Mao Tse-tung and Secret Societies

By STUART R. SCHRAM

THAT Mao Tse-tung owes his rise to power to the support of the Chinese peasantry is an obvious and undisputed fact. The oldest controversy regarding his career concerns the degree of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy which can be attributed to such a peasant-based revolution in an agrarian country. Considerable attention has also been devoted to the guerrilla methods by which this revolution was carried out, and to the relative importance of the appeals of nationalism and of social justice in rallying the peasants to Mao's banner. The fact that Mao himself has his roots among the Chinese peasantry has, of course, not been overlooked, but it has been considered primarily in the light of the advantages which Mao drew from this background in understanding and manipulating the peasantry. There is not the least doubt that Mao, who has been a Marxist revolutionary for some forty-five years, has endeavoured throughout his political career to exploit his knowledge of the Chinese masses in order to lead them towards goals lying partly outside their tradition-bound universe. But at the same time, he has, even yet, not totally transcended the inheritance of his youth although he is making a furious effort to do so through the current "cultural revolution." When the patterns of his thought and action were taking shape, roughly in the decade 1926–36, he was still closer to his origins. It is therefore imperative to study not only what Mao Tse-tung has done with (or to) the Chinese peasantry, but what he owes to the fact that he was originally a part of it.

The present article is devoted to an aspect of this problem: Mao's relations with, and attitudes towards, a highly characteristic traditional form of organisation closely linked to the peasantry—the secret societies. This topic cannot be separated from the larger context of his links with the peasantry and with peasant traditions in general. On several occasions, Mao has affirmed that, once he went to Changsha in 1910 to study at the middle school there, he completely repudiated his peasant background. Thus, in 1936, in his autobiography as told to Edgar Snow, he affirmed that during the time he spent in the army in the winter of 1911–12, he had adopted the student mentality according to which manual labour was degrading so that he spent a large part of his wages buying

water from the professional water-carriers, rather than fetch it himself.[1] Similar statements about his mentality during his student days are to be found in his speeches of May 1942 on problems of art and literature. In the latter case, he adds that it was only through revolutionary action that he came to realise that workers and peasants were morally far cleaner than students.[2]

There is unquestionably a good deal of truth in all this. A decade-and-a-half spent primarily in Changsha, Shanghai and Canton partially alienated Mao from rural China. And the worker-centred orthodox Marxism which was propagated by the Chinese Communist Party at the time of its foundation did not encourage him to look towards the peasantry during the years of his apprenticeship as a revolutionary. But at the same time it is doubtful whether he ever detached himself as completely as he claims from the social and intellectual world of his youth. In any case, even if, for a few years, he made a conscious effort in this direction, he could not divest himself of the imprint of his childhood and adolescence.

This point is not merely of abstract and academic interest. It means that Mao approached the peasantry in general, and the secret societies in particular, not simply from the outside, as a revolutionary seeking to manipulate them, but also with a certain degree of instinctive comprehension and sympathy.

The explicit evidence on Mao's attitude towards and relations with the secret societies is extremely limited. Considering that he carried on revolutionary struggles among the peasantry for over twenty years before coming to power, often in areas where the influence of the secret societies was strong, the references to this phenomenon in his published writings are surprisingly few. In fact, a careful search through the whole of the current edition of his *Selected Works*, and through some (though not all) of his writings not included in the official canon,[3] has turned up only three such references. We also possess a small amount of information about Mao's actual relations with members of the secret societies during the Chingkangshan period, which throws useful light on his approach to the problem. Though the conclusions which can be drawn from all this are only tentative, they are perhaps sufficiently suggestive to be of some general interest.

The information available dates primarily from the beginning and the end of the decade of apprenticeship. During the first period, Mao

[1] Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (London: Gollancz, 1937), p. 139.
[2] Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (London: Pall Mall, 1964), p. 225.
[3] In particular, his report at the Second Soviet Congress in January 1934 and his report to the October 1938 plenum of the Central Committee entitled "On the New Stage."

analysed the social basis of the secret societies and praised the revolutionary potential of their members. Later, at the end of the Long March, he attempted to exploit their rudimentary nationalist ideology in order to gain their support in the struggle against Japan.

By 1926 Mao was, of course, well launched on his career as a revolutionary, and according to his own statements had already rediscovered the peasantry. This rediscovery had taken place in the summer and early autumn of 1925. Mao had gone to his native village of Shao Shan " for a rest " at the end of 1924. When the May 30, 1925 incident led to a sudden upsurge of militancy among the peasantry, he returned to action and spent the months from June to October organising peasant associations in Hunan. Then, pursued by the police of his old enemy Chao Heng-t'i, the governor of the province, he fled to Canton, where he remained for approximately a year, until October 1926.[4]

In Canton, Mao engaged in a wide variety of activities in the Kuomintang apparatus. For our purposes, the most important of these was his participation in the Peasant Movement Training Institute of the Kuomintang Peasant Department. Mao was the principal of the Sixth Session of this institute, which lasted from May to October 1926.[5] In addition, he very probably lectured during the Fifth Session, which lasted from October to December 1925. The likelihood of this supposition is increased not only by the fact that with the Fifth Session the proportion of students from Hunan suddenly leaped to nearly 40 per cent. of the total, but by the fact that among them was Mao's own brother, Tse-min.[6]

One of the essential aims of the institute since P'eng P'ai founded it in 1924 was to train cadres for *armed* struggle as one of the essential aspects of the struggle of the peasantry. Approximately one-third of

[4] I date Mao's return to Canton in late October or early November 1925 for two reasons. On the one hand, he says in his autobiography that, having discovered the revolutionary potential of the peasants after the May 30 incident, he spent " a few months " organizing them before fleeing to Canton (Snow, p. 157). On the other hand, a source cited by Jerome Ch'en in *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 100, says that Mao arrived in Canton in November. Mao's arrival in Canton marks the beginning of a period of about a year for which the official Peking historiography grossly distorts the chronology of his activities to conceal the fact that he collaborated with Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang apparatus in Canton long after most other Communists in high-ranking positions had been eliminated following Chiang's March 1926 *coup*. For further details, see Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 81–93.

[5] See Eto Shinkichi's articles in *The China Quarterly*, Nos. 8 and 9 (1961–62); the report on the Sixth Session from *Chung-kuo Nung-min* (*The Chinese Peasant*), No. 9, 1926, reprinted in *Ti-i-tz'u Kuo-nei Ko-ming Chan-cheng Shih-ch'i ti Nung-min Yun-tung* (*The Peasant Movement during the First Revolutionary Civil War*) (Peking: People's Publishing House, 1953), pp. 20–32. Mao's appointment as principal of the Sixth Session, on March 16, 1926, is reported in the minutes of the Kuomintang Peasant Committee, in *Chung-kuo Nung-min*, No. 4, 1926.

[6] Tse-min's name appears in the complete list of students of the Fifth Session published in *Chung-kuo Nung-min*, No. 2, 1926.

the students' time was devoted to military training. This armed struggle was to be carried out by small groups of peasant self-defence corpsmen. Therefore Mao's attention was directed to the organisation of the peasantry on the lowest levels, and also to forces such as the secret societies which were capable of influencing the work of the peasant armies and of other modern-type revolutionary organisations.

It appears that Mao's articles of January and February 1926, the first dealing with the categories of the peasantry and the second with the classes of Chinese society in general, corresponded substantially to lectures which he gave at the Peasant Movement Training Institute. The relation between the two articles is characteristic. Mao first produced an analysis of class relations among the peasantry, and then deduced from it, by analogy, the "Analysis of All the Classes of Chinese Society" which constitutes (in a highly bowdlerised form) the first text in the current canon of the *Selected Works*. The wording of whole passages of the two articles is identical, but understandably the problem of the secret societies is treated at greater length in the article on the countryside. The corresponding passage represents the only attempt in the whole of Mao's writings to define the nature of the secret societies as a social phenomenon:

> The *yu-min* [rural vagrants or *éléments déclassés*] consist of peasants who have lost all opportunity of employment as a result of oppression and exploitation by the imperialists, the militarists and the landlords, or as a result of floods and droughts. They can be divided into soldiers, bandits, robbers, beggars and prostitutes. These five categories of people have different names, and they enjoy a somewhat different status in society. But they are all human beings, and they all have five senses and four limbs, and are therefore one. They each have a different way of making a living: the soldier fights, the bandit robs, the thief steals, the beggar begs and the prostitute seduces. But to the extent that they must all earn their livelihood and cook rice to eat, they are all one. They lead the most precarious existence of any human being. They have secret organisations in various places: for instance, the Triad Society in Fukien and Kwangtung; the Ko-lao-hui in Hunan, Hupei, Kweichow and Szechuan; the Big Sword Society in Anhwei, Hunan and Shantung; the Society of Morality in Chihli and the three north-eastern provinces; the Green Gang in Shanghai and elsewhere. These serve as their mutual aid societies in the political and economic struggle. To find a place for this group of people is the greatest and most difficult problem faced by China. China has two problems: poverty and unemployment. Hence, if the problem of unemployment can be solved, half of China's problems will be solved. The number of *yu-min* in China is fearfully large; it is roughly more than twenty millions. These people are capable of fighting very bravely, and if properly led, can become a revolutionary force.[7]

[7] *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 176.

The origins and nature of the *yu-min* is a complex sociological problem, and Mao's definition may or may not be adequate. Of greater interest is his clear affirmation that the *yu-min* constitute the *only*, or at least the principal, basis of the secret societies. In 1951 Mao added a phrase to the parallel but much briefer passage in the article on the classes in Chinese society, affirming that the *yu-min* were inclined to be destructive.[8] At the same time, he definitely did not regard them, even at the time, as a decisive force in the revolution.

> Our work of organising the peasantry involves gathering . . . into a single organisation the peasant landholders, semi-landholders, share-croppers, poor peasants and farm labourers and handicraftsmen. . . . As for the *yu-min*, one should exhort them to side with the peasants' associations and to join the great revolutionary movement to help solve the problem of unemployment; one should never force them to go over to the side of the enemy and become a force in the service of the counter-revolutionaries.

Thus, for Mao in 1926 the *yu-min* and their secret societies were good revolutionary fighters, but they were also a somewhat ambiguous force, since they might go over to the enemy. In 1927, in his celebrated report on the peasant movement in Hunan, Mao supplemented his analysis of the social basis of the secret societies with a few remarks on the mentality to which they corresponded. These are to be found in the paragraph on eliminating banditry. According to Mao, in the areas where the peasant associations have established their authority, banditry and even petty thievery have totally disappeared. He explains this in part by the great efficiency of the peasant organisations, and their omnipresence, but also by the role of political activity as an outlet for pent-up resentments and the desire for action:

> The members of the secret societies have all joined the peasant associations, in which they can openly and legally play the hero and vent their grievances, so that there is no further need for the secret "mountain," "lodge," "shrine" and "river" forms of organisation. In killing the pigs and sheep of the local bullies and bad gentry and imposing heavy levies and fines, they have adequate outlets for their feelings against those who oppressed them.[9]

In the course of his adventures on the Chingkangshan, Mao was to be most intimately exposed both to the social basis (the *yu-min*) and to the adventurous mentality he had attributed to the secret societies. In the difficult circumstances in which he now found himself, he went

[8] See *Selected Works* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), I, p. 19.
[9] *Selected Works*, I, p. 53. (Translation modified slightly to bring it into accord with the original Chinese text contained in the supplement to the 1947 edition of the *Hsuan-chi* (*Selected Works*), p. 36, which says that *all*, and not merely some, of the members of the secret societies have joined the peasant associations.)

forward to an even more favourable judgment of these groups than he had expressed in 1926.

In texts written during the Chingkangshan period or shortly afterwards, Mao admitted that "the soldiers of peasant or working-class origin in the Fourth Army in the Border Area constitute an extreme minority" and that the *yu-min* represented "a majority of Red Army soldiers."[10] The secret societies were directly implanted among these elements. In his autobiography, Mao has told us how, on ascending the Chingkangshan, he united with two bandit leaders, Wang Tso and Yuan Wen-ts'ai, and transformed them temporarily into "faithful communists:"[11] In an account published in January 1930 in the military organ of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, we find these two men described as bandits (*liü lin*) and leaders of the Triad Society (*Hung-hui shou-ling*).[12]

Knowledge of the secret societies was probably not very developed among the staff of the Central Committee in Shanghai, and "*Hung-hui*" may stand either for the secret societies in general, or for the Triad. In fact, it is very possible that Wang and Yuan were leaders of the Ko-lao-hui, which was highly influential in Hunan at the time. In any case, the anti-Ch'ing traditions of the Triad and the Ko-lao-hui were very similar, and in 1907 the representatives of the two societies in Japan had actually joined together with those of two other societies to form the Kung-chin-hui or "Society for Mutual Progress."[13] Chu Teh, who was soon to join Mao on the Chingkangshan, was, as he has related himself, a high dignitary of the Ko-lao-hui.[14] Thus we can assume that the role of the secret societies in the relationships among the various leaders, and between the leaders and the troops, while we cannot define it with precision, was certainly not negligible.

What was Mao's reaction to this situation, in which he was obliged to rely not merely on the peasantry but on still more strange and disparate elements in order to fashion his "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army"? He decided, as he wrote in his report of November 1928 to the Central Committee, to "intensify political training, so as to effect a qualitative change in these elements."[15]

This last clause has disappeared in the current edition of the *Selected Works*—and no wonder. For the idea that rural vagrants can

[10] *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 196, 200.
[11] Snow, p. 166.
[12] *Chung-yang Chün-shih T'ung-hsün* (*Central Military Correspondence*), No. 1, January 15, 1930.
[13] Wu Yü-chang, *The Revolution of 1911* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1962), p. 94.
[14] Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road. The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956), *passim*, especially pp. 88–89.
[15] *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 196.

be transformed by suitable training into the vanguard of the proletariat is hardly an orthodox one. It is, however, a striking reflection of the extreme voluntarism which has characterised Mao's variant of Leninism from beginning to end. A bit later, in his letter of January 1930 to Lin Piao, he expressed the opinion that if Lin was unduly pessimistic regarding the possibility of a rapid victory in all of Kiangsi Province, this was because he " overestimated objective forces and underestimated subjective forces." [16] (Today it would appear that Lin has got over this error.)

But the presence in Mao's army of singularly unproletarian elements, suitable purified by indoctrination, did not merely reflect the difficulty of securing soldiers and officers of suitable class origin, though this is naturally how he presented the matter to his superiors in the Party. It also corresponded to a fundamental bent of his own temperament and imagination. From childhood he had admired the bandit heroes of the popular Chinese novels, and though his vision of the world was no longer circumscribed by the horizon of the peasant rebel, neither did his Marxist convictions lead him to repudiate the enthusiasms of his youth. There is little doubt that the sympathy for the outcasts of society manifested in his articles of 1926 persisted during the time that he was on the Chingkangshan, and that he accepted the support of bandits and members of the secret societies not merely with resignation but with a certain satisfaction.

Mao's sympathy for these old-fashioned rebels was by no means shared by the Central Committee, still less by the Communist International. In December 1927 the Central Committee sent two urgent messages to Chu Teh, ordering him to go to the Chingkangshan and join with Mao, in order to correct Mao's deviations. Chief among these was a tendency to take himself for one of the heroes of Liang Shan P'o, and to carry out heroic exploits on behalf of the masses rather than to rouse the masses to carry out an armed insurrection.[17]

For the attitude of the Communist International, a curious indication is to be found in a letter of December 1929 to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Mao's base-building is lumped together with the Red Spears and similar rebellious activities of a traditional type directly inspired by the secret societies:

> One characteristic which distinguishes . . . the revolutionary upsurge in China is peasant warfare. The counter-revolution of the *bourgeoisie* and the landlords has not succeeded in definitively repressing the revolutionary peasant movement. The uprisings of Moslems, of

[16] *Hsuan-chi*, 1947 edition, supplement, pp. 98–99.
[17] *Chung-yang Cheng-chih T'ung-hsün* (*Central Political Correspondence*), No. 16, pp. 81–89 (letters dated December 21 and December 27, 1927).

> "Red Spears," etc., . . . which are under reactionary leadership, but which are objectively revolutionary because of their mass character, and above all the general development of the mass agrarian movement in the majority of the Chinese provinces, the soviet regions which have survived and which recently have been enlarged and reinforced, the incessant guerrilla warfare in the South—all this has become one of the channels through which will flow the future powerful upsurge of the revolutionary movement in all China. But the truest and most essential sign of an upsurge which is developing is the renewed activity of the workers' movement.[18]

This passage constitutes a particularly striking example of the priority of urban over rural developments which characterised Comintern policy throughout the 1930s. Mao's soviet base areas are regarded in the Comintern letter as merely one more proof—though, to be sure, a slightly more important one than the activities of the "Red Spears" —that the Kuomintang Government had not yet succeeded in crushing peasant unrest completely. It is suggested that the soviets are less important than the activities of a more orthodox type among the peasantry throughout the territory of China. Indeed, six months earlier the Comintern had actually recommended that Mao's whole enterprise be liquidated in favour of tactics modelled on those laid down for the cities of Western Europe at the Sixth Comintern Congress.[19]

The attitude both of Moscow and of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party regarding the value of Mao's tactics was profoundly modified after the remarkable successes of the Red Army in late 1929 and early 1930. In the following period of the Kiangsi Soviet Republic, the influence of the secret societies in the base areas presumably did not disappear overnight. But I have not discovered any references by Mao either to the secret societies or more generally to the *yu-min* during this time.

The last and by far the most important text of Mao referring to the secret societies was the appeal of 1936 to the Ko-lao-hui. This text was published in *Tou-cheng* (*Struggle*), the organ of the Chinese Communist Party, and presumably distributed also in the form of handbills. It represents a completely different approach to the secret societies, reflecting the changed political conditions in which Mao found himself. The

[18] *Strategiya i taktika Kominterna v natsional'no-kolonial'noy revolyutsii na primere Kitaya* (*Strategy and Tactics of the Comintern in the National and Colonial Revolution, according to the Chinese Example*) (Moscow: 1934).

[19] *Ibid.* p. 242. This document reads in part: "Our tactics in the countryside should correspond to the work of the Party in winning over the urban proletariat in the process of its day-to-day economic struggles. It is not at all necessary to begin the peasant movement immediately with calls for carrying out an agrarian revolution, with guerrilla warfare and uprisings. On the contrary, the current situation in China dictates to the party the task of exploiting particular and minor conflicts." See Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, p. 140.

Central Committee plenum of December 1935 had called for a "Government of National Defence," and little by little China was moving towards a national united front against Japan. In this context, Mao resorted to an attempt to demonstrate the similarity, amounting almost to identity, between the anti-Ch'ing nationalism of the Ko-lao-hui and the anti-Japanese programme of the Chinese Communist Party. He wrote:

> In the past you supported the restoration of the Han and the extermination of the Manchus; today, we support resistance to Japan and the salvation of the country. You support striking at the rich and helping the poor; we support striking at the local bullies and dividing up the land. You despise wealth and defend justice, and you gather together all the heroes and brave fellows in the world; we do not spare ourselves to save the country and the world, we unite the exploited and oppressed peoples and groups of the whole world. Our views and our positions are therefore quite close.[20]

Mao also wrote in this text that Liu Chih-tan, who had been one of the founders of the soviets in north China prior to the arrival of the main Red Army after the Long March, was not only a leader of the Red Army, but an "exemplary member" of the Ko-lao-hui. Thus Mao's remarks on the secret societies did not represent mere abstractions but were linked to his day-to-day experiences. It is further stated in his appeal that a "reception bureau" (*chao-tai-ch'u*) for Ko-lao-hui members fleeing the white areas had been created in the soviet region. This is confirmed by Edgar Snow, who writes, in a passage dealing with the role of various auxiliary organisations in the soviet areas: "Even the Elder Brother Society, an ancient secret organisation, was brought into soviet life and given open and legal work to do."[21]

The summer of 1936, when this appeal was issued, was a particularly difficult time for Mao and his comrades. The military strength at their disposal was still relatively small after the losses of the Long March, and Chiang Kai-shek was by no means reconciled as yet to the continuing existence of the Communists and was planning a new effort to exterminate them. In these circumstances Mao appealed to every conceivable ally among the national, social or religious groups in the neighbourhood of his base in the north-west. He called upon the Inner Mongolians to "preserve the glory of the epoch of Genghis Khan," and advised the Moslem minorities of Sinkiang and elsewhere to take as their "compass" the national revival of the Turks.[22]

That all of these initiatives represented attempts to exploit politically

[20] See below the appendix containing a complete translation of Mao's "Appeal to the Ko-lao-hui."
[21] Snow, p. 224.
[22] For references and further details, see Chap. VIII of Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*.

more naïve allies by speaking their own language is obvious enough. But this does not mean that there was not a certain degree of sincerity in Mao's utterances as well. To the Hunanese nationalist who as an adolescent had admired Tseng Kuo-fan, and whose first conscious political impression had been anguish about the destiny of China, the glory of Genghis Khan or the Turkish national revival were more than merely manipulative symbols. As for the Ko-lao-hui, Mao had such a high idea of its revolutionary virtues that in talking to Edgar Snow, he attributed to it virtually the whole credit for the 1911 revolution in Hunan Province, though the leaders of the uprising in Changsha were in fact long-standing members of the T'ung-meng-hui.[23]

What can one conclude from these fragmentary facts about Mao and secret societies? It is of interest to note, first of all, that even these few details are not stressed in accounts of Mao's life published today in Peking. The secret societies may have been useful auxiliaries prior to 1949, but since that date they have been considered as feudal and reactionary, and it is not in order to emphasise the fact that Chairman Mao ever had any dealings with them. The appeal to the Ko-lao-hui naturally does not appear in the current edition of the *Selected Works*, nor does the article of January 1926 on the peasantry, with its colourful account of the social basis of the secret societies. The much briefer passage in the "Analysis of All the Classes in Chinese Society" has been, as indicated above, modified by the addition of a phrase denouncing the destructive tendencies of the *éléments déclassés*. All this is in keeping with a larger pattern now prevailing in Peking of de-emphasising the Chinese and traditional aspects of the revolution so as to demonstrate that it was and is orthodox and therefore universal. In recent months this anti-traditionalist tendency has, of course, gone infinitely further.

Secondly, the fact that there is so little to be found on a subject manifestly so important, even in the contemporary texts of Mao's writings, serves to underline once more how much basic research remains to be done before we can arrive at a really adequate understanding either of Mao or of the Chinese Communist movement. Precise knowledge of Mao's concrete relations with the secret societies in Hunan in the 1920s, on the Chingkangshan, in Kiangsi and in Yenan days

[23] Snow, p. 138. The *tu-tu*, Chiao Ta-feng, was not, as claimed by Mao, a poor man, but the son of a large landed proprietor owning over 500 *mou*, who had broken with his family as a result of his revolutionary convictions. (This fact, reported by Feng Tzu-yu, *Ko-ming I-shih*, II, p. 280, is accepted and elaborated upon by a Communist historian, Li Shih-yueh, *Hsin-hai Ko-ming Shih-ch'i Liang-Hu Ti-ch'ü ti Ko-ming Yun-tung* (*Revolutionary Activity in Hunan and Hupei at the Time of the 1911 Revolution*) (Peking: San-lien Shu-tien, 1961), p. 97.) He had joined the T'ung-meng-hui while a student in Japan in 1906.

would obviously give fuller meaning to his few fragmentary published references to the subject.

But even from the little we do know, it is possible to see once more how complex and ambiguous is the process of transforming a society with strongly rooted traditions on the basis of an ideology of foreign origin. Mao has told us that the two bandit chieftains and leaders of the secret societies with whom he allied himself on the Chingkangshan were "faithful Communists" so long as he remained on the scene. But the account of the former political commissar in Wang Tso's regiment about how he gained Wang's confidence reads for all the world like the story of how Chu-ko Liang convinced Kuan Yü and Chang Fei of his superior tactical skill in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.[24]

To be sure, Communism has not been simply swallowed up by the mentality and habits of traditional China, as some would have it. But it has been, if not "sinified," then at least bound up in an amalgam with ideas and forces that have little in common with Marxism. This is not an original conclusion, but it emerges with singular clarity from the scanty information about Mao's relations with some of the most tradition-bound forces in Chinese society.

Appendix

Appeal of the Central Soviet Government to the Ko-lao-hui

Brothers of the Ko-lao-hui!

Recently the mortal enemies of our Chinese nation, the Japanese imperialists, have been constantly increasing the ferocity of their savage robber actions to swallow up China. Not only have they occupied our four north-eastern provinces, but they have gone further and established *de facto* control over the whole of northern China. They have not merely engaged in smuggling, thus ruining the whole of our economic life, and increasing various forms of suffering such as bankruptcy and unemployment, but they have established a colonial régime in Taiwan and Korea, and they have sent more than 50,000 additional soldiers into northern China. All of these political and economic methods are calculated to turn northern China into a second "Manchukuo," to make of northern China a base for an assault on all of China. Moreover, they are just now engaged in carrying out a ruthless invasion of north-western, central and southern China, and endeavouring to swallow up all of China and turn it into their colony; they want to turn our 400,000,000 brothers into their slaves and beasts of burden. The grievous misfortune of the loss of our state and the extinction of our race is already singeing our eyebrows; we find ourselves before an imminent crisis in which life and death, survival or ruin are at

[24] The commissar succeeded in "transforming" Wang's regiment by organising an ambush to destroy the leader of the local *min-t'uan*: *Hui-i Ching-kang-shan Ch'ü ti Tou-cheng* (*Recollections of the Struggle in the Ching kang shan Area*) (Peking: Workers Publishing House, 1955), pp. 16–18.

stake. Apart from a few traitors who are selling out their country [*han-chien mai-kuo-tsei*], there is no one among all those Chinese who are in the slightest degree upright, among those Chinese who are unwilling to be slaves without a country, whose hair does not stand on end with anger, whose bosom is not filled with rage, and who does not want to wage a war of resistance to the death against Japan! Today the military leaders of the south-west, Li Tsung-jen, Ch'en Ch'i-tang, etc., have raised the banner of resistance to Japan, and moved their armies northwards. Moreover, they have demanded of the Nanking Government and Mr. Chiang Kai-shek to go forth and do battle against Japan. The anti-Japanese national revolutionary war has already entered a new stage.

Formerly, following its principles—"Restore the Han and exterminate the Ch'ing," "Strike at the rich and aid the poor"—the Ko-lao-hui participated actively in the anti-Manchu revolutionary movement of 1911. The revolution in northern Shensi has also benefited from the considerable aid, support and active participation of comrades from the Ko-lao-hui. Comrades such as Hsieh Tzu-ch'ang or Liu Chih-tan are not only leaders of the Red Army; they are also exemplary members of the Ko-lao-hui. This revolutionary spirit, these glorious feats, must be manifested even more widely in today's heroic struggle to save the country and save ourselves.

The Central Chinese People's Soviet Government has many times in the past proclaimed its views about resisting Japan and saving the country, and called upon all those who are unwilling to be slaves without a country to unite, without distinction of party or class, and go and fight together against our common enemies—the Japanese imperialists and the traitors who are selling out their country—in order to secure the independence and liberation of the Chinese nation. The Ko-lao-hui has always been representative of the organisations of the resolute men of our nation, and of the broad masses of peasants and toilers. It has constantly been the victim of the oppression of the militarists and the bureaucrats; its members have been considered as "inferior people" or calumnied as "bandits," and it was denied a legal existence. The treatment inflicted on the Ko-lao-hui by the ruling class is really almost identical with that inflicted on us! In the past, you supported the restoration of the Han and the extermination of the Manchus; today, we support resistance to Japan and saving the country. You support striking at the rich and helping the poor; we support striking at the local bullies and dividing up the land. You despise wealth and defend justice, and you gather together all the heroes and brave fellows in the world; we do not spare ourselves to save China and the world, we unite the oppressed and exploited peoples and social strata of the whole world. Our views and our positions are therefore quite close; there is even more complete correspondence as regards our enemies and the road towards salvation. Consquently, we once more make a special and very sincere appeal to all our brothers of the Ko-lao-hui throughout the whole country. Regardless of our past subjects of discord or mutual grievances, we must now forget them in order to unite under the slogan of resisting Japan and saving the country. Let us constitute a close and intimate alliance of brothers, let us together defend righteousness and come to the aid of our country in its need. This is your sacred duty, and the sacred duty of the whole Chinese people!

The Soviet Government is the government of the oppressed people of

China. We have the responsibility to receive and to protect all those who are persecuted and threatened with arrest by the Kuomintang Government. Consequently, the Ko-lao-hui can exist legally under the Chinese Soviet Government. Moreover, we have instituted a reception bureau for the Ko-lao-hui for receiving all the heroes, brave fellows and courageous fighters for upright causes who are unable to maintain themselves in the white areas. We hope and request that the lodge masters and grand masters of the various lodges in all parts of the country, and our brothers among the brave fellows on every hand, will send representatives or come themselves to discuss with us plans for saving the country. We await them with enthusiasm, and will give them a hearty welcome! We proclaim loudly:

Show the revolutionary spirit that characterised the Ko-lao-hui in the past!

Let the Ko-lao-hui and the whole of the Chinese people unite to strike at Japan and to restore China!

Long live the liberation of the Chinese people!

The Chairman of the Central Government of the Chinese People's Soviet Republic:

MAO TSE-TUNG,
July 15, 1936.