CHAPTER TWENTY-FIV

25

War and Revolution, China (1927–1949)

The Chinese Communist Party

The Nationalist Government in Nanjing

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The Chinese Communist Party During the War

The Civil War and the Communist Victory

During the two decades from 1927 to 1949, China was ruled by Nationalist Party and its head, Chiang Kaishek. The Nationa government turned toward the West for help in modernizing the coun but in general was distrustful of intellectuals. In its big cities, above in Shanghai, China took on a more modern look with tall buildings, partment stores, and Western dress. The government had to concentra most of its energies on military matters, first combating the remaini warlords, then the Communist Party bases, then Japan. The Commun Party attracted a small but highly committed following. Because the Nationalists' pressure, it was on the run much of the time until base area was established in Yan'an (yen-ahn) in 1935, where Ma Zedong emerged as the paramount leader. During the war with Japa (1937–1945), the Communist Party formed itself into a potent rev lutionary force, able to mobilize poor peasants into a well-discipline fighting force. The Civil War of 1947–1949 resulted in the victory of th Communist Party.

The large questions behind much of the scholarly work on thi period revolve around the outcome in 1949. Why did May Fourt liberalism decline in significance? Could the economic policies of th Nationalists have brought prosperity to China if Japan had not invad ed? How much of a difference did the Comintern's often misguide instructions make to the development of the Communist Party? Hov crucial was Mao to the way the policies of the party developed? Why did the Nationalist Party and Chiang Kaishek lose the support of the urban middle class?

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

With the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, Chinese intellectuals began to take an interest in Marxism–Leninism, which seemed to provide a blueprint for a world of abundance without

loitation. Communism appeared scientific, i-Western, anti-imperialist, and successful: it just proved itself capable of bringing revolu- ı to a backward country. For the May 1919 is- of *New Youth*, Li Dazhao (lee dah-jow), the :arian at Beijing University, wrote an introduc- ı to Marxist theory, explaining such concepts class struggle and capitalist exploitation. Soon ellectuals were also looking into the works of ıin and Trotsky, who predicted an imminent ernational revolutionary upheaval that would ng an end to imperialism. Although China did t have much of a proletariat to be the vanguard its revolution, the nation as a whole, Li Dazhao gued, was exploited by the capitalist imperialist untries. In 1920, Li organized a Marxist study oup at Beijing University. At the same time, Chen uxiu organized one in Shanghai, where he had ɔne after resigning his university post in Beijing. nother source of knowledge of European Marxism ere the thousands of Chinese students, male ıd female, who had gone to France in 1919 and 920 to participate in work-study programs. Most 'orked in factories, where they were introduced to oth strikes and Marxism–Leninism.

The early Marxist study groups were offered nancial assistance and guidance by the Comintern. ı 1920, soon after the Comintern learned of the xistence of Marxist study groups in China, agents vere sent to help turn the groups into party cells. This entailed teaching "democratic centralism," he secret to party discipline. Each local cell elected lelegates to higher levels, up to the national party congress, with its central executive committee and :he latter's standing committee. Delegates flowed up, and decisions flowed down. Decisions could be de- bated within a cell, but once decisions were reached, all were obligated to obey them. This cell structure provided a degree of discipline and centralization beyond anything in the prior repertoire of Chinese organizational behavior.

Following Comintern advice, thirteen delegates met in July 1921 to form the Chinese Communist Party as a secret, exclusive, centralized party. The party broke with the anarchists and guild social- ists and asserted the primacy of class struggle. Chen Duxiu was chosen as secretary general. The party agreed to put priority on organizing labor unions and recruiting workers into the party. In Shanghai, the new Communist Party oversaw the establishment of a Russian language school, helped organize labor unions, and formed the Socialist Youth Corps.

At the insistence of the Comintern and against the advice of many of the Chinese members, the deci- sion was made in 1922 to ally with the Nationalists. The United Front between the Nationalist and Communist parties was expedient for both at the time because they could concentrate on their com- mon foe, the warlords. However, it covered over deep differences. The Nationalist military included many staunch anticommunists who were appalled by talk of class warfare. One reason the communists re- mained in the United Front was that it gave them the opportunity to organize both workers and peasants. Along the route of the Northern Expedition, farm- ers' associations were established, with membership exceeding 1 million people by the end of 1926.

The United Front ended in the spring of 1927. On March 21, as the Nationalist army neared Shanghai, the Communist-led General Labor Union called for a general strike. More than six hundred thousand workers responded and seized the city. Flush with victory, they began demanding the return of the foreign concessions. On April 11, the head of the union was invited to the home of the leader of the mafia-like Green Gang, where he was murdered. The next day Green Gang members and soldiers loyal to Chiang attacked union headquarters. Soon soldiers were mowing down civilians with machine guns; an estimated five thousand were killed.

The terror quickly spread to other cities. The labor union base of the Communist Party was destroyed. Although the party tried to continue working with the left wing of the Nationalist Party in Wuhan, Chiang's show of force carried the day. By July 1927 the Soviet advisers had withdrawn from the Nation- alist army, and the United Front was over.

That fall, the Communist Party tried to organize uprisings in both cities and the countryside, but none met with much success. A failed uprising in Guangzhou led to the execution of three thousand to four thousand worker revolutionaries. From 1927 through 1930, the hunt was on for Communist organizers all over the country; in some areas, the only evidence that troops needed in order to conclude that a young woman was a communist was bobbed hair. The surviving Communist leadership was driv- en underground and into the countryside. On orders of the Comintern, Chen Duxiu was blamed for these disasters and expelled from the Communist Party. Party membership, which had reached about sixty

thousand in April 1927, plummeted to fewer than ten thousand within the year.

Mao Zedong's Emergence as a Party Leader

Through the 1920s, Mao Zedong was just one of hundreds of Communist Party organizers. He ended up playing such an important role in twentieth-century Chinese history that it is useful to begin with his early experiences.

Mao was born in 1893 in a farming village about 30 miles south of Changsha (chahng-shah), the capital of Hunan province. He began helping out on his father's 3-acre farm when he was six. At age eight, in 1901, he entered the local primary school, where he studied for six years. Mao then worked full time on the farm for three years, from ages thirteen to sixteen. When he was fourteen years old, he was betrothed to the eighteen-year-old daughter of a neighbor, but she died in 1910, and Mao left the farm to continue his education. One of his teachers was a returned student from Japan, and from him Mao became fascinated with the writings of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. In 1911, at age seventeen, Mao walked the 30 or so miles to Changsha to enter a middle school. Not only was Changsha a large city, but also the new provincial assembly was then meeting, and all sorts of newspapers were in circulation. Mao joined student demonstrations against the Qing government and cut off his queue. Then, in October, revolutionary soldiers seized power in nearby Wuhan, and the fall of the Qing Dynasty soon followed. Mao, wanting to be a part of the action, joined the republican army, but after six months of garrison duty in Changsha, he quit to continue his education.

For a year Mao spent his days at the Changsha public library reading world history and Chinese translations of works by such Western writers as Rousseau, Montesquieu, J. S. Mill, Adam Smith, and Charles Darwin. Only when his father refused to support him any longer unless he enrolled in a school that gave degrees did he enter the Hunan Provincial Fourth Normal School, where he studied for five years (1913–1918). The teacher there who had the greatest impact on him was Yang Changji, a social science teacher deeply interested in philosophy, which he had studied during his decade abroad in Japan, Great Britain, and Germany. Mao came to share Yang's dissatisfaction with the physical fitness of Chinese intellectuals, and he wrote an article on physical education that was published in *New Youth* in 1917.

Mao was twenty-four years old when he gradua
When Yang moved to Beijing to take up an appo
ment at Beijing University, Mao followed him. Y
helped him get a job as a clerk in the library, wh
made him a subordinate of Li Dazhao, only four ye
his senior but already well known in intellectual
cles, having studied law for six years in Japan a
having been offered a position on the editorial bo
of *New Youth*. That year Li Dazhao wrote ab
Marxism and the Russian Revolution for *New You*

Before he had been in Beijing a year, Mao h
to return home because his mother was ill, but
stopped to visit Shanghai for a couple of weeks
the way. Mao thus missed the excitement at Beiji
University during the May Fourth incident. Back
Changsha, Mao took a teaching job and started h
own magazine, producing four issues with articles
topics such as democracy, unions, and fighting o
pression. Mao also turned his hand to organizin
forming the Hunan United Students Associatio
and organizing a strike of thirteen thousand midd
school students against the local warlord.

After his mother died, Mao returned to Beijing t
find Professor Yang desperately ill. At the beginning
1920, Mao's father and Yang both died. When Ma
returned to Hunan a few months later, he was appoin
ed principal of a primary school. That seems to hav
left him some time; he also organized a cooperativ
bookstore that proved a commercial success. Professo
Yang's daughter Yang Kaihui (yahng ky-hway) als
returned to Hunan, and by the end of 1920 she an
Mao were living together. Two years later, their firs
son was born, and they spoke of themselves as married

It was not until 1920 that Mao showed particula
interest in Marxism. Part of this new interest came
from letters he received from fellow students who had
gone to France. When the first meeting of the Com-
munist Party was held in Shanghai in July 1921, Mao
was one of the two delegates from Hunan. He was
sent back to Hunan with instructions to build up the
party there and develop ties to labor unions. Mao re-
cruited former classmates, his two younger brothers,
and others to help him organize unions and strikes. In
early 1923, conforming to party policy, Mao joined
the Nationalist Party. That June he went to Guang-
zhou for the third congress of the Chinese Communist
Party. In December he sent in a pessimistic report on
the situation in Hunan, where peasant organizations
had been crushed and many factories had closed.

During much of 1924, Mao was away from home,
in Guangzhou or Shanghai, doing United Front work.

925 he did the opposite, returning to his home ge to work with peasants out of the reach of y authorities. In October 1925, he returned to ıngzhou and took up work for the Nationalist :y's propaganda department, becoming the direc- of the Peasant Training Institute in 1926. Dur- the Northern Expedition, Mao and those he had ned organized peasants in advance of the army. In ruary 1927, Mao submitted a highly positive re- t to the Communist Party on the revolution among peasants in Hunan who had seized power from dlords and felt the joy of righting ancient wrongs. n April 1927, when Chiang Kaishek unleashed terror in Shanghai, Mao was in Hunan. Follow- ; party instructions, he tried to ignite peasant in- rrection, but found that the terror had crushed the ›vement that only recently had looked so promis- g to him. Mao now wrote a report that empha- ed the need to back political ideas with military rce, contending, in his oft-quoted phrase, that ›olitical power is obtained from the barrel of the ın." In October 1927 he led his remaining peasant llowers into a mountain lair used by secret society embers on the border between Hunan and Jiangxi, lled Jinggangshan (jing-gahng-shahn). Mao lost ›ntact with Yang Kaihui, who had just given birth › their third son. He also was out of touch with ıe party hierarchy. He began to draw in other com- ıunists, among whom was nineteen-year-old He izhen (huh dzih-jun), from a nearby landlord fam- y, who had joined the party during the Northern xpedition. She and Mao, then thirty-four years old, ecame lovers and had a child in 1929.

In the mountain area that Mao's forces con- rolled, he pushed through an extreme form of land eform, redistributing all the land of the rich and equiring all the physically able to work. His troops uffered, however, with little in the way of arms or ammunition, clothes, or medicine.

In January 1929, Mao decided to look for a better-supplied base area that would be less vulnerable to Nationalist attacks. His choice was a border region between Jiangxi and Fujian, where he set up what came to be called the Jiangxi (jyahng-shee) Soviet. The party leadership, which could reach him there, quickly condemned him for his views on rural revolution and the role of military force. Mao fell ill and managed to avoid responding to the party's order that he go to Shanghai. In 1929–1930, Mao did, however, conduct an exhaustive study of rural life in one county in the Jiangxi Soviet, Xunwu (shyewn/shyun-woo) County, to learn more about how a party could be built on a peasant base. In his analysis of landownership, he classified the population into landlords (those who lived off the rents of their lands, subdivided into large, medium, and small landlords), rich peasants (those who rented out some land or made loans but worked the rest themselves), middle peasants (those who worked their own land without borrowing or hiring help), poor peasants (tenants and owners of plots too small to support them), and others, including hired hands, loafers, and those who did such manual labor as boatmen and porters. The vast majority of the population fell into the category of poor peasant or lower. When land was redistributed, many more would receive land than would lose it. In his study of Xunwu, Mao also recorded literacy rates, postal service, shops and services, and even the number of prostitutes.

The Communist Party leadership was still trying to ignite urban uprisings and in October 1930 assaulted Changsha. Not only did the attack fail, but also the Nationalists arrested Yang Kaihui and had her shot. The three young boys were sent by friends to Shanghai. The youngest died, and Mao did not see the other two until 1946.

THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT IN NANJING

The decision of the Nationalist Party to purge itself of communists did not delay the military unification of the country, and in 1928 the Nationalists gained the allegiance of three key warlords to reunite the country. It established its capital at Nanjing, not used as a capital since the early Ming Dynasty. International recognition quickly followed, and Western observers were more optimistic about the prospects for China than they had been for decades. Men who had studied in Western countries were appointed to many key government posts, and progressive policies were adopted, such as a new land law limiting rents and a new marriage law outlawing concubinage and allowing women to initiate divorce. (See **Biography: Yuetsim, Servant Girl.**) Over the next several years, most of the foreign powers consented to reductions in their special privileges. Tariff autonomy was recovered, as well as control over the Maritime Customs, Salt Administration, and Post Office. Foreign concessions were reduced from thirty-three to thirteen, and extraterritoriality was eliminated for some minor countries.

BIOGRAPHY

Yuetsim, Servant Girl

Yuetsim, born around 1910, knew nothing about her natal family. All she knew was that she had been kidnapped when she was about three years old and sold, through intermediaries, as a "slave girl." She thought disbanded soldiers then roaming the countryside might have been the ones who kidnapped her.

A Hong Kong family, the Yeos, purchased Yuetsim. Her master's father had been a successful merchant and had three concubines in addition to his wife. Her master, Mr. Yeo, was the son of the first concubine, and he held a modest government position as a clerk. When his wife had no children, he purchased a prostitute as a concubine, and she gave birth to four children. The wife, who had bound feet, rarely left her room. The family bought little Yuetsim to help the concubine with the housework and care of the children. It is difficult to imagine that a three-year-old could be of much use to anyone, but by four or five she could at least fetch and carry. Naturally, she never learned to read or write.

Because Yuetsim knew no other life, she put up with the way she was treated. Her mistress, the concubine, was often harsh and contemptuous. During this period, Hong Kong newspapers were filled with agitation against the custom of selling girls into bondage. Yuetsim, however, never heard anything of the movement or of the 1923 law that took the first steps toward outlawing the selling of girls into service. In December 1929 a further strengthening of the laws against child slavery required owners of slave girls to register them with the government, pay them wages, and free them at age eighteen. Because Mr. Yeo worked for the government and was known to have had a slave girl for years, he had to take some action. He might have married her off, as many masters did, but his concubine was so angry at losing Yuetsim's services that she simply ordered Yuetsim out of the house.

In 1930 one of the officials in charge of the registration of slave girls found a place for Yuetsim in a home for women and girls in need of protection, and she stayed there several years. Finally she went back to the Yeos as a maid, knowing no other place to go. Soon after her return, both the wife and the concubine died. Yuetsim continued to take care of the master and his children.

After the death of his wife and concubine, Mr. Yeo wanted to make Yuetsim his concubine. His children, however, were adamantly opposed and threatened to cut off contact with him if he went through with the marriage. They, after all, had known her all their lives as a humble servant. Although their own mother had been a prostitute before becoming their father's concubine, they thought marriage to a former slave girl would disgrace the family. Mr. Yeo gave in to them.

Yuetsim stayed on anyway. In retirement, Mr. Yeo's fortunes declined, but Yuetsim nursed him in his illnesses and shopped and cooked for him. She was still living with him when she told her story in 1978.

Questions for Analysis

1. How did Yuetsim's experiences shape her personality?
2. From Yuetsim's story, what were the challenges facing those who tried to improve women's situations through legal reform?

Source: Based on Maria Jaschok, *Concubines and Bondservants: The Social History of a Chinese Custom* (London: Zed Books, 1988), pp. 69–77.

From 1928 on, Chiang Kaishek was the leader of the Nationalists. From a landlord–merchant family near Ningbo, Chiang had aspired to take the civil service examinations, but when they were abolished, he went to Japan to study military science, joining the precursor of the Nationalist Party while there. His appointment to head the Whangpoa Academy in 1924 was a crucial one because it allowed him to form strong personal ties to young officers in the party's army. Once Chiang, a skillful politician, became fully enmeshed in party and government matters, he proved able to balance different cliques and build personal ties to key power holders. In 1927 he married Soong Meiling (sung may-ling), the daughter of a wealthy merchant family and the sister of Sun Yatsen's widow.

To modernize his army, Chiang turned to Germany, attracted by the success the Nazis were having in

ilizing and militarizing Germany. Indeed, Chiang argued, "Can fascism save China? We answer: Fascism is now what China most needs."* man advisers helped Chiang train an elite corps, campaigns against the communist base in gxi, and import German arms. Young officers ame members of the Blue Shirts, an organization oted to the nation and against such New Culture as as individualism. Chiang entrusted political ning in the army and schools to the Blue Shirts, o also took on secret service work.

Chiang was not a political progressive. He made attempt at elective democracy, as this was to be a iod of "political tutelage." The press was heavily nsored, and dissenters and suspected communists re arrested and often executed. To combat the intellectual appeal of the communists and build support for his government, Chiang in 1934 launched ideological indoctrination program, the New Life ovement. Its goal, he claimed, was to "militarize e life of the people of the entire nation" and to nurish in them "a capacity to endure hardship and pecially a habit and instinct for unified behavior" make them "willing to sacrifice for the nation at l times."†

Chiang was a patriot, however, and wanted a rong and modern China. Much progress was made economic modernization. Life in the major cities took on a more modern look. Conveniences like lectricity were gradually changing how all major ities functioned. A professional class, composed of cientists, engineers, architects, economists, physicians, and others with technical expertise, often acquired through study abroad, was gaining influence.

The Nationalists' modernizing programs unfortunately failed to bring improvements to the countryside. Most peasants had seen no improvement in their standard of living since Qing times. The government and private philanthropic organizations sponsored rural reconstruction projects that tried to raise the level of rural education, create facilities for credit, encourage modern enterprises, and form peasant associations, but gains were usually limited to small areas and short periods. Continued population growth to over 500 million by 1930 relentlessly increased the pressure on available land. The advantages brought by modernization—cheaper transportation by railroads and cheaper manufactured consumer goods—were yet to have a positive impact on the rural economy. China's exports were struggling, silk and tea having lost ground to Japanese and Indian competition, then all exports facing decreased demand due to the worldwide depression of the 1930s.

Popperfoto/Getty Images

Chiang Kaishek and Soong Meiling. In 1927, Chiang Kaishek married Soong Meiling, the younger sister of Sun Yatsen's widow. Soong came from a wealthy family, had been educated in the United States, and after the Japanese invasion worked hard to gain American support for China.

Shanghai

During the Nanjing Decade, Shanghai emerged as one of the major cities of the world. Since 1910 it had been China's most populous city, and by the 1930s it had about 4 million residents. It attracted Chinese entrepreneurs, especially those willing to collaborate with foreigners. It had China's largest port and was the commercial center of China. In the 1920s and 1930s it had half of China's modern industry.

*Cited in Lloyd Eastman, *Abortive Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 40.
†Cited in Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 415.

Shanghai attracted more foreigners than any of the other treaty ports, a high of more than thirty-six thousand. The British and Japanese were especially numerous because they owned the most foreign companies. Some of Shanghai's foreigners had come in the nineteenth century and stayed; others were there for only a few years. Among the merchant families who amassed huge fortunes were the Sassoons, from a family of Jewish traders active in Baghdad and Bombay. David Sassoon began by trading cotton from Bombay to China in the 1870s; his son Elias Sassoon bought warehouses in Shanghai later in the nineteenth century; and his grandson Victor Sassoon turned to real estate, in the 1930s reportedly owning nineteen hundred buildings in Shanghai, including those that are now the Peace and Cypress hotels. Some of the early employees of the Sassoons also made fortunes, including Silas Hardoon and Elly Kadoorie. Hardoon started as a night watchman in the 1870s. Kadoorie's mansion is now the Shanghai Children's Palace.

Because the international districts admitted anyone, no matter what their passport or visa status, Shanghai became a magnet for international refugees. After the Russian Revolution, many of the Russian bourgeoisie fled east via the trans-Siberian railroad. Later they made their way south through Manchuria, many eventually settling in Shanghai, often to find only menial jobs. In the 1930s, thousands of Jews fleeing the Nazis also found refuge in Shanghai, where they were aided by the wealthy Jewish families already there, such as the Sassoons, Hardoons, and Kadoories.

The foreign presence in Shanghai was visible to all in its Western-style roads and buildings. Along the river an embankment called the bund was built and was made into a park with signs posted that read "No dogs" and "No Chinese."

With its gambling parlors and brothels, Shanghai had a reputation as a sin city. Reportedly about fifty thousand women worked in Shanghai as prostitutes in the 1930s. Young women were also drawn into Shanghai to work in textile mills or as servants. In 1930 more than 170,000 women worked in industry, about half in cotton mills. The typical prostitute or mill hand was a young, unmarried, illiterate woman recruited in the countryside by a labor contractor. The contractor would supply a small advance payment, often to the girl's parents, and would make arrangements in the city for employment, housing, and food. The women w often kept in conditions of debt servitude. Some tory workers joined unions and engaged in stri others put their hopes on getting married and turning to the country. Women in Shanghai, fr factory girls and prostitutes to office workers a the wealthy, commonly wore dresses called *qip* a compromise between Western and Chinese sty (See **Material Culture: Qipao.**)

Shanghai also attracted Chinese intellectua especially as Nationalist censorship became m severe. If they worked from the Internatio District or French Concession, they were usua safe from the Chinese police. Dissidents, radica and revolutionaries chose Shanghai for much t same reasons.

Relocating the Communist Revolution

In 1932 the Central Committee of the Communi Party gave up trying to foment urban insurrectio and joined Mao in the Jiangxi Soviet. Mao was th chairman of the soviet, but after their arrival, he wa on the sidelines, his recommendations often ove ruled. In the fall of 1934, with the German-planne fifth "extermination campaign" of the Nationalist encircling them with a million-man force, the Com munist Party leadership, without consulting Mao decided to give up the Jiangxi Soviet. In October about eighty-six thousand Communist soldiers, cad res, porters, and followers broke out of the encircle ment, the start of the much mythologized year-long Long March in search of a new place to set up a base. Most wives and children had to be left behind (only thirty-five women joined the march). To protect them and the thousand or so sick or wounded soldiers left behind, about fifteen thousand troops remained in Jiangxi. Mao's wife, He Zizhen, although pregnant, was allowed to come, but they had to leave their two-year-old child behind with Mao's younger brother. When Mao's brother, like many of those left behind, was killed in 1935, Mao lost track of the child.

Month after month the Red Army kept retreating, often just a step or two ahead of the pursuing Nationalist troops. Casualties were enormous. The farther west they went, the more rugged the terrain; as they skirted Tibet, they also had to deal with bitter cold. By the time they found an area in Shaanxi where they could establish a new base, they had marched almost 10,000 kilometers. Only

DOCUMENTS Wang Shiwei's *Wild Lilies*

Born in 1906, Wang Shiwei was one of eight children of a schoolteacher. During his school years he was strongly affected by the May Fourth Movement. In 1925 he entered Peking University and began to write for publication, both his own articles and translations of European fiction. After joining the Communist Party in 1926, he was sent to the Marxist–Leninist Institute in Moscow for further education. After the war with Japan began in 1937, Wang joined the Communist base camp in Yan'an, where one of his tasks was translating works by Marx and Lenin. In 1942 he published several articles in the Liberation Daily, *which portrayed the Communist Party as less than fully egalitarian. The party responded with a rectification campaign. Wang Shiwei was put on trial and later imprisoned. In 1947, with the civil war raging, he was executed. The excerpt below is one section in a larger essay titled Wild Lilies, one of the essays that got him into trouble.*

What is lacking in our lives?

Recently young people here in Yan'an seem to have lost some of their enthusiasm, and to have become inwardly ill at ease.

Why is this? What is lacking in our lives? Some would answer that it is because we are badly nourished and short of vitamins. Others that it is because the ratio of men to women is 18:1 and many young men are unable to find girlfriends. Or because life in Yan'an is very dreary and lacks amusements.

There is an element of truth in all these answers. It is absolutely true that there is a need for better food, for partners of the opposite sex and for more interest in life. That is only natural. But one must also recognize the fact that all the young people here in Yan'an came with a spirit of sacrifice to make revolution, and certainly did not come to satisfy their desires for food, sex, and an enjoyable life. I cannot readily agree with those who say that their lack of enthusiasm, their inward disquiet even, are a result of our inability to resolve these problems properly.

So what is it that is fundamentally lacking in our lives? Perhaps the following conversation holds some clues for us.

During the New Year holiday I was walking home in the dark one evening from a friend's place. Ahead of me were two girl comrades talking in animated whispers. We were some

about eight thousand of those who began the march made it the whole way, though some new recruits and communists from other base areas had joined en route, to bring the total to nearly twenty thousand. (See Map 25.1.)

To the Nationalists in Nanjing, the Long March must have seemed a huge victory. The Communist Party's urban activists had been crushed in 1927–1928, and now the rural activists had suffered just as devastating a blow, their numbers greatly diminished and the survivors driven into remote and poverty-stricken regions. Those who made the Long March, however, saw it as a victory. That they had overcome such daunting odds reinforced their belief that they were men of destiny with a near-sacred mission to remake China.

It was during the Long March that Mao Zedong reached the top ranks of party leadership. When the marchers reached Zunyi (tsuhn-ee) in Guizhou province in early 1935, they paused to hold an enlarged meeting of the Politburo and assess their strategy. Seventeen veteran party leaders were present, including Mao, the Comintern representative Otto Braun, and thirty-year-old Deng Xiaoping to take notes. Blame was placed on Braun and others who had urged positional warfare to defend against the Nationalist attack. Mao was named to the Standing Committee of the Politburo and given new responsibility for military affairs.

From 1936 to 1946 the Communist Party made its base at Yan'an, a market town in central

way apart so I quietly moved closer to concentrate on what they were saying.

"He keeps on talking about other people's petty-bourgeois egalitarianism; but the truth of the matter is that he thinks he himself is something special. He always looks after his own special interests. As for the comrades underneath him, he doesn't care whether they're sick or whether they're well, he doesn't even care if they die, he hardly gives a damn!"

"Crows are still black, wherever they are. Even our Comrade XXX acts like that."

"You're dead right! All this bullshit about loving your own class. They don't even display ordinary human sympathy. You often see people pretending to smile and be friendly, but it's really all on the surface, it doesn't mean anything. And if you offend them in the slightest, they glare at you, pull their rank and start lecturing you."

"It's not only the big shots who act that way, the smaller fry are just the same. Our section leader XXX crawls when he's talking to his superiors, but he behaves very arrogantly towards us. Many's the time when comrades have been ill and he hasn't even dropped in to see how they are. But when an eagle stole one of his chickens, you should have seen the fuss he made! After that, every time he saw an eagle come flying over he'd start screaming and throwing clods of earth at it—the self-seeking bastard!"

There was a long silence. In one way I admired the comrades' sharp tongue. But I also suddenly felt depressed.

"It's sad that so many comrades are falling ill. As a matter of fact, nobody wants people like that to visit them when they fall ill, they just make you feel worse. Their tone of voice, their manner, their whole attitude—they don't make you feel they care about you."

"How right you are. They don't care about other people, and people don't care about them. If they did mass work, they'd be bound to fail."

They carried on their conversation in animated whispers. At this point our ways parted, and I heard no more of what they had to say. In many ways their views were one-sided and exaggerated. Perhaps the picture they drew does not apply very widely; but there is no denying that it is useful as a mirror. . . .

Questions for Analysis

1. What were Wang Shiwei's main concerns in this piece? Did he make any efforts to blunt his criticisms?
2. Why would party officials have found this article objectionable?

Source: Wang Shiwei's "Wild Lily" from *New Left Review*, Issue 92, July-August 1975. Copyright © New Left Review. Reprinted with permission.

Shaanxi where homes were often built by cutting caves into the loess soil cliffs. When the American journalist Edgar Snow visited Yan'an in 1936, the survivors of the Long March appeared to him to be an earthy group of committed patriots and egalitarian social reformers, full of optimism and purpose. They lived in caves, ate simple food, and showed no disdain for the peasants whom they were mobilizing to fight against the Japanese. During the war, too, outside observers were impressed with the commitment to group goals of the Yan'an forces. All through Mao's lifetime the official media promoted this image of the leaders of the Yan'an Soviet as a cohesive group of idealistic revolutionaries.

Mao's standing in Yan'an was high, but he stil had rivals. A group of communists who had gone to Russia for training arrived in late 1935 and provoked debate on the errors that had cost the lives of so many party members. Mao realized that he would have to improve his grasp of Communist dialectic and began systematic study. His new secretary, Chen Boda (chuhn baw-dah), who had studied in Moscow for several years in the late 1920s, began writing of Mao as a theorist. Mao was becoming more set against the claims of the well educated, even if their education was in Marxism. To contrast himself from the urban intellectuals, Mao would act like a peasant, opening his clothes to look for lice with guests present.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Qipao

In the first decades of the twentieth century, as educated young people came to look on the West as the source of everything modern, they turned to Western styles of dress. This was especially true of those who had worn this style while studying abroad. Some people adopted full Western-style dress, but others tried to develop a style that would be both Chinese and modern at the same time. The so-called Mao suit, first popularized in China by Sun Yatsen, is an example of this sort of hybrid style for men. For women in the early twentieth century, the garment that most successfully modernized Chinese dress was the *qipao* (chee-pow).

The *qipao* is a one-piece dress characterized by an upright ("mandarin") collar, an opening from the neck to under the right arm, and a fairly narrow cut, often with a slit, especially if the skirt reached below midcalf. The *qipao* was much more form-fitting than anything worn in the nineteenth century, but reflected traditional styles in its collar, its slanted opening, and sometimes its fastenings. It could be made of silk, cotton, or synthetics for everyday wear or elegant occasions.

Keystone/Getty Images

Well-Dressed Young Women. These three young women wear *qipao* with short sleeves and high slits. Notice also their high-heeled shoes and curled hair.

Mao was victorious over the Soviet returnees in art because he was the better politician but also ecause he seems to have become truly confident hat he was in the right. He began spending more ime lecturing party members. He also started to alow or encourage the beginnings of the cult of Mao: n 1937, a portrait of him appeared in the revoluionary newspaper and a collection of his writings was printed.

It was during this period that Mao took up with Jiang Qing. He Zizhen and Mao's surviving children had gone to the Soviet Union for safety and medical treatment. Jiang Qing (jyang ching), twenty-four years old, had worked as an actress in Shanghai and made her way to Yan'an after the Japanese invasion. Some of the other Communist leaders resented her liaison with Mao, having liked and admired He Zizhen. Mao and Jiang Qing had a daughter in 1940, the last of his four surviving children (six were lost or died).

THE JAPANESE INVASION AND THE RETREAT TO CHONGOING

From the time of the May Fourth protests in 1919, Chinese patriots saw Japan as the gravest threat to China's sovereignty. In 1895, Japan had won Taiwan. In 1905, after an impressive victory over Russia, it gained a dominant position in southern Manchuria. In 1915, by applying pressure on Yuan Shikai, Japan had secured a broad range of economic privileges. The Japanese Army in Manchuria, ostensibly there to protect Japan's railroads and other economic interests, was full of militarists who kept pushing Japanese civil authorities to let the army occupy the entire area. In 1928, Japanese officers assassinated the warlord of Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin (jahng dzaw-lin), hoping for a crisis that would allow Japan to extend its power base.

Map 25.1 China in 1938

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1931, Japanese soldiers set a bomb on the hern Manchurian Railroad to give themselves xcuse to occupy Shenyang (shuhn-yahng) "in defense." China did not attempt to resist mili- y but did appeal to the League of Nations, which gnized China as being in the right but imposed eal sanctions on Japan. Then in January 1932, an attacked Shanghai to retaliate against anti- anese protests. By that point Shanghai was such international city that the Japanese assault and bombing of civilian residential areas was widely demned. After four months, the Japanese with- w from Shanghai, but in Manchuria they set up uppet regime, making the last Qing emperor the minal head of Manchukuo ("Manchu land").

Anger at Japanese aggression heightened Chinese tionalism and led to the formation of national sal- tion leagues and boycotts of Japanese goods. Still, iang, like most other military men of the day, did t see any point in putting up a fight when Japanese epower was so clearly superior. Chiang was con- nced that all Chinese would have to be united under ie leader before China could hope to thwart Japan.

In 1936 troops that had been driven out of lanchuria by the Japanese were ordered by Chiang blockade the Communists in Yan'an. When Chiang ime to Xi'an, they kidnapped him and refused to re- ase him until he agreed to form a united front with the ommunists against Japan. These troops did not want be fighting other Chinese when the Japanese had ccupied their home towns. The Communists played o part in the kidnapping but joined the negotiations vhen Stalin urged them to keep Chiang alive and cre- te a nationwide united front against Japan.

The next year, Chiang did put up a fight when the apanese staged another incident as an excuse for aking more territory. Chiang was probably hoping o inflict a quick defeat to convince Japan that the Nanjing government was a power to be reckoned with so Japan would negotiate with him rather than con- tinue to move into China as though it was unoccupied. Japan instead launched a full-scale offensive, sweep- ing south. Chiang had to abandon Beijing and Tianjin, but he used his best troops to hold off the Japanese at Shanghai for three months. He asked for an all-out stand, and his troops courageously persisted despite heavy shelling and bombing, absorbing 250,000 killed or wounded (compared to 40,000 Japanese casualties). When Shanghai fell, the Nationalist troops streamed toward the Nationalist capital, Nanjing. After the Japanese easily took Nanjing in December 1937, they went on a rampage, massacring somewhere between 40,000 and 300,000 civilians and fugitive soldiers, raping perhaps 20,000 women, and laying the city waste. The seven weeks of mayhem was widely report- ed in the foreign press, where it was labeled the Rape of Nanking. If this violence was intended to speed a Chinese surrender, it did not achieve its goal.

During the course of 1938, the Japanese secured control of the entire eastern seaboard and set up pup- pet regimes headed by Chinese collaborators. (See Map 25.1.) Terror tactics continued, including bio- logical and chemical warfare in Zhejiang (juh-jyahng) in 1940, where bubonic plague was spread and poi- son gas released. Civilian casualties were also inflict- ed by the Nationalist government. When the Chinese had to retreat from Kaifeng, Chiang ordered his en- gineers to blow up the dikes on the Yellow River, creating a gigantic flood that engulfed more than four thousand villages, drowned some three hundred thousand people, and left 2 million homeless. It de- layed the Japanese for only three months.

Japan had assumed that once it captured the capital at Nanjing and inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the Nationalist army, Chiang Kaishek would come to terms. When he refused and moved inland, the war bogged down. Rather than persuad- ing the Chinese to surrender, Japanese terror tactics instead intensified popular hatred for the Japanese. China's great distances spread Japanese forces. In north China, Japan concentrated on holding rail lines, and Chinese guerrilla forces concentrated on blowing them up. Guerrilla soldiers depended on lo- cal peasants to feed them and inform them of en- emy concentrations and movements. They acquired weapons and ammunition by capturing them from the Japanese. Many resistance fighters worked in the fields during the day and at night acted as guides or scouts to help blow up bridges, rail lines, and roads. Peasant cooperation with the guerrillas provoked savage Japanese reprisals, including killing everyone in villages suspected of harboring resistance fight- ers, which the Japanese called their "kill all, burn all, loot all" policy. Chinese resistance forced Japan to keep about 40 percent of its troops in China even after the Pacific War had begun in late 1941 (see **Connections: World War II**).

The Nationalists' capital was moved inland first to Wuhan, then to Chongqing (chung-ching), deep in Sichuan. Free China, as it was called in the Western press, started with the odds heavily against it. The capital, Chongqing, suffered repeated air raids

and faced not only shortages of almost everything but runaway inflation as high as 10 percent a month, leading to widespread corruption as government workers' salaries fell to a pittance. The army was in worse shape. The army Chiang had spent a decade training had been destroyed. From 1939 on, the bulk of China's 5 million soldiers were ill-trained peasant conscripts. Press gangs would enter villages and seize the able-bodied. As many as a third of the conscripts died on the forced marches to their bases because they were not given enough to eat or medical care. Desertion, not surprisingly, was a huge problem. Another serious disability for Free China was the lack of an industrial base inland. Chinese engineers made heroic efforts to build a new industrial base, but constant Japanese bombing, the end of Soviet aid in 1939, and the closing of the route through Burma in 1942 frustrated their efforts. From 1942 on, American advisers and American aid flown over the mountains from Burma enabled Chiang to build a number of modern divisions, but not an army able to drive the Japanese out of China.

During World War II, international alignments began to shift. After Britain proved unable to defend Hong Kong, Singapore, or Burma from Japanese invasions in 1941–1942, it lost its standing in Chinese eyes as the preeminent Western power. Its place was taken by the United States, which ended up doing most of the fighting against Japan. The American-educated wife of Chiang, Soong Meiling, was popular with the American press and lobbied effectively for China. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, looking ahead, wished to see China become the dominant power in East Asia after the defeat of Japan, and he convinced his allies to include Chiang in major meetings of the Allies at Cairo and Yalta (though Churchill referred to making China one of the Big Four as an absolute farce). It was as a result of this sort of geopolitics that China, so long scorned as weak and backward, became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council after the war.

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY DURING THE WAR

During the first few years of the war, there was some genuine cooperation between the Communists and Nationalists. This largely ended, however, when the Communist divisions of the New Fourth Army were attacked by the Nationalists in January 1941 or grounds that they had not complied rapidly enc with an order to retreat north of the Yangzi. F this point on, the Nationalists imposed an econc blockade on the Communist base area.

Some one hundred thousand people made t way to Yan'an during the war, about half of th students, teachers, and writers. Party members swelled from forty thousand in 1937 to about ei hundred thousand in 1940. The fight against Jaj helped the Communists build a base of popular s port. In areas of north China where the Japan armies had penetrated, peasants were ready to j forces against the Japanese.

Resistance forces were not exclusively Commun Patriotic urban students fled to these relatively unc tested rural areas where they helped both National and Communist resistance forces. The Communis however, were more successful in gaining control the social, political, and economic life in villages b cause they gave peasants what they wanted: an arn of friendly troops who not only did not steal the crops but also helped them bring in the harvest ar implemented popular economic reforms.

Class struggle was not emphasized during the wa against Japan, nor was there much confiscation o land. Still, considerable redistribution was accon plished by imposing graduated taxes that led large landholders to sell land that was no longer profi able. Landlords were more than welcome to hel with forming and supplying militia forces, and edu cated youth from better-off families were recruite as party members. Party propagandists did their bes to stoke patriotic passions, glorify the Soviet Union and convey the message that the Communist Party could build a better, more egalitarian future. They called so many meetings that rural folk in Hebe quipped, "Under the Nationalists, too many taxes; under the Communists, too many meetings."*

The Japanese did not penetrate as far west as Yan'an, and during the war Mao could concentrate on ideological issues. As the party grew rapidly, Mao sought ways to instill a uniform vision. Neither Marx nor Lenin had seen much revolutionary potential in peasants, viewing them as petty capitalist in mentality; in Russia, the party had seized power in an urban setting. Because the communists in China

*Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowics, and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 41.

failed in the cities, Mao reinterpreted Marxist
ry in such a way that the peasants could be
as the vanguard of the revolution. Indeed Mao
e more and more to glorify the peasants as the
masses and elaborate the theory of the mass
party cadres had to go among and learn from
peasant masses before they could become their
hers. Marx was a materialist who rejected ide-
: interpretations of history. Ideas did not make
ory; rather, they reflected the economic base, the
le of production, and the relations of produc-
ı. Mao's vision of revolution, by contrast, was
ıntaristic: it emphasized the potential for people,
:e mobilized, to transform both themselves and
world through the power of their wills.

This "Thought of Mao Zedong" did not win in
ree competition of ideas among the survivors of
: Long March, but rather in a power struggle in
ıich Mao proved a master tactician, able to elimi-
te his rivals one after the other and get the Central
›mmittee to label them deviationists of the right or
t. To reform the thinking of both old cadres who
d deviated from the correct line and new recruits
›m bourgeois families, in 1942, Mao launched the
'st of many rectification campaigns. Cadres had to
ıdy documents Mao selected in small groups, ana-
ze their own shortcomings in Maoist terms, listen
criticism of themselves at mass struggle sessions,
ıd confess their errors. Everyone watched the dra-
ıatic public humiliations of the principal targets, in-
.uding the party theorist Wang Ming and the writer
Vang Shiwei. People learned to interpret any devia-
.on from Mao's line as defects in their thinking due
› their subjectivism and liberalism, characteristics
f their petty bourgeois background. One man, for
nstance, who confessed to being bothered by the
›arty elite's special privileges (such as getting to ride
›n horseback while others walked) was taught that
iberal ideas elevating the individual over the collec-
:ive lay behind his feelings. Those who balked were
›unished; some even died. Many of those invited to
›vercome their errors truly developed a new collec-
tive consciousness that greatly increased their useful-
ness to the party. Others simply learned to be more
circumspect when they talked.

The Seventh Party Congress, the first since the 1920s, was held at Yan'an in the spring of 1945. The preamble of the new constitution recognized Mao's new role as sage of the party: "The Chinese Communist Party takes Mao Zedong's thought—the thought that unites Marxist–Leninist theory and the practices of the Chinese revolution—as the guide for all its work, and opposes all dogmatic or empiricist deviations."*

Getty Images

The Communist Leadership. Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, and Zhu De (left to right) were photographed in the winter of 1944, by which time the Communist party had gained a foothold behind Japanese lines all across north China.

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE COMMUNIST VICTORY

The end of the war with Japan set the stage for the final confrontation between the Nationalists and the Communists. When Japan surrendered in August 1945, there were more than 1 million Japanese troops in China proper and nearly another 1 million in Manchuria, as well as about 1.75 million Japanese civilians. Disarming and repatriating them took months, as the Nationalists, the Communists, the Americans, the Russians, and even some warlords jockeyed for position. The United States airlifted 110,000 Nationalist troops to key coastal cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou, and 53,000 U.S. Marines were sent to help secure Beijing and Tianjin. The Russians had entered Manchuria in early August in fulfillment of their secret

*Cited in Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (New York: Viking, 1999), p. 101.

promise to the United States and Britain to join the eastern front three months after victory in Europe. They saw to it that large stores of Japanese weapons got into the hands of the Red Army—some 740,000 rifles, 18,000 machine guns, and 4,000 artillery pieces—giving them about as much Japanese equipment as the Nationalists got.

From August 1945 until January 1947, the United States made efforts to avert civil war by trying to convince Chiang to establish a government in which opposition parties could participate. The American ambassador brought Mao and Chiang together for several weeks of meetings in Chongqing, but the agreements reached on cooperation led nowhere. Full-scale civil war ensued.

The civil war itself lasted only about two years. The Red Army (now called the People's Liberation Army, or PLA) began to isolate the cities, starting in Manchuria and working south. It lost battles but built support through moderate land reform. When Nationalist soldiers defected, they took their equipment with them, and the PLA incorporated them into its armies. Within a year the Nationalist forces in Manchuria were routed, and the PLA was moving into China proper. In 1948 a two-month battle near the railway center of Xuzhou (shyew-joe) pitted six hundred thousand of Chiang's troops against an equal number of Communist ones. Although Chiang had air support, his army was smashed, and he lost almost a half-million men. Thus, although the Nationalists had started with much more in the way of modern armaments and several times the number of troops, they fared poorly on the battlefield. In early 1949, Chiang Kaishek and much of his army and government retreated to Taiwan and reestablished their government there.

The unpopularity of the Nationalists had many roots. Prices in July 1948 were 3 million times higher than they had been in July 1937, and inflation did not let up then. People had to resort to barter, and a tenth of the population became refugees. Nationalist army officers and soldiers were widely seen as seizing whatever they could for themselves rather than working for the common good. Student protests were often put down by violence. When liberals demanded that Chiang widen participation in his government, he had his secret police assassinate them. No amount of American support could make the Chinese want to continue with this government in power.

SUMMARY

The years between 1927 and 1949 were mar by two long and bitter struggles: Chinese aga Japanese and Nationalists against Communists.

Marxism did not make much of an impact China until the success of the Bolshevik Revolut in Russia in 1917. Thinking that Marxism–Lenin might have something to offer China, Marxist stu groups were formed both in Beijing and Shangh The Comintern, once it learned of them, offered b financial and organizational assistance. In 1921 Chinese Communist Party was officially formed a began organizing labor unions.

From 1922 to 1927, the Communist Party form a united front with the Nationalist Party, whi broke down after the Nationalist army attack union members when the Northern Expediti reached Shanghai. For several years, Communi had to work underground. A soviet was establish in the hinterlands between Jiangxi and Fujian. A ter relentless attacks by the Nationalist army, t Communist leadership of the soviet decided to mo their base and set out on the "Long March." Duri this year-long retreat, Mao Zedong emerged as o of the top leaders.

Beginning in 1928, the Nationalist governme ruled from Nanjing, with General Chiang Kaishe in charge. He turned to people with Western edu cations to help modernize the government and th economy. Shanghai became a flashy internationa city, a magnet for European refugees. In cities acros the country living standards improved, but in th countryside little progress was made in alleviatin poverty.

Among the most pressing problems the Nationalist faced was Japanese encroachment, which becam more and more serious from 1931 on, when Japa seized Manchuria. Chiang wanted to suppress th Communists before dealing with the Japanese, bu in 1936 was forced to form a united front with them against Japan. When Japan launched a full-scale offensive in 1937, Jiang used his best troops to de fend Shanghai at huge cost. Jiang had to retreat to Nanjing, then later to Chongqing in Sichuan. After the United States declared war on Japan, Chiang re ceived significant American assistance, and after the war the United States unsuccessfully tried to broker a power-sharing agreement between the Nationalists and Communists. The Communists emerged from

ld War II stronger than before. During the war had been able to recruit new members and had ed experience mobilizing peasants. The civil war broke out in 1947 led to Communist victory 949 and the withdrawal of the Nationalists to wan.

/hat changed between 1927 and the end of 9? How different was China? More than a :-century of struggle against a Japan intent on erialist expansion was over: Japan had been roughly defeated and had turned against war. The Nationalist Party had been defeated by the Communist Party and had withdrawn from the mainland. The Communist Party itself had changed dramatically. It had broken free from Comintern control and tied itself intimately to the peasantry. Mao had risen to the top position in the party and established his version of Marxism as the correct ideology. The party had grown enormously and acquired extensive experience in redistributing land, mobilizing peasants, and keeping a tight rein on intellectuals.