then developed a judgment on the situation similar to that endorsed at Zunyi.²⁵

The military debate that began with the experience of 1927 was substantive, even though somewhat confused initially. At the risk of oversimplifying the various sides in the controversy, one can summarize the thread of the argument as follows: what were the conclusions to be drawn from the fact that the struggle for revolution would henceforth be part of a process of protracted warfare? In China, a long period of civil war seemed unavoidable **before** the conquest of state power, whereas in Russia, the civil war of 1918-1921 unfolded **after** the victory of a brief insurrection and the establishment of a new state power.

This was the context in which other essential differences between China and Russia (concerning notably

²⁴ "Resolution de la Conference de Zunyi" (complete title: Resolution du Centre du Parti communiste chinois sur le bilan de la lutte contre le cinquieme en-cerclement de l'ennemi) reproduced in French in Hu Chi-hsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-250.

²⁵ Lin Biao, "Sur la tactique des attaques breves et soudaines," July 5, 1934, in Hu Chi-hsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-229.

their social formation, conjuncture and international context) acquired an immediate significance: the situation of protracted warfare became an "over determining" factor which partially modified the relationship to other fundamental factors-economic, social, political and cultural data.

The Red Army was involved in **partisan warfare**. This implied that the Communist forces had to adopt a specific mode of organization to deal with two distinct sets of tasks: the conduct of military operations against a more numerous and better armed enemy, and the continuation of in-depth mass work. This consideration was the basis for one of the canons of Maoist military conceptions, ably summarized in 1929 by Chen Yi in his report on the "Army of Zhu-Mao", submitted to the CCP leadership²⁶: "in periods of partisan warfare ..., the Red Army is characterized ... by its mobility. Its organization must therefore be different from that of other armies. The principle which governs the tactics of the Red Army can be summarized in two sentences: 'Concentrate to face the enemy, and disperse to win over the masses to our cause.' The troops must be organized in such a way that the Red Army can both concentrate and disperse."²⁷

Mao Zedong imparted a **strategic dimension** to partisan warfare, a form of struggle usually considered a conjunctural tactic, by integrating it into an **original combination of politico-military instruments** designed for waging a protracted people's war. As early as January 1930, he described this complex organism in a letter to Lin Biao: "It appears that the policy of roving guerrilla actions alone cannot hasten the high tide of the revolution in the entire country and that the political measures adopted by Zhu De and Mao Zedong, as well as by He Long, Li Wenlin and Fang

Zhimin, are undeniably correct. These measures foresee, in particular, the formation of support bases, the systematic creation of organs of power, the organization of close collaboration between the Red guerrilla units and the broad peasant masses formed in struggle, the deepening of the land reform, the development of armed forces through the creation of insurrectional detachments at the level of the county, red guards at the level of the division, then of the district, and territorial forces of the Red Army, up to the creation of a non-territorial Red Army, and finally the extension of political power through successive waves."²⁸

Mao polemicized against "certain comrades" who simply reduced the Chinese revolutionary process to two stages: first, the conquest of the masses throughout the nation; then the conquest of political power. Mao put forward a different perspective: the creation of a territorial dual power and "the extension through successive waves" of the scattered parcels of this political power. This was the perspective within which he stressed the importance of an articulated combination of politico-military forces, ranging from partisan units to the "non-territorial" (that is, geographically mobile) Red Army, later called regular armed forces.

Mao's letter to Lin Biao appears to be an answer to another letter, dated September 28, 1929, sent by the Central Committee to the Army Group he commanded.²⁹ This text reveals a latent

²⁶ Chen Yi (Dong Li), "Rapport sur l'Histoire et la situation actuelle de l'Armée rouge de Zhu-Mao," September 1, 1929, *Bulletin militaire du Comité central*, number 1, January 15, 1930. Reprinted in French in Hu Chi-hsi, *op. cit.*, p. 149-178.

²⁷ Idem, p.159.

²⁸ Mao Zedong, "Une étincelle peut mettre le feu à toute la plaine" [A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire], January 5, 1930, quoted in Hu Chi-hsi, p. 47. In the present version of the *Selected Works*, the names of He Long and Li Wenlin have been erased, idem, p. 130. On the other hand, the name of Peng Dehuai appears neither in the original version or the *Selected Works*, which would seem to indicate that he was one of the "certain comrades" targeted by Mao. An English translation of this letter, slightly different from that of Hu Chi-hsi, will be found in "Letter to Lin Biao," *New Left Review*, number 65, January-February 1971, pp. 60-61 (with an introduction by Bill Jenner).

²⁹ "Lettre d'instructions du Comité central du Parti communiste chinois au Comité du Front du 4^e corps de l'Armée rouge," (*Euvres Choisies de Zhou Enlai*, Peking 1981, pp. 41-59. According to the

polemic against Mao's conceptions, which allegedly attributed too much importance to the conflicts between the various warlords (whose existence was one of the factors allowing for a stabilization of territorial dual power) and assigned too central a role to the Red Army. The Central Committee document recognizes the importance of the Red Army, of course, but appears to have been written in line with the perspective which Mao had criticized as spontaneist: a Red Army and rural guerrillas whose temporary role would soon give way to the uprising of the masses led by the party and to the direct struggle for political power centered on the cities. For the CCP leadership, the situation that arose after the defeat of 1927 was a sort of unexpected "detour". It would later return to being "normal"; the old strategic conceptions therefore had to be maintained. For Mao, what had emerged was the lasting features of the Chinese revolutionary process, and strategic conceptions therefore had to be reviewed and brought into line with these features: the peasantry would constitute the main force of the revolution, an idea considered as heretical as any in the international Communist movement in those days.

In the early 1930s, the reality of protracted war became obvious to all. It was recognized to the point of becoming the title of an article by Zhou Enlai, written in March 1934.³⁰ Yet the discussion grew more bitter. The political turn carried out in the Jiangxi Republic (the eviction of the Maoist faction from the centers of power) was combined with a major turn in the military situation: Chiang Kai-shek threw

editorial note, "certain passages of this letter were not retained when it was included in the present edition." I was not able to compare it with the original version. This text was written by Chen Yi, after a discussion of his aforementioned informational report, under the dictation of Zhou Enlai.

³⁰ Zhou Enlai, "Nos victoires dans la cinquieme campagne: sur la guerre prolongee," published in *L'etoile rouge*, March 13, 1934, and reprinted in French under the title "Sur la guerre prolongee," in Hu Chi-hsi, pp. 178-196.

unprecedentedly large forces into the Fifth Annihilation Campaign. Advised by the German Hans von Seeckt, he settled into a fierce bunker warfare, applying a genuine stranglehold on the Soviet zone. The measures devised by Mao earlier—and already amended by Zhou during the Fourth Annihilation Campaign—no longer sufficed. The leadership had to choose: either move further along the line of Mao's tactics, or radically change the mode of operation. The realism of the Maoist conceptions on the one hand, and of the Zhou-Otto Braun bloc on the other, were to be harshly tested in reality.

Zhou Enlai's article published in March 1934, displays a surprising spirit of triumphant optimism. "The Guomindang is attempting to gain victory through a protracted political, economic and geographical war." The Fifth Annihilation Campaign launched by Chiang some five and half months earlier, left the Red Army no time for resting. It "...is permanently engaged at the front and fighting continuously.... [Nevertheless] not only have we not been weakened by the war, but it has enabled us to develop and strengthen it. These facts give the lie to all the opportunists" sounding alarm bells in Jiangxi. It is possible, even necessary, to "develop the fighting on all fronts," simultaneously, and "to settle the outcome of the battle in the main sector without therefore abandoning the fight in the other sectors."³¹ One should accept the terrain chosen by the adversary and not give up a single inch of territory while wreaking havoc in the enemy rear.

Otto Braun was more sober. Between April and August 1934, he published eight articles under the signature of Hua Fu. The Guomindang, he noted, has engaged in a genuine war of attrition and partisan operations are no longer sufficient. We must develop an "active defense," bolstered by "a zone of bunkers," units of a "long but discontinuous frontal defense line" designed to "pin down" enemy forces. We should wage "a moving war under

³¹Zhou Enlai, "Sur la guerre prolongee," *op.cit.*, pp. 186-187, 190.

the conditions of bunker warfare" and transform "tactical victories into campaign victories" by multiplying "short and sudden attacks" (Otto Braun's key formula).³²

Mao's conceptions were scary. The population of the Jiangxi Soviet Republic included three million people. The peasants wanted to defend their revolutionary gains (the land reform) and protect themselves against repression. Under these circumstances, the Maoist tactics lost their popularity because the price to be paid was high. Mao Zedong stressed the need for flexibility; without it, the Red Army could not keep the initiative: one should allow the enemy to penetrate deeply in order to get a chance to trap him; choices must be made and forces concentrated on a few selected axes; the alliance between Chiang Kai-shek and the various warlords had to be broken at all cost, using, if need be, the flag of anti-Japanese resistance; the Red Army had to find a way to fight far away from the Guomindang bunker lines and, if everything else failed, to be ready to leave Jiangxi to escape annihilation. What was essential was to preserve both military and political mobility.

According to Hu Chi-hsi, "Zhou Enlai's protracted war was, in essence, a war of attrition, whereas the Maoist strategy presented in January 1935 in the Zunyi Resolution, all of whose main points already appeared in Lin Biao's July 1934 article, was a strategy for a war of movement. As for Otto Braun's short and sudden attacks tactic, it was in reality, despite its name, a half-way strategy...."³³

Many historians believe the defeat of the Jiangxi Soviets was inevitable. This was, incidentally, Bo Gu's main argument in Zunyi, as he sought to minimize the scope of the

³² Otto Braun, *La revolution et la guerre*, "Un probleme urgent de la guerre revolutionnaire" (number 2, April 1934), "Sur la tactique de l'Armee rouge dans la guerre de blockhaus" (number 3, April 20, 1934), "Opposons-nous a une interpretation erronee de notre tactique" (number 4, May 18, 1934). In French translation in Hu Chi-hsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-213. Hu reproduced three of the eight articles by Otto Braun.

³³ Hu Chi-hsi, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

mistakes he had committed. On the other side, the Maoist leadership accused Bo Gu, Otto Braun and, to a lesser extent, Zhou Enlai, with having allowed a possible victory to escape, and then having prepared the retreat in precipitous fashion.

I am not in a position to judge the real opportunities which might have existed at the time. But the Maoist criticism of the CCP leadership's conceptions ring true. Zhou's compulsive optimism forbade any cold-headed examination of the real relationship of forces. Otto Braun fell back on tactical considerations, lacking in strategic depth. Both allowed themselves to be locked into a defensive and ever more static posture, both on the military and political planes. By contrast, the Maoist conceptions made it possible to test the possibilities that still existed to their ultimate limit, and quickly decide to withdraw should the need arise.

Some of these possibilities do not seem to have been fully exploited by the CCP. Chiang Kai-shek's authority was by no means unchallenged. The camp of the counter-revolution divided several times, in 1933-1934, as witnessed by the revolt of the Nineteenth Route Army.³⁴ The Communist leadership, which was divided, had long criticized Mao for the importance he gave to conflicts among the warlords, and relied on the ultra-left directives emanating from Shanghai and Moscow, was unable to take full advantage of these fractures.

The Maoist road and the people's war model

Between 1932 and 1935, the Maoist faction asserted its originality in

³⁴In November 1933, the commanders of the Nineteenth Route Army rebelled against Chiang Kai-shek. Contacts were established with the Communist forces, but failed to lead to any agreement. The rebellion was isolated and smashed. It could have triggered the outbreak of other contradictions in the camp of the Guomindang and paralyzed Chiang Kai-shek's ability to strike out. If the Communist forces had been able to hold out just a bit longer, they might have won a decisive battle: the war with Japan was beginning and the entire national political situation would soon be completely altered.

the field of CCP-Comintern relations as well as in that of politico-military orientation. The reason that Mao was temporarily isolated is probably the same reason that he was able to reassert his political authority so suddenly: he had drawn certain political lessons of the defeat of 1927 earlier and more clearly than most other CCP leaders.

In the 1932-1934 period, most other politico-military leaders of the CCP still recoiled before the gravity of the choices they had to make. The defeat of 1927 had resulted in a strengthening of Stalinist power in the party. Opposing the orientation of the "Center" and asserting the national autonomy of the CCP meant accepting a showdown with those who wielded power and held the purse strings. Implementing the Maoist strategy meant accepting new inroads by the White armies into the Soviet zone, and even accepting the idea that, at some point in the near future, it might have to be abandoned altogether.

Nevertheless, it was Mao, the heterodox one, who proved the greatest realist. On the short run: Moscow's instructions were inapplicable because they emanated from abroad and corresponded to the concerns of the Russian bureaucracy. The static defense of the Jiangxi zone got bogged down. It became necessary to resort once again to the Maoist tactics so fiercely decried. On the long run too: it is enough to compare the theses put forward by Mao between 1928 and 1935 to the Chinese revolutionary process of the 1935-1949 period, to understand that.

Thus, Mao Zedong emerged at the head of the CCP thanks to his tactical and strategic realism. He was not content to rediscover the potential role of rural guerrilla warfare, already noted by many "classics", from Marx and Engels to Lenin. He innovated, in depth. As a thinker of protracted revolutionary war, he opened a new field of reflection that went far beyond military questions. He reversed the traditional Communist approach to the peasantry: where it had been considered an auxiliary force (though one whose support could be decisive), it was now elevated to the rank of main (though not leading) force

of the revolution. He reinvested Chinese military thought and experience into a new class perspective, imparting it with a content extraordinarily relevant to our times.

Mao's military thought was formed during a fierce civil war. Only later would he adapt it to a new framework, that of national defense against imperialist invasion. Protracted revolutionary war is a people's war, a class war.

Mao analyzed the relationship between war and revolution in China, an immense, backward, semicolonial country. In this field, he was a pioneer and the Chinese experience contains a wealth of lessons. The Maoist conception of revolutionary war has found many disciples. But frozen in a new "orthodox model," it has sometimes been so impoverished as to betray its original intent.

The "Chinese road" includes the idea of the "mass line", a point which differentiates authentic Maoist currents from organizations with an ultra-militarist tradition. Nevertheless, through the theme that "a single spark can start a prairie fire," it has fostered a semi-"focoist"³⁵ perspective which believes that guerrilla bases (*focos* or hearths) established in the mountains can act as a revolutionary detonator. Advocates of this perspective forget that the Red Army was not born in such *focos* but in a revolution and mass uprisings, and that it never durably established itself in scarcely inhabited forest areas.³⁶

The theme of "the encirclement of the cities by the country" summarizes vividly Mao's view, a heterodox audacity at the time.³⁷ It is an important insight

³⁵ The word "focoist (or *foquista*, in Spanish, from *foco*, a hearth), has been used to designate certain Latin American guerrilla warfare currents that emerged in the 1960s, following the victory of the Cuban revolution. The focoist outlook was systematized in particular by Régis Debray, in his book, *Revolution in the revolution*. But the experience of the Cuban revolution is also much richer and dialectical than the focoist "model" claims.

³⁶ See the chapter 2, part I, NSR number 2.

³⁷ At the time, the Trotskyist current believed that the only conceivable road to revolution was an urban insurrection that won over a peasant uprising

but the formula must not be reduced to a sociological determinism that would claim the "Russian road" is the "model" for urban capitalist countries, and the "Chinese road" that of all "semicolonial semifeudal" countries the majority of whose population is rural.

Russia at the turn of the century was not a semi-colony. But the Russian social formation nevertheless displayed many features resembling those of today's dependent countries, and the lessons of this experience remain interesting for Third World revolutionaries on more than one count.³⁸ The Chinese revolution of 1925-1927 shows that colonial and semicolonial countries can experience revolutionary processes other than the encirclement of the cities by the country.³⁹ The "Chinese road" was not determined only by the social structure of the country, but also by the outcome of previous struggles and the international context.⁴⁰

The destruction of Communist work in the trade unions and the lasting passivity of the proletariat in the main coastal centers were neither desirable

to its camp.

³⁸ For a discussion of this topic, see Teodor Shanin, *The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of Century*, 2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1985.

³⁹ Many other revolutionary episodes of the Third World confirm this, beginning with the August Revolution in Vietnam in 1945. The course followed by revolutionary struggles in a given country depends in part on the nature of the period. Changes in the period are themselves determined by a whole set of national, regional and international factors. They can either close off or open up prospects for a victorious mass insurrection. They change the way the national factor and the class factor combine. There can therefore be a shift of the axis of revolutionary struggles in a particular country in light of these changes. On this topic, see Pierre Rousset, *Nationalisms et Communisme vietnamiens. Le Vietnam entre deux guerres mondiales*, Paris: Galilee, 1978.

⁴⁰ One can say that the sort of determinism at work in this arena is historical and not narrowly sociological (or economic and political), meaning that it is the result of the concrete interaction of many factors and the way in which past history (both recent and more distant) influences the conjuncture and the period.

nor inevitable: they were the product of defeats and constituted a heavy handicap for the revolutionary struggle. Despite that, the urban work conducted by the CCP represented an important political factor from 1937 to 1949. The striking formula of encircling the cities from the country also tends to hide the considerable role played by rural towns⁴¹ in the Chinese social formation. The reality is that these towns served as anchorage points for the Red Army and were often far more vital than the mountain rear: as local centers of politics and the economy, they enabled the CCP to consolidate its social base and offered big opportunities for recruitment, supplies and financial support.

Many have used the Chinese revolution, erected into a "model," as an argument to elevate war into a particularly worthwhile instrument for revolutionary mobilization and "consciousness-raising." There is some truth in this view. The masses learn through struggle; the party, the teacher, is itself taught through trials and listening to masses (an old Marxist theme reinvested in the Maoist tradition).

But war is not just one form of struggle among others. It can be used by the revolution, but it, in turn, imposes its own laws on the latter. It is a tough school of cadre-training but it is not the best school of democracy. It turns secrecy into a cult, a certain form of hierarchical discipline into a vital necessity; it hardens human beings. War requires that the party develop and maintain social roots lest it become unable to continue the fight. But it also bolsters authoritarian structures. The best, most representative local cadres are often called upon to join the mobile, conventional forces, and can no longer play their earlier role, in a symbiosis with the direct mobilization of the people. The Maoist "mass line" reflects this two-fold process of sinking roots and identifying with the people on the one hand, and becoming autonomous and rising above the masses on the other.

⁴¹ Moreover, this role is diversified depending on the region at hand.

The Red Army was a democratic army in the sense that it was a people's army in its goals, its politicization, its internal rules and its relations with the population. But factional secrets in the party leadership, along with military secrets, meant that the major decisions were made by a narrow circle of initiators. The feeling of insecurity very quickly threatens free political discussion. Internal security was drastic in all the Red Armies. "As Peng Dehuai wrote in his memoirs from prison: 'Everybody in the Army worried about his safety' (he was speaking of conditions as early as 1931 and 1932). There was not much democracy. The Section for Eliminating Traitors, which had originally been under the Political Department, now became a Security Bureau at the same level as the Political Department."⁴²

The functioning of the party and revolutionary army had already been severely affected by the factional and bureaucratic climate initiated in Moscow. To that was added the deep imprint of the permanent state of war.

Protracted warfare is not a free choice, but a choice imposed by circumstances. After 1927, the CCP had to answer a vital question: how could it regain the initiative when class struggles had already reached a level of armed confrontation but the situation appeared durably unfavorable on the military plane? Mao Zedong had an answer for the long term; planning an accumulation of political, social and military forces that could lead to a gradual reversal of the relationship of forces: the transition from "a strategic defensive approach" to the equilibrium of forces, and the general counter-offensive.

In the circumstances of China at that time, this was an effective answer. But applied elsewhere, it has sometimes given rise to a sort of "military gradualism" that was dangerous because

⁴² Salisbury, p. 247. The quotation is taken from Peng Dehuai's *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshall*, written while he was in jail, during the cultural revolution and published in Peking in 1984.

of its lack of flexibility.⁴³ Here too, the Chinese experience does not correspond to this reductionist outlook. The CCP was compelled to change its orientation more than once in light of political rather than military considerations; it was able to gain the initiative on the political plane to avoid losing it on the military field.

People's war, from China to El Salvador, has demonstrated its importance in contemporary national and social liberation struggles. But protracted people's war remains a costly war, one that can exhaust the population on the long run. Its dangers must be understood in order that they be contained more effectively; its limitations too, that all forms of struggle be combined more successfully. The primacy of politics over the military also helps to develop international solidarity and to establish the general conditions for a victory which is won as fast as possible and in which the people participate as massively as possible.

The revolutionary experiences of the last forty years have considerably enriched the theory of people's war. People's war has had to adapt to other national circumstances and to the new weapons and approaches of imperialist counter-insurgency. But the Chinese revolution opened a historical breach in this field. The CCP demonstrated, in its time, a real creativity and a great capacity for adaptation. This flexibility of the Chinese Communist Party can be explained, among other factors, by the fact that it had lived through other periods and other forms of struggle before engaging in protracted warfare. Its cadres knew how to operate in more than one situation.

The CCP's multi-faceted experience, acquired at considerable

⁴³ To avoid this danger, the Vietnamese Communists have reintegrated into their theory of protracted people's war the idea of a "favorable moment," a political crisis, a revolutionary crisis. This is of the points (along with the ability to combine various forms of struggle, the importance given to activity in the international arena, etc) Vietnamese politico-military thought, which is particularly dialectical, prolongs and surpasses the level of its Chinese counterpart.

cost, was to be of great use as the Long March drew to a close. For the Japanese invasion, in 1937, was changing the configuration of national politics. It put the united front with the Guomindang, even though it was now a mortal enemy, on the agenda again, and rekindled the factional struggles inside the CCP.

Chapter 5
1937-1945

The Sino-Japanese war: revolution and the united front

Japanese pressure on China grew steadily stronger throughout the 1930s. In 1931, the Japanese army occupied the Northeast. In January 1932, it attacked Shanghai. In 1933, it infiltrated the North China plain and occupied Jehol. In 1935, it enlarged its influence in Cha-har and Hebei. Tensions rose steadily until July 1937 when the actual general invasion of the country began.

The Sino-Japanese war lasted until the defeat of the Japanese Empire in 1945. During these eight years of war, a united front existed between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang. At first sight, it appears similar to that which existed from 1923 to 1927. If one were to go by its diplomatic statements alone, the CCP once again formally renounced its independence and agreed to follow the Guomindang. The Red Army was nominally dissolved. From 1934 onward, Moscow operated a major political turn, endorsed and formalized by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, in July-August 1935. It proclaimed that the time had come to create "popular fronts" with bourgeois parties against fascism, and put together an international bloc with the "democratic" imperialist powers. In many countries Communist Parties were placed in tow of their temporary allies. The question arises: was not the CCP simply applying Comintern policy in China?

Indeed, did not the Communist leaders sometimes sing the praise of Chiang, the butcher of Shanghai, and of the party of the counter-revolution? Had not Mao Zedong, in a report to the

Central Committee in October 1938 (the golden year of the united front policy), gone so far as to salute "the glorious history" of the Guomindang? Had he not called Chiang Kai-shek "a great leader"? Had he not asserted that in the national anti-Japanese front agreement struck by the CCP and Guomindang, the latter "occupied the position of leader and framework...?" "Under the single great condition that it support to the end the war of resistance and the United Front, one can foresee a brilliant future for the Guomindang."⁴⁴

"Under the single great condition..." a small phrase that overlaid a violent conflict over leadership of the anti-Japanese resistance. In reality, the CCP's 1937-1945 united front policy was different, in fact profoundly different from that of the 1925-1927 period; this is why it did not end up with a new bloody massacre of the people's forces. Quite the contrary. Over the nine years of the front, the Communist forces were able to expand in spectacular fashion. The Red Army jumped from 30 000 troops to nearly one million. The zone controlled by the Communists, from about two million to 95 million inhabitants. By 1945, the CCP was in a strong position to win the civil war that smoldered under the embers of the united front: four years were enough for it to conquer power in this immense country/continent.

The CCP's united front policy did not concern only its relations with the Guomindang; far from it. It included many facets designed first and foremost to create a social bloc capable of winning a majority to the revolution. One can say that it was a permanent feature of the Chinese CP's orientation, a strategic factor: according to the Maoist formula, the party, the army and the united front constituted the three indispensable

⁴⁴ See Mao, "On the new stage - Report to the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party" (October 1938), in Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought...*, pp. 228-229. These passages were not published in the *Selected Works* which, however, do contain the next section of this report (though not without some alterations) which emphasizes the CCP's own role in the anti-Japanese resistance.

elements for victory. The alliance between the CCP and Guomindang was of a more conjunctural nature. From 1927 to 1937 and later, from 1945 to 1949, there was no such united front, but an open civil war. Nevertheless that alliance lasted a long time and represents one of the most controversial aspects of Maoist policy. For this reason, it may be useful to review its actual history before returning to Mao's overall conception of the united front.

Imperialist aggression, wars of national defense and the united front

The Soviet Republic had symbolically declared war on Japan in 1932 and the CCP had proposed the formation of an anti-Japanese united front long before 1936, but against Chiang Kai-shek, whose capitulationist tendencies it denounced. The main purpose of this policy was to play on the Guomindang's internal contradictions and blow it apart. Strong opposition emerged inside the CCP when the leadership first decided to change its orientation and propose the united front to the Guomindang as such.

As for Chiang Kai-shek, he made no secret of his intention to do away with the Communists once and for all. He had had time to stabilize his grip on the country from 1928 to 1937, the "Nankin decade"—as it was known, after the city Chiang had made his capital. The last rebel Warlords had been brought to heel between 1934 and 1936. The legitimacy of his government was recognized in the country, particularly by the middle classes, as well as in the West. For Chiang, a definitive victory over the CCP was necessary before he could make a real commitment to the war of national resistance. Chiang was fond of saying that "the Japanese are an ailment of the skin, the Communists an ailment of the heart."⁴⁵

What compelled the two parties to enter willy-nilly into a fragile alliance was the magnitude of the stakes

⁴⁵ Quoted by Roland Lew, *Mao prend le pouvoir*, p.98.

involved and the reactions of Chinese public opinion. Tokyo was actually intent on turning China from a semi-colony into a direct colony, that is, to complete the process begun a century earlier by Britain. China, already an oppressed nation threatened with the loss of its last few elements of independence, mobilized. Every party would henceforth be judged by its commitment to the nation's resistance effort.

Japan was trying to create its own vast zone of influence in East Asia and the Pacific. China was therefore thrust into the march towards World War Two long before many other countries. Inter-imperialist competition was the background of this planetary conflagration, the struggle for hegemony was joined by the United States, Japan and Britain, with France and Italy in the secondary roles.

But World War Two was not just an inter-imperialist conflict. It was prepared by an enterprise of counter-revolution aimed mainly at stopping the dynamic unleashed by the Russian revolution in Europe, and by the desire of the Great Powers to consolidate their rule in the Third World. Much as was the case between 1914 and 1918, except on far vaster scale this time, the world war of 1939 to 1945 demonstrated "the close relationship between imperialist war and wars of national liberation and revolution."⁴⁶

World War Two, particularly in the East, cannot be analyzed simply as a conflict between democracies and dictatorships. The traditional colonial powers (like Britain and France) were not democratic as far as the people they had subjected were concerned!⁴⁷ The Japanese regime, although extremely militaristic and repressive, was not the equivalent of German Nazism. As a new imperialist power, Tokyo used terror to impose its rule. But that was nothing exceptional as the history of European

⁴⁶ Ernest Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, London: Verso, 1986, p.21.

⁴⁷ Japan was able for a time to attract and ally with nationalist elements in certain Southeast Asian countries, by promising them Asian solidarity and independence.

colonization will readily demonstrate.⁴⁸ Finally, the Asian regimes allied to the Western powers were at times far closer to fascism than liberalism.

This was precisely the case in China. According to Christopher Thorne, "indeed, if the term 'fascist' is to be employed in a non-European context for the 1930s, to no regime is it more appropriate to attach it than that of the Kuomintang in China. 'Fascism,' declared Chiang Kai-shek to a gathering of his Blue Shirts in 1935, 'is a stimulant for a declining society.... Can fascism save China? We answer: yes.'"⁴⁹ In terms of authoritarianism, the Generalissimo, as he modestly asked to be called, did not mince his words: "the people must obey the orders of the government and the Leader absolutely,"⁵⁰ Chiang blocked every move towards democratic reform with relentless constancy, thereby destroying the attempts to establish a "third force" between the Guomindang and CCP. "One Doctrine, One Party, One Leader" was the watchword of the dictatorship. Within the Guomindang, the pro-Japanese lobby was powerful and many of the party's officials would later collaborate with the Japanese authorities.

What justified the alliance between the CCP and Guomindang, was therefore not the latter's membership in the "worldwide camp of the democracy," but the duty to wage the "just" war, the war of national defense and liberation in a dependent country faced with imperialist occupation. This was the opinion of Trotsky at the time and he launched a very sharp polemic⁵¹ against

those who refused to listen to any talk of united front with the class enemy, who claimed that Chinese revolutionaries should advocate defeatism, as they did in the imperialist countries, and simultaneously fight against both the Japanese and Guomindang. "To speak of 'revolutionary defeatism' in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists. [...] China is a semicolonial country which Japan is transforming, under our very eyes, into a colonial country. Japan's struggle is imperialist and reactionary. China's struggle is emancipatory and progressive."⁵²

Advocating a united front had nothing to do with fostering illusions about Chiang Kai-shek: "We know Chiang Kai-shek well enough as the hangman of the workers. But this same Chiang Kai-shek is now obliged to lead a war which is *our* war. In this war, our comrades should be the best fighters. Politically they should criticize Chiang Kai-shek not for making war but for making it in an ineffective manner, without high taxation of the bourgeois class, without sufficient arming of workers and peasants, etc."⁵³

The standard of national resistance therefore had to be wrested from Guomindang hands, thereby preparing for future class confrontations: "In participating in the *military* struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence—to prepare *politically* the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek... that is the only revolutionary policy."⁵⁴

These letters from Trotsky show that he had correctly understood the nature of the Chinese conflict and the stakes involved. But the Communist Party was absent from the political

⁴⁸ It is enough to recall that the Christian West can claim as its own the revival of slavery and the slave trade.

⁴⁹ Christopher Thorne, *The Far Eastern War, States and Societies 1941-1945*, London: Counterpoint-Unwin Paperbacks, 1986, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Quoted by Roland Lew, *Mao...*, p. 73.

⁵¹ Referring to the ultra-lefts who denounced, from their countries in the West, any possibility of a united front between the Chinese revolutionaries and the Guomindang, Trotsky wrote: "We are concerned here with either real traitors or complete imbeciles. But imbecility, raised to this degree, is equal to treason." "On the Sino-Japanese War" (Letter to D. Rivera, September 23, 1937), *On China*, p. 568.

⁵² *Idem*, pp. 568-569.

⁵³ Leon Trotsky, "Concerning the Resolution on the War" (*Letter to the International Secretariat, October 27, 1937*), *op. cit.*, p. 574.

⁵⁴ Trotsky, "On the Sino-Japanese War," *op. cit.*, p. 571.

equation which he set up. He seems to have considered the CCP as a subordinate entity incapable of any independent role. But the CCP was precisely to play a major role in the Sino-Japanese war.

1935-1939: the beginnings of the united front and the lessons of 1927

By 1935-1936, the Red Army had been steeled by its trials and tribulations; it had become a cadre army, the backbone of the revolutionary movement. The survivors fleeing southern and central China could now build new roots in the North Shaanxi base area.⁵⁵ But the situation remained very difficult. The Maoist leadership still had to consolidate itself and emerge on a truly national scale. North Shaanxi was not just a peripheral region, far away from the political and economic centers of the country, but also a socially backward area.

The CCP leadership was forced to take a series of crucially important political decisions under these precarious circumstances in all haste. The national situation was in flux. Contact had been reestablished with Moscow and the CCP had to deal with Soviet demands. On August 1, 1935, a solemn declaration had been published in Moscow, in the name of the CCP, although contact had been lost for several months. This statement known as "The Appeal of Maoergai,"⁵⁶ has been attributed to the

⁵⁵ Mao only stopped in Wuqi for three days, in October 1935. He then removed to Wayaobu where he remained until early 1936; he stayed next in the city of Bao'an, a more secure area, until January 10, 1937. He finally settled in Yan'an which was to become the "war capital" of the Communist forces.

⁵⁶ It is now certain that this appeal was written without the Chinese leadership being informed of it. According to the testimony gathered by Harrison Salisbury, the Political Bureau of the CCP, back in Maoergai (Sichuan), was completely absorbed by an attempt to cope with the conflict with Zhang Guotao in the best possible way and the question of a possible united front between the CCP and Guomindang was not even mentioned (Salisbury, *The Long March*, pp. 260-261). See also Gregor Benton, "The 'Second Wang Ming Line' (1935-1938)", *The China Quarterly*, n°61, March 1975, pp. 62-65.

Chinese Communist Party and Mao, when it was, in fact, drafted in Russia with the participation of Wang Ming. In it, Moscow, worried by pressure from Japan in the Far East, proposed a united front to the Guomindang. The incident is quite revealing of the way in which the Soviet bureaucracy looked upon the various national organizations of the Comintern as docile instruments of its policy.

Pressure from Moscow had a role in changing CCP policy. But it would be wrong to analyze the party's evolution exclusively from that angle. Rather a complex of factors must be taken into account. In the mid-1930s, "barely settled in after the Long March, the Party was forced to carry out a difficult change of course while under strong pressure from competing directions. Moscow was forcefully pushing its new popular front line. In China the growth of the anti-Japanese feeling was posing the question of national unity. The Party rank-and-file and the land-hungry peasants were exerting their pressure to the Left. Each of these lobbies clamoured for the ear of a leadership threatened by KMT encirclement and material shortages, and in which there was as yet no single absolutely dominating figure or group."⁵⁷

The CCP's orientation shifted gradually. At the Wayaobu Political Bureau meeting, in late December 1935, the Chinese leadership had already been apprised of the new orientation decided by the Comintern. Nevertheless, the resolution it adopted was by no means a carbon copy. Of course, the CCP now advocated unity with the Chinese bourgeoisie, as against the supporters of a "closed door" policy. The "broadest national united front" was henceforth the "general tactical line."⁵⁸ But on the question of the war, the PB resolution emphasized that "a basic principle of the Party's revolutionary struggle is the unification of the Chinese civil war and

⁵⁷ Benton, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Resolution of Wayaobu, quoted by Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends, The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967, p. 59.

national war."⁵⁹ The implicit goal of the resolution therefore remained to isolate Chiang Kai-shek. The land reform program, though more moderate than the one implemented in Jiangxi, remained radical enough to meet Moscow's disapproval. The CCP's struggle to win hegemony inside the united front was reaffirmed.⁶⁰

The caution of the Maoist leadership is easy to explain. It had not forgotten the terrible lessons of 1927. Mao recalled these during the Wayaobu conference: "The revolution failed in 1927 chiefly because (...) no effort was made to expand our own ranks (the workers' and peasants' movement and the armed forces led by the Communist Party), and exclusive reliance was placed on a temporary ally, the Kuomintang. (...) In those days, the revolutionary united front had no mainstay, no strong revolutionary armed forces. (...) The lesson we paid for with our blood was that the lack of a hard core of revolutionary forces brings the revolution to defeat. Today things are quite different."⁶¹

By late 1935 and early 1936, the Maoist leadership was involved in a two-sided political battle: against a current it denounced as sectarian because it wanted to keep the "door closed" against the Guomindang, and against an opportunist current which wanted to open the door to Chiang Kai-shek too fast and too wide.

In February 1936, the Red Army launched a major military offensive in Shanxi⁶², causing great displeasure in Moscow. In March, Mao offered the Generalissimo a possibility to form a united front: "If Chiang Kai-shek or any other army ceases hostilities against the Red Army, then the Chinese Soviet

government will immediately order the Red Army to stop military action against him or the army concerned." On the crucial question of who should control the Red Army, "it goes without saying that we shall never allow Chiang Kai-Shek to lay a finger on it." This combination of military offensives and political overtures is a good illustration of the two-level policy then followed by the CCP.⁶³

Following the failure of that military offensive and the rise of anti-Japanese feelings in Chinese public opinion, the CCP decided to open its unitary policy wider and to moderate its social program further. But the determination of the Maoist leaders not to concede on the essential point, the control of their own independent forces and their long-range goals, was confirmed. In his 1936 interviews with Edgar Snow, Mao explained his position on the "dissolution" of the Red Army and independent Yan'an government, in advance. The American journalist recounts that outside "the formal interview, Mao indicated that the Communists would be prepared to make such changes in nomenclature as would facilitate 'cooperation', without fundamentally affecting the independent role of the Red Army and the Communist Party. Thus, if it were necessary, the Red Army would change its name (...), the name 'Soviets' would be abandoned, and the agrarian policy would be modified during the period of preparation for war against Japan."⁶⁴

⁶³ Benton, p. 67.

⁶⁴ Mao as quoted by Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, London: Penguin Books, First Revised and Enlarged Edition, p. 418. This actually was the way things happened. A part of the Trotskyist movement did not understand this, and later, refused to admit it, making the debates inside the Fourth International on the causes of the victory of 1949 particularly confused. In a report on November 8, 1951, Peng Shuzhi, asserted for example that the CCP had "even capitulated to Chiang's government by cancelling its agrarian policy and dissolving the 'Red Army' and the Soviets." This did not prevent Peng from also noting the considerable growth of the Communist armed forces during the Sino-Japanese war. See "Report on the Chinese Situation," *The Chinese Revolution, Part I, Education/or Socialists*, New

⁵⁹ Quoted by Benton, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁶⁰ See Benton, pp. 66-67, and Lyman Van Slyke, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

⁶¹ Mao Zedong, "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism" (December 27, 1935), *Selected Works*, volume I, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975, pp. 166-167.

⁶² Shanxi (with a single "a") is a province north of Shaanxi (with two "a"s). Sometimes transcribed respectively Shenxi (or Shensi) and Shanxi (or Shansi).

In December 1936, the "Xian incident" signaled a major turn in CCP-Guomindang relations. Chiang Kai-Shek had made a trip to Xian (Shaanxi) to urge a revival of operations against the Communists; once there, though, he was arrested by the local Guomindang leaders who felt the top priority was resistance against Japan. Moscow vigorously denounced the action, calling it a "kidnapping" whereas Yan'an saluted the rebel generals for their patriotism. Finally, after a period of hesitation⁶⁵, the CCP intervened to get Chiang Kai-shek released. The rebellion of the Northwest had failed.

On February 19, 1937, the Guomindang Central Committee officially requested that cooperation with the Soviet Union and Communists be restored. A united front was formally concluded in the following months. During its first year, the year of "the honeymoon," political prisoners were freed by the Guomindang, and the Communist Party was able to open headquarters in white areas (it would, in fact, keep its permanent delegation open in Chongqing until the bitter end).⁶⁶ Soon though, the tension rose between the two parties and elements of civil war periodically surfaced within the camp of the national resistance.

Mao was a driving force in the development of the united front policy in 1936-1937. He polemicized sharply against those who tried to create obstacles to its implementation. But he was clear on the limits beyond which no

concessions were possible: maintenance of the Communist Party's independence and exclusive control over the liberated zones and Red Army. In the "theses" he presented in November 1937⁶⁷, Mao Zedong referred back to a previous draft resolution of the Central Committee whose conclusion had been unambiguous: "It is most essential to maintain absolutely independent Communist Party leadership in what was originally the Red Army and in all the guerrilla units, and Communists must not show any vacillation on this matter of principle."⁶⁸ An internal CCP resolution specified that: "Even after the establishment of the democratic republic, the Communists should not give up absolute leadership over the people and the existing armed forces in soviet areas. On the contrary, the party should resolutely lead the Chinese masses' anti-Japanese struggle and day-to-day economic and political struggle and persist in enlarging and consolidating its own political and military forces to assure a thorough victory of the anti-Japanese war and the democratic republic, so as to fight for the realization of a socialist future."⁶⁹

Zhou Enlai spelled out clearly the long-range goals of the united front in a talk with Edgar Snow in 1936 but then asked the journalist not to publish this interview because its particular clarity might jeopardize the negotiations with Chiang then under way. Snow recounts the interview as follows: the plans of the CCP, as explained by Zhou, "aimed chiefly at bringing an end to the civil war and forming a 'united front' with other armies to resist Japan. 'Then you're giving up revolution?' I asked. 'Not at all. We are advancing revolution, not giving it up. The revolution will probably come to power by way of anti-Japanese war.' As for Chiang Kai-shek? 'The first

York: Socialist Workers Party (USA), June 1972, p. 23.

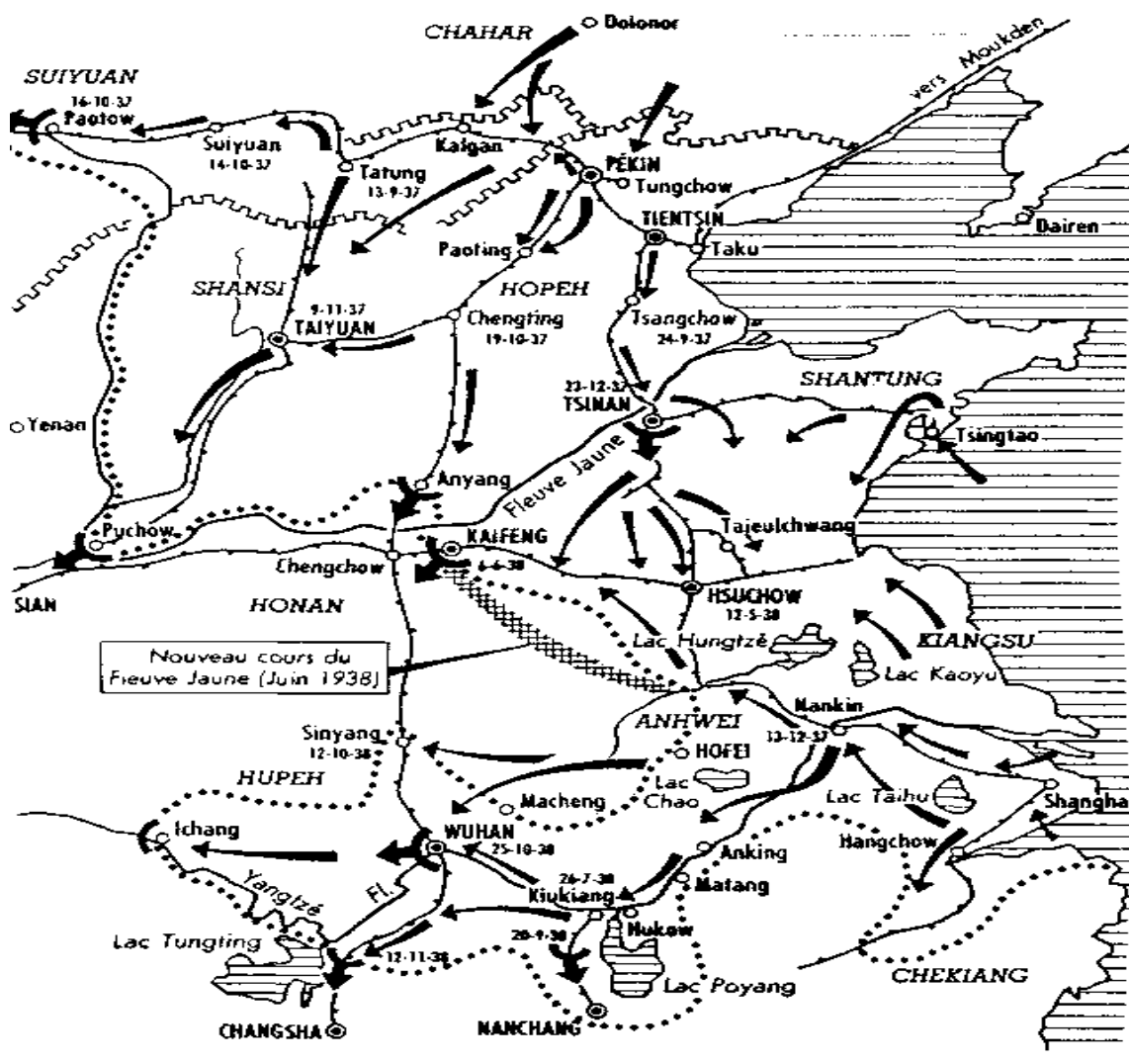
⁶⁵ It is still difficult today to judge the precise reasons that led the CCP leadership to come to the rescue of their sworn enemy: was it the pressures from Moscow, internal differences, and/or an analysis of the political situation in the country and the relationship of forces inside the Guomindang? According to Van Slyke, the last of these factors was decisive. In this view, the Communists feared that the elimination of Chiang would benefit mainly the pro-Japanese lobby inside the Guomindang, rather than the elements favorable to national resistance (*Enemies and Friends*. . . chapter 5).

⁶⁶ Chongqing, Sichuan (also Chungking, Szechwan), became the capital of Chiang Kai-shek's war government after the fall of Wuhan.

⁶⁷ Mao Zedong, "The Situation and Tasks in the Anti-Japanese War After the Fall of Shanghai and Taiyuan" (November 12, 1937), *SW*, vol. II, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975, pp. 61-74.

⁶⁸ "Draft Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Concerning the Communist Party's Participation in the Government" (September 25, 1937, point 8, *SW*, vol. II, p. 72 (footnote 5).

⁶⁹ Quoted by Benton, p. 70.



Japanese operations in China July 1937-October 1938

day of the anti-Japanese war,' he prophesied,' will mean the beginning of the end for Chiang Kai-shek.' The Communists would win, Chou said, because they know how to organize and arm the peasants in patriotic war. Chiang did not."⁷⁰

The Maoist leadership and the "Second Wang Ming line"

Moscow and Yan'an now finally seemed to be converging after being out of step. Nevertheless, the differences which emerged between 1935 and 1937 showed that the two capitals did not approach the question of the united front from the same angle. The major concern of the Comintern leadership was

the implementation of the diplomatic options of the Soviet bureaucracy which now wished to take the initiative in the Far-East: Chiang Kai-shek was the main focus of this policy, the ally it sought. The Maoist leadership was concerned about the conditions under which it could wage its struggle: Chiang Kai-shek remained a fearsome enemy. It directed its attention first to the national situation and then negotiated with Moscow.

These two different approaches were not accidental. That is why they surfaced repeatedly throughout the entire Sino-Japanese war. Within the CCP, they were expressed in the conflict over line between the Maoist leadership and the Wang Ming faction, Moscow's faithful follower.⁷¹ The debate over orientation

⁷⁰ Zhou Enlai quoted by Edgar Snow, *Journey to the Beginning, A personal View of Contemporary History*, New York: Vintage Books, 1972, p. 158.

⁷¹ Wang Ming, incidentally, also wrote an "Ode to Moscow" in five stanzas. Quite significantly, it is explained that he wrote the lyrics of this Ode in late

provides researchers with the means to assess the relationship of forces inside the Communist Party and the latter's relations with the Kremlin. Political discussion was reserved to a small coterie of top leaders. Nevertheless, thanks to Greg Benton's work, it is now possible to discern the contours of the debate.⁷²

Let us briefly review how the struggle over orientation unfolded. The disagreements between Mao and Wang Ming that emerged in late 1935 continued into the next year. Wang repeatedly complained that "serious weaknesses" in party policy were jeopardizing the achievement of national unity. In the USSR, George Dimitrov, who had delivered the report on the united front to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, criticized the "political immaturity" of the CCP before the Comintern Secretariat. The problem was that the Party continued to call for the overthrow of the Chiang Kai-shek clique.⁷³

On July 22nd, the party leadership finally agreed to approve the land policy advocated by Wang Ming. This time, Dimitrov approved the move. The CCP took a stand in favor of the unification of both political and military forces. But it stated that such a unification could only be implemented after "a Chinese democratic republic had been established," and that the soviet

October 1941, in Yan'an, after Mao refused to modify his military plans to adjust them to the Russian situation. According to Meng Ching-shu, Wang Ming had wanted an offensive to be launched "to prevent the Japanese from opening a second front against the Soviet Union" (Wang Ming, *Mao's Betrayal*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979, p. 48). The point is important since Stalinists were often quite willing to set the pace of military operations in their own country according to the needs of the war in the USSR, while the others preferred to set it according to their own national situation.

⁷² I relied mainly on Gregor Benton's already cited study, "The 'Second...'", for this section. For a discussion of his article, see the debate between Shum Kui Kwong and Benton in *China Quarterly*, n°69, March 1977.

⁷³ Faced with the blockade of the white armies, Mao and Zhu De launched another appeal along the same lines on April 5, 1936.

regions would then integrate this republic as component parts. As Greg Benton notes, this was a proposal that provided "both a flexible framework for maneuver and for putting political pressure on Chiang, and a tactic to guarantee the integrity of the Red areas, since the KMT could never meet such conditions."⁷⁴ It is therefore not surprising that Wang Ming was still criticizing CCP policy in September 1936. On the other hand, Mao privately made fun of Wang Ming's writings.⁷⁵ He was careful not to do so in public though, to avoid a direct clash with Moscow.

In the period that followed the "Xian incident," Mao and Wang Ming answered the Guomintang in different terms. In their general tone, on the question of the social rights of the masses, of the independence of the Communist forces, of democracy and the National Assembly, Greg Benton notes, "Wang's formula was angled to a compromise. Mao's at exposing the reactionary nature of the Kuomintang."⁷⁶ In June 1937, Zhou Enlai drew a demarcation line between the European popular fronts and the situation then prevailing in China, emphasizing the opposition between the nature of the Guomintang, which was reactionary, and that of the CCP, which was revolutionary.

As the negotiations advanced, the question of a united government was posed. Most cadres based in Yan'an considered the existing regime represented "the dictatorship of a single party, the Guomintang". The CCP could not enter the Nankin government. The National Assembly and Constitution had to be changed, and a new government elected on that basis. Wang Ming, by contrast, believed the Nankin government could become a genuine all-China government of national defense, provided that it changed its policy in several fields, purged its pro-Japanese members, and integrated militant anti-Japanese figures, etc. This reformed and strengthened government should be the one that summoned a new National

⁷⁴ Idem, p. 70.

⁷⁵ Snow, *Red Star...*, p. 580.

⁷⁶ Benton, p. 73.

Assembly.

The Political Bureau held a conference in August 1937. Three positions emerged: Mao's, Wang Ming's and an intermediate group's, the "conciliators", among whom stood Zhu De. Wang Ming returned from a trip to Moscow in October 1937. A fight for control over the majority of the Political Bureau broke out; it was settled by a compromise. Although Mao was forced to retreat, he was able to keep control of the Army and stay in a position to strengthen his faction in Yan'an (while Wang Ming removed to Wuhan).

In 1937 and 1938, a series of more long-range differences emerged:

- **"Defeat for all" or "victory for all"**

According to a number of authors⁷⁷, this is how Mao encapsulated the conflict over line. He advocated "defeat for all" (that is, the Japanese and the Guomin-dang) while the "conciliators" put forward the formula of "victory for all" (meaning the CCP and Guomindang).

- **Military orientation**

Mao characterized the Guomindang's policy as "partial resistance" to the Japanese, thereby earning sharp criticism from Wang Ming. Mao advocated a military strategy independent of the Guomindang and based on mobility and guerrilla. Wang Ming advocated close cooperation with the Guomindang and the waging of a more conventional war. The "conciliators" strove to combine the two orientations. Most cadres in Yan'an believed the Communist forces' name change (from Red Army to Eighth Route Army) should remain a mere "question of form." For Wang Ming, though, their unification under a single command should be the first step towards building a single genuine all-Chinese army. For him, the goal was "a unified command, unified organization, unified arms, unified discipline, unified treatment, unified military commands and unified

military activities."⁷⁸

- **Perspectives after victory**

In a document dated December 27, 1938, Wang Ming criticized those CCP members who did not understand the foundations of the policy of alliance with the Guomindang. Subordinate everything to resistance against Japan, he explained; avoid struggling for hegemony inside the united front; assert firmly that collaboration with the Guomindang will continue after the victory over Japan. He predicted that the leadership of a liberated China would pass to Chiang Kai-shek, whom the war would have transformed into a national hero.

We have already noted that Mao too spoke of Chiang as a "national hero". But he left open the question of the relationship of forces inside the united front and its possible subsequent evolution. He recalled that the Chinese bourgeoisie could not implement the democratic tasks of the revolution. He explained that, insofar as the united front was composed of several groups, "it is the struggle among them which will determine the future." In a war waged by a workers party, "the outcome (of the struggle) cannot be reduced to simple reforms. The leadership of the proletariat created the possibility to transform the war into a socialist revolution." These views, reported by Bisson, were meant to lay the ground for the publication of Mao's theses of May 3, 1937, under the title "The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan." According to these theses, the future democratic republic "may move in a capitalist direction. The possibility also exists that it will turn towards socialism, and the party of the Chinese proletariat should struggle hard for the latter prospect."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Idem*, p. 85.

⁷⁹ For the statements reported by Bisson in his *Yenan in June 1937*, and for the quotation from Mao's report in May 1947, see Benton, p. 76. See also Mao Zedong, "The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan" (May 3, 1937), *SW*, vol. I, pp. 263-283.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, p. 76.

All this does not mean that Wang Ming consciously hoped for a Guomindang victory over the CCP. As noted by Greg Benton, it is probable that "both Mao and Wang Ming shared the same goal of seizing power from the KMT and overthrowing the old society. Where Mao differed from Wang, even at the height of the united front, was in his ability to integrate this revolutionary aspect into day-to-day Party work, instead of relegating it to some distant future."⁸⁰

"But whereas Wang's analysis led him in practice to abandon any preparations for a later showdown, Mao devoted himself to accumulating enough independent military and political strength to decide the issues as they posed themselves."⁸¹

"Mao's own achievement in this period was to withstand exceptional pressures from several directions and keep course between the twin dangers of capitulation to the KMT and barren sectarianism."⁸²

The transfer of Communist troops behind Japanese lines and the "South Anhui Incident"

In 1937-1938, Mao's position in the leadership of the CCP was not yet fully consolidated. The climate of the united front was propitious to the emergence of an intermediate current inside the party apparatus, which in turn gave more room to maneuver to Wang Ming. In one of his talks with Anna Louise Strong, Mao noted that when the Long March ended, political clarification had not yet been achieved. "After we reached Yen-an, we spent three and a half years on a rectification campaign to solve this problem [of line] thoroughly. It takes time."⁸³

As in 1934-1935, it was again the test of events that enabled Mao to reassert and consolidate his personal and political leadership. From July 1937

to October 1938, the Japanese army advanced rapidly and occupied the five provinces of North China. The Chinese armies defended the main urban centers and were smashed by the Japanese troops after a tough war of position. Wang Ming committed himself personally to fight the battle of Wuhan, the capital, along with the Guomindang. But Wuhan fell in October 1938. This was a grave failure, both militarily and politically, for the Guomindang as well as for those inside the CCP who had wagered on a united and "conventional" defense strategy.

Mao advocated another, very audacious, policy: spreading the Communist network nationwide, but with the bulk of its regular forces sent into North China, behind the Japanese lines. He took as his point of departure considerations of a military (the need to resort to guerrilla warfare against a highly armed enemy) as well as of a political nature. The **war of national defense should be a "people's war"**. It should be based on a mobilization of the population, on the organization of the masses. Behind the Japanese lines, it was possible to carry out this work without finding oneself involved in permanent clashes with the Guomindang. The Communist Party could constitute new liberated zones.

This conception was crucial in several respects. It made it possible to conduct the resistance against foreign occupation in more active and efficient ways than conventional warfare. It made it possible to **turn the war of national defense into a link between yesterday's revolutionary war and tomorrow's**.

Chiang Kai-shek used the immensity of China's territory to carry out a long retreat; his plan was to wait for Japan to exhaust its forces in the Pacific war before launching a counter-offensive; this left vast stretches of land open to CCP action. Chiang sought to weaken the Communist forces by every possible means. Incidents between the two forces would grow more frequent until 1941, when they would lead to the liquidation of the General Staff of the New Fourth Army, an event known as the "South Anhui Incident."

The forces of the Eighth Route

⁸⁰ Benton, p. 92.

⁸¹ Idem, p. 85.

⁸² Idem, p. 94.

⁸³ "Anna Louise Strong: Three Interviews with Chairman Mao Zedong," Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *China Quarterly*, n° 103, September 1985, p. 501.

Army had infiltrated the provinces of the North. Advance units of the New Fourth Army had crossed the Yangzi river. The Communist forces were trying to clear out the terrain for action behind the Japanese lines by reducing the power of the local warlord, that is the power of the Guomindang. A violent battle had pitted the Communist troops against the white forces at Hungqiao; the latter, although enjoying great numerical superiority, were defeated. Chiang Kai-shek then decided to do away with the New Fourth Army, whose headquarters were still south of the Yangzi river, in a region he controlled, once and for all.

In January 1941, a Communist column of 10 000 troops, under the command of Ye Ting and Xiang Ying, was surrounded and decimated by the Guomindang aided by the Japanese who used their air force against the Communists. These events had a deep impact on public opinion. Already the battle of Hungqiao had backfired to Chiang's political disadvantage: he had tried to prevent Chinese armies from moving to a position where they could fight the Japanese! His victory in South Anhui also turned to his disadvantage: he had smashed nationalist forces with the help of the Japanese invader!

The "incident" also had a big impact on the CCP membership. It marked the end of the long fight over orientation between Yan'an and Xiang Ying. The latter belonged to the "28 Bolsheviks" faction. He had been left behind when the Long March began, and held out for three years in Jiangxi, with the Maoist Chen Yi. The forces that survived that epic battle were to form the hard core of the New Fourth Army. They created a new red area in South Anhui, but this time, under the flag of the united front. According to Greg Benton, "everything through the united front' was the slogan that best typified Xiang's policy. This was no ordinary slogan, but one closely associated with Wang Ming and criticized by Mao and Liu Shaoqi as opportunist."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ . Gregor Benton, "The South Anhui Incident," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XLV, n°4, August 1986, p. 683. I relied on this study for this section. Anhui is also transcribed Anwhei.

But Benton does not cast Xiang Ying as a Wang Ming "agent". He held to that line for his own reasons: he believed in the united front with the Guomindang; he probably found it difficult to adapt to the conditions of the war, so different from those of the mid-1930s; and above all, he reportedly wished to preserve his independence against the Maoist Political Bureau. When Yan'an asked him to transfer his forces to the North, he refused. It was Chen Yi, officially his subordinate, who led many units of the New Fourth Army across the Yangzi, thereby saving the bulk of this Army Group. According to Benton, "Hungqiao was the victorious culmination of a line decided on in 1938, whereas the Incident in south Anhui was the last step in a false start."⁸⁵

Gregor Benton's study demonstrates that the national leadership in Yan'an also committed mistakes during these crucial events, by hesitating on the schedule and itinerary that the Communist forces were to follow in order to break through the mesh in which the Guomindang forces had trapped the General Staff of the New Fourth Army. Nevertheless, the political implications of the defeat were quite clear. The Maoist leadership (Mao, Liu Shaoqi⁸⁶, Chen Yi) had a basic difference with Xiang Ying. The failure of Xiang was also the failure of the Wang Ming line. It became obvious that a joint defense with the Guomindang was impossible. There remained the Maoist road.

The Maoist conception of the united front

It is now necessary to review Mao's overall conception of the united front.

During the war of national

⁸⁵ Idem, p. 713.

⁸⁶ Liu Shaoqi was in charge of the North. There are several texts dated 1936 or 1937 in the *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, volume I, Peking Foreign Languages Press, 1984, which polemicize against the "closed door" policy and "right opportunism," which defend the principle of the leading role of the CCP in the united front, and which analyze the war against Japan as a partisan war.

defense, the Maoist conception of the united front with the Guomindang combined two poles: proposing the broadest unity against imperialist occupation and accepting to moderate considerably the party program in order to achieve that unity; while conquering the leadership of the national resistance by preserving the independence of the Communist forces, and strengthening them, through the implementation of a enough democratic activities (both of a political and social nature) to guarantee the existence of a mass base. The revolutionary army was the keystone of this policy; without it, the CCP could not have successfully coped with the contradictory aspects of its orientation.

The policy of broadest alliance did not exclude struggle; to the contrary, it integrated it as one of its foundations. In the Maoist conception, the alliance with the Guomindang implied a conflict over leadership and over line. The slogan of "Unity and Struggle" was counterposed to those who advocated Unity alone, or Struggle alone. Moreover the alliance policy was adjustable. For a while, the civil war was to be subsumed in the united front and converted into a struggle for influence within the national movement; this fight was to sharpen until it led to a new civil war. The united front was then turned against the Guomindang.

In its most general formulation, the Maoist alliance policy aims to unite and broaden the camp under revolutionary leadership, and to divide and reduce the camp under counter-revolutionary leadership. It operates on both the political and social planes. It pursues both short-term and long-term goals.⁸⁷ It can be summarized as follows: asserting the leadership of the party (in the name of the proletariat), consolidating the fundamental alliance (that of the workers and peasants), winning over the intermediate forces (including those representing the middle classes), neutralizing the hesitating elements, dividing the adversary's following, isolating the most dangerous

⁸⁷Tactical and strategic goals are laid out simultaneously in Chinese texts; this sometimes creates confusion for the reader.

enemy at a given moment, concentrating blows against this enemy, adapting tactics to each stage of the struggle so as to eliminate one by one the forces of the counter-revolution, thereby insuring the final victory.

These goals are not particularly original. But they were systematized and adapted to the framework of China's protracted people's war. Mao's united front policy ran up against particular obstacles and therefore developed its own particular features:

- the ability to adapt

A united front policy must be fleshed out in local reality. The difficulty arises because it must be a solution to demands that are partly complementary partly contradictory. Those in charge of concretizing and implementing it need a lot of talent to find the right combination in practice.

A glimpse of the scope of this problem can be gained from William Hinton's *Fanshen*, an exciting account of the ups and downs of Communist work in a village of North China during the Third Civil War.⁸⁸ Land was scarce and very poor. The first measures of the land reform were implemented but the most deprived peasants were still not satisfied. If the land redistribution policy was made more radical to fully correspond to their actual need for land, it would have to make inroads into the land of middle peasants; this threatened to push a significant part of the village population over to the side of the counter-revolution. The CCP's goal was at once to consolidate its following among the lower classes and avoid creating a new political base for the Guomindang in the village. There is no universal solution to such dilemmas. The answer could only be concrete.

Another study, by Elizabeth Perry⁸⁹, shows the fluctuating nature of the alliances struck by the Chinese

⁸⁸ William H. Hinton, *Fanshen*, London: Penguin Books..

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1980.

Communists with traditional peasant associations in the northern region of Hua-pei, well-known for its peasant revolts and the Red Spears movement, a large secret society that had earlier evoked an enthusiastic response from Li Lisan and Chen Duxiu.⁹⁰

Reality turned out more complex than the Communists had expected. Several dissident movements with a substantial following among the people existed in that region; they were social bandits who recruited uprooted peasants, like the Bare Egg Society, and sometimes opposed the Red Spears. The Red Spears were a village defense movement, but they were also controlled by the local notables, the gentry. The Communists had to deal with a complex web of social relations inside the village: the power of clan ties and need for collective protection against outside threats often created a solidarity between the different classes that was difficult to break save in exceptional periods.⁹¹

Political cadres like Chen Yi, Liu Shaoqi and Peng Dehuai were called upon to contribute ideas to this interesting debate. In the end, policy simply fluctuated depending on the period: for instance, the alliance with the Bare Egg Society gave way to a new policy of "reorganization" of the Red Spears during the anti-Japanese resistance. In this case too, the only answer had to be concrete and based on progressive adjustments.

Alliance and united front work included many facets and had to be adapted to many different milieus and changing circumstances. The role of local cadres was as important as that of the central leadership. The Maoist "mass

line" takes this problem into account when it advocates "ideological centralization," for issues of national relevance, and "operational decentralization", for issues in the purview of the cadres out in the field.

●the social base of the resistance and the rightist danger

In 1948, Mao wrote that "the history of our Party shows that Right deviations are likely to occur in periods when our Party has formed a united front with the Kuomintang and that "Left" deviations are likely to occur in periods when our Party has broken with the Kuo-mintang."⁹² During the Sino-Japanese war, this rightist danger was evident not only with respect to the extent and form of the united front with the Guomintang, but also on the terrain of classes, in the very social base of the CP.

To preserve the possibility of an alliance with "patriotic landowners," the Communist Party suspended its land distribution policy. The leadership specified the measures that were to be taken in the red base areas located behind the Japanese lines in a resolution of January 28, 1942: on the one hand, it ordered a reduction of the level of rents and the interest rates on loans (a measure favorable to the peasants); on the other hand, it guaranteed the payment of these obligations (a measure protecting landowners). It warned against leftist errors and, more strenuously, against rightist errors. It summarized the three principles that were the basis of its orientation at that time as follows: the peasants were the "basic strength" of the anti-Japanese war and, the fact was, they could not be mobilized durably without a reduction of rents and interest rates; the rights of patriotic landowners and the gentry had to be acknowledged for the sake of the anti-Japanese united front; and the rich peasantry and rural capitalists represented an "indispensable force in

⁹⁰ It is interesting to note how the "urban" Chen Duxiu got so enthusiastic about the Red Spears peasant rebellion, and noted that the "present time had produced a revolutionary party and army that could unite with peasant power to supersede the shortcomings of traditional rebellions." Perry, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-215.

⁹¹ Maoist "speak bitterness" meetings, during which poor peasants recounted their miserable life, were precisely designed to create a collective class consciousness and break down the solidarity of peasants and notables inside the clans.

⁹² Mao Zedong, "A Circular on the Situation" (March 20, 1948), SW, vol. TV, 1975, p. 219.

the anti-Japanese war and in the battle for production" since "the capitalist mode of production is the more progressive method in present-day China."⁹³

Severe problems were posed by the suspension of the land distribution policy. In his interesting book covering the period, *China Shakes the World*, reporter Jack Belden noted that "this national war, in itself, was revolutionary and often agitated the minds of the people more and quicker than the land reform might have done. (...) Nevertheless, the Communist program did alienate some of the poor peasants, the tenants and the long-term workers. From bitter experience the peasant had learned to distrust any intellectual who came to his village with fine promises. Only if you gave him land did the poor peasant think you meant business. When the Communists abandoned land confiscation and told the tenantry and the rural workers that they must forget about the landlords and fight the Japanese, these dispossessed men saw behind such fine promises nothing but the ancient double cross. 'Fang kuo pi' ('dog -wind-blowing'), they muttered under their breath and went on their way."

"Outwardly, this identified the Communists with the Kuomintang" whose program also officially advocated a reduction of rents on land. "The difference, however, between the Kuomintang official and the Communist cadre was that the cadre tried to enforce rent-reduction regulations. When the peasant saw this, he stopped and turned around. Here was a different kind of official."⁹⁴

Despite its moderation, the Communist Party program hit on some issues that were very important for the peasant such as the cost of land and the crucial problem of usury and the peasants' debt. It was part of a policy of

active social and economic mobilization designed to establish the production necessary for war and change social behavior and power relations inside the village: taxation of the rich; seizure of the land of collaborators; development of rural industry, mutual aid teams, cooperatives, peasant associations; educational campaigns; establishment of a new administration under Communist control....⁹⁵ Nationalism alone could not account for the support which the peasantry gave to the CCP.⁹⁶

During the Sino-Japanese war, the party had to broaden the resistance movement and therefore make concessions and mobilize the masses by answering their needs. It had to combine partially contradictory measures in a single orientation. The dangerous gap which developed between its "diplomatic" positions (which were drafted in a spirit of grand "unanimity") and its actual policy (designed to strengthen its own leadership) was therefore bound to foster rightist pressures.

Nevertheless, the lesson of the Chinese resistance to Japanese occupation is clear. Its effectiveness- as well as the continuity of the revolutionary struggle-were due to the mobilization of the masses and to the CCP's ability to organize that mobilization. Without the actual implementation of the reduction of land rents and interest rates, the national defense war could not have remained a people's war. Without the subsequent resumption of the land reform, as we shall see, the forces accumulated in 1937 and 1938 could not have been

⁹³ "Decision of the CC on Land Policy in the Anti-Japanese Base Areas" (January 28, 1942), *A Documentary History...*, Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank, eds., pp. 276-279.

⁹⁴ Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, London: Penguin, pp. 221-222.

⁹⁵ This revolutionary administration either openly replaced the old structures, or paralleled them due to a situation of partial or total clandestinity. The way in which the CCP program was implemented depended on the areas and the relationship of forces (stable or threatened bases, etc.).

⁹⁶ On this topic, see among others Elinor Lerner, "The Chinese Peasantry and Imperialism: A Critique of Chalmers Johnson's Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 6, n°2, April-August 1974, and Chalmers Johnson, "Peasant Nationalism Revisited: The Biography of a Book," *China Quarterly*, n°72, December 1977.

reinvested in the revolutionary struggle for power. While the revolutionary army was the keystone of the policy of united front with the Guomindang, mass work was the keystone of the social alliance policy.

The social alliance of the popular classes formed the fundamental alliance, the stable bedrock of the revolutionary united front policy. The broader alliances, of a political nature, often played a quite important role but had to fit within the lasting framework of the strategic alliances.

• the approach to power within the united front and the sectarian danger

Despite the remarks we have just made and contrary to certain widespread notions, I believe that the main danger embedded in the Maoist conception of the united front is not in the direction of opportunism, but of sectarianism.⁹⁷

The Maoist conception of alliances can be set out graphically in a pattern of concentric circles (see next page). At the center stands the Communist Party. The first thickly drawn ring represents the bedrock alliance or fundamental class alliance; the second, the broad alliance (whether national or anti-fascist) with its potential for conflict; the third, the enemy forces that one is striving to isolate. Any number of additional intermediate circles can be introduced into the figure to make it more complex.

This fundamental approach is alien to any conception of alliances in which the Communist Party would be given a subordinate place. It places the party, its leadership activity and its control mechanisms at the very center of the united front. It is far more likely to give rise to a sectarian and manipulative conception of alliances, in an ultra-left direction.

⁹⁷ This opinion stands in contrast to the conventional wisdom of a large part of the Trotskyist movement which identifies the Maoist united front with a "Menshevik-Stalinist" conception of the "popular front" which accepts the leading role of the national bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution.

The Maoist theory of the united front contains the presupposition that there is now and will always be only one "proletarian" party" worthy of the name in any given country. For the "concentric" schema leaves no room anywhere for a second revolutionary party. Other political forces must either represent intermediate (petty-bourgeois) or enemy social layers. They must be placed either in a relation of subordination or in one of antagonism.

This outlook was shared by many Communist currents at that time (not just the Stalinist current). The plurality of Marxism was still a very marginal fact, embodied for instance in the existence of the Trotskyist current, which it was easy to ignore, decry or repress. Since then, things have changed quite substantially. The international communist movement is now beset by lasting divisions. In most countries, several revolutionary organizations exist side by side, and finding the means to unite them, both nationally and internationally, has become a problem of first-rate importance.⁹⁸ The "concentric circles" conception of the united front offers no means to deal with this problem whatsoever, for any solution implies the recognition of several organizations that identify with the working class, the poor peasantry, the revolution.

The division of the communist movement has been made worse by Soviet Stalinism, but it also expresses deeper realities: the heterogeneity of social classes and national experiences, the complexity of the process of political clarification within the political vanguard (the uneven ability to compare theory with actual experiences), the weight of an already quite long history of socialism.... Marxist pluralism is a major political fact. If the national and international fragmentation of

⁹⁸ This is particularly true in a country like El Salvador, but the problem has now become the norm and not the exception. On the international plane, it is equally obvious: most activities of internationalist solidarity bring together revolutionary organizations with different political and ideological histories.

revolutionary forces is to be overcome and prevented, it must become a conscious part of the contemporary approach to the united front; this requires a supersession of the Maoist tradition (and of many other traditions).

More substantially, the "concentric" schema of the united front turns the party into the real center of political and social power. The administrative system of the Three Thirds established during the Sino-Japanese war, enabled the CCP to associate representatives of "national salvation organizations" to the management of day-to-day business and to isolate potential adversaries.⁹⁹

It was not designed to share real decision making power. There is an obvious link between this conception of the united front in society and the position which the CCP assumed in the state after victory.¹⁰⁰

• Urban work

During the Sino-Japanese war, the CCP deployed major efforts in the cities. The Maoist leadership gradually took over this area of party work where many cadres of the Wang Ming faction had been active. It assigned some of its own top cadres to work in the white areas, both to open work, as in Chungqing, where Zhou Enlai was sent, and more often to underground work, for which Liu Shaoqi was put in charge. This work was conducted within the framework of the united front policy. It enabled the CCP to influence urban nationally-minded sectors, to conduct propaganda against the Guomindang and win over more people.

As the years went by, the CCP was able to renew its alliance with student milieus, the intellectuals, sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie. In 1938, the

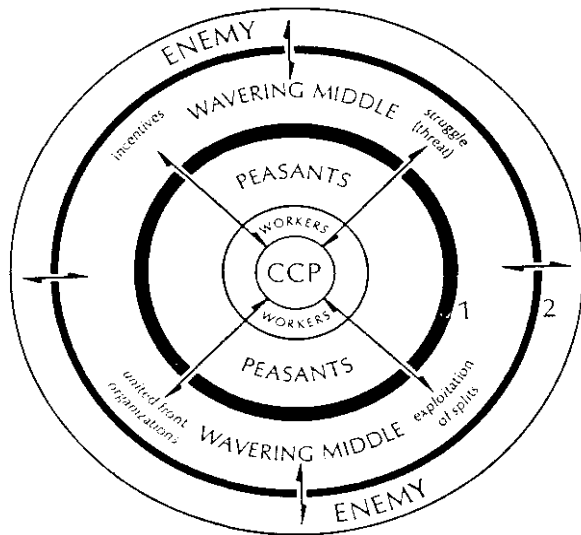
authority of the Chiang regime reached its apex. But it began to decline in 1939, with each new advance of the Japanese troops. Little by little, the CCP emerged as the party of national resistance. Its following grew in the universities; many students flocked to Yan'an. The political battle then joined in the cities was to bear fruit somewhat later, but these developments were decisive. For the showdown which was to take place from 1946 to 1949 was not exclusively military and rural. It was also political and urban: the CCP, after years of war, was able to appear as the alternative, when the Chiang regime, undermined by its gross inefficiency and negligence, began to lose its own social base.

Urban work therefore played a more important role than the military nature of the Chinese conflict could lead one to believe. The CCP conducted this work under very difficult circumstances and this was no mean achievement. Nevertheless, the reorganization of communist work in the workplaces did not match up to this effort and the urban front, a "political" front, acquired an essentially "democratic" character: the continuity of the mobilization on class issues was not as clear as in the countryside.

The alliance with the "intermediate forces" (intellectuals, students, democratic and nationalist elements) was achieved under conditions of war, repression and clandestinity. Secretiveness enhanced manipulation, which was further fostered by the "concentric" approach to the united front. Thus, an instrumental relationship developed between the party that would later become the leader of the state, and its current allies. The role of these "intermediate" forces, however, would not end at the moment of victory. They have a place in the reconstruction of society. After 1949, this manipulative and instrumental relationship caused bitterness and chronic dissidence; this broke out with great force and suddenness in 1956 during the Hundred Flowers campaign. While the instrumentalization of intellectual milieus paid off on the short run, on the longer run it nurtured a crisis which was very difficult to overcome.

⁹⁹ The various administrative organs in charge of government were supposed to be composed of one third party members, one third representatives of mass organizations, and one third members of other parties. In practice, though, the dosage and composition of these organs varied depending on the period and the location.

¹⁰⁰ See the concluding chapter of this study.



"Representation of the CCP's concept of the United Front as part of the theory of contradictions"

The numeral 1 indicates the boundary of the basic worker-peasant alliance, led by the CCP; 2 indicates the outer limit of "the people," i.e., the outer limit of the united front and the limit within which contradictions are non-antagonistic. The arrows indicate pressures or influences acting upon the middle group; notice that the middle group can either stay on the side of "the people" or go over to "the enemy." The identity of those in the outer two circle (middle and enemy) will change according to circumstances; all parts of this structure are always present; the enemy should not comprise more than 10 per cent of the population, preferably less." (Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends-The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, p. 250.)

*** A radical negation of the "bloc of four classes" theory**

Stalinist tradition has frozen the front policy to be followed by Communist Parties of dependent countries during the entire period of the democratic revolution into a rigid formula: the "bloc of four classes" encompassing the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. The CCP used that formula more than once. Nevertheless, the Chinese experience of the anti-Japanese united front constitutes a radical denial of the relevance of this theory, a fact which is confirmed by the Maoists' own analysis.

The period of democratic revolution (before the seizure of power in 1949) includes a civil war and not only an alliance with the Guomindang. In fact, tensions were so strong, that it never gave rise to harmonious relations between the two parties, nor even to a stable united front organization.

During the Sino-Japanese war, the CCP opened its alliance policy to sectors that are not included in any of the categories of the "bloc of four classes" and all of which were also present inside the Guomindang: the landowning class (described as feudal or semi-feudal), the comprador and bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The great families who led Chiang Kai-shek's party (already a party quite different from Sun Yatsen's) did not deserve the label of "national bourgeoisie" in any shape or form. They were linked to imperialism

(whether U.S. or British, and sometimes even Japanese) and formed precisely what the Maoists rightly called the bureaucratic bourgeoisie: a bourgeoisie that systematically used its control over the state apparatus to extend its economic power and wealth.

The Guomindang need not be prettified and painted nationalist in order to justify a united front. The alliance was necessary not for structural reasons, but for political reasons (the invasion of China); that is why it was so unstable and wracked by conflict, why class contradictions kept on surfacing in the midst of the war of national defense, why the Japanese defeat signaled the resumption of civil war.

Mao Zedong says nothing else in his 1956 talks. "The Chinese comprador bourgeoisie consisted of pro-British, pro-U.S. and pro-Japanese groups. During the War of Resistance Against Japan we exploited the contradiction between Britain and the United States on the one hand and Japan on the other, first striking down the Japanese aggressors and the comprador group depending on them. Then we turned round to deal blows at the U.S. and British aggressor forces and bring down the pro-U.S. and pro-British comprador groups."

"The national bourgeoisie is an opponent of ours. (...) While it is opposed to the working class, it is also opposed to imperialism. (...) We must by all means win the national

bourgeoisie over to the fight against imperialism. The national bourgeoisie is not interested in fighting feudalism because it has close ties with the landlord class. What is more, it oppresses and exploits the workers. We must therefore struggle against it. But in order to win it over to join us in the fight against imperialism, we must know when to stop in the struggle. (...) In other words, we must have just grounds for waging the struggle, be sure of victory, and use restraint when a proper measure of victory is gained. (...) Towards the national bourgeoisie a policy of 'both unity and struggle' should be adopted."¹⁰¹

It seems to me that the very concept of national bourgeoisie is quite debatable, particularly in the dependent countries today. The interpenetration of the various economic sectors leaves little room for such a category which presupposes some sort of structural independence from the imperialist market. Even in the China of the 1930s and 1940s, the national bourgeoisie did not appear as a well-defined, dynamic and independent political force. I believe that it is better to speak of a middle bourgeoisie that may have some links with the imperialist market as well as with the landowning class, but which, because of its economic weakness can make more lasting compromises with the revolution than the big bourgeoisie, the bastion of counter-revolution.¹⁰²

* * *

The Chinese experience with the united front is interesting. It makes it possible to distinguish fundamental class alliances for the overall revolutionary struggle, from temporary and conflict-ridden political alliances. It sheds light both on the strengths and dangers of

¹⁰¹ Mao Zedong, "Some Experiences in Our Party's History," *SW*, vol. 5, pp. 327-329.

¹⁰² The revolutionary camp can have an interest in reaching some compromises with it, even after victory, for the economic reconstruction of the country. From the standpoint of the middle bourgeoisie, such compromises are then more a result of a relationship of forces favorable to the revolution than of its nationalism.

the Maoist outlook. In this respect as in others, Mao's warning to his Latin American visitors must not be forgotten: "The Chinese experience, which consists in establishing rural bases of support and to encircle the cities from the countryside and finally to seize the cities, is not necessarily valid for a number of countries, but it can serve as a reference for you. Be careful, I dare advise you, not to transplant it ready made. Every experience from abroad can be taken as a reference, not as a dogma. You must therefore unite the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete conditions of each country."¹⁰³

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 6

The Maoism of Yan'an: *revolution and historical constraint*

Mao the Teacher, warning his audience against transforming the Chinese experience into a universal model, stands in contrast to Mao, the Infallible Guide, the Red Sun of the Peoples of the World, developed by the cult of personality. The dichotomy was already becoming apparent in 1939-1940 when Maoism emerged as a full-fledged doctrine and Yan'an became the symbol of the new society.

Mao Zedong used the years 1938 and 1939 to consolidate his authority. A network of Communist territorial bases was reconstituted. The bulk of the Eighth Route Army, with Peng Dehuai and Zhu De, operated in Shanxi.¹⁰⁴ The New Fourth Army was based in the Lower Yangzi basin, west of Shanghai, and began infiltrating the north shore of the river under Chen Yi.¹⁰⁵ Other Communist units regrouped in Shandong (half-way between Shanghai and Peking) and southern China (north of Canton). In all about fifteen red bases were formed around the country.¹⁰⁶

The Shaan-Gan-Ning base¹⁰⁷, established in a hilly and impoverished

region, had already been around a long time (since 1931). It was not located behind the Japanese lines and opened onto Guomindang China. It served as the shelter for the national party leadership and the University of the Resistance (Kangda). Democratic personalities and foreign journalists were invited to come and visit. Yan'an was to become the CCP's war capital and a symbol. Twenty years the birth of the Communist movement, ten years after the upheaval of the Second Chinese revolution, this was where Mao expounded his strategic conceptions and broached theoretical and cultural questions, where Marxism was "sinified", where a vast "rectification campaign" was undertaken, where a certain model of social practice was systematized and the personality cult began.

Uninterrupted revolution

The history of Mao Zedong is the history of a fight for the revolutionary conquest of state power. That is the axis of his political positions, the horizon of his tactical choices, the issue that led him to oppose Stalin and the key to his theory of uninterrupted revolution.

In February 1940, Mao published *On New Democracy*. "The historical particularity of the Chinese revolution is that it is divided into two phases: the democratic phase and the socialist phase, and that the first phase is already no longer that of democracy in general but that of a democracy of a new, Chinese, type, that of new democracy...."¹⁰⁸

"If you consider their social nature, the many forms of political rule existing in the world today essentially come down to the three following types: 1/ a republic of bourgeois dictatorship; 2/ a republic of proletarian dictatorship; and 3/ a republic of the dictatorship of several revolutionary classes. (...) The third type is a transitional form that exists in certain revolutionary colonies

¹⁰⁴ The Guomindang had evacuated this province which lies north of Shaanxi (with two "a"s), after its defeat at the battle of Taiyuan (the provincial capital).

¹⁰⁵ See the previous chapter.

¹⁰⁶ The Communist forces regrouped, partly in line with a central plan, and partly as a result of the evolution of local situations. In addition, there existed a variety of independent guerrilla groups.

¹⁰⁷ It straddled the border of three provinces: Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia. Red bases were generally located in these geographical outlands for military reasons (difficult access), economic reasons (the prevailing autarky enabled the Communists to develop an independent resistance economy), and political-administrative reasons (the possibility of playing one provincial government against the other). The base of Jin-Cha-Ji, by contrast, was located in a plain. The resistance fighters were forced to dig a staggering network of tunnels to protect themselves. Headed by Lin Biao and Nie Rongshen, it was one of the most important base areas. It spread across Shanxi, Chahar and Hebei, not far from Peking.

¹⁰⁸ Mao, "La nouvelle démocratique," extracts of the original version published in Carrère d'Encausse and Schram, *Le Marxisme et l'Asie*, p. 351.

and semi-colonies. (...) They will be states of new democracy in which several anti-imperialist classes will unite to exercise their dictatorship jointly."¹⁰⁹

"This revolution is already no longer the old revolution, entirely led by the bourgeoisie (...), it is a new revolution, led by the proletariat or including the participation of the proletariat in its leadership, whose first goal is the creation of a new democratic society and a state characterized by the common dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes [including the bourgeoisie]..."¹¹⁰

Was Mao defending the Stalinist perspective of "revolution by stages" in advocating "new democracy?" Did the "joint dictatorship" mean putting the proletariat in the tow of the bourgeoisie and abandoning the socialist struggle in practice? As a public text, *New Democracy* was addressed to the "intermediate forces." Mao noted nevertheless that the new democratic revolution "was no longer part of the old bourgeois and capitalist world revolution, but part of the new world revolution, part of the proletarian socialist world revolution..."¹¹¹

In a major work of 1939, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*¹¹², Mao Zedong lays out his analysis of the Chinese

revolutionary process: "Chinese society is still a colonial, semi-colonial, and semi-feudal society, (...) the task of the Chinese revolution consists in a national revolution and a democratic revolution (...), the character of the Chinese revolution at the present stage is not proletarian-socialist but bourgeois-democratic."

"However, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in present-day China is no longer of the general, old type, which is now obsolete, but of the special, new type (...), we call it the new-democratic revolution. (...) [It] is part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution; it resolutely opposes imperialism, i.e. international capitalism. Politically, it means the joint *revolutionary-democratic* dictatorship of several revolutionary classes over the imperialists and reactionary traitors, and opposition to the transformation of Chinese society into a society under bourgeois dictatorship. Economically, it means nationalization of all big capital and big enterprises of the imperialists and reactionary traitors, distribution of large landed property among the peasants, and at the same time assistance to private middle and small enterprises¹¹³ without the elimination of the rich-peasant economy. Hence, while clearing the way for capitalism, this democratic revolution of a new type creates the precondition for socialism. The present stage of the Chinese revolution is a transitional stage between putting an end to the colonial, semi-colonial, and semi-feudal society and establishing a socialist society—a new revolutionary process (...) This process began only after World War I and the Russian October Revolution; it started in China with the May 4th Movement of 1919. A new-democratic revolution is a revolution of the broad masses of the people led by the proletariat and directed against imperialism and feudalism; *it is a revolution of the united front of several revolutionary classes* (...)."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Idem, pp. 335-356. In 1951, when this text was republished, Mao replaced "social nature" (at the beginning of the quotation) with "class nature of the political power". The official version of "On New Democracy" is published in *SW*, vol. 2, pp. 339-384.

¹¹⁰ Idem, p. 352. Mao added: "This is why such a revolution also opens the road—incidentally a still broader road—to the development of socialism." Schram indicates in italic the passages which were eliminated or revised by Mao in 1951. Remarks about the changes introduced in 1951 are, as usual, those of Stuart Schram. The remarks apply to all quotations in this chapter.

¹¹¹ Idem, pp. 351-352.

¹¹² Mao, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" (December 1939), in Schram, *The Political Thought...*, pp. 229-233. The complete text printed in *SW*, vol. II, pp. 305-334, follows rather closely the original version of this class written by Mao and a few others during the winter 1939. The passages quoted here are from Mao's pen.

¹¹³ The 1951 version says here: "while maintaining the private capitalist enterprises in general..."
¹¹⁴ In the 1951 version, the last phrase of the sentence ("it is the revolution of the united front of

"This kind of new-democratic revolution differs greatly from the democratic revolutions in the history of European and American countries in that it results in the dictatorship of the united front of all revolutionary classes, not in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁵ (...) This kind of new-democratic revolution differs also from a socialist revolution in that it aims only at overthrowing the rule of the imperialists and reactionary traitors, but not at overthrowing any capitalist elements still able to take part in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles (...)."

"There can be no doubt whatever that the ultimate perspective of the Chinese revolution is not capitalism but socialism.¹¹⁶ (...) It is an inevitable result of the victory of the democratic revolution in economically backward China that capitalism will develop to a certain degree. (...) This will be merely one aspect of the result of the Chinese revolution, not its whole outcome. The whole outcome of the Chinese revolution will be the development of the capitalist factors on the one hand and of the socialist factors on the other. What are the socialist factors? They are the growing political weight of the proletariat and the Communist Party in the whole country and the actual or possible recognition of the leadership of the proletariat and the Communist Party by the peasantry, the intelligentsia, and the petty bourgeoisie. (...) Together with the favourable international situation, they are bound to make it highly possible that the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution will finally steer of a capitalist future and head towards the realization of socialism...."

"The Chinese revolution as a whole involves a twofold task. (...) The leadership in this twofold revolutionary task rests on the shoulders of the party of the Chinese proletariat, the Chinese Communist Party, for without its leadership no revolution can succeed."

"The completion of China's

bourgeois-democratic revolution (the new-democratic revolution) and its transformation into a socialist revolution once all the necessary conditions are present, that is the sum total of the great and glorious revolutionary task of the Chinese Communist Party. All members of the Party (...) should never stop half-way. (...) Every Communist must know that the Chinese Communist movement¹¹⁷ as a whole is a complete revolutionary movement embracing the two revolutionary stages, democratic and socialist, which are the two revolutionary processes differing in character, and that the socialist stage can be reached only after the democratic stage is completed. The democratic revolution is the necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable trend of the democratic revolution. (...) We can give correct leadership to the Chinese revolution only on the basis of a clear understanding of both the differences between the democratic and socialist revolutions and their interconnections."

"Except for the Communist Party, none of the political parties, bourgeois or petty-bourgeois, is equal to the task of leading China's two great revolutions, democratic and socialist."¹¹⁸

This text is based on four key ideas concerning the trajectory of the revolution in Chinese-type countries:

- The two stages (democratic and socialist) of the revolutionary struggle are part of one and the same overall process. The point of strategy is to guarantee the transition¹¹⁹ from the first to the second revolution.
- The greatest attention must be

¹¹⁷ In 1951: "the revolutionary movement led by the Chinese Communist Party."

¹¹⁸ In another part of this text, Mao analyzes the relations between the Chinese peasantry and proletariat and states that "the Chinese proletariat has many particularly outstanding qualities, *which permit it to become the leading force in the Chinese revolution*" Schram, *The political...*, p. 263.

¹¹⁹ Or transformation, or growing over: translations vary. Likewise, specialists note that the Chinese word for uninterrupted revolution should in fact be translated by the formula "permanent revolution."

all classes") is eliminated.

¹¹⁵ In 1951, Mao added; "under the leadership of the proletariat."

¹¹⁶ In 1951, Mao added here: "and to communism."

devoted to the stages of this transitional process from democratic to socialist revolution, because they call for concrete tasks of a different type.

- The Communist Party must secure its leadership over the entire revolutionary process (including its first democratic stage).
- With the completion of the democratic revolution, China can avoid the road of capitalist development and take the road of socialist development.

In connection with the second point, Mao launched a fierce polemic against ideas he attributed to Trotsky: "We advocate the theory of the transition of the revolution, not the Trotskyite theory of permanent revolution [*pu-tuan ko-ming lung*] nor semi-Trotskyite *Li Lisan-ism*. We stand for going through all the necessary stages of a democratic republic in order to arrive at socialism. We are opposed to tailism but also to adventurism and precipitation."¹²⁰

The theory of permanent revolution does not deny the existence of democratic and socialist stages in the revolutionary process.¹²¹ One could even

say that the distinction and the link between these two stages constitutes the starting point of the theory. For Trotsky, permanent revolution "embraces [first] the problem of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist. This is in essence the historical origin of the theory."¹²² "This was precisely the idea that was expressed by the very designation of the revolution as a 'permanent,' that is, an uninterrupted one, a revolution passing over directly from the bourgeois stage into the socialist. To express the same idea Lenin later used the excellent expression of the bourgeois revolution growing over into the socialist."¹²³

"The permanent revolution is not a 'leap' by the proletariat, but the reconstruction of the nation under the leadership of the proletariat."¹²⁴ While it is possible to leap over the stage of capitalist development, it is nevertheless indispensable to take into account the progression of mass consciousness and tasks, the tactical requirements of the fight¹²⁵: "Every attempt to skip over real, that is, objectively conditioned stages in the development of the masses, is political adventurism."¹²⁶

"I never denied the *bourgeois* character of the revolution in the sense of its immediate historical tasks, but

thereby losing sight of the essential link in this combination, the process of transition/growing over.

¹²² Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, New York: Pathfinder, p. 131.

¹²³ Idem, p. 136. One sees the extent to which Stuart Schram, who seems to have read Mao with greater attention than Trotsky, can go wrong when he counter-poses the Leninist conception of growing over, to the Trotskyist conception of permanent revolution (see note 1, p. 227, of Schram's introduction to *The Political*.)

¹²⁴ Trotsky, op.cit., p. 178.

¹²⁵ The theory of permanent revolution does not present a universal and rigid system on the growing over of the revolutionary process in backward countries. Indeed, the way in which the process unfolds, in which democratic and socialist tasks follow each other or combine, depends on various concrete factors such as the nature of the social formation, the historical context, the outcome of previous struggles...

¹²⁶ Idem, pp. 241-242.

¹²⁰ "Let US Strive to Draw the Broad Masses into the Anti-Japanese United Front," (Speech given on May 7, 1937), idem, p. 227. In another text dated 1935, Mao asserts that: "only the counterrevolutionary Trotskyites will talk such nonsense as that China has already completed her bourgeois-democratic revolution and that any further revolution can only be a socialist one. The revolution of 1924-1927 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution that was not completed and failed." ("On the Tactics of Fighting Japanese Imperialism," Report of December 27, 1935 to a conference of party members, idem, p. 265.) Trotsky did not hold the views Mao attributes to him. Quite the contrary, what he advocated was organizing a defensive struggle around democratic slogans.

¹²¹ It is unfortunately true that Trotskyists, thoroughly absorbed by the polemic against the Stalinist conception of "revolution by stages," have sometimes forgotten this, and seen in the permanent revolution only an instant combination of democratic revolution and socialist revolution,

only in the sense of its driving forces and its perspectives."¹²⁷

What Trotsky rejected with his theory of permanent revolution, was the notion that a historical stage of development was necessary between the victory of the democratic revolution and the beginning of the socialist revolution in the imperialist epoch, in backward countries. The proletariat therefore had to assume the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution¹²⁸ leading to the establishment of its dictatorship in alliance with the peasantry.

The dictatorship of the proletariat was the decisive lever by means of which the process of the democratic revolution growing over into a socialist revolution could actually take place. This essential thesis of the theory of permanent revolution is neither ultra-left nor sectarian. For the leverage which control of the state apparatus provides, is precisely what enables the proletariat to conclude alliances with the peasantry and, if necessary, with sectors of the bourgeoisie. The class alliance of the peasantry and proletariat remains at the core of the revolutionary process.¹²⁹

The formula "a dictatorship of the proletariat that leads the peasant masses behind it"¹³⁰ distinguishes two questions: that of social alliances (between the working class and peasantry) and that of the class nature

¹²⁷ *Idem*, p. 180.

¹²⁸ As far as I am concerned, I prefer to use the term of national democratic rather than bourgeois democratic revolution and demands because it emphasizes the change in the historical context and social dynamic.

¹²⁹ Trotsky notes in thesis 3 on the permanent revolution that: "Not only the agrarian, but also the national question assigns to the peasantry—the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries—an exceptional place in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie." *Op. cit.*, p. 276-277.

¹³⁰ Thesis 5 on permanent revolution, *op.cit.*, p. 277.

of the state (which is proletarian). Lenin's original formula, "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," mixed these two levels.¹³¹ The experience of the Russian revolution led the Bolsheviks, beginning with Lenin, to characterize the political power born in the October revolution as the dictatorship of the proletariat, and its social alliance as working-class and peasant.

The Maoist formula of "dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes" again mixes these two levels which must be distinguished for a clear analysis of the overall revolutionary process. But Maoist writings as well as practice show that the struggle for Communist hegemony was at the very heart of Mao's conceptions: "The democratic revolution will undergo several stages of development (...) It is a long struggle from the hegemony of the bourgeoisie¹³² to the hegemony of the proletariat, a process of striving for leadership that depends on the condition that the Communist Party raise the level of awareness and organization of the peasantry as well as the petty bourgeoisie."

"The peasantry is the staunch ally of the proletariat; after it comes the petty bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeoisie that will contend with us for hegemony."

"We depend on the strength of the masses and on our correct policies to overcome the vacillation and the lack of thoroughness of the bourgeoisie; otherwise, the bourgeoisie will turn round and overcome the proletariat."¹³³

One should note a certain indeterminateness and lack of theoretical precision in the Maoist formulas of that time. The indeterminateness (concerning the pace and form of future relations with the

¹³¹ Lenin was already struggling to insure a proletarian leadership of the democratic revolution and of the democratic dictatorship of the peasantry and proletariat.

¹³² Note that this hegemony was a fact, a given in China in the 1930s.

¹³³ "Let Us Strive to Draw ..." (May 7, 1937), Schram, *The Political...*, p. 227. See also the previous chapter on the Maoist conception of the united front.

middle bourgeoisie) can be explained easily. The experience of 1927 was a negative experience; a positive experience was still necessary to fully clarify class relations in the Chinese revolution. Moreover, reality itself remained partially undetermined: what it would become depended on the outcome of struggles.¹³⁴

The lack of precision of the theoretical formulas concerned the question of the state and reminds one of Lenin's formula of 1905.¹³⁵ It shows in particular to what extent Stalinism had acted as a screen between the various national Communist Parties and the living experience of the Russian revolution. By deifying Lenin and excommunicating the other Russian leaders and theoreticians (such as Trotsky and Bukharin), the Soviet bureaucracy excluded any critical assimilation of the history of Bolshevism.¹³⁶ Mao studied the works of Lenin, but his theoretical thinking remained hemmed in by the leaden shield clamped on the movement by Stalinism.

The "sinification" of Marxism

The process of sinification of Marxism was begun in the late 1930s. It was foreshadowed by the "rectification"

¹³⁴ It is enough to compare the situation of alliances at the moment of victory in the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, to become convinced of this fact.

¹³⁵ For Denise Avenas, Mao's approach "'stuck' to Chinese reality with the same margin of uncertainty as the Leninist theory of the revolution before 1917 'stuck' to the reality of Tsarist Russia; these uncertainties were linked to the uneven and combined nature of the social and economic formation of backward countries; this is what made it possible for Lenin to state in 1917, not that his formula had been erroneous, but that it had been realized under a form other than the expected one." (*Maoisme et communisme*, Paris: Galilee, 1976, pp. 132-133.)

¹³⁶ Indeed, to do so, one has to study the formation and evolution of the concepts of Russian social-democracy and each Russian Marxist leader's own contribution, and compare them to the actual experience of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

movement of 1941-1944.¹³⁷ The party had to be united around the "mass line;" dogmatism and elitism, defeated. Along with Mao, Liu¹³⁸ was one of the main movers of this campaign, a genuine "internal struggle" designed to eradicate the "three errors" of subjectivism, sectarianism and formalism.

Mao declared in October 1938: "The Chinese Party has already made great progress in its Marxist-Leninist training as compared with the previous situation, but this training cannot yet be said to be universal and profound. *From this standpoint, we are more or less inferior to some of our fraternal parties in other countries.* And yet our task is to lead a great people of 450 million in an unprecedented historic struggle. Consequently, widespread and thorough study of theory is of decisive importance for us and can only be carried through by the utmost effort. Let us work hard at it. (...) Comrades, we must definitely study Marxism."

"Another task of our study is to understand our historic inheritance and to evaluate it critically by the use of the Marxist method. The history of our great people over several thousands of years exhibits national particularities and many precious qualities. (...) We are Marxist historians; we must not mutilate history. From Confucius to Sun Yatsen we must sum it up critically, we must constitute ourselves the heirs of all that is precious in this past. (...) *There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used.* (...) Consequently, *the Sinification of Marxism* (...) becomes a problem that must be understood and solved by the whole Party without delay... We must put an end to writing eight-legged

¹³⁷ Zengfeng, to rectify the wind, or style.

¹³⁸ Liu Shaoqi wrote his most famous work in 1939: "How to Be a Good Communist," *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, vol. 1, pp. 107-160. See also, "On Inner-Party Struggle" (July 2, 1941 -revised June 1943), pp. 180-216.

essays on foreign models; there must be less repeating of empty and abstract refrains; we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and ear of the Chinese common people."¹³⁹

In 1942, Mao noted as he opened the Party school in Yan'an that "if we (...) *have not created a theory in accordance with China's real necessities, a theory that is our own and of a specific nature*, then it would be irresponsible to call ourselves Marxist theoreticians. (...) *If we see only the complete works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on the shelf*, then our achievements on the theoretical front cannot but be poor. (...) We need theoreticians who base their thinking on the standpoints, concepts, and methods of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, who are able *to explain correctly the actual problems issuing from history and revolution, who are able to give a scientific interpretation and theoretical explanation of the various problems of Chinese economics, politics, military affairs, and culture.*"

(...)

*"Marxism-Leninism has no beauty, nor has it any mystical value. It is only extremely useful. It seems that right up to the present quite a few have regarded Marx-ism-Leninism as a ready-made panacea. (...) Those who regard Marxism-Leninism as religious dogma show this type of blind ignorance. We must tell them openly, 'Your dogma is of no use,' or, to use an impolite formulation, Your dogma is less useful than shit.' We see that dog shit can fertilize the fields and man's can feed the dog. And dogmas? They can't fertilize the fields, nor can they feed a dog. Of what use are they?"*¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Mao, "On the New Stage," (1939) Report to the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of October 1938, in Schram, *The Political...*, p. 171-173. In the version of the *SW* the passages in italic in Schram were eliminated or substantially revamped. Among other things, the formula "sinification of Marxism" has disappeared from the text.

¹⁴⁰ Mao, "Reform in Learning, the Party and Literature" (April 27, 1942), *idem*, pp. 174-179. Same remark as above concerning the passages in italic in Schram.

Mao Zedong did not make the term "sinification of Marxism" a key point of his doctrine for any considerable length of time. Nevertheless, the process of sinification of Marxism illustrates certain essential features of Maoism.¹⁴¹ The requirement that Marxism be applied to Chinese reality, be used to understand China, but also be adapted, "dewesternized," was at the core of Maoist concerns.

Mao's intellectual background is complex. One should not forget that the apostle of the "precious things" in Chinese national history was also a child of the May Fourth Movement, deeply iconoclastic, a violent critic of Confucius and tradition. Mao never traveled abroad until 1949 and did not know Western languages; this radically limited his horizons. On the other hand though, he was in great part self-taught and had read every translation available in China in the 1920s; thus, he was subject to a diverse set of ideological influences.¹⁴² He was widely read but nevertheless fell back on the days of his youth to retrieve the popular language of villages.

Mao Zedong reclaimed Chinese history, but from a modern standpoint—the revolutionary Communist perspective. He retrieved many "Chinese things" that enabled him to impart a "national form" to his Marxism: original military conceptions, the potential and limitations of the peasants, the place of the dissident intellectual among the people, the breakdown and regional devolution of central powers, political struggle understood as a struggle for

¹⁴¹ Schram's already cited works are quite interesting in this respect. For a study of the process of "sinification" and the role of Chen Boda, Mao's secretary for many years, see Raymond Wylie, "Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta and the 'sinification of Marxism, 1936-1938," *The China Quarterly*, n° 79, September 1979.

¹⁴² They include socialist and anarchist influences. Anarchism underwent notable expansion in the 1900s among East Asian revolutionaries. Li Dachao and. to a certain extent. Mao were influenced by it. For a recent book about anarchism in China, see Jean-Jacques Gandini. *Aux sources de la révolution chinoise, Les an-archisles. contribution historique de 1902 a 1927*. Lyons: Atelier de Creation li-bertaire. 1986.

state power, the sociological thought of Confucianism and the dialectical thought of Daoism.

Chinese history is specific, rich.¹⁴³ Mao's creativity owes a lot to the way in which he reclaimed that history. In an interview with Anna Louise Strong, in June 1947, Liu Shaoqi explained that Mao's main contribution was "to transform Marxism from a European form to an Asian form. Marx and Lenin," he said, "were Europeans; they wrote in European languages about European histories and problems, seldom Asia or China. The basic principles of Marxism are undoubtedly adaptable to all countries, but to apply their general truth to concrete revolutionary practices in China is a difficult task. Mao Tse-tung is Chinese; he analyzes Chinese problems and guides the Chinese people in their struggle to victory. He uses Marxist-Leninist principles to explain Chinese history and the practical problems of China. He is the first that has succeeded in doing so. (...) Mao not only applied Marxism to new conditions, but gave it a new development. He created a Chinese or Asian form of Marxism."¹⁴⁴

Mao counterposed these national roots to the universalist claims of many European ideologues. He took this argument very far: the only concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form. Although its method is universal, living Marxism is always original. Later, with the rise of the cult of personality, Maoism, in turn, would be defined as sinified Marxism and the Marxism of our times: there was the founding father, Marx, then Lenin and the beginnings of the imperialist epoch, and now, for the contemporary epoch, Mao.

While Mao incorporated many elements taken from national history to his political thought, he did not evolve an original conceptual interpretation of the Chinese social formation. He did not

reopen the debate on the Asian mode of production and was content to give "a Chinese form" to European concepts such as feudalism, transcribed into the terminology designating imperial China, *fengjian*.¹⁴⁵

To be fair, one should remember that it is only recently that Marxist theoreticians have resumed the study of this very important question in systematic fashion.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, this area displays Mao's limits. Mao was a radical innovator in the field of orientation, not when it came to conceptualizing: the generalization of the term "semi-feudal" testifies to the existence of a major problem of substance (the reciprocal originality of European and Chinese history), but does not resolve it.

Mao's status as a philosopher or theoretician is a subject of heated

¹⁴⁵ This point is very important. *Fengjian* was translated by feudalism, and vice-versa. This fostered a permanent misunderstanding between Westerners (who filled the term with its European content) and Chinese (who filled it with a different reality). The theme of the Asian mode of production is now being reintroduced into Marxist research in China; see Wu Dakun. "The Asiatic Mode of Production in History as Viewed by Political Economy in Its Broad Sense." in Su Shaozi et al.. *Marxism in China*, Nottingham: Spokesman. 1983. pp. 53-77. This little book includes four contemporary Chinese texts on Marxist research, the Asian mode of production, humanism and Rosa Luxemburg, and gives an idea of the recent redevelopment of theory in People's China.

¹⁴⁶ See chapter 3. volume 1. of this study. When Mao called for the sinification of Marxism, the late writings of Marx on the question were forgotten, along with the original contribution of the Russian populist theoreticians. Trotsky's was obliterated by Stalinism. This contribution concerns mainly the way in which he integrates the dialectic of uneven and combined development in the imperialist epoch and in which he uses this method to approach the Russian social formation and revolutionary process as a whole. However, he does not innovate in the analysis of social classes in backward countries, particularly not with respect to the peasantry. Lenin's contribution in this respect is considerable but incomplete: Lenin only discovered a new promising approach at the end of his life (see his article "On Cooperation" (January 4, 1923). *Collected Works*, vol. 33. pp.467-475.

¹⁴³ The specificity of Chinese history springs in part from the role of the tradition of a centralized state, perhaps unique from the standpoint of its duration.

¹⁴⁴ Anna Louise Strong. "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung." *Amerasia*. June 1947. pp. 161-162.

controversy.¹⁴⁷ During the period considered, he produced some important methodological works: *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*.¹⁴⁸ In my opinion, these documents, although not exceptional, display genuine dialectical qualities, particularly if one takes into account the context.¹⁴⁹ At the time, mechanical materialism was dominant in the circles of the Communist International. Mao used Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, part of which had been translated into Chinese, but he was cut off from later developments such as Gramsci and Lu-kacs. He drew on the Chinese dialectical tradition.¹⁵⁰ But the status of philosophy in Chinese culture, more concerned with immediate usefulness, is not the same as its status in Western culture, which is more conceptual; this has led Francis Soo to state that Mao does not deserve the title of Philosopher for westerners, but does for the Chinese (although, even there, they would consider him a quite peculiar philosopher since he was not content merely to comment on the Classics).¹⁵¹

The movement for the sinification of Marxism thus corresponded to an actual need: to adapt ideological references to a practice and orientation that broke with the "canons" of official international orthodoxy. The campaigns against dogmatism and for "sinification" followed by the rectification movement stood in the continuity of the factional struggle launched ten years earlier against the carrier of the Dogma, Wang Ming. The "28 Bolsheviks" were ridiculed on the ideological plane after being defeated on the political plane. They lost

the authority that Knowledge acquired in the USSR previously conferred. Faction members kept their seats on the Central Committee but were officially condemned. In a resolution of April 20, 1945, the CC criticized "a group of party members who did not have the experience of practical revolutionary struggle and who had committed ultra-left errors of a dogmatic type" and "who were led by Comrade Chen Shaoyu (Wang Ming)." They had "committed errors of a dogmatic type and draped themselves in the toga of 'theoreticians' of Marxism-Leninism..." This erroneous line "had the deepest influence on our Party and, for that reason, was most deadly."¹⁵²

The attack on Wang Ming implied a criticism of Stalin.¹⁵³ But this did not

¹⁵² Mao. "Décision sur certaines questions de l'histoire de notre Parti (Adoptée le 20 avril 1945 par la 7e assemblée plénière élargie du Comité central du PCC élu au VIe Congrès)," (*Euvres Choisies*, vol. 4.1941-1945. Paris: Editions sociales. 1959. pp. 215 and 224. This resolution was not reproduced in subsequent editions of the *EC*. It presents a very factional history of the CCP. It criticizes by name those who "noisily called themselves 'one hundred per cent Bolsheviks'" and continued to be official members of the CC. such as Bo Gu (Po Kéou). As for Wang Ming (Tchen Chao-yuêi or Ouang Ming in the transcription of the Editions sociales). he was denounced several times. Liu Shaoqi appeared as the party's Number Two in this resolution.

¹⁵³ Mao linked the "28 Bolsheviks" to Moscow explicitly on more than one occasion. In April 1956. for instance. Mao recounted what had not been written into the 1945 resolution. He noted the faction was tied to the Communist International. "The resolutions of the Fourth Plenum [that of 1931. when the "28 Bolsheviks" seized power] were written by Russians and were imposed on us. particularly the Wang Ming line." Later, "during the anti-Japanese resistance, there were also rightist tendencies." once again connected in part to Wang Ming (the "second Wang Ming line") ("Intervention lors de la Conférence élargie du Bureau politique du Comité central." April 1956. Paris: Editions du Cerf. 1975. p. 163). In his "Talks at the Chengtu Conference." in March 1958. Mao recalled that: "The Chinese 'left' opportunists had nearly all been influenced while in the Soviet Union," and "what is more." at a time when "Stalin's rule was beginning to be consolidated." Dogmatism developed when "Mif's influence was the greater." (Mao. "Talks at the Cheng-tu

¹⁴⁷ Most Western Marxist theoreticians consider him a poor philosopher, but there are some exceptions (notably the Frenchman Althusser).

¹⁴⁸ Both are published in *SW*, vol. 1.

¹⁴⁹ See Roland Lew. "Maoism. Stalinism and the Chinese Revolution." Tariq Ali. ed., *The Stalinist Legacy*, London: Penguin. 1984. pp. 287-294.

¹⁵⁰ See for instance J.W.Freiberg, "The Dialectic in China: Maoist and Daoist," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 9, n°1, January-March 1977.

¹⁵¹ Francis Y. K. Soo. *Mao Tse-tung's Theory of Dialectic*, D. Reidel Pub.. "Sovietica," 1981. pp. 134-136. See also Joseph Needham. *Within the Four Seas. The Dialogue of East and West*. London: Allen&Unwin. 1969.

stop Mao from singing the praises of the Kremlin master. In December 1939, he delivered an oration for Stalin's sixtieth birthday in which one can detect a touch of irony under the exaggerated homage. "Comrade Stalin is the leader of the world revolution. (...) As you know, Marx is dead, and Engels and Lenin too are dead. If we did not have a Stalin, who would give the orders? This is indeed a fortunate circumstance."¹⁵⁴

"If we did not have a Stalin, who would give the orders?" Here is a sentence that speaks volumes about what the Comintern had become. Gone were the days when the Comintern had a life of its own, when a Henk Sneevliet could argue fiercely against the decisions of Soviet diplomacy.¹⁵⁵ The Comintern had become a mere instrument of the Kremlin. And when it became a bother, Moscow just decided to dissolve it, on May 13, 1943. Mao greeted this dissolution with obvious relief. He stated: "the task of the hour is to strengthen the national Communist Parties in each country; we therefore no longer need this international leading nucleus." The situation had become so complex and fluid that "the Communist International, so far removed from the real struggles of each country," was no longer suitable. "The leading cadres of the Communist Parties of each country had grown up and therefore reached political maturity." The Chinese CP in particular had demonstrated its capacities since 1935 (the Zunyi conference...). "The dissolution of the Communist International [aims to]

strengthen [the CP] in order that it gain in each country a greater national reality."¹⁵⁶

The resolution adopted on this topic by the Central Committee of the CCP declared unambiguously that "beginning today, the Chinese Communist Party is released from the obligations imposed by the statutes of the Communist International and by the resolutions of its different congresses." Indeed, "the national liberation war (...) requires that the Communist Parties of all countries be independent to settle all problems, taking into account the national particularities and historical conditions of each country..."¹⁵⁷

The movement for the sinification of Marxism therefore had more than one function: asserting the legitimacy of a "Chinese-style" Marxism, emphasizing the need for a creative application of the Marxist method, consolidating the political victory over the Wang Ming faction on the ideological plane, reducing Stalin's authority, giving the CCP the possibility to guarantee its autonomy from Moscow on all terrains... But "sinification" was also the assertion of a rising nationalism that of the Han, this "great people of 450 million" with its multi-millennial history) and the beginning of the Mao personality cult.

The Mao cult had roots of its own, but one is dealing here with one of the most pernicious aspects of Stalinist influence over the world Communist movement. The bureaucratic power of the Moscow Center had created the Stalin cult to better impose its authority. Its factional practices and conceptions were implanted into every subordinate party. Resistance to the Stalinist take-

Conference" (March 1958). *SW*. vol. 4. p. 97.

¹⁵⁴ Mao. "Stalin is our commander" (December 21, 1939). in Schram, *The Political...* p. 427.

¹⁵⁵ Although he was the first to advocate the CCP's entry in the Guomindang. Sneevliet violently opposed the Soviet decision, beginning in 1923. to send massive material (and especially military) aid to Sun Yatsen's party. He was worried by the militaristic tendencies already evident in the Guomindang. See the interesting article by Tony Saich and Fritjof Tichelman, "Henk Sneevliet: A Dutch Revolutionary on the World Stage," *The Journal of Communist Studies*, vol. 1. n°2. June 1985. p. 183. A biography of Henk Sneevliet by F. Tichelman is due to be published shortly by La Brèche. Paris.

¹⁵⁶ "Rapport détaillé du camarade Mao Tse-toung sur les questions posées par la dissolution de l'Internationale communiste." May 23, 1943, in Alain Roux. "Le Parti communiste chinois et la dissolution de l'IC." *Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*. n°22. third quarter 1977. pp. 58-60. For Stalin, as subsequent events would soon demonstrate, the dissolution of the Comintern implied in no way the recognition of the independence of the national parties.

¹⁵⁷ *Idem*. pp. 64-65. Both texts were published at the time in the newspaper *Liberation*. Roux provides a complete translation.

over had to adapt to these methods. An alternative charismatic figure was created to assert and embody national legitimacy. The personality cult, an incredible degradation of Communist ideals, although not universal, became the norm.

The Mao cult was made official at the Seventh Congress of the CCP, in May 1945: Stalin's name was removed from the statutes, and Mao Zedong Thought introduced.¹⁵⁸ Liu Shaoqi, the party's Number Two, was the high priest of this new cult whose liturgy he intoned mixing substantive remarks (about the modes of penetration of Marxism in China) and adulation: "Mao Zedong Thought is a new development of Marxism in the national-democratic revolution of the present epoch in the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries. It is an admirable model for the nationalization of Marxism. (...) As a disciple of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, what Mao Zedong did was precisely to unite Marxist theory with the practice of the Chinese revolution to give birth to Chinese Communism: Mao Zedong Thought (...) which will constitute in addition a great and useful contribution to the liberation of the people in all the nations of the East. (...) Mao Zedong Thought, from his conception of the Universe to his system of work, is (...) the systematic sinification of Marxism, the transformation of Marxism from its European form to its Chinese form. (...) This constitutes one of the great exploits in the history of the world Marxist movement, it is an unprecedented extension of Marxism, the best of truths, to a nation of 450 million people. This deserves our very special recognition. Our comrade Mao Zedong is not just the greatest revolutionary and the greatest statesman in the history of China, he is

¹⁵⁸ In French, I chose the term "Thought of Mao Zedong" which is the translation used by Schram and in the (*Euvres choisies* of Liu Shaoqi published in Peking. Various Maoists have explained that one should read the formula as "Mao Zedong Thought" (not "of Mao Zedong" in the collective sense of Maoism (as there is Leninism). Their argument would be more convincing ... if there had not been the cult of personality—in Mao's lifetime!

also its greatest theoretician and scientist..."¹⁵⁹

The campaign of denunciation of dogmas gave birth to a new Dogma. The CCP rejected Moscow's authority, asserted its profoundly national character and began to postulate to the role of Guide of the East. Mao had said that the "principles" of Marxism "can all be summed up in one sentence: 'To rebel is justified.'"¹⁶⁰ But it was not a good idea to try and rebel against his cult...

The peasant question

The balance sheet of the CCP's rural work is remarkable. It was the first Communist Party, closely followed by its Vietnamese cousin, to sink massive roots in the rural world and organize the peasant movement so successfully. For this massive organization of the peasantry, the CCP had to be armed. The "mass line" prepared activists of urban origin to adopt a way of life that was rudimentary and crude and culturally alien to the world of the coastal metropolises. One had to learn to speak the language of the village, to respect its customs, to recognize its symbols. One had to adapt to a new mental universe.

The Chinese penetrated the village community and succeeded where the Russians had failed. Lenin gave great importance to the land question and performed some genuinely pioneering political work. The Bolsheviks supported the rural uprising of 1917 on the basis of the peasants' own demands, changing their own program against the advice of more "orthodox" Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg. They forged a worker-soldier-peasant alliance that was essential to victory. But they were not able to build a widespread, solid

¹⁵⁹ Liu, "Sur le parti" in Carrère d'Encausse and Schram, pp. 362-364. A part of this report was published as "On the Party" (May 14, 1945), Report on the Revision of the Party Constitution delivered at the Seventh National Congress, *SW*, pp. 314-364. Also published separately by Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1950.

¹⁶⁰ "Stalin is our commander," pp. 427-428. Is it by chance that Mao reminds his audience of this principle precisely in this article?

Communist village organization before the seizure of power. Maoism innovated. It did not ally with the peasantry from an urban base, but actually structured the rural mobilization. It became the spokesperson for peasant demands, taking over the terrain which, in Russia, had been traditionally occupied by the Socialist Revolutionaries and only taken over by the Bolsheviks suddenly in 1917.

In China, neither serfdom nor the juridically subordinate status of the peasant corresponding to it, nor the large feudal manor, ever had the same reality as in Tsarist Russia. Nor did a plantation economy develop as it did in Malaysia. Agrobusiness, the green revolution, the import-export market had not yet penetrated as deeply as it has today in so many dependent countries. The situation varied from the more traditional north to the south where the influence of modern cities was greater and the relations between the urban bourgeoisie, land ownership and trade, tighter. On the whole though, Chinese agriculture was, like the Russian, above all a genuine peasant agriculture, family farming in which labor played a far more important role than capital. The class contradictions between peasants on the one hand, and gentry, rural notables and landowners on the other, were getting sharper. We noted earlier that the CCP had dwelt extensively on the analysis of the stratification inside the peasantry.¹⁶¹ The struggle for land and goods, against usury and debts, was not only directed against outsiders to the community, or even the richest people within the village, but often took the form of a struggle inside the peasantry itself which divided into rich, middle, poor and landless peasants.¹⁶²

The Chinese experience renewed the Russian experience and provided similar lessons. Given the nature of peasant demands (which determined concrete tasks) the early development of

class conflicts within the peasantry did not imply the immediate development of a socialist dynamic. The central place of democratic struggles in this sort of revolution was confirmed.¹⁶³

The need to deepen the understanding of the peasant question is sorely evident here. In China as in Russia, peasant reality flew in the face of many preconceived notions: the peasantry did not disappear and did not turn against the socialist power.¹⁶⁴ While failing to play an independent historical role, it nevertheless refused to simply "decompose." It struck a lasting alliance with the revolutionary regime. It emerged at once as individualistic, conservative, and open to modernizing, collectivist and socialist endeavors. The Chinese experience fostered a whole new debate on the factors of cohesion and differentiation among the peasantry, on its narrowly family or community approach, on its backward or forward outlook.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Democratic demands include social questions, like land distribution, not just political questions, like rights and freedom.

¹⁶⁴ According to traditional Marxist analysis, the peasantry was supposed to decompose rapidly into a rural bourgeoisie on the one hand and a proletariat on the other. As such, it was expected to oppose the revolutionary regime as soon as the first steps of the socialist stage were implemented. Bolshevik policy therefore aimed at forging a temporary alliance with it and facilitating internal cleavages in

¹⁶⁵ . It should be made clear that the debate on the agrarian question and the evolution of contemporary rural structures in dependent countries cannot be reduced to the debate on the peasantry. I have not yet satisfactorily assimilated the arguments of these fundamental debates. There is an abundant literature on the peasantry, of which the following deserve special notice: Teodor Shanin, *Roots of Otherness*, (already cited); "Measuring Peasant Capitalism, The Operationalization of Concepts of Political Economy: Russia's 1920s-India's 1970s." in E. H. Hobsbawm et al., *Peasant in History*. Oxford University Press. 1980; Samuel Pop-kin, *The Rational Peasant. The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*, University of California Press. 1979; James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant. Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, Yale University Press. 1976; Eric Wolf, *Peasants*. Foundations of Modern Anthropology Series. 1966. and his classical *Peasant Wars of the*

¹⁶¹ See the end of chapter 2, volume 1, of this study.

¹⁶² This raises difficult problems with respect to the social united front. See previous chapter.

The revolutionary administration and territorial dual power: *between revolution and conservatism*

Dual power emerged in a territorial form. A revolutionary administration was created. Cut off from the centers of the national economy, this administrative power was not properly speaking the embryo of a state, a miniature version of what it would be after the victory—in fact, its isolation was to have quite a few consequences after victory. The corps of functionaries of the liberated zones was to play a significant role in the creation of the Communist regime. It had developed without direct links with the urban classes, including the working class. The substitutionist relationship of the CCP apparatus and Red Army toward the proletariat, was strengthened by this particular process of struggle for power.

The village milieu, despite its revolutionary potential, remained quite conservative; this was particularly true in Yan'an which sheltered the central Communist administration, where thousands of new urban activists, workers, students and intellectuals gathered. Shaanxi was not Jiangxi. It was a rural, distant, impoverished and only slightly populated province. The implementation of Communist policy was affected by this environment, particularly in relation to the struggle for women's liberation.

This was an area where one could find many contrasts in time and space in revolutionary China of the 1930s and 1940s. In the Jiangxi Soviet Republic, a very radical law on marriage was adopted. Mao waged a genuine fight for equality in sexual relations, which led him to clash with traditional morality. He made sexuality—and freedom for women and men to look for a mate, a partner, outside of arranged marriages—into a weapon in the revolutionary

struggle. He actively defended the right to divorce against stubborn objections.

With the spread of the struggle to the north, women were mobilized. Female associations of the CCP were established. Solidarity among wives developed; "speak bitterness" meetings allowed the assertion of a collective consciousness of their condition. Battered wives revolted. In historical perspective, it is clear that women's emancipation was a major component of the fight for modernization, national liberation and social revolution in China. Already, the educated reformers of the late Manchu dynasty had challenged the existing status of women. The popular uprising of the Taipings had advocated equality of the sexes and many lower-class women had participated actively in its dynamic phase. Later, the republican revolution contributed to changing the condition of bourgeois women. The May Fourth Movement undermined the legitimacy of Confucianism which straitjacketed daughters and wives in a web of stringent duties. Industrialization completely changed the situation of women workers by enabling them to escape the village structures. With the Third Chinese revolution, the struggle of women spread to the countryside and deepened.

Chinese history highlights the portentous role that women play in modern revolutions when they rise massively for their emancipation. But it also shows the resilience of the social and cultural obstacles to this advance. In Yan'an itself, the movement got bogged down. Although the very radical 1934 Law on marriage was republished, it was not enforced. Hua Chang-ming notes that in this region of the country, marriage was mainly a financial transaction. The poor peasant who had painstakingly saved enough to buy a wife, was not about to let her get away from him. The right to divorce did not win acceptance. Age limits were not respected. The Communist leadership sounded the retreat, and abandoned the theme of freedom of marriage for the less consequential one of "family harmony," which was to benefit wives.

The revolutionary political and administrative apparatus backslid all the

Twentieth Century. New York: Harper & Row; Cohen, Gutkind, Brazier, eds., *Peasants and Proletarians. The Struggle of ThirdWorldWorkers*. Monthly Review Press. 1979.

more easily on this issue as it got bigger and because it included few women. Women became the privilege of cadres—cadres who did not necessarily respect the principles of equality within the couple and used their political power to bolster their male power.¹⁶⁶ Not before 1950 would a new Law on marriage be decreed and the fight against tradition resume along with a further deepening of the social revolution in the cities and country. Women's condition has changed in the People's Republic on the labor, family and ideological fronts; but advances are constantly being challenged by the "old man," the weight of "feudal customs," backwardness and bureaucracy.¹⁶⁷

Stalinism and "national communisms"

Maoism emerged as a full-fledged distinct current at the Seventh Congress of the CCP. Neither by its origins, doctrine or practice could it be reduced to Stalinism;¹⁶⁸ Stalinism formed in a bureaucratic counter-revolution in a transitional society. Maoism formed in the revolutionary struggle for power in a semi-colonial society. We noted on several occasions the influence of

¹⁶⁶ There are many examples of this sort of behavior, including relating to Mao. Nevertheless, if one takes into account the historical and conjunctural con-text, it is not certain that the Maoist cadres were any more conservative in this field than contemporary revolutionary activists in the Western world...

¹⁶⁷ See among others Hua Chang-ming. *La condition féminine et les communistes chinois en action. Yan'an 1935-1946*. Paris: Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur la Chine contemporaine et Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. 1981; Delia Davin. *Women-Work. Women and Party in Revolutionary China*. Routledge&Kegan Paul. 1978; Elizabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China*. Routledge&Kegan Paul. 1978. See also the already cited reports by Bel-den and Hinton, as well as Isabel and David Crook. *Revolution in a Chinese Vil-lage: Ten Mile Inn*. Routledge&Kegan Paul. 1959.

¹⁶⁸ This is why I believe it is not appropriate to call the CCP "Stalinist". even in the ideological sense. The CCP was precisely... Maoist.

Stalinism on the CCP. But the ideological roots of Maoism were diverse; they included the May Fourth tradition and its cultural breadth, and the early contribution of the Communist International and of Chinese sources whose importance cannot be underestimated.

The CCP became Maoist by freeing itself from the political and organizational subordination imposed by the Kremlin masters. Nevertheless, it did not emerge as the revolutionary Marxist antithesis of Stalinism. Maoism emerged both within the Stalinized world Communist movement and against Moscow's policy. The CCP criticized the Stalinist road of development¹⁶⁹ but did not integrate key lessons of the Russian experience into its initial doctrine. Maoists were keenly aware that once in power, a party ran the risk of "cutting itself off from the masses." They thought the "mass line" would help to overcome that danger, but they failed to determine its precise nature and therefore its real magnitude.¹⁷⁰

Within the world workers movement, the CCP's position remained ambivalent. It supported the principle of independence of the national parties, but sided with Stalin when the Yugoslavs were expelled from the Co-minform¹⁷¹, in 1948, on slanderous charges.¹⁷² The

¹⁶⁹ Jack Belden wrote: "I was often quite astonished while in the Liberated Areas to hear both Communists and non-Communists declare that the Soviet Union had made the peasant the serf of the state. Furthermore, the Chinese Communists were extremely critical of the violence of the Soviet land reform. 'We want to avoid that,' they would often say to me. 'Not only did the Russians make many mistakes, which we don't have to repeat, but also their basic programme may not be suited to China.'" (*China Shakes the World*, pp. 103-104.)

¹⁷⁰ Moral armament was the favored method of fighting bureaucratism. The role of political democracy in a socialist regime was basically unknown. Only in the mid-1950s, after the Hungarian and East German crises, did Mao deal with the specific problems of a transitional society (which cannot be reduced to the weight of the past and the pressure of imperialism).

¹⁷¹ The international network of CPs created after the dissolution of the Comintern.

¹⁷² The Yugoslav leader Dedijer wondered "how could the Chinese communists agree to that

CCP asserted its independence but made it clear it was willing to pay the price required to maintain its alliance with Moscow. Examined from an international standpoint, the Chinese positions appear contradictory. But seen in the Chinese context, the CCP is a coherent party-endowed in fact, with such remarkable coherence that it was able to pass all the tests to which it was subjected. It does not deserve the label of "centrist" in the sense of a political current that vacillates between reform and revolution, or between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism.

These two facets of Maoism reflect the weight of the historical constraints, both national and international, which prevailed in its formative years and deeply influenced the general course of the revolution. The CCP assimilated the conditions of the struggle in China and adapted to them. Its national roots were its strength but also imposed certain limits on its political evolution—this can be explained by the world context at the time.

Maoism was shaped at a time when Stalinism was triumphant. The history of the CCP illustrates the limits of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. Concerned mainly with events in Europe, the Soviet bureaucracy did not succeed in subjecting the Chinese party durably to its rule—a few other parties, such as the Vietnamese and Yugoslav, also escaped. But no one could escape its influence altogether. Its power derived from its control of the Soviet state and from the blackmail it could use against movements that vitally needed its aid, or its neutrality, in their fight against imperialism. The selfish nationalism of the Soviet bureaucracy aroused a nationalist resistance among the most well-rooted and militant sections of the Comintern.

disgraceful resolution directed not only against the Yugoslavs but against the principles upon which the Chinese revolution had developed and triumphed?" (Vladimir Dedijer. *The Battle Stalin Lost*. New York: Grosset, p. 103). The Yugoslavs paid the Chinese back in kind two years later, when they refused to condemn the US intervention in Korea, a typical imperialist intervention under cover of the UN flag.

The nefarious influence of Stalinism was particularly damaging at the time because the European workers movement was on the retreat. Nazism ruled in Germany, Franco was winning the civil war in Spain, the French popular front was mired in reformism. The world war was approaching. The peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial world could not count on rapid help from a proletarian revolution in any advanced capitalist country. The defeat of revolutionary struggles in the imperialist world had very deep and lasting consequences on the parties of the colonial and semi-colonial world.¹⁷³

Maoism, a revolutionary movement, was not Stalinism, but cannot be understood without it.¹⁷⁴ The victory of the Soviet bureaucracy dealt a death blow to internationalism. These were the circumstances in which what I call "national communisms", for lack of a better word, emerged.¹⁷⁵ These currents were shaped in a long struggle for power. They proved able to define the road to their revolution; their coherence was that of their own historical trajectory. But, despite their qualities,

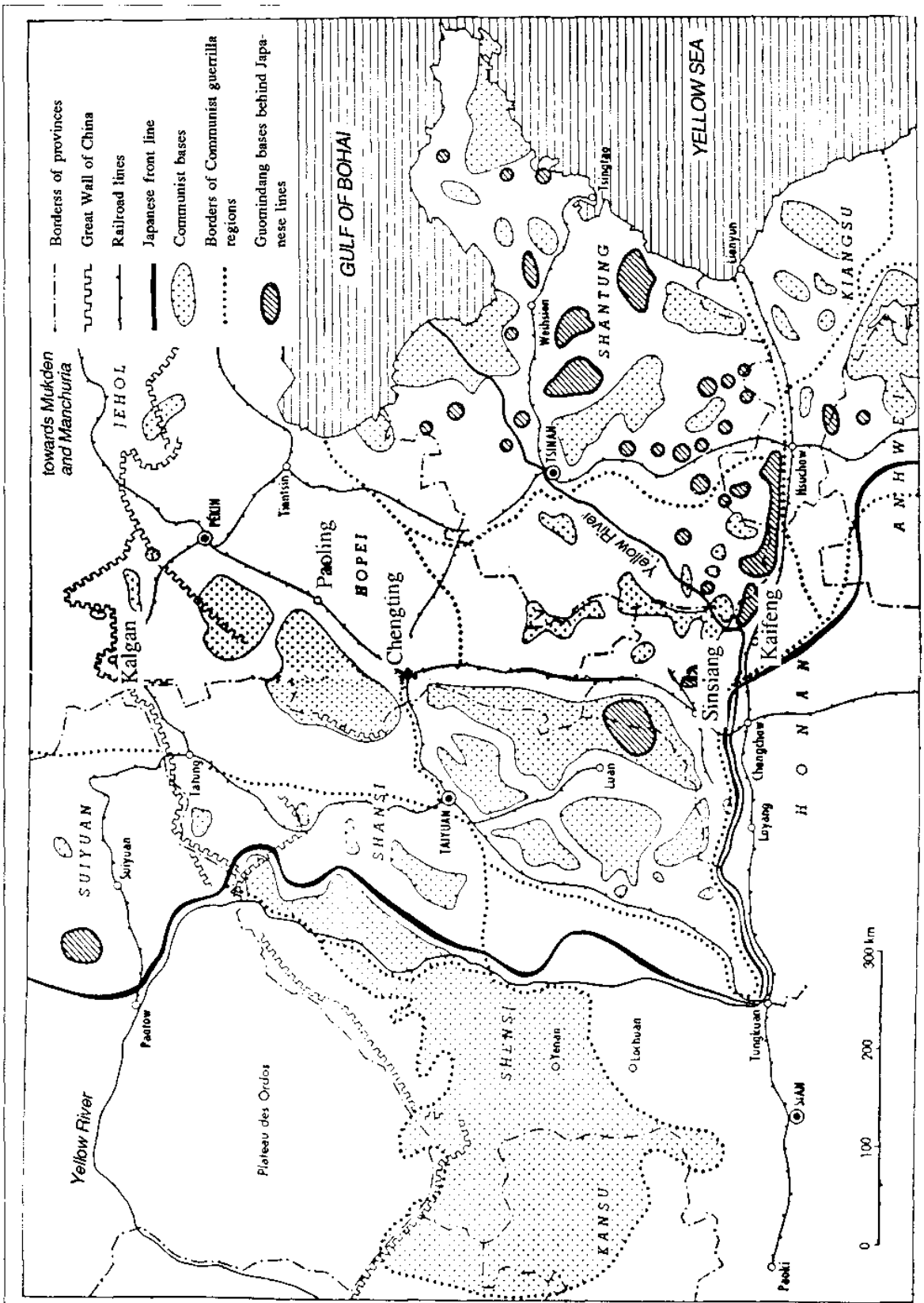
¹⁷³ Western activists "disappointed" by national liberation movements because their revolutions were not as pretty as hoped, should not forget this. Third World peoples and revolutionary movements pay a high price for battles lost in Europe (defeats which are largely due to the consequences of Stalinism.)

¹⁷⁴ The impact of Stalinism was so great that no contemporary revolutionary current can be understood without it. The roots of the Fourth International are precisely in the anti-bureaucratic struggle launched in the 1920s and 1930s in the USSR against the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian revolution.

¹⁷⁵ I put forward this notion in a debate on the Communist Parties and Stalinism in the review *Critique Communiste (Marx ou Crève)* in 1975-1976. See Michel Lequenne. "Sur le centrisme" (n°1. April-May 1975). Christian Leucate. "Sur la crise du stalinisme" (n°5. February -March 1976). Pierre Rousset. "Stalinisme, centrisme et 'communismes nationaux'" (n°6. April-May 1976). Roland Lew. "Marxisme en Occident, marxisme en Orient" and "Revolution en Asie et marxisme" (N°24. September 1978). I call attention particularly to the last article. which contains a full—and very interesting—critique of my 1975 book. *Le Parti communiste vietnamien*.

they remained dependent on a context shaped by Stalinist supremacy over the international workers movement. The sclerosis of Marxist research accentuated their empirical inclinations. Since relations between the various parties became more and more formal, it became more and more difficult to rise above the national horizon of each revolutionary experience.

The evolution of Maoism did not stop in 1945. It would soon be confronted to new tasks—those of the transitional society—and to a changing international context. But it had reached maturity at that point, and remained deeply marked by the conditions extant at the time of its formation.



Territorial dual power

Liberated areas of the Chinese Communist Party, Guomindang bases behind Japanese lines and territory occupied by the Japanese in northern China during the Sino-Japanese war [map from Jacques Guillermaz, Histoire du Parti communiste chinois (1921-1949), Paris: Payot, 1968]

Chapter 7 1945-1949

The conquest of power: national liberation, modernization and social revolution

The Sino-Japanese war played a far more important role in the defeat of the Japanese Empire in 1945 than indicated by most Western textbooks which focus mainly on the war of the US forces in the Pacific, the British counter-offensives in Southeast Asia, and Australia's resistance. The Communist success testifies to the magnitude of the fight waged for eight years on Chinese soil. As the war ended, the CCP controlled 19 liberated regions or about 10% of Chinese territory.¹⁷⁶ But the Japanese capitulation was precipitated by the nuclear holocaust and came before the Chinese general staffs could revamp their military plans. This triggered a race against the clock between the Communist Party and Guomindang, as both rushed to occupy as much territory and recover as many weapons as possible.

It all happened very fast. On August 6, the first atom bomb hit Hiroshima. On the 8, the USSR declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria.¹⁷⁷ On the 9, Mao called for a "general counter-offensive" to destroy Japanese forces, "seize their equipment and armament, and vigorously expand the liberated regions."¹⁷⁸ On the 14, Tokyo capitulated. The Allied Command ordered the Japanese troops stationed in China to surrender only to the Guomindang. The United States organized a gigantic air-lift to transfer Chiang's troops to the central and northern provinces posthaste and prevent

Communist forces from conquering the main urban centers. The marines intervened to seize control of communication hubs. With this help, the Guomindang was able to recover the bulk of Japanese war booty.

But the CCP was able to enlarge substantially the surface of the liberated areas. It redeployed its forces and concentrated new assets in Manchuria which the Soviets occupied until April 1946.¹⁷⁹ Moscow was the recipient of the Japanese surrender and carried away the industrial equipment of this region where Japan had invested heavily. It let the Guomindang take over the large cities. But the CCP took advantage of the situation to sink more solid roots. This time, it was able to recover a part of the Japanese weapons.

At the same time as this race against the clock was going on, peace negotiations began between the two parties. They failed and a civil war opened. Four years after the capitulation of Japan, the People's Republic was founded. The victory of the Chinese revolution was a genuine historical test that made it possible to verify, clarify and expand the analyses and lessons of thirty years of struggle.

Negotiations and civil war: countering Yalta

Seen in its proper perspective, the civil war was the continuation of the national defense war: it was the logical

¹⁷⁶ According to Communist sources, the liberated areas included 95 million inhabitants; the CP organized an army of 910 000 people, a militia of 2.22 million, and self-defense units totaling 10 million. See James P. Harrison, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party 1921 -1972, The Long March to Power*, London: MacMillan, 1973, p. 372.

¹⁷⁷ In line with the Yalta agreements signed February 11, 1945. At the Yalta conference, the world was divided into "zones of influence" by the United States, Britain and the USSR.

¹⁷⁸ Mao, *The Last Round with the Japanese Invaders* (August 9, 1945), SW, vol. III, p. 289.

¹⁷⁹ According to John Gittings, 100 000 troops were sent to reinforce Manchuria (where guerrillas were already operating) by order of General Zhu De, on August 11, 1945. The principle of this decision had already been adopted one year earlier and did not depend on Soviet approval. The Chinese Communists complained on more than one occasion that they had not received the aid which they hoped to get from Moscow in Manchuria. *The World and China, 1922-1972*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1974, pp. 148-150.

outcome of the fundamental political conflict evident throughout the experience of the anti-Japanese united front. Nevertheless, it was preceded by intense negotiations. There is nothing paradoxical in this fact. Negotiations are required as a necessary moment of war. They were required then for military and political, and national and international reasons.

◆ **The military situation:** the CCP was conscious of the real relationship of forces. The Generalissimo's army included 4 million troops and 199 operational divisions, was equipped with excellent weapons, enjoyed American logistical support and leadership, and had exclusive control of the air. It was a fearsome adversary. But Chiang was paying the price of his previous policy; his forces were concentrated in the southwest of the country. Despite the airlift and maritime transport offered by Washington, he needed time before he could move onto the initiative on a national scale again. His first attacks on liberated areas were failures!¹⁸⁰

◆ **On the international plane,** the Communist Party was isolated. Chiang Kai-shek's government had consolidated its position during the war through a series of conferences like the Cairo conference and the Yalta negotiations among the Great Powers. He alone enjoyed official recognition, including from the USSR.¹⁸¹ Moscow was acting irresolutely in Manchuria—in line with its own interests and not those of the CCP—but fundamentally abiding by the spirit of the Yalta accords: China was to be part of the Western zone of influence. Washington promised its support to the "nationalist" regime.¹⁸² But the United States could not get involved in a new war in China; they did not have the political means to do so.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ In October 1945, several divisions of Chiang's army were destroyed by Communist forces in southeastern Shaanxi and Honan.

¹⁸¹ A new bitter experience for the CCP occurred when the USSR signed a treaty with the Chiang Kai-shek government recognizing its sovereignty over the entire territory, on August 14, 1945.

¹⁸² See among others John Gittings, chapters 5 & 6. ¹⁸³ Mao understood that the development of the atom bomb did not fundamentally alter this state of affairs and fought the pessimism that took hold of

◆ **On the national plane,** the political climate was not favorable to civil war. The population yearned for peace. The Chiang Kai-shek government still had some real authority. The theme of a national union for reconstruction of the country was popular. Neither the Guomindang leadership nor the CCP leadership had any illusions; a propaganda war raged throughout the negotiations period. But the party responsible for a return to the state of war risked losing the support of a notable section of the population.

The CCP documents of that period mention all these factors.¹⁸⁴ Communist policy probably contained an alternative: testing the possibilities for a temporary peace but preparing for a resumption of the fighting. Mao Zedong polemicized violently against Chiang Kai-shek and warned once again against a mistake similar to that committed in 1927: the concessions were designed to unmask the true nature of Guomindang policy and to gain the political initiative, the sympathy of wavering elements, a legal status and a situation of peace.¹⁸⁵ "We must recognize difficulties (. . .). It must not be imagined that one fine

some quarters.

¹⁸⁴ Such as the report presented to the North China Bureau between the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty and Mao's departure for Chungqing (August 28), which Van Slyke summarizes. The authors of this document noted that a return to civil war was likely, but that a peaceful development remained possible for three reasons: the people's longing for peace, the fact that neither the United States nor the USSR wanted a civil war at that point, and the problems facing Chiang Kai-shek which could lead him to make concessions. The CCP itself, the document noted, was experiencing some difficulties. It could not conquer the large cities because Chiang's forces were too well armed and "the Soviet Union, because of the obligation to carry out the terms of the [Sino-Soviet] treaty, cannot help us directly." The reporter complained that "we do not understand actual Russian policy." See *Enemies and Friends...*, pp. 186-188.

¹⁸⁵ See Mao, *The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan* and "Chiang Kai-shek Is Provoking Civil War" (August 13, 1945), *SW*, vol. IV, pp. 11-26 and 27-31.

morning all the reactionaries will go down on their knees of their own accord. In a word, while the prospects are bright, the road has twists and turns."¹⁸⁶

As the war ended, the relationship of forces had reached an unstable equilibrium. The United States and the USSR, the CCP and the Guomindang neither wanted nor could move to a general showdown. The equilibrium was upset after a few months; the whole country slid into civil war. This situation meant that negotiations had an important role to play. For a time, the central field of confrontation was the battle for peace.

A first round of negotiations took place in August and September 1945 under the aegis of General Hurley, of the US army; they resumed under the auspices of General Marshall. Their stated purpose was to create the conditions necessary for the establishment of a coalition government. A Consultative Political Conference convened in January 1946. Five resolutions were adopted calling for a complete overhaul of existing institutions and making a cease-fire possible. Nevertheless, as noted by Van Slyke, the conference "achieved impressive results on paper, but neither party limited its action in the light of these results, or had much confidence in the other's good faith. (...) Chiang Kai-shek was determined to extend his political and military control over the whole of China. (...) The CCP spoke and acted as a sovereign power, entitled to full equality with the KMT. (...) The CCP sought a political solution where it was

¹⁸⁶ Mao, "On the Chungking Negotiations" (October 17, 1945), *SW*, IV, p. 60. In "On Peace Negotiations with the Kuomintang—Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" (August 26, 1945), Mao noted that "at present the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain all disapprove of civil war in China," but further on, he wrote that "if the Kuomintang still wants to launch a civil war after our Party has taken the above steps, it will put itself in the wrong in the eyes of the whole nation and the whole world, and our Party will be justified in waging a war of self-defence to crush its attacks." *Idem*, pp. 48-49.

weak, while simultaneously consolidating and expanding its hold on territories where it was able to do so."¹⁸⁷ A few months were enough to turn the documents of the Consultative Political Conference into mere scraps of paper. As early as March and April, a civil war seemed unavoidable.¹⁸⁸ By summer 1946, it had become general. The Guomindang launched a series of major offensives. In July, 2 million troops attacked the large Communist bases in the center and north. In March 1947, Chiang Kai-shek's army occupied Yan'an. Nevertheless, thanks to their mobility, the Communists were able to preserve their strength and progressively exhaust that of their adversary.

Hardly one year after the general resumption of the civil war, the balance of forces changed. The People's Liberation Army—its new name since July 1946—launched counter-offensives in Manchuria, under Lin Biao, and in the central plain, under Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi. By late 1948-early 1949, the military debacle of the Guomindang began. It was defeated in Manchuria and in the battle of Huai-Huai in central China, as well as in the north; the surrender of the Peking garrison was obtained in January. Things then moved very quickly. The northwest was liberated under Peng Dehuai. Shan-ghai was taken in May, Canton in October, Nanning, on the border with Vietnam, in December. The Guomindang withdrew to the island of Taiwan.

China changed camps: this was

¹⁸⁷ Van Slyke, p. 187. In a secret document of April 1946, while recognizing the USSR's right to accept compromises, Mao explicitly rejected the implications of the Yalta conference for China: "Such [international] compromise does not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions. The principle of the reactionary forces in dealing with the democratic forces of the people is definitely to destroy all they can and to prepare to destroy later whatever they cannot destroy now. Face to face with this situation, the democratic forces of the people should likewise apply the same principle to the reactionary forces." *Idem*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁸⁸ *Idem*, p. 189.

one of the great failures of the Yalta conference. The victory of the revolution had not been wanted by Moscow which believed it neither desirable nor possible. Both Stalin and Mao understood this and both later agreed—at least on the one point—that this had been the case; both admitted so much in talks given later, Stalin in 1948, and Mao in 1962.¹⁸⁹ Dedijer states in his memoirs that Stalin re-counted in February 1948 the meetings with the Chinese delegation, during which he had noted that "conditions were not ripe for an uprising in China and that [the Chinese Communists] should seek a modus vivendi with Chiang Kai-shek and disband their army. The Chinese Communists agreed with us, their Soviet comrades, but when they went back to China they did just the opposite. They rallied their forces, organized their armies, and now they are beating Chiang Kai-shek."¹⁹⁰

When the polemic with Khrushchev erupted, Mao reviewed the history of Sino-Soviet relations before a plenum of the CCP Central Committee held in 1962. "We spent the whole of 1960 fighting Krushchev. (...) But in fact the roots [of this conflict] lie deep in the past, in things which happened very long ago. They did not permit China to make revolution: that was in 1945. Stalin wanted to prevent China from making revolution, saying that we should not have civil war and should cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said. The revolution was victorious. After the victory of the revolution, he next suspected China of being a Yugoslavia, and that I would become a second Tito. Later when I went to Moscow to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, we had to go through another struggle."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ The two quotes have often been put together, for instance by James Harrison, pp. 384-385.

¹⁹⁰ Dedijer, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

¹⁹¹ Mao, "Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee" (September 24, 1962), in Schram, ed., *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed-Talks and Let-ters 1956-1971*, p. 191.

* * *

The victory of the Third Chinese Revolution confirmed three points in our analysis of Maoism:

❖ The **strategic horizon** of Maoism was definitely **the struggle for power** and not compromise.¹⁹²

❖ The victory followed a long process of **internal conflict** within the party based on the **balance sheet of the Great revolution** of 1924-1927.¹⁹³

❖ This is precisely why Maoism won in a fight **against the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy**.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² In a private letter of October 19, 1984, Aldo Bronzo reproached me with underestimating the "stagist" aspect of the Maoist outlook in the 1930s and 1940s (see also his book, *I Comunisti in Cina*, Milano: Nuove Edizioni Internazionali, 1983). The discussion point raised by Bronzo is interesting. I noted in the previous chapter the relative indeterminateness of Mao's perspective, but it is true that I believe it was not as great as Bronzo does. What seems to me essential is that the struggle was conceived as a revolutionary struggle for power. This was the perspective in which organizational, political, social and military forces were accumulated; this is what explains that the empirical grasp of the situation was fruitful and the successive readjustments of the line made in time.

¹⁹³ In this regard, it is noteworthy that Zhou Enlai presented a report to the Party central school in Yan'an, in 1944, which followed "six months" of analysis of "the struggle between two lines" on the occasion of "a study of the documents of the period of the Great Revolution." Although factional and glossing over the role of Stalin, the report is interesting; in it, Zhou reviews the history of the CCP with respect to its analysis of the character of the revolution from the standpoint of its tasks, motor forces, and leadership. He recalls the conception developed by Mao in 1939 that "the Chinese revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism waged by the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat." See Zhou, "On the Sixth Congress of the Party" (March 3 and 4, 1944), and "'On the United Front" (April 30, 1945), *SW*, vol. I, pp. 177-210 and 213-244.

¹⁹⁴ The victory of 1949 cannot be explained by a change of policy in Moscow due to the Cold War between the USSR and USA. Such an explanation cannot account for the continuity of the struggles and the real chronological sequences in China itself, for the political content of the debates over orientation inside the CCP, for the active role

But a sharp break was avoided. Peking decided to "lean to one side only" on the international arena and maintain its alliance with Moscow. The CCP hoped that it would obtain material aid and a development model from its Soviet big brother, a country that was already quite industrialized compared to China. Stalin, a realist, adjusted to the accomplished fact. But, as Mao noted in 1962, the political conflict that emerged in the years of revolutionary struggle foreshadowed that which would break out in the 1950s and end with the schism of 1960.

The process of permanent revolution

The People's Republic was born on October 1, 1949. Victory came quickly, more quickly than the CCP leaders had hoped. It concluded a long process of revolutionary maturation: **it was a social and political victory, before being a military victory.** The impressive growth of Communist forces during the civil war testified to that. The party membership numbered 1.35 million in 1946; 3.1 million in 1948; 4.5 million towards the end of 1949; 5.8 million in 1950. As for the PLA it jumped from 1.277 million in June 1949 to 2.8 million in June 1948, to 5 million in 1950.¹⁹⁵

The truly revolutionary character of the civil war was embodied in the agrarian struggles, the collapse of the Guomindang's urban power base, and the nature of the regime born in the victory.

• the agrarian revolution

During the "third civil war," the CCP radicalized its land policy until 1947, then moderated it. Depending on the time and place, the party either seemed outflanked by the spontaneous mobilizations of poor peasants who set

played by the Maoist leadership over a long period in organizing the struggle for power, for the tensions which appeared between the CCP and the Kremlin, and for the statements of the actors themselves about what happened.

¹⁹⁵ See James Harrison, pp. 395-396

out to storm the heavens, or had to exert great efforts to guarantee the independent action of the most deprived layers who were prisoners of their clan relations and haunted by the memory of past defeats.¹⁹⁶

Land reform moved very quickly to the center of the CCP's action program. The progressive transition from rent reduction to land distribution began in late 1945. The new orientation was made official by the Directive on the Land Question of May 4, 1946, whose central slogan was "the land to the tiller."¹⁹⁷ The decision shows the extent to which the civil war was already a reality. The policy was implemented in different ways though. Then, in 1947, it became suddenly more radical. The CCP leadership launched a "rectification movement" targeted at Communist cadres of the village level. The secrecy which had protected party members was abolished in Liberated Areas so that the local cells could appear before mass meetings held to pass judgement on

¹⁹⁶ This sort of discrepancy between the action of the party and the action of the masses, or between situations in different districts and regions, is found in every revolution, including the Russian.

¹⁹⁷ The anniversary of the May 4, 1919 Movement The Directive is reproduced in Liu, *SW*, vol. 1, pp. 372-378. Liu played a particularly important role in this field from 1946 to 1948. During the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist faction blamed all "the leftist errors" of 1947 on him. According to Tanaka Kyoko, it is possible that differences arose between Mao and Liu over how to apply the agrarian policy, but on the whole the two leaders seem to have gone through a parallel evolution. See Tanaka Kyoko, "Mao and Liu in the 1947 Land Reform: Allies or Disputants?" *The China Quarterly*, n°75, September 1978.

The history of the CCP, as rewritten during the Cultural Revolution, is obviously superfactual (it describes the eternal fight between Mao's "red line" and Liu's "black line"). Its falsifications are countless. But it is worth noting that Liu recognized in 1949 that he bore among the leadership a particular responsibility for the leftist errors of 1947; see "Some Questions Concerning Urban Work" (March 12, 1949), *SW*, vol. 1, p. 417. It seems that when the war ended, the central leadership of the CCP was composed of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Ren Bishi, one of the earliest leaders of the CCP, who died of an illness in 1950.

their activities. In September 1947, a National Land Conference was summoned following the political rectification campaigns, in the presence of Liu Shaoqi.¹⁹⁸ The principle of an Agrarian Law was adopted. This Law was promulgated on October 10, 1947;¹⁹⁹ it stipulated that "the system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation is abolished. The agrarian system of 'the land to the peasants' must be instituted."²⁰⁰ The CCP leadership ordered more radical measures: unconditional confiscation of the land of landowners and its distribution on a per capita egalitarian basis. But by the end of the year, the Communist Party had to moderate its land policy and called for a correction of "ultra-left errors."²⁰¹ The interests of the middle peasants had to be taken into account. The new policy was spelled out in detail over the course of 1948.²⁰²

The changes in the CCP's land policy can be explained in part by the changes of the general conjuncture. In early 1947, the military situation was difficult. Energies had to be stirred up; to do so, the radicalism of the poor peasantry had to be unleashed. As the Communist forces regained their bearing in the course of the year, social support for the revolution had to be broadened to consolidate the rear and weaken the enemy. But the CCP's land policy also

¹⁹⁸ See Liu, "Speech Concluding the National Land Conference" (September 13, 1947), *op. cit.*, pp. 379-392.

¹⁹⁹ The anniversary of the republican revolution of 1911.

²⁰⁰ The text of this "Basic Programme on Chinese Agrarian Law Promulgated by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party" is published in Appendix A, Hinton, *Fanshen*, pp. 727-731. "*Fanshen*" means "to turn one's body around" and this "turn-around" or "upheaval" was one of the central slogans of the 1947 land reform. The "rectification campaigns" assigned a single set of numerical goals for the entire country, in contradiction with the principle of "operational decentralization." This was one of the contradictions of the "mass line" that would often create problems.

²⁰¹ See Mao, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks" (December 25, 1947), *SW*, vol. IV, pp. 157-176.

²⁰² See Mao's writings of this period in *SW*, volume IV.

ran up against a fundamental problem: the shortage of land in the north of the country, and the nature of the peasant economy.

According to Tanaka Kyoko, although the land reform developed very unevenly in various areas, it had already been thoroughly implemented in its radical version in many areas under Communist control by late 1946.²⁰³ By mid-1947, in many cases, the class of landowners had been eliminated and the rich-peasant-landowning elements were only marginally represented among the village cadres.²⁰⁴ The reason the CCP leadership made a wrong assessment of the situation was that it underestimated the scarcity of land. Even after the reform, there were still many poor peasants left. Any attempt to equalize the situation further by additional distributions of land would have to attack the middle peasantry. "In fact, the Party had to choose either equal distribution or preservation of the middle peasant economy."²⁰⁵ Any challenge to that economy meant ripping through the social fabric and breaking the productive equilibria. According to Tanaka Kyoko, the CCP leadership only realized the extent of this problem in 1948.

At any rate, a genuine agrarian revolution began during the third civil war and was generalized after 1949. The mass mobilization required for the pursuit of the war went hand in hand with a change in social and political power in the villages.

• the urban front

When the Chiang Kai-shek

²⁰³ Tanaka Kyoko, pp. 568-569. See also Zhou, "Agrarian Reform and Consolidation of the Party in the Old and Semi-Old Liberated Areas" (February 22, 1948), *SW*, vol. I, pp. 322-331.

²⁰⁴ Kyoko, p. 592.

²⁰⁵ *Idem*, p. 593. The problem also had a political dimension, as noted in chapter 5: the risk of handing over a new popular base to the Guomindang. In addition, the difference between the rich and middle peasant was often quite tenuous, and this had to be taken into account. The solution was found after victory, with the development of a cooperative economy.

government returned to the urban centers of the coastline, it enjoyed definite prestige. Yet its authority collapsed very quickly and "the regime lost the war first and foremost in the urban strongholds."²⁰⁶

This crisis of the regime was one of the elements of the revolutionary situation in China.²⁰⁷ Its corruption, negligence, factionalism and authoritarianism caused democratic public opinion and the students to turn away from it. Inflation reached gigantic proportions. The price index—using a base of 100 in 1937, at the outbreak of the war—climbed to 627 210 at the end of 1946, and 10 340 000 by the end of 1947! The middle classes and civil servants were hit brutally. The working class moved into struggle. The regime lost the battle of the cities in the political and social arena. Victory was not simply the product of a gradual evolution of the relationship of forces. The final confrontation took place when a genuine and acute national crisis and revolutionary crisis, the groundwork for which had been laid by prior struggles, erupted.

Δ Political struggles

Student agitation began in late 1945. One year later, it spread throughout the nation and took on a pro-nounced anti-imperialist tone following the indictment of two US marines for the rape of a young Chinese woman. In December 1946, a vast movement against the US occupation of the country began. Students demanded the formation of a coalition government including the Communists. In 1947, they mobilized against the civil war and denounced the carelessness of the regime in the face of the famine devastating several regions. Nationalist emotions reached a new pitch in 1947-1948 when a new international alliance appeared to be in the works between the Guomindang, the United States and... Japan. Repression against the student

²⁰⁶ Lew, *Mao prend le pouvoir*, p. 14.

²⁰⁷ The crisis of the bourgeois regime is one of the distinctive features of every acute revolutionary situation.

movement became harsher.

Within a few years, the student milieu and the "third force" elements, represented mainly by the "Democratic League," went over to an alliance with the CCP.

Δ Workers struggles and the CCP

China had about two or three million workers. The working class had been able to maintain its standard of living during the war. It now demonstrated its militancy and obtained a sliding scale of wages in 1946. With the continuation of economic stagnation, demonstrations and strikes became more numerous in 1947-1948. However, the urban proletariat was only very slightly politicized—far less so than twenty years earlier. Corporatist traditions had become strong after the debacle of 1927. "This is one of the most astonishing paradoxes of the Third Chinese revolution: one has to recognize the coexistence of the vigorous militancy of the workers and their near-complete political lethargy," Roland Lew notes.²⁰⁸

The CCP had been able to keep a network of activists in the labor movement, but a much weaker one than before. According to Alain Roux, these activists | numbered 800 in Shanghai in 1948.²⁰⁹ In March 1949, Mao Zedong announced that the center of gravity of Communist action was now located in the urban centers:

"From 1927 to the present the centre of gravity of our work has been the villages. (...) The period of "from the city to the village" and of the city leading the village has now begun. (...) If we do not learn how to wage these struggles (...) we shall be unable to maintain our political power, we shall be unable to stand on our feet, we shall fail."²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Roland Lew, "Chine: Un Etat ouvrier? Le monde ouvrier chinois sous le socialisme réel," in C. Aubert et al., *La société chinoise après Mao*, Paris: Fayard, 1986, p. 46.

²⁰⁹ Alain Roux, *Le casse-tête chinois*, Paris: Editions sociales, 1970, p. 83.

²¹⁰ Mao, "Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Commute of the Communist Party of China" (March 5, 1949), SW, vol. IV, p. 361.

Liu Shaoqi encapsulated the problem facing the CCP quite well. As stated by Chairman Mao, "we must rely on the workers. But are they reliable? Marxism holds that the working class is most reliable. Generally speaking, this is correct, but we still have some specific problems. So we must strive to enable our working class to become completely reliable. If we ignore these problems and rely on the workers without doing any work among them, they won't necessarily be reliable."

"Our Party used to have close ties with the workers, but later we were compelled to move to the country-side. The Kuomintang has been operating among the workers for so many years that, through its influence, it has made the ranks of the workers more complicated. Moreover, our ties with the workers have been weakened and our cadres (including members of the Central Committee) do not know them very well and are no longer good at working among them. Hence we must study assiduously. (...) There are three principal measures we must take: do all we can to maintain the workers' living standard (...); conduct intensive education among the workers on a broad scale; and get them organized."²¹¹

When Mao and Liu presented their reports to the Central Committee, the CCP had already won control of the great northern cities. It had two priority concerns: guaranteeing the mobilization of all resources for the war and revitalizing production to put an end to the economic slump. After having helped to spread the strike movement, it suddenly called a halt to workers' struggles and offered the most extensive guarantees to those entrepreneurs who would produce.

In the cities as well as the country, **the Guo-mindang's defeat was political and social and not just military. But the working class was basically passive at the moment when the CCP took power. The substitutionist relationship** which had developed between the urban class-

²¹¹ Liu, "Some Questions Concerning Urban Work," p. 419.

es and the CCP during the struggle became crystallized at the moment of victory.

Nevertheless, **the revolutionary perspective of the Chinese Communist Party became clearer.** In June 1949, Mao noted in "On the people's democratic dictatorship," that: "The people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry, and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and peasants, because these two classes comprise eighty to ninety per cent of China's population. (...) The transition from new democracy to socialism also depends upon their alliance. The people's democratic dictatorship needs the leadership of the working class [that is of the CCP]. (...) We must unite with the national bourgeoisie in common struggle. Our present policy is to regulate capitalism, not to destroy it. But the national bourgeoisie cannot be the leader of the revolution, nor should it have the chief role in state power."²¹²

- **The nature of the revolutionary regime**

From 1949 to 1952, the People's Republic placed itself under the banner of "new democracy," but the revolutionary character of the regime emerged clearly. While the situation differed in various regions, on the whole, the victory deepened the dynamic unleashed by the civil war. Under these circumstances, "from the outset, the Communists undertook a forced march towards a break with capitalism and turned away from a long period of class collaboration."²¹³ It was all settled very fast. The united front policy remained in effect. A Consultative Political Conference assembled on September 30, 1949; it included, in addition to the CCP, eleven "small parties" and groups and ten "democratic personalities." Non-Communists were nominated to

²¹² Mao, "On the people's democratic dictatorship" (June 30, 1949), in Schram, ed., *The Political Thought...*, pp. 234-235. For the complete text in the official version see *SW*, vol. IV, pp. 411-424.

²¹³ Lew, *op.cit.*, p.64.

government positions. All, whether parties or individuals, accepted the leadership of the CCP on government affairs. Moreover, this principle was clearly written down in the preamble of the Common Program adopted by the Consultative Conference. While "people's democratic dictatorship" was the "power of the united front," its "base was the alliance of the workers and peasants, and its leader, the working class [that is, the CCP]."²¹⁴

Counter-revolutionary parties were dissolved. "Bourgeois democratic parties" were given the function of helping the CCP to influence certain layers of the population. But their activities were closely watched and they held no power in the national state apparatus.²¹⁵ This state apparatus was created on the basis of the organs born in the struggle and in the revolutionary dual power areas, such as the Red Army, the administration of Liberated Areas, the popular associations and assemblies, the militia, etc. **Real state power on a national scale was in the hands of the CCP**, which intervened at every level through the pyramid of its own corresponding committees.

The economic, social, political and international actions of the regime during its first few years confirmed that the victory had indeed signified a portentous revolution.

◆ In the economic field

Japanese properties and "bureaucratic capital" (that is, controlled by the Guomindang's "families") were nationalized. This represented: 80% of modern industrial capital, 67% of the power plants, 33% of coal mines, 90% of steel capacity, 38% of spindles and

²¹⁴ "Programme commun de la Conférence consultative politique du peuple chinois" (September 29, 1949), *Documents importants de la Première Session Plénière de la Conférence Consultative Politique du Peuple Chinois*, Pékin, 1949, p. 1. Article 1 stipulates that "the People's Republic (...) puts into effect the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class." Idem, p. 2. The entire document borrows its key formulas from CCP documents.

²¹⁵ See Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends...*, chapter 10. There could be local exceptions, temporarily.

60% of looms, 44% of the merchant marine, almost the entire railroad and air transport network.²¹⁶

Small-scale capitalist and artisanal production remained very substantial. In June 1950, the CCP made its policy more flexible to facilitate economic recovery. The state had to learn to manage the economy. But big capital, **the economic core of the counter-revolution**, had been massively attacked. The bourgeoisie had lost its ability to act **in centralized fashion** on the economic and political planes. In 1952, the State Planning Commission was officially created. That year, 56% of industrial output came from the state sector, 5% from the mixed state-and-private sector; of the remainder 21.5% was produced to fill orders from the state. Only 17.5% of industrial output was both produced and marketed through private channels.

The CCP hesitated to extend the land reform to the south of the country immediately. It tried to see if alliances were possible; it gave top priority to production: 23% of the world population had to be fed from 7% of its cultivable land! But it only hesitated on the pace and form of the reform. On June 28, 1950, the National Law on Agrarian Reform was officially adopted. In 1953, 45% of the land had been redistributed, the power of the gentry smashed. Mutual aid teams (the very first phase of the process of instituting cooperatives) were established.

◆ In the social arena

The upheaval of social relations in the village continued while the struggle for women's emancipation resumed. **The regime forged a new alliance with the urban proletariat**—or, at any rate, with its privileged sector, the permanent working class of state firms.

In June 1950, the CCP suspended further recruitment of peasants and launched a big campaign to recruit workers. In 1949, already, 80 000 workers were admitted into the party in the industrial regions of Manchuria. In 1951, 6.3% of CCP membership were

²¹⁶ Figures from this section from Roux, op.cit.

workers; in 1952, 7.2%; in 1956, 14%—that is 1.5 million workers out of 11 million members.²¹⁷ Roland Lew notes that this "working class, more and more structured by the Party, was mobilized to become the main support of the new regime. (...) [This] effort to obtain its active participation seems to have been crowned with real success; this was made easier by the fact that the working class was able to retain and even increase the gains it had made before 1949. Better yet, an undeniable upward social mobility, particularly during the first years of the People's Republic, made it possible for many workers to gain access to managerial and technicians' positions. Some of them even were incorporated into the new privileged strata. The promotion of the workers was often effected through the trade unions..."²¹⁸

◆ Anticapitalist radicalization

This revitalization of the urban proletarian base of the CCP was made "particularly urgent by the fact that the period of 'new democracy' was coming to a close," Roland Lew notes. "That stage gave way in 1952 to a sudden flare-up of anticapitalism which completely socialized the economy and decapitated the capitalist class by about 1955-1956."

Much as the land reform in the countryside, the urban revolution was an act of class violence which came with a series of CCP-initiated political campaigns from 1950 to 1952: the Campaign of Information, Criticism and Self-Criticism; the Campaign for the Elimination of Counterrevolutionaries; the Three-Anti Campaign (*Sanfan*) against corruption, waste and the bureaucratism of cadres; the Five-Anti Campaign (*Wufan*) against pay-offs, fraud, fiscal evasion, misuse of state property, and illegal acquisition of state economic secrets, that is, against the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie.

Similarly to what happened in the countryside, the red terror, in the sense

acquired by this word during the French revolution of 1793,²¹⁹ left many victims. The movement to repress counter-revolutionaries ended with several million arrests, and from 600 000 to one million executions, between 1951 and 1952. The gangs and secret organizations that controlled many trade unions were decapitated. During the *Sanfan* and *Wufan* campaigns, street committees were established, the power of CCP-controlled trade unions was bolstered, and the links between workers associations and employers—as well as salaried staff and hiring subcontractors—smashed.

The working class remained politically subordinated to the Communist Party. But its organization grew and its class consciousness asserted itself.

◆ In the international arena

The revolutionary nature of the victory was also expressed in the field of foreign policy. In November 1949, in his opening speech before the congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions held in Peking, Liu Shaoqi drew the lessons of the Chinese experience for the countries of the East. "The road followed by the Chinese people (...) is the road that must be followed by many colonial and semicolonial countries. (...) The working class (...) must form a vast united front which must be led by the working class and its party. [This united front] must not be led by the vacillating national bourgeoisie, always ready to compromise, nor by the petty-bourgeoisie and its parties. (...) Armed struggle is the main form of struggle for national liberation in many colonies and semicolonies."²²⁰

²¹⁹ Roux, p. 132.

²²⁰ Liu, "Discours d'ouverture a la reunion de la Federation syndicale mondiale" (novembre 1949), Carrere d'Encausse and Schram, *Le marxisme...*, pp. 381-382. Moscow did not appreciate in the least the suggestion of an alternative revolutionary "model." The Kremlin let it be known that it did not believe that the "Chinese road" was suitable for other Eastern countries. See the extracts of Zuckov's report to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, idem, pp. 384-386.

²¹⁷ Figures from Lew, "Chine: Un Etat ouvrier?...", » pp. 48-49.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

On January 18, 1950, while the Indochina war was raging, Peking officially recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.²²¹ On February 14, 1950, the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Friendship was signed after two months of difficult negotiations. On June 21, 1950, the Korean War acquired an international dimension. On October 7, US forces arrived on the bank of the Yalu river, the border between China and Korea. On the 16th, 700 000 to 800 000 Chinese soldiers intervened, later joined by massive reinforcements. They pushed the US armed forces back to the 38th parallel at the cost of enormous casualties (estimated at 800 000) caused by the unevenness in weapons and equipment.

In December 1950, Washington imposed a commercial embargo and economic blockade on China. On February 1, 1951, the People's Republic was expelled from the United Nations where its seat was taken by Taiwan. The most numerous people of the earth was ejected from the international community of states for having the impudence to oppose imperialist dictates and win.

From 1949 to 1953, when an armistice was signed in Korea, China was at the forefront of the international confrontation between classes.

* * *

It is now time to sketch a first **overall balance sheet** of the revolution of 1949

At the beginning of the century, China was thrust into a global crisis of society and confronted with two vital tasks: national liberation (anti-imperialism) and modernization ("anti-feudalism"). Two parties contended for the leadership of the oppressed nation over three decades: the Guomindang and the Communist Party.

The Guomindang benefited from

considerable advantages such as the prestigious legacy of Sun Yatsen, power and material resources, international recognition, an urban base. It was given ten years (1927-1937) to consolidate its power nationwide and eight years to prove its mettle in the war against the Japanese invaders. It was awarded one last chance after World War Two, thanks to Moscow's support and the active intervention of the United States. It failed. **Its failure is that of a bourgeoisie incapable of leading the twofold struggle for liberation and modernization.**²²²

The Chinese Communist Party enjoyed none of these advantages. Everything it won, was won in struggle, in a very difficult struggle. After thirty years of fighting, there is no way the victory of the CCP can be explained away as the result of an accident.²²³ The

²²² The relative success of the Guomindang in Taiwan does not invalidate the significance of its failure on the mainland. The scale of problems was not comparable in the island and in the country-continent. In Taiwan, the Guomindang also benefited from the after-effects of the revolutionary victory in China. The extent of imperialist aid to Taipeh must be explained by the geo-strategic stakes involved: creating a cordon sanitaire around Red China. The Guomindang implemented measures it had opposed on the mainland (such as a land reform directed against Taiwanese landowners, who were incidentally competitors of the Guomindang overlords who had fled the mainland). The nationalization of imperialist properties was easy because these were mainly Japanese. These were the circumstances that made it possible for Taiwan to benefit, in a pattern similar to South Korea, from changes in the international division of labor in the capitalist world.

²²³ Or of "exceptional circumstances" that supposedly explain how the victory could be won against the the policy of the CCP. These "circumstances" (world war, the final paralysis of the imperialist powers, etc) are not in fact exceptional. They were present in the case of the Russian and Yugoslav revolutions (which were victorious) and of many other revolutions, which were defeated! By contrast, the Vietnamese revolution, whose leadership, though different, is "kindred" of the CCP's, was forced to win without benefiting from any of these "exceptional circumstances." The truth is that what made the difference between victory and defeat was, in general, the way in which the struggle was

²²¹ . Something Moscow had not yet done even though the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in 1945, in the wake of the August revolution.

success of the CCP is the success of a **revolutionary answer to a global crisis of society**.

The Chinese experience sheds light on the highly controversial question of the relationship between the democratic and socialist stages in the revolutionary process of dependent countries. There was a **clear distinction** in terms of **fundamental tasks** between the period of the struggle for power and the period that followed the conquest of power. There were also **conjunctural** tasks and alliances determined by **contingent** situations. But, in terms of the **motor forces** and **political leadership**, the revolutionary process stands as a **single overall process**: two phases, or two stages²²⁴, of a single revolution, and not two revolutions separated by a historical period of capitalist development. The **link between the two stages** of the revolution is underlined by the speed with which the People's Republic took anticapitalist measures and above all—because the issue is not primarily one of speed—by **the continuity of the process** of transition from the

conducted.

This question has been the subject of a long debate in the Trotskyist movement. Peng Shuzi and Peng Bilan believe that the "exceptional circumstances" alone explain the CCP's victory; see Chen Pi-lan (Peng Bilan) "The Real Lessons of the Chinese Experience with Guerrilla Warfare," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, vol. 10, n°2, 1973. On the other hand, Wang Fanxi believes the circumstances were not "exceptional" and in themselves, explain nothing. He believes that Chinese Trotskyists cannot spare themselves a self-criticism by invoking the "circumstances"; see F. H. Wang, "On the Causes of the Triumph of the CCP and the Failure of Chinese Trotskyists in the 3rd Chinese Revolution—A Reply to the Pengs", *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, vol. XIX, n°3, June 1983, pp. 5-16; and jointly with Lau K., "It is still necessary to draw the lessons from the failure of the Chinese Trotskyists (A thesis submitted to the coming congress of the Fourth International for consideration)," September 1983, 8 pages, mimeographed

²²⁴I do not give much credence to subtle attempts to distinguish between a "phase" and a "stage", a particularly fickle argument when translated into 60 different languages...

democratic tasks to the socialist tasks, as well as by the way in which they **combined** after victory.

The revolutionary overthrow of the old **class state power** and its replacement by a new one appears clearly in the Chinese experience as the **lynchpin** of the growing over of the revolution. Indeed, along with the mass mobilizations, the new Chinese workers state played an **active and extremely important** role in changing the relationship of forces between classes and in transforming society.²²⁵

Thus, the Chinese revolution clearly displays the features of a **process of permanent revolution** (or **uninterrupted revolution**). In this respect, it is interesting to note that the leaders of the CCP refused to erect a Chinese wall between the regime they called "new democracy" and the regime they called "dictatorship of the proletariat." In his political report for the Central Committee before the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party, Liu Shaoqi states that: "Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the working class has won the power to rule throughout the country in conditions of a firm alliance with several hundred millions of peasants; the party of the working class—the Chinese Communist Party—has become the party that leads the state power of the whole country; therefore, the people's democratic dictatorship has in essence become a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus, it has become possible for the bourgeois-democratic revolution in our country to be directly transformed by peaceful means, into a proletarian-socialist revolution. The establishment of the People's Republic of China signifies the virtual completion of the stage of bourgeois-democratic revolution in our

²²⁵. On the long run, there must be a concordance between the class nature of the state and the dominant mode of production, or more generally—to include transitional societies—and the socio-economic structure. But periods of social revolutions are precisely characterized by discrepancies between the state-political level and the socio-economic level. In such periods, the role of the state as a historical agent and not just as a historical product, asserts itself with particular force.

country and the beginning of the stage of proletarian-socialist revolution: the beginning of the period of transition from capitalism to socialism."²²⁶

The Chinese Communist Party: an appraisal

But can one really speak of a process of permanent revolution, that is of the creation of a society of transition to socialism, in a country where the proletariat only accounted for a tiny percentage of the population, did not directly lead the struggle, and where the leading party was so grievously cut off from the cities?

To answer this question fully, one would have to analyze China from 1949 to 1987 and show that its fundamental features and specific contradictions were indeed those of a transitional society; that would take us beyond the boundaries of this study. One aspect of the question, though, is in the purview of this study, namely the analysis of the party which led this revolution.

The CCP was not a bourgeois party. It was created and waged a fight against the Chinese and international bourgeoisie—and when it tried to follow the bourgeoisie's lead, the latter turned on it and crushed it. The CCP used its state power to smash the political and economic power of the bourgeoisie.

The CCP acted among and with the peasantry. But, in spite of Trotsky's (and a few other observers') prognosis, it did not become a peasant or agrarian party. It assumed the role of spokesperson for peasant demands but elaborated its orientation on the basis of goals and considerations that stood far beyond the social and ideological horizon of the peasantry (the project of an industrialized society, the perspective of collectivization of agriculture, the grasp of the international relationship of forces and the evolution of the situation on a

national scale). It structured the peasant mobilization and sometimes opposed it, in order to channel and orient it. It reasserted its urban perspective as soon as it felt it could focus its activity on the cities.

According to some analysts, notably Roland Lew, the CCP was the party of the revolutionary intelligentsia. Faced with the gravity of the crisis and the inability of either the bourgeoisie or proletariat to implement a solution, this social layer crystallized in the party, put forward its own prospect for a new society, harnessed the rural mobilization and subsequently transformed itself into a new social elite that struck an alliance with the labor aristocracy.²²⁷ The strong point in this analysis is that it sticks quite closely to the historical trajectory of the CCP. It has a major handicap though, namely its seeming inability to answer two questions that arise from its interpretation of the events: what is the nature of the new society and what is the world significance of the emergence of such revolutions in our century (from the Russian revolution to the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions)?

Although it may at first sight seem paradoxical, the characterization of the Chinese Communist Party as a workers party seems to me to correspond most satisfactorily to its history and to the nature of the revolution it led. There can be no simple sociological explanation for the existence of a party like the CCP. A number of national and international, political and social factors must be taken into account, including:

◆ The depth of the overall crisis of

²²⁶Liu, *The Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to the Eighth National Congress of the Party* (September 15, 1956), in *Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China-Documents*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981, p. 15.

²²⁷ See Lew, *Mao prend...*, and "La formation du communisme chinois et l'émérgence mao'iste." Lew's analysis converges partly with David Rousset's on China and the USSR. But they also diverge on some points. David Rousset uses the concept of state capitalism and analyzes the trajectory of these revolutions in the framework of a world crisis of transition caused by a development of the productive forces so rapid that it overtook the capacities of the old fundamental classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. See *La société éclatée*, Paris: Grasset, 1973, and *Sur la guerre*, Paris: Ramsay, 1986.

Chinese society.²²⁸ This crisis exerted a dynamic and powerful pressure on the agents of the revolution; its considerable duration provided them with the time needed to readjust progressively their orientation.

◆ The impact of the Russian revolution and the existence of the USSR which, despite Stalinism, made the possibility of a non-capitalist development more credible and endowed the reference to Marxism with a material reality.

◆ The emergence of a modern mass nationalism, based on the people, in a dependent country, that was able to fuse with the contemporary emergence of a socialist perspective.

◆ The origins of the CCP, which, before being thrown back into the countryside, had acquired a genuine mass proletarian character, and the lessons of the 1924-1927 experience. These lessons, and the cadre apparatus, contributed to insuring the continuity between the original Communist movement and that of the Maoist period.

◆ The requirements of a life-and-death struggle waged without a break. Insuring a mass base and the quality of the membership as well as the leadership became permanent prerequisites for survival. This made reformist renunciation quite difficult and contributed to insuring the continuity of a living revolutionary reflexion.²²⁹

◆ The nature of the social formation. All that is said above could be operational only if the CCP could find support among social layers which, although not exactly proletarian, could be integrated into a permanent revolution perspective.

²²⁸ On the roots of this crisis see, among others, the book by Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1971. In the introduction to the latest French edition (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), the author presents the evolution of his own thinking over the twenty years since the first edition.

²²⁹ The number of central cadres of the CCP who capitulated after the defeat of 1927 seems remarkably small.

The social formation: an appraisal

The experience of the Chinese revolution illustrates the dialectical interplay between the national and socio-economic reality (the objective factors) and the political actors (the subjective factor).²³⁰ The history of the CCP makes it possible to broaden the analysis of revolutionary practice in the contemporary world; this is a most stimulating aspect for activists. But the Chinese revolution also makes it possible to renew the analysis of the social formation of dominated countries. This is a difficult task, particularly for observers who neither know the given society first hand nor speak its language, because it requires the assimilation of a mass of empirical data.²³¹ They must venture beyond generalities and seek the originality of the country's history and contemporary social formation,²³² as well as the variety of regional situations, to compare the impact of given political practices in real social settings and conjunctures.

I make no claim to having completed this analytical task but I would like to conclude this study by identifying certain questions which a discussion on the Chinese social formation might help to elucidate.

◆ Social base of the process of permanent revolution

The Chinese revolutionary process—and many others after it—confirmed the substance of the theory of permanent revolution. But its form diverged widely from the original model in which the urban working class was to physically lead the struggle thanks to the emergence of its own organs of power (the councils). This discrepancy raises both political (for "form" is just as important as "substance" for those who wish to act) and theoretical problems (what made possible the continuity of

²³⁰ See Bianco, *op. cit.*, concluding chapter.

²³¹ Marx knew this well, and learned Russian to study the country and assimilate its originality.

²³² A given society, a concrete social formation, is the product of a particular ancient and recent history, and therefore always original.

the revolutionary process?)

We already mentioned the question of this peasantry which turned out stabler and more willing to integrate in a transitional society than tradition had expected. We noted the role of the activist intelligentsia and the recurring importance of school youth. We should also note the way in which declassed and uprooted elements were temporarily or durably organized in the revolutionary fight; the weight of the rural towns and their impact on the social environment²³³; the existence of a vast urban and rural semi-proletariat, like the traditional Chinese rickshaw puller, and not one but several working classes with different situations and traditions. We should also recall the rural women's struggle which, in the Chinese revolution, was broader and more constant than that of the urban proletariat!

Above all, there is the way in which diverse layers can be organized for the revolutionary fight by an activist vanguard and can build links with one another in the struggle: for example, the way in which the mobilization of women of the people was able to play the role of a link in the policy of alliances, or the role of the urban poor, who were a genuine social crossroads of the city and the country, the proletariat and petty-bourgeoisies.

The analysis of social formations in the light of revolutionary struggles allows a considerable enrichment of the conception of social alliances in the permanent revolution.²³⁴ The Chinese experience seems to show that the social base of a permanent revolution process is broader than believed.

◆ Diversity of the social formations of dependent countries

A comparison of the social formation of various dependent countries sheds light on the originality of

²³³ This is a point to which Leslie Evans called my attention.

²³⁴ In the framework, it should be clear, of the general formula of the worker-peasant alliance winning over to its side the petty-bourgeoisie.

each one of them. The order in which tasks and slogans follow each other and the way in which they combine, the form of the process of growing over, cannot be identical in peasant China and Cuba, where plantations are prevalent; or in urbanized Argentina and Eastern Timor.

In the most advanced semi-industrialized countries, proletarian demands can be more central. In the most backward countries where (modern) classes have not yet fully congealed, it is debatable whether a process of permanent revolution can take place without, at least, the spillover-and-pull-along factor of a struggle in the same region (such as affected Mongolia in relation to Russia or China).

In East Asia alone, the variety of national histories and therefore of contemporary social formations is quite broad.²³⁵ If the substantial debate is to go forward, it must move beyond general characterizations. Indeed, what lessons can be drawn from the Chinese experience if one has not thought out the differences as well as the resemblances (the state of dependency, the weight of the rural world)?

◆ Forms of the revolutionary regime

The dictatorship of the proletariat can appear in a variety of different forms. This can be explained easily: a workers state is born in an unique struggle and carries the imprint of that struggle. The historical factors that shape the form of revolutionary regimes are many²³⁶ and none of them can determine the course of events alone, but the social formation is certainly one

²³⁵ See for instance the comparative approach sketched by Fritjoff Tichel-man, *The Social Evolution of Indonesia, The Asiatic Mode of Production and its Legacy*, The Hague/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980.

²³⁶ In addition to the social formation: the nature of the period; the national, regional and international conjuncture; the course of the struggles and the forms of dual power, the concrete balance of forces; the political traditions; the choices made by the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary actors...

of the most important such factors, particularly if it is understood in its totality (the combination of the socio-economic, politico-state and ideologico-cultural formations).

For instance, the key question of socialist democracy and legality, can be approached from two complementary angles: the programmatic and the political. The experience of the last sixty years confirms the extent to which socialist democracy and legality are fundamental needs of all societies of transition to socialism, from the programmatic standpoint. Their absence creates acute contradictions. But experience also demonstrates that all countries cannot arrive at such a political regime by the same road. From the political standpoint (the determination of concrete tasks), each process must be analyzed in its specificity.

Political actors are endowed with free will which can determine, to a large extent, the success or failure of the struggle. The CCP leadership must bear the responsibility of its options for the better—the definition of an effective orientation, for instance—and for the worse: acts of repression that were not required by the situation and that violated revolutionary legality and democracy. I am referring here to the repression unleashed against radical intellectuals in Yan'an in 1942, for instance, which was a prelude to the crisis of the Hundred Flowers in 1956²³⁷, and to the repression visited upon the Trotskyists.

On December 22, 1952, the CCP security forces arrested between 200 and 300 Trotskyist activists and sympathizers. These secret arrests were never justified publicly and never led to regular trials. The fate of many of them remains unknown. A Trotskyist leader like Zheng Chaolin was only freed on June 5, 1979, at the age of 78, after spending over 25 years in prison in the People's Republic, he who had already spent six years in the jails of Chiang Kai-

²³⁷ See in particular Gregor Benton, "The Yenan 'Literary Opposition'," *New Left Review*, n°92, July-August 1975, and his *Wild-Lilies, Poisonous Weeds*.

shek (from 1931 to 1937)!²³⁸

The repression of the Trotskyists was not conducted in the same fashion by all factions of the CCP. In this respect too, the "28 Bolsheviks" worked hand in glove with the Kremlin. Moscow displayed its irritation with the Maoist leadership.²³⁹ But the repressive face of the Maoist leadership is a reality too; it is embodied by the gloomy police figure of Kang Sheng who joined the leadership upon his return from Moscow, in 1937, and poured the vilest slanders on Chen Duxiu. During the Cultural Revolution, he thrived on executions and dirty work. When it returned to power, the Deng Xiaoping faction expelled him posthumously (he had died in 1975)

²³⁸ See Gregor Benton, "Le dirigeant trotskyste Zheng Chaolin libéré en Chine," *Inprecor*, n°59, September 19, 1979, and Bianco and Chevrier, eds., *Dictionnaire biographique...* There is a solid anti-Trotskyist tradition in the CCP to which all its leaders seem to have paid a tribute. See for instance Zhou, "On the Causes of the Emergence of a Trotskyite Opposition Faction in China and its Prospects" (October 1929), *SW*, vol. I, pp. 57-60. Also, in an otherwise interesting article, Zhu De drops the usual slander of "pro-Japanese Trotskyites": "De la guerre des partisans antijaponaise," *EC*, vol. I, p. 47.

²³⁹ The Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted a resolution on the Chinese Question denouncing drily the lack of energy with which the anti-Trotskyist campaign was prosecuted; "In this area, the Party is far from having done all that was called for. It is absolutely false to consider the Trotskyites as a party or political current, and the way in which last year's appeal issued by the CC posed the question of the possibility of including the Trotskyites in the National Anti-Japanese United Front is absolutely inadmissible. We must strengthen by all means the struggle against the Trotskyites, these agents of the Japanese militarist clique." "Decision de l'IC sur la question chinoise," Point 7, *L'IC et la lutte contre le fascisme et la guerre*, Moscow, 1980, p. 480. The Maoist leadership had indeed left open the possibility of the Chinese Trotskyists participating in the National Anti-Japanese United Front. This was the time of the Moscow trials and the sections of the Comintern were supposed to take analogous measures. As a result of Kremlin instructions, many revolutionary activists—both Trotskyist and non-Trotskyist—were assassinated criminally throughout the world.

from the CCP, a thoroughly unusual measure.

While the Maoist leadership was responsible for its own decisions, it waged its struggle in a particular environment; historical constraints bored down on it with their full weight. Mao Zedong inherited from the days of his youth a populist vein colored by libertarian inclinations. But he became a man of war, a faction fighter, an authority figure. Comintern influence and the process of protracted armed struggle played a role in his evolution. The social base of the party also did: the relationship of a Communist Party to the peasantry is not the same as its relationship to the working class.²⁴⁰ The central theme of the "mass line" is quite revealing in this respect. The party had "to listen to the masses" because correct ideas issued from the masses helter-skelter and had to be systematized by the party before being returned to the masses. The Party was the irreplaceable mediator.

A humanist tradition exists in China, but not the centuries-long experience of political democracy whose roots, in Europe, go back to the Greco-Roman tradition and the development of free bourgeois towns. In the Empire of the Middle, that tradition was smothered by the power of the centralized state.

The Chinese revolution is a great democratic revolution because it freed a people from a certain form of economic exploitation, but also because it was a rising of rural women and poor peasants, despised and contemptible, for human dignity. The violence of the "speak bitterness" sessions and the explosion of hatred against the village notables can only be explained by the memory of exploitation, and perhaps more relevantly, by that of repeated humiliations. The Chinese revolution made manual labor respectable in a country where the rich had let their nails grow long to prove they need not work with their hands. The status of

permanent worker in a state factory became a desirable job where cadres sent their children.

But we have also seen the weight of the non-democratic factors in the Chinese revolution, from the conservatism of the village to the Soviet Stalinist influence and the exigencies of a harsh military fight. The revolution produced a regime that was at once popular and democratic, authoritarian and bureaucratic. The party is almost completely confused with the state. The CCP is subject to mass criticism on a local basis—something a typical Stalinist party could not tolerate. But it has full sovereignty over the running of the state. It is rooted in a mobilized population, but it rises far above the classes in whose name it speaks. This is one of the main internal contradictions of the regime, which was apparent in its subsequent development.

To be resolved, this contradiction requires that the activist vanguard scrupulously respect the self-organization of the population and be armed with a medium and long-run orientation: the prospect of a society whose very core is socialist democracy and legality; a political plan and the choice of appropriate means to make the anti-bureaucratic battle a concrete reality.²⁴¹ Objective conditions made this battle particularly difficult in China. The country was very backward economically and isolated internationally (it faced an imperialist blockade, could not count on a revolution in the West, and had to pay for Soviet aid at a high price).²⁴² The revolutionaries could not base themselves on and supersede bourgeois democratic traditions, as they can in the West. The Maoist leadership tried to

²⁴⁰ . Because there is a coincidence between the party's program and the proletariat's (potential) consciousness of its own class interests which does not exist in the same way in the case of the peasantry.

²⁴¹ In particular, socio-economic measures limiting strictly the standard of living of cadres, all the way to the top ranks, must be taken.

²⁴² This last point is particularly important because the transition to socialism requires organization on the international plane. The building of socialism cannot be completed within the national borders of a single state, be it the largest on earth. The revolution, of course, can and must progress without waiting for an international extension, but it can do so only at the price of increasing problems.

apply to the transitional society the principles of the "mass line" that worked so well in the struggle for power. Although it failed, this experience deserves to be studied in critical fashion because it can help to find the modes of organization and action suitable for original conditions, the national forms and sources that can make possible a real advance in the building of a transitional society.²⁴³

* * *

The experience of the Chinese revolution is a living vindication of the essential points of the revolutionary Marxist program for dominated countries. But it raises many questions whose answer is by no means obvious yet. It invites a collective reflexion on revolutionary practice and its foundations, on the historical constraints that every revolution must face, and on the means to cope with them.

The same applies to the experience of the People's Republic from 1949 to this day. But that is another story.

KEY EVENTS: A REMINDER

1839-42: Opium war
1850-1864 revolt of the Taipings
1899-1900 Boxer rebellion
1911-1912 republican revolution (First Chinese Revolution)
1914-1918 World War One
1918-1919 foundation of the Communist International
1919 May Fourth Movement
1921 foundation of the CCP
1925-27 Second Chinese Revolution
1928 Mao Zedong and Zhu De in the Jingganshan
1929-1934 Jiangxi Soviet Republic
1930 Communist uprising in Changsha fails
1931-32 Japan occupies northeastern China, attacks Shanghai
1934-1935 Long March - Zunyi

conference Seventh Congress of the Comintern

1936 "Xian incident" (December)
1937-1945 Sino-Japanese war
1937-1938 Japanese advance Wuhan falls (October 1938)
1939-1945 World War Two
1939-1940 Soviet-German Pact and Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy, Japan)
1941 "South Anhui incident" (New Fourth Army) Germany attacks the USSR Pearl Harbor: US declares war on Japan military conference of UK-USA-China
1942 "Rectification movement" in the CCP
1943 Cairo conference dissolution of the Communist International
1944 Japanese take Changsha
1945 Yalta conference VIIth congress of the Chinese Communist Party Germany capitulates; nuclear holocaust (Hiroshima, Nagasaki); USSR declares war on Japan; Japan capitulates. Sino-Soviet Treaty CCP-Guomindang peace negotiations civil war-type incidents
1946-1949 civil war in China
1946 land reform resumed
Guomindang offensives in Shandong and Jiangsu
1947 Communist offensive in Manchuria student mobilizations Guomindang army occupies Yan'an Communist counter-offensive in central China promulgation of Agrarian Law
1947-1948 workers strikes
1948 large-scale Communist offensive
1949 foundation of the People's Republic of China (October 1, 1949)
1950 Guomindang flees to Taiwan
1950-1953 Korean war

²⁴³ This is not counterposed to an internationalist conception of the revolution and socialist reconstruction. Mao, unfortunately, because of his training, or because he tried to make a virtue of necessity, conceived the building of socialism "in a single country."

Reading for beginners

We have selected the following books for the reader who wishes to begin a study of the Chinese revolution. Publication details are in the bibliography. There are some discrepancies concerning the history of Chinese communism in the works listed below. Historical research is still in progress and new material is appearing all the time. The list also includes a variety of analyses and opinions.

General overviews

The following six books are good reference works, each with its own qualities:

- *A History of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-72, The Long March to Power*, by James Pinckney Harrison provides a lot of information on the evolution of Chinese communism.
- *A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1949*, by Jacques Guillermez, has a very clear outline. It is more precise on military questions than original in terms of political thought.
- *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution and China from the 1911 Revolution to Liberation*, by Jean Chesneaux et al., is a very useful systematic presentation with many documents. It is often written from a standpoint very favorable to Maoism.
- *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, by Lucien Bianco, is an original analysis and very interesting synthesis of the course followed by the Chinese revolution, with particular attention to its social background.
- *Mao Tse-tung*, a biography by Stuart Schram, presents the now classic analysis of the formation of Maoism. Schram is one of the first authors to have focused on the question of the "sinification" of Marxism.
- *Marxism and Asia, 1853-1964*, by Hélène Carrère d'Encausse and Stuart Schram enables the reader to reconstruct the international context of the communist movement; an anthology, it includes documents by authors known only by specialists, and touches on many controversial questions.

a few other books...

... criticizing Stalinist policy in China and presenting the views of the Left Opposition:

- *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* by Harold Isaacs, a classical study of the Second Chinese Revolution and Communist defeat of 1927. The first edition was written when the author was a revolutionary and supported the Trotskyist position. The edition now available was revised when the author was no longer a revolutionary. Nevertheless it remains quite useful.
- *Leon Trotsky on China*, edited by Leslie Evans and Russell Block, brings together the bulk of the Russian leader's writings on China from 1925 to 1940.

➤ Peng Shuzi, one of the leaders of Chinese Trotskyism, wrote the "Introduction" to the above collection, and lays out his analysis of the trajectory of the Chinese Communist Party in it.

➤ In *Chinese Revolutionary*, Wang Fanxi, another Trotskyist militant, recounts the formation of the Chinese Left Opposition in the USSR and presents an analysis of the role of the CCP which is different from Peng's.

...eyewitness accounts

Three reports written at the time by Western travelers particularly deserve to be read by those who wish to understand the history of the Chinese revolution and CCP:

➤ Edgar Snow wrote ** Red Star Over China* after visiting the Communist zones in 1936-1937, a key transitional period between the Long March and the Sino-Japanese war, and interviewing the CCP leaders, a scoop at the time.

➤ In ** China Shakes the World*, Jack Belden sketches an extraordinary panorama of the situation and struggles in different regions of the country from 1946 to 1949, at the height of the civil war that led to the victory of 1949.

➤ William Hinton's ** Fanshen* is contemporary with Belden's book: it is a fascinating study of the history of one village in North China during the civil war and land reform; it is one of the rare concrete illustrations of many aspects of revolutionary developments in the countryside.

...writings of Chinese leaders

One should, of course read the writings of *Mao Zedong. But the *Works* of other CCP leaders are now being published again in English by Peking and also deserve to be studied. We should mention for the period before 1949 the *Works* of *Liu Shaoqi, *Zhou Enlai and *Zhu De.

With respect to Mao Zedong, the 5-volumes of *Selected Works* (the first four volumes cover the period before 1949 and were published while he was alive) should be complemented by Stuart Schram's *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*. This anthology is very well put together, with an interesting introduction, and presents the original version of the texts touched up by Mao in 1951 for official publication. It is therefore a complement, but not a substitute for the *Selected Works*, which offer, despite the amendments, an irreplaceable overview of the Maoist outlook.

and for fun...

➤ ...relax while you learn about imperial China with Robert Van Gulik's *Judge Ti's Investigations*.

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Bibliography

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