

MAO TSE-TUNG, CH'EN PO-TA, AND THE CONSCIOUS CREATION
OF "MAO TSE-TUNG'S THOUGHT" IN THE CHINESE
COMMUNIST PARTY, 1935-1945

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

One of the most distinctive aspects of modern Chinese politics is the role of "Mao Tse-tung's thought." This study investigates the concrete political and ideological process which gave rise to Mao's thought within the Chinese Communist Party, with special reference to the years 1935-45. This decade, which overlaps the Yen-an period in Chinese Communist historiography, opens with Mao Tse-tung's rise to power at the Tsunyi Conference, and closes with the formal incorporation of his thought into the new CCP constitution at the Party's Seventh Congress.

In the course of the study, it became apparent that Mao Tse-tung played a strong personal role in fostering the cult of his own person and thought. However, he received the enthusiastic support of a small group of Party intellectuals who gathered around him, of whom the most important is Ch'en Po-ta. Pending further research, conclusions regarding Ch'en's role must remain tentative, but the initial evidence does suggest his influence on certain aspects of Mao's thinking, and in the formulation of a historic-philosophical rationale for Mao's claim to ideological supremacy.

The study falls into two main periods; 1935-40 were years of ideological creativity, when the basic ideas behind Sinified Marxism were worked out by Mao and Ch'en; 1940-45 were years of ideological consolidation, when the two men worked to systematize and disseminate Mao's thought as the CCP's official guiding doctrine. The conclusion emerges that the cult of Mao and his thought was not merely a simple concomitant of

Mao's rise to power during this period. Rather, the dual cult was consciously created and propagated within and without the CCP as a deliberate act of policy on the part of the ascendant Maoists, with Mao and Ch'en very much at the core of this policy.

From time to time, developments within the CCP, in Chinese domestic politics, and in the international arena intervened to accelerate or retard the Maoists' deliberate campaign to foster the ascendancy of Mao's thought. However, by the time of the CCP's Seventh Congress in 1945, the victorious Maoists had succeeded in their joint drive for the "primitive accumulation" of political and ideological power. Mao's power was by no means absolute, but the Chinese Communist Party -- and shortly the entire nation -- had entered the era of "Mao Tse-tung's thought."

In sum, this study contributes to our understanding of the Chinese Communist movement in four areas. It develops previous discussions of the ideological history of the CCP, especially regarding the emergence of the concepts of the "Sinification of Marxism" and "Mao Tse-tung's thought." In using these ideological concepts as points of reference, this thesis also offers a distinctive approach to the study of elite politics within the CCP during the Yanan period. At the same time, Mao Tse-tung's personal role in fostering the twin cult of himself and his thought is brought into sharper focus than in previous studies. Finally, our knowledge of the early career of Ch'en Po-ta is considerably enhanced, particularly regarding his role as Party ideologist and historian in the service of Mao Tse-tung.

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R.F.W

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CB</u>	<u>Current Background</u>
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
<u>CCWW</u>	<u>Chinese Communist Who's Who</u>
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
<u>CQ</u>	<u>China Quarterly</u>
<u>FEQ</u>	<u>Far Eastern Quarterly</u>
<u>FQYJ</u>	<u>Fei-qing yan-jiu (Studies in Bandit Affairs/Studies in Chinese Communism)</u>
<u>IS</u>	<u>Issues and Studies</u>
<u>JAS</u>	<u>Journal of Asian Studies</u>
<u>JF</u>	<u>Jie-fang (Liberation)</u>
<u>JFRB</u>	<u>Jie-fang ri-bao (Liberation Daily)</u>
<u>Ji</u>	<u>Mao Ze-dong ji (Collected Works of Mao Tse-tung)</u>
KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)
NCNA	New China News Agency
NEM	New Enlightenment Movement
<u>SW</u>	<u>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung</u>
<u>WWCC</u>	<u>Who's Who in Communist China</u>
<u>XJ</u>	<u>Mao Ze-dong xuan-ji (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung)</u>
<u>ZGYJ</u>	<u>Zhong-gong yan-jiu (Studies in Chinese Communism)</u>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: IN SEARCH OF A CHINESE WAY

(i) Scope of the Study

The appearance of "Mao Tse-tung's thought" (Mao Ze-dong si-xiang) as a specific ideological concept in July 1943 is an event of considerable importance in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. In the ensuing years Mao's thought has become a major factor in Chinese politics, and the subject of a good deal of criticism and praise. To some, "Mao Tse-tung's thought" represents the creative development of orthodox Marxism-Leninism, while to others it represents the CCP's break from the mainstream of the international communist movement. (Perhaps in reality it means both?) Surprisingly, there has been little attempt to subject the historical process which gave rise to Mao's thought to a thorough analysis. The valuable paper by Noriyuki Tokuda is too brief to be fully satisfactory, and the passing attention given this subject in any number of more general treatments of the Chinese Communist movement is even less adequate.¹ Accordingly, this study attempts an analysis of the

¹Tokuda's paper was originally published in Japanese as Mō Taku-tō-shugi, 1935-1945 (The Formation of Mao Tse-tungism, 1935-1945), Tokyo: Keiō Tsūshin, 1971. It was later presented at a conference in the United States (Sante Fe, August 1971) with the title, "Mao Tse-tung's Ideological Cohesion with the Party and the Revolutionary Movement, 1935-1945." Part of the original study was also published in English in Japan, entitled "Yenan Rectification Movement: Mao Tse-tung's Big Push toward Charismatic Leadership during 1941-42," The Developing Economics (Tokyo), IX (March 1971), pp. 83-99. K'ung Te-liang has also published a very brief article entitled "First Appearance of 'Mao Tse-tung's Thought'," Issues and Studies, IX:5 (February 1973), pp. 34-41.

political and ideological process which gave rise to the concept of Mao Tse-tung's thought within the CCP between the years 1935-45. It was during this decade that Mao Tse-tung gradually achieved the fusion of political and ideological authority in his own person, from the time of his limited victory at the Tsunyi Conference in 1935 to the formal incorporation of his thought into the CCP's new constitution in 1945. These ten years conveniently overlap what is known as the Yen-an period in Chinese Communist historiography, an important era which has inspired some excellent book-length studies to which later reference will be made. None, however, has paid special attention to the ideological aspects of the political struggle that dominated so much of the CCP's inner life during this key decade. Boyd Compton's translation of the CCP's famous "rectification documents" is of course extremely important, but it is hardly a substitute for a serious monograph on the Party's ideological development during the Yen-an years. We are not attempting to write such a monograph here, but it is hoped that this study will throw additional light on the debates that accompanied Mao Tse-tung's emergence as the Party's leading ideological spokesman, and on the specific political context in which they took place. As is indicated by the recent publication of the purported diaries of Peter Vladimirov, a Comintern representative in Yen-an during 1942-45, a good deal of controversy still surrounds the CCP's development during these critical years.²

²Mao's China (Party Reform Documents, 1942-44), Trans. and Introd. by Boyd Compton, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1952. Peter Vladimirov, The Vladimirov Diaries (Yen-an, China: 1942-45), Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1975. Since their publication, these diaries have sparked off considerable debate as to their authenticity. While it is likely that they have been judi-

It should be emphasized that we are not proposing a study of the evolution and content of the whole range of Mao Tse-tung's political thought. Although this subject is far from being exhausted, it has been the focus of many able writers in the field, of whom the most prominent is Stuart R. Schram.³ Rather, our interest is in the concrete ideological and political process that gave rise to "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as a formal ideological concept within the CCP, and which led to its adoption as the official "guiding thought" of the Chinese Party. As such, we are not primarily concerned with whether (in any empirical sense) Mao's thought is sophisticated or not, original or not, orthodox or not, Chinese or not, relevant or not. These problems are best left to the philosopher or the revolutionary, in whose judgement the subjective factor has an acknowledged place. For our part, we are interested in asking more empirical questions: Did the emergence of Mao's thought reflect the intellectual concerns of China in the 1930's and 1940's, or was it essentially an extraneous development? Did the concept of Mao's thought spring full-blown from the minds of its advocates, or did it

ciously edited by the Soviet authorities, much of the diaries do ring true. Consequently, we have referred to them from time to time on issues which appear to be clarified further by Vladimirov's notes and comments. That the diaries serve to blacken Mao Tse-tung's personal character and leadership is only too obvious, but this need not deter us from using one of the more remarkable sources on the Yen-an period.

³Schram's well-known study is The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung, 2nd ed., Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969. Three other titles should be noted: Arthur A. Cohen, The Communism of Mao Tse-tung, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964; Frederick Wakeman, Jr., History and Will (Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung's Thought), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973; and James Chieh Hsiung, ed., The Logic of "Maoism" (Critiques and Explanation), New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974.

represent the culmination of previous ideological movements within the CCP? Did Mao's thought emerge simply as a natural concomitant of Mao Tse-tung's growing political power in the Party, or was it the product of a deliberate act of conscious creation on the part of its proponents? Which individuals or groups within the CCP supported the elevation of Mao's thought as the Party's official body of doctrine? Who opposed such a move? Who simply went along? To what extent was the emergence of Mao's thought affected by developments within the CCP itself, or by domestic or foreign events beyond the control of the Party? Finally, we want to know exactly what "Mao Tse-tung's thought" meant in the minds of its proponents, and what relationship they felt it had to orthodox Marxist theory on the one hand, and to Chinese history and culture (broadly defined) on the other. The pursuit of such questions is of course highly interesting in itself, but it also provides an excellent framework to study the history of the CCP during the Yenan period. In particular, this approach places Mao Tse-tung's rise to power in bold relief, for his growing ideological stature became both a major issue in defining his personal authority in the CCP, and a central point of attack on the part of his critics and opponents within the Party and without. Surely this is the essence of what we might call ideological history, that is, the study of the evolution of political ideas in the context of political power, and of the nature and consequences of their mutual interaction.

Throughout the study, we have given extensive coverage both to the evolution of ideas and to the struggle for power within the CCP,

and, less importantly, between the CCP and the Chinese Nationalist Party. As the study progressed, it became apparent that it fell naturally into two distinct periods, each with its own specific character. The first period (1935-40) is one of ideological creativity, when Mao Tse-tung and his associates worked out the basic elements of their distinctive ideology, namely, "Sinified" Marxism-Leninism. With the publication of Mao's "On New Democracy" in January 1940, this initial creative period came to a close; the basic thinking and writing had been done, although the new concept of the "Sinification of Marxism" was not yet widely accepted throughout the CCP. The second period (1940-45) is essentially one of ideological consolidation, when the ascendant Maoists responded to a series of challenges by remoulding the ideology of the CCP along the lines that had been worked out previously. The task now was to systematize and disseminate the basic concepts of Sinified Marxism-Leninism ("Mao Tse-tung's thought") throughout the CCP, and beyond it to Chinese society as a whole. This period closes in June 1945, when Mao's thought was incorporated into the new Party constitution, and the Chinese people were exhorted to rally under the banner of Mao Tse-tung. Mao's ascendancy within the Chinese Communist Party was perhaps not as absolute as it appeared in later years, but there can be no gainsaying the fact that the CCP -- and shortly the nation itself -- had entered the era of Mao Tse-tung and "Mao Tse-tung's thought."

In the course of research it soon became clear that considerable attention would have to be given to the personal role of Mao Tse-tung. The importance Mao came to attach to the role of ideology in the

revolutionary movement, combined with the considerable doubt evinced by many of the Party's top leaders regarding his competence as a Marxist-Leninist theoretician, did much to stimulate his determination to acquire undisputed authority as the CCP's leading spokesman on all questions of doctrine. Consequently, Mao's pervasive influence is to be seen at every important juncture in the evolutionary process that gave rise to the Party's acceptance of his own thought as its official guiding ideology. Yet, Mao could not possibly have accomplished this feat unaided, and one's attention is thus drawn to other individuals who played a role in the process. Mao surrounded himself with a small band of Party theoreticians firmly committed to his cause, including such figures as Ai Ssu-ch'i, Chou Yang, Chang Ju-hsin, and Ch'en Po-ta. These individuals, and many others besides, came to be recognized as Mao's personal "think tank," people who helped Mao formulate his ideas, and who worked assiduously to win their widespread acceptance throughout the Party. They comprised the intellectual machine that stood behind Mao in the course of his struggles during the Yen-an period, and in many respects Mao's triumph in 1945 was very much their triumph as well. Indeed, the high degree of awareness with which Mao and his small band of theorists promoted his claims to ideological supremacy suggests that the formulation of Mao Tse-tung's thought was an act of conscious creation, and not simply the result of a seemingly inevitable process in the ideological development of the CCP.

Of this group, it is Ch'en Po-ta who clearly emerges as the single most important figure other than Mao himself in the conscious

creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought. Consequently, we have paid special attention to Ch'en's position in the ideological debates within the CCP during 1935-45 with a view to ascertaining his role in helping to formulate and propagate the concept of Mao Tse-tung's thought. Although the precise relationship between Mao and his enigmatic political secretary has remained obscure, academic opinion has tended to underrate Ch'en's importance in the Maoist camp, and his personal intellectual influence on Mao. Lately, however, Ch'en's key role in the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's has caused some second thoughts as to his relationship with Mao, and a shift to a more positive evaluation is now in sight. It has now been recognized, for example, that in times of need Mao has usually "turned to his most trusted supporters, especially Ch'en Po-ta."⁴ Certainly, this study demonstrates quite clearly that Ch'en Po-ta had emerged as a Party theorist in his own right prior to meeting Mao in the summer of 1937, that he directly influenced Mao's own thinking in certain important respects during the Yen-an period, that he played a central role in the Party's Rectification Campaign of 1942-43, and that he became the leading architect of the "Maoist myth" that has dominated the official history of the CCP right to the present day. Indeed, Ch'en was extremely prolific between 1935 and 1945, and no attempt has been made to discuss the full range of his writings

⁴On this point, see Michel C. Oksenberg, "Policy Making Under Mao, 1949-68: An Overview," in John M.H. Lindbeck, ed., China: Management of a Revolutionary Society, London: Allen and Unwin, 1971, p. 98. According to a recent dispatch by the Peking correspondent of The Globe and Mail (Toronto), a directive of the CCP Central Committee has acknowledged that Mao's Selected Works may have to be purged of the influence of Ch'en Po-ta. For further details on this tacit admission of Ch'en's role in shaping Mao's thought, see "Chinese Hint That Mao's Works May Be Revised," The New York Times, 8 September 1974.

and ideas during this period. The focus of our discussion is rather on those aspects of Ch'en's thought which are particularly relevant to his role in fostering the development of Mao's thought as the CCP's official ideology. Nonetheless, the present work does considerably augment the existing body of knowledge concerning Ch'en Po-ta's role in the Chinese Communist movement during the Yen-an era.

By 1945, Mao Tse-tung's thought had emerged as an enormously powerful phenomenon within the ranks of the CCP. As our study makes clear, there were important reasons for this: In the first place, the creation of a truly distinctive Chinese communist ideology had great appeal to many of the Party's urban intellectuals who sought some visible symbol of China's cultural independence from the West, including the Soviet Union. Second, Mao and his close supporters were aware of the need for Mao to build up a distinctive ideological profile as a weapon against the power of the Moscow-oriented Returned Students, and indeed of Moscow itself. Third, most members of the CCP, regardless of their personal views, appreciated the need for the CCP to put forward a relatively coherent ideological doctrine that would win the allegiance of China's masses in competition with the ideological blandishments of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists. The theoretical key that opened the door to the creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought was of course the concept of the "Sinification of Marxism." Based on the ideas of both Mao and Ch'en Po-ta, the Sinification of Marxism allowed for the formulation of an interpretation of Marxism-Leninism that was claimed to be at once distinctly Chinese and indisputably scientific. Only when foreign Marxist theory was

tested in the crucible of Chinese revolutionary practice, it was argued, would a new living theoretical construct emerge with the indelible stamp of Chinese genius. Given Lenin's dictum that without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement, we can appreciate Li Wei-han's later claim that:

The establishment in the Party of the idea of integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution was the most fundamental question -- a question of decisive significance -- in building the Communist Party [of China].⁵

The path from the Sinification of Marxism to the creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought was by no means inevitable, but Mao and his close supporters ensured that there would be no serious opposition to Mao's claim to theoretical supremacy within the CCP. When outright opposition did surface, as in the case of Wang Shih-wei and other dissident intellectuals, it was vigorously opposed and ultimately suppressed. Yet such action was exceptional; as much as anything, the triumph of Mao's thought was due to years of painstaking ideological and political work on the part of the Maoists, and, most importantly, to the growing realization within the CCP that in the final analysis Mao's ideas seemed to work. Had Mao's leadership and policies suffered a severe setback during 1935-45, his thought might well occupy the place in the official history of the Chinese revolution now taken by that of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. In the evolution of Mao Tse-tung's thought as the CCP's official doctrine, as in most other historical phenomena, one is hard put to avoid the conclusion that nothing succeeds quite like success.

⁵Li Wei-han, The Struggle for Proletarian Leadership in the Period of the New-Democratic Revolution in China, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1962, p. 98.

While our study must of necessity give special prominence to both Mao Tse-tung and Ch'en Po-ta in the conscious creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought, we have kept purely biographical discussion to a bare minimum. Nor have we paid much attention to their activities prior to 1935, when this study commences. This omission is easily made good in the case of Mao Tse-tung, whose early life and ideas have been subjected to considerable scrutiny by a variety of writers. Should the reader be interested in pursuing the details of Mao's career prior to 1935, he has only to turn to a host of excellent studies on the subject.⁶ Unfortunately, the same is not true of Ch'en Po-ta, who has so far received scant attention from students of the Chinese Communist movement. Parris H. Chang has written an article which is perhaps the only special study of Ch'en Po-ta, but it focuses on Ch'en's role in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's, with little in the way of detailed background information on Ch'en.⁷ It would thus seem appropriate to preface our present study with some brief comments on Ch'en Po-ta's life and thought prior to 1935, with particular emphasis on those aspects which are most relevant to our

⁶Two prominent biographies of Mao are Jerome Ch'en, Mao and the Chinese Revolution, London: Oxford University Press, 1965; and Stuart Schram, Mao Tse-tung, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1966. A detailed treatment of Mao's later career is Edward E. Rice, Mao's Way, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. Other studies of Mao's rise to power will be cited throughout the text, and need not be mentioned at this time.

⁷Parris H. Chang, "The Role of Ch'en Po-ta in the Cultural Revolution," Asia Quarterly, I (1973), pp. 17-58.

discussion of his role in the creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought during 1935-45. Additional material on Ch'en's early career can be found in the various biographical sources listed in the footnotes to the following discussion.

Throughout the study, we have made extensive use of direct quotation from the writings of the principal figures involved. Although this might seem excessively tedious to some, it does help to clarify the points under discussion, and to reduce ambiguities to a minimum. In certain cases, as with Ch'en Po-ta, many of the writings under consideration have not been translated or even discussed to any great extent in English-language studies of the Chinese Communist movement. Accordingly, extensive citation from some of Ch'en's more interesting and/or important works will give the reader a better insight into Ch'en's mode of analysis and expression. In any study of the evolution of ideas or ideologies, it is often desirable to permit the individual protagonists to speak for themselves rather than through the intervention of a second party. It is hoped that the clarity thus gained will more than offset the possible tedium that this approach might induce in the minds of certain readers.

(ii) Ch'en Po-ta: The Formative Years

Ch'en Po-ta is one of the few top-ranking CCP leaders to have been born into a "poor peasant" family; on this all the sources agree.⁸ At the time of his birth in 1904 (or 1903 in the Chinese reckoning) Ch'en's family was living in Huian county, Fukien, reportedly one of the poorest areas in the province. Ch'en's personal name is Shang-yu, but ever since the 1930's he has been widely known as Po-ta, a pen-name he adopted while teaching in Peking under the alias of yet another name, Chih-mei.⁹ When he was still a child, the family left Huian and settled in or near the town of Chimei in T'ungan county, on the mainland opposite the island city of Amoy.

⁸As is the case with most CCP leaders, biographical sources on Ch'en Po-ta are not particularly substantial, but nonetheless a good deal of information can be gleaned from those that are available. Among the most useful sources are the relevant entries in Howard L. Boorman and Richard C. Howard, eds., Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, I, pp. 221-223; Chinese Communist Who's Who, Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1970, I, pp. 104-105; IS, VI:7 (April 1970), pp. 87-93; Donald W. Klein and Ann B. Clark, eds., Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism, 1921-1965, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, I, pp. 122-125; Li Feng-min, ed., Zhong-gong shou-yau shi-lue hui-bian (Chronologies of Chinese Communist Leaders), Taipei: Institute for the Study of Chinese Communist Problems, 1969, pp. 81-100; and Who's Who in Communist China, 2nd ed., Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1969-70, I, pp. 94-95. Also see Hsüan Mou, "Chen Bo-da jiu wei lu-mian zhi mi -- shi zao-nian de 'fan-gong zi-shou' yi-an jie-lu le ma?" (The Mystery of Ch'en Po-ta's Disappearance -- Has His "Secret Surrender and Anti-Communist Confessions" in the Early Years Been Revealed?), Zhong-gong yan-jiu (Studies in Chinese Communism), V:3 (10 March 1971), pp. 28-42; and Shao Nan, "Chen Bo-da shi-lue," (Biography of Ch'en Po-ta), ZGYJ, V:8 (10 August 1971, pp. 85-94. Additional sources can be found in later notes to this chapter, and in the selected bibliography.

⁹Ch'en's original name (yuan-ming) is Shang-yu; his alternate name (you-ming) is Chih-mei; his pen-name (bi-ming), and the one by which he is commonly known, is Po-ta. See the biography of Ch'en in Fei-qing yan-jiu (Studies in Bandit Affairs), II:2 (February 1968), p. 97.

A studious child, Ch'en was accepted at about the age of eight into a "new style" school recently established in Chimei by a wealthy overseas Chinese. The school gradually expanded to include secondary education and teacher training, and Ch'en continued his education through all three levels. After leaving Chimei, he went to Canton for a brief stay, but in early 1925 he enrolled in the newly established Shanghai Labour University. Although a creation of the recent Nationalist-Communist united front, the university was in fact controlled by the Communists, and included such Party leaders as Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai on its faculty. Ch'en was apparently quite left-wing by the time he entered the university, and he played an active role in student activities both on and off the campus. It was at about this time that he joined the Communist Party along with his close friend, Jao Shu-shih, who was later to become a leading Party figure.¹⁰ After completing his studies in Shanghai, Ch'en traveled south to Changchow, Fukien, where General Chang Chen's 49th division of the National Revolutionary Army (KMT) was stationed. Chang (a fellow Huian villager) offered Ch'en a post as a secretary, and he soon won Chang's esteem for his literary ability. Within a short space of time most of Chang's speeches and articles were passing through his young assistant's hands, and it is said that Ch'en exercised considerable influence on Chang's thinking during this period. During the Nationalist suppression of the Communists in

¹⁰ Most sources agree that Ch'en joined the CCP in 1927 (presumably before the Party was suppressed in April of that year), but it may in fact have been a little earlier. See for example Klein and Clark, *op. cit.*, I, p. 122; *Gendai Chūgoku jimmei jiten* (Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary China), Tokyo: Gaikō jihō sha, 1962, p. 488; and *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedya* (Large Soviet Encyclopedia), Moscow, XLVII (April 1957), p. 488. Many thanks to Mr. David Barrett for translating the third source from the Russian.

the spring of 1927, however, Ch'en fled to Shanghai and thence to Nan-king, where he was arrested and imprisoned. With Chang Chen's personal intervention, Ch'en was apparently encouraged to write a "letter of repentance" in which he repudiated the Communists and promised to devote himself to the study of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. He was thereupon released from prison, and given a new start in life.¹¹

By this time it was perhaps too late for Ch'en to turn over a new leaf, for immediately upon his release from prison he re-established contact with the CCP. He was greatly changed, however, for the near destruction of the Party had a profound impact on his thinking. He recalled in later years that after the failure of the revolution of 1924-27:

Henceforth, and for a long time after, matters such as the pursuit of Marxist-Leninist truth and how to grasp Marxism-Leninism to comprehend the problems of the Chinese revolution swirled in my mind.¹²

The Communist debacle of 1927 had not destroyed his faith in the ultimate correctness of Marxism-Leninism, but it instilled in him a desire to study afresh the application of the foreign theory in the specific context of Chinese society. Shortly thereafter, the Party arranged for him to go to Moscow for further education along with many other young activists who had survived the holocaust. Ch'en enrolled at Sun Yat-sen University, where he took intensive courses in both Russian language and Marxist-Leninist philosophy. He was not

¹¹For this account of Ch'en's imprisonment and release, see Shao Nan, op. cit., p. 86.

¹²Ch'en Po-ta, "Si-xiang de fan-xing" (Reflection in Thought), Jie-fang ri-bao (Liberation Daily) (28 August 1942), p. 4.

very active politically during these years, but he established a solid foundation in the historical and theoretical aspects of Marxism-Leninism and its application in Russia. Indeed, his studies in Moscow provided the intellectual basis for his later emergence as a leading CCP theorist and historian, from the mid-1930's on.

Ch'en's modest political role during his stay in the Soviet Union was a function not only of his desire to study, but also of the particular situation prevailing amongst the Chinese students at Sun Yat-sen University at the time. In its early years, the CCP sent many young members to Moscow to continue their education, among them the group that later became known within the Party as the "Returned Students" (or the "Twenty-eight Bolsheviks"). Led by Ch'en Shao-yu (Wang Ming) and Ch'in Pang-hsien (Po Ku), the members of this group were known at the university as the "international faction" (guo-ji-pai) because of their primary loyalty to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. Ch'en, on the other hand, belonged to the "branch faction" (zhi-bu-pai), a large group of students who acknowledged the direct authority of the CCP itself, and of its official representatives in Moscow. Considerable tension developed between the two groups, especially in 1930 when Stalin launched a major purge of the CPSU in the aftermath of his victory over Trotsky and Bukharin. This purge stimulated the internationalist faction at Sun Yat-sen University to put their own house in order, and it is said that Po Ku (and probably Wang Ming also) singled out Ch'en for engaging in "sectarian activities," and warned

him of disciplinary action if he persisted.¹³ In all likelihood then, Ch'en had personal as well as ideological reasons for supporting Mao Tse-tung during his crucial struggle with the Returned Students in Yen-an in the late 1930's and early 1940's. A private grudge had been added to Ch'en's previous disdain for their rigid adherence to the Soviet (i.e., Stalinist) version of Marxism-Leninism and its application to China.

Po Ku's threat of punishment never materialized, for sometime in late 1930 or early 1931 Ch'en left Moscow to return to China. He finally settled in Peking, where he secured a lecturer's post at China University, at that time one of the city's leading strongholds of left-wing students. It was apparently at this time also that he married Chu Yu-jen, a Szechwanese girl and fellow student whom Ch'en had met in Moscow and who returned to China with him.¹⁴ At China University Ch'en lectured on ancient (pre-Ch'in) Chinese history and philosophy under the alias of Ch'en Chih-mei. He used his teaching post as a base from which he could take part in underground Party activities, and write polemical articles against enemies of the CCP.

¹³The most detailed account of Sun Yat-sen University in the late 1920's is provided by one of its former Chinese students, who was himself one of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. See Yüeh Sheng (Sheng Chung-liang), Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution (A Personal Account), Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1971. See also the recollections of Chang Kuo-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1971, II, pp. 88-102.

¹⁴Shao Nan, op. cit., p. 85, and Hsüan Mou, op. cit., p. 28 are the only sources to claim that Ch'en is married. Hsüan further claims that Chu Yu-jen is the sister of Chu Yu-lun, the wife of Lo I-nung, the well-known CCP leader who was executed in 1928. For details on Lo, see Boorman and Howard, op. cit., II, pp. 431-433; and Klein and Clark, op. cit., I, pp. 639-641.

under his newly acquired pen-name, Ch'en Po-ta. His teaching duties did not prevent him from undertaking Party work in Tientsin in 1933, in cooperation with K'o Ch'ing-shih, Nan Han-chen, Chu Ch'i-wen and other later well-known Party figures.¹⁵ This experience doubtless proved useful in late 1935, when Ch'en worked with the same men to give a definite political direction to the famous student movement that erupted in Peking in December of that year.

By the autumn of 1935 Ch'en was on the threshold of a new stage in his life, for the December Ninth Movement would push him to national prominence among Marxist writers in the Nationalist-controlled part of China. Yet by all accounts Ch'en was a most unbecoming revolutionary, for he was a short and stocky individual with thick glasses and a strong south Fukienese accent made all the more unintelligible by a pronounced stammer. Nor did his personality do much to enhance his image, for he seems to have been cast in a strict mould; he neither smoked nor drank, nor was he inclined to engage in idle conversation even with his comrades in the Party. He was more a creature of the mind, and his mind was best expressed through the pen. According to one source, Ch'en had been tutored by his elder brother Tun-yu, with the result that his "written Chinese was rather good and his calligraphy was very beautiful."¹⁶ Inarticulate in speech, it was through the medium of the written word that Ch'en Po-ta was to climb high in the ranks of the CCP. Indeed, his career was to have much in it reminiscent of the scholar-official of traditional China.

¹⁵WWCC, pp. 94-95. It is not known if Ch'en had a secret Party name for use in his underground activities in Peking and Tientsin.

¹⁶IS, VI:7, p. 87. Nothing much is known about Tun-yu; he

Ch'en's basic philosophy in these early years is illustrated in a long review article he wrote in the spring of 1935.¹⁷ To begin, Ch'en tackles what he regards as the "most fundamental problem in philosophy", namely, the problem of the relationship between thinking and existence. Reiterating the Marxist position that matter exists independently of human cognition, he asserts that there is no such thing as "abstract truth", but only "concrete truth." Man's perception of concrete truth is only partial, and must develop through his practice in the natural and social worlds. Man's task is thus to apply his partial (relative) truth in actual practice and in this way gradually approach complete (absolute) truth. What intellectual tool is man to employ in his progress from the perception of relative truth to the comprehension of absolute truth? For Ch'en, it is the law of dialectics, or the science of the contradictions inherent in all natural and social phenomena. Rejecting the idealists' belief that contradictions exist merely as figures of speech or categories in logic, Ch'en argues on the contrary that:

Dialectics are inherent in living matter, and are the soul of the countless things in the universe. If there were no contradictions and no dialectics, there would be no universe, no nature, no society, and no thought.¹⁸

Since dialectics are the very "soul" of the objective world, man must

apparently taught at an overseas Chinese school in Burma for many years, but later returned to China.

¹⁷Ch'en Po-ta, "Fu-bai zhe-xue de mo-luo" (The Decline of a Decadent Philosophy), Du-shu sheng-huo (Reading Life), Shanghai: Du-shu sheng-huo she, IV:1 (10 May 1936), pp. 48-57; and IV:2 (25 May 1936), pp. 39-41. Although the article is dated 14 March 1935, it was not published until the much later date cited above.

¹⁸Ibid., (pt. 1), p. 54.

use this tool to comprehend the real world existing independently of his consciousness. Ch'en rejects the idealists' charge that dialectical materialists (viz, Marxists) are dogmatists who apply the concept of dialectics in a rigid manner, and arrange the facts of the real world according to a fixed formula. In his opinion, "genuine" Marxists.

...approach and grasp objective things only in a living way (huo-sheng-sheng de), only in the course of their own practice. They then proceed to analyse the internal and external connections in the development of things on the basis of the things' concreteness and totality, and to analyse the various aspects of the concrete contradictions inherent in the things.¹⁹

But, ask the idealists, is the law of dialectics itself dialectical; that is, are contradictions inherent in it as well as the rest of the objective world? Ch'en answers in the affirmative, but rejects the implication that these inherent contradictions will eventually negate themselves, and hence the law of dialectics itself. On the contrary, he argues, history has demonstrated that the science of dialectics has itself developed as a result of these inner contradictions from a lower to a higher stage. Thus, modern dialectical materialism is an improvement on both the primitive dialectical materialism of ancient Greece and Hegel's more sophisticated dialectical idealism. How does this process of change and improvement come about? According to Ch'en:

¹⁹Loc. cit.

Since its creation, dialectical materialism has developed into new stages, and is just now again developing into a new stage. This process is based on the development of history, of man's practice, and of the law of dialectics itself. This development [of dialectical materialism] is not merely quantitative, but also qualitative.²⁰

Previously, Ch'en had stated that modern dialectical materialism (Marxism-Leninism) was a "brand new thing," the product of the development of the dialectic from lower to higher stages. But if Marxism-Leninism is in turn developing into a new stage, will another "brand new thing" be produced? And if so, what will it be? Ch'en does not answer this question in his article of 1935, but in the following years the answer slowly began to emerge. Finally, Ch'en responds to the allegation that dialectical materialists in China are in danger of being ensnared in foreign "nets." The implication is that Chinese Marxists are subservient to outside influences (i.e., Moscow), and are not really in command of their own professed philosophy. Ch'en rejects this suggestion, remarking that it is the Chinese idealists who really "crawl up to 'foreign' masters." They simply regurgitate the anti-Marxist philosophy of such foreign thinkers as Hume, Kant, Bergsen, Russell, Dewey, et al., whose theories are nothing but opium used to "enslave their own people and the people of the colonies."²¹

Ch'en's emphasis on the need to apply dialectical materialism to Chinese problems in a "living way," and his firm denial that Chinese Marxists are in danger of being ensnared in foreign "nets" should be noted. They suggest that he was less than happy with

²⁰Ibid., pp. 54-55.

²¹Ibid., (pt. 2), p. 40.

China's status as a mere borrower of the new "scientific" philosophy of the proletariat, forever indebted to the West (including Russia) for philosophical enlightenment. But was China only a borrower of dialectical materialism, or did it in fact have an independent claim to a 'Marxist' tradition in the realm of thought? Ch'en was at this time beginning to take the latter position, as illustrated in his views on T'an Ssu-t'ung, the radical Chinese reformer who was executed in 1898. In late 1933, Ch'en drafted a lengthy essay on T'an's philosophy, claiming that T'an's thought contained elements of elementary materialism and incomplete dialectics.²² Thus by 1933 Ch'en was attempting to satisfy himself as to the indigenous Chinese roots of 'Marxism.' Eventually, his search for the origins of dialectical materialism in China was to lead him back to the philosophy of classical antiquity.²³ For Ch'en, China's long history is not something simply to be rejected; on the contrary, Chinese Marxists like himself are able to inherit the "most outstanding aspects" of the thought of T'an Ssu-t'ung precisely because they are the "inheritors of all the outstanding thought of China."²⁴

²²Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun Zhong-guo qi-meng si-xiang-jia Tan Si-tong" (On the Chinese Enlightened Thinker T'an Ssu-t'ung) (15 December 1933) in Ch'en Po-ta, Zai wen-hua zhen-xian shang (On the Cultural Front), Hong Kong: Sheng-huo shu-dian, 1939, pp. 181, 209.

²³The search for precedents of dialectical materialism in China's past was a source of constant fascination for many CCP intellectuals. For example, the Party theorist and historian Hsü Meng-ch'iu once commented to Nym Wales that as a student in the early 1920's he had read a study entitled Ancient Communism in Chinese Society. "It was not correct," he recollected, "but we read it with interest." See Nym Wales (Helen F. Snow), Red Dust (Autobiographies of Chinese Communists), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1952, p. 59.

²⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Tan Si-tong," p. 244. The reformer Ts'ai Yüan-pei

By 1935 Ch'en Po-ta had moved toward an interpretation of Marxism-Leninism that would: (1) establish its compatibility with Chinese society by finding elements of dialectical materialism in China's rich historical record; and (2) encourage the "development of Marxism-Leninism in China through its "living" application in the course of the Chinese revolution. Such an interpretation would fend off attacks from the Right, for it countered their claim that Marxism-Leninism was basically incompatible with Chinese society, and in any event was being applied too dogmatically by its Chinese adherents. Also, Ch'en's interpretation did much to appeal to the nationalistic feelings of all non-Marxist Chinese, for it held out the possibility of developing a new philosophical system that was truly Chinese in both its historical origins and contemporary form. At the same time, Ch'en was to fall under attack from the Left, many of whom argued that Marxism's sharp critique of feudal society would be blunted by any attempt to reconcile Marxist theory and Chinese history. Further, the Left maintained that any attempt to develop Marxism-Leninism by adapting it to Chinese conditions would distort its universal scientific quality, applicable regardless of time and place. Even so, Ch'en's interpretation of Marxism-Leninism was to prove more relevant to the needs of a new Nationalist-Communist united front against Japan than did that of the Leftists within the CCP. Ch'en's views on Marxist theory were also more in accord with those of Mao Tse-tung, who in 1935

was also impressed by T'an Ssu-t'ung, receiving from him in particular the "inspiration to create a synthesized philosophy." See Robert K. Sakai, "Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei as a Synthesizer of Western and Chinese Thought," Papers on China, Cambridge, Mass.: Center for East Asian Studies, Harvard University, III (May 1949), p. 173.

commenced his drive to supreme power in the CCP in the face of strong opposition from the leftist Returned Students. In the ensuing years, Ch'en's views on Marxism-Leninism were to become increasingly explicit along the lines we have discussed, and increasingly in the service of Mao Tse-tung. In the autumn of 1935, however, Ch'en Po-ta was at a turning point in his own career; at the age of thirty-one, the inarticulate lecturer at China University was about to become one of the CCP's most effective spokesmen in the struggle for a new united front against Japan. It was in the context of this struggle that Ch'en elaborated on his interpretation of Marxism-Leninism, and in so doing established his position as a rising young theorist in the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party.

CHAPTER II

CH'EN PO-TA, MAO TSE-TUNG, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM IN CHINA, 1935-37

(i) Nationalism and National Forms

Following the defeat of the Communists in the revolution of 1925-27, many of China's leftist intellectuals turned to a reconsideration of revolutionary theory in light of China's specific history and social system. Marxism became increasingly accepted by wide sections of the intelligentsia (including the students) as the true science of society, and great efforts were made to translate both classical and contemporary Marxist-Leninist works into Chinese. There was little questioning of the general proposition that a correct grasp of theory was essential as a guide to social practice, and much attention was devoted to working out a suitable theoretical position within the framework of Marxism.¹ Ironically, nationalism became an ever more powerful force in the political life of the nation precisely at the moment when large numbers of intellectuals were abandoning their traditional belief systems in favour of an essentially foreign body of thought. Nationalism had been an important political factor in China for at least a decade, but it received a great stimulus in the 1930's

¹For a brief but useful discussion of the various schools of thought in the "Controversy on China's Social History," see Benjamin I. Schwartz, "A Marxist Controversy on China," Far Eastern Quarterly, XIII (1954), pp. 143-153.

from the growing Japanese threat, especially after the attack on the northeast in 1931. The student movement in particular became increasingly nationalistic and militant, and the largely student-organized December Ninth Movement of 1935-36 had a profound impact on the entire country. Many later leaders of the CCP (including Ch'en Po-ta himself) were to rise to prominence during this and similar campaigns against Japan's increasing aggression.²

Inevitably, this rapid rise in nationalism had an immediate impact on China's two major political parties. This was especially true of the KMT, which had always been quite nationalistic, and which became even more so under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. By the early 1930's the "Nationalist Restoration" had been well and truly launched, with Chiang declaring that a major task of the revolution was to "revive our Chinese culture, to restore our people's ancient virtues, to proclaim our Chinese national soul."³ It was at about this time too that the Nationalists launched a concerted attempt to establish their own ideology as the basis for China's reconstruction, a problem which in one writer's opinion lay "at the root of the Kuomintang's concern in the thirties."⁴ Whatever the shortcomings of the

²On the rapid growth of nationalism among the students during the 1930's, see John Israel, Student Nationalism in China, 1927-1937, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966.

³For an excellent discussion of the "Nationalist Restoration" in the mid-1930's see Mary C. Wright, "From Revolution to Restoration: The Transformation of Kuomintang Ideology", FEQ, XIV (1955), pp. 515-532. The quotation from Chiang is on p. 525.

⁴James C. Thomson, While China Faced West (American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 17.

KMT's New Life Movement of 1934-35, there is no doubt that it represented an attempt to win the youth of China to the Nationalist cause.⁵ The attention devoted to China's "national soul" was not characteristic of Chiang Kai-shek alone; rather, it formed the basis of what was to develop into a major debate in the mid-thirties on the nature of the Western impact on China. In the 1920's, people as diverse as Hu Shih and Ch'en Tu-hsiu had argued in favour of the widespread introduction of Western influences into China, but with the rise of nationalism in the wake of Japanese aggression this relatively uncritical attitude became suspect. A landmark in the debate was the publication in January 1935 of a joint declaration by ten leading academics who opposed the "wholesale Westernization" approach taken by their more zealous colleagues. While agreeing that China had much to learn from the West, they argued that it was mistaken to advocate the too complete imitation of England, the United States, the Soviet Union, Italy, or Germany:

We demand a cultural construction on the Chinese basis.... We must examine our heritage, weed out what should be weeded out, and preserve what should be preserved....It is right and necessary to absorb Western culture. But we should absorb what is worth absorbing and not, with the attitude of total acceptance, absorb its dregs also.⁶

There is no doubt that the ten professors in question approached the

⁵For an account of the New Life Movement, see Samuel C. Chu, The New Life Movement, 1934-1937, New York: East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1957.

⁶For this quotation and its source, see the translation in Wm. Theodore de Bary, et al., Sources of Chinese Tradition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 854-856.

problem of Westernization from an essentially conservative point of view, but their concern reflected the increasing nationalism of the age. As such, it was in tune with the times, and could not be lightly dismissed by political activists in any camp who wished to relate to the temper of these turbulent years. As we saw in Chapter I, Ch'en Po-ta himself was much concerned in the spring of 1935 with refuting the allegation that Chinese dialectical materialists were overly influenced by their "foreign masters," and assuring his readers that the "new philosophy" he espoused was on the point of entering a higher stage in its development in China.

It was in this general intellectual climate that the December Ninth Movement broke out at the end of 1935, and by the following spring the movement had spread from Peking to every part of the country. The students demanded that the Nationalist government terminate its campaigns against the Communists, and join with them in a new united front against Japan. At this time China University, where Ch'en was teaching, had the largest number of CCP members of any university in Peking, and it played a major role in the campaign along with Yenching and Tsinghua, two leading universities in the capital. Shih Li-teh, who headed the Liaison Department of the Peking Students' Federation at the time, later revealed that Ch'en was a "responsible comrade" in the CCP's Northern Bureau and played an active role in the movement.⁷ Nothing specific is known about his activities,

⁷John Israel, "The December 9th Movement: A Case Study in Chinese Communist Historiography," in Albert Feuerwerker, ed., History in Communist China, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968, pp. 247-276. For Shih Li-teh's comments on Ch'en's role, see Li Ch'ang, et al., "Yi-er-jiu" hui-yi-lu (Reminiscences of "December Ninth"), Peking: Zhong-guo qing-nian chu-ban-she, 1961, p. 39.

other than that he worked in cooperation with K'o Ch'ing-shih, Nan Han-chen and other later luminaries in the CCP. It was also about this time that he got to know Liu Shao-ch'i, who headed the Party's Northern Bureau in the mid-thirties, and established good personal relations with him. Liu, it is said, thought highly of Ch'en at the time.⁸

Following the Comintern's initiative, the CCP too had been moving (albeit more slowly) toward a united front policy, and the December Ninth Movement did much to prepare public opinion for some kind of renewed cooperation between the Communists and the Nationalists.⁹ In December 1935 Chou Yang, a leading CCP cadre in cultural affairs in Shanghai, disbanded the League of Left-Wing Writers and set up a new body, the United Association of Chinese Writers. The task of the new organization was to play down militant left-wing literature in favour of cooperation with all writers, Marxist or not, who opposed Japan. Chou and his associates put forward the slogan of "national defence literature" as the umbrella under which all patriotic writers could work toward a common cause, the defence of China against Japanese aggression. This slogan won the immediate support of many Communist intellectuals such as Kuo Mo-jo, Ai Ssu-ch'i, Ho Kan-chih and Ch'en Po-ta himself, but it was not accepted by others. Indeed, an

⁸FQYJ, II:2, p. 98.

⁹For a detailed comparison of the Comintern's and the CCP's attitude toward the new united front, see Gregor Benton, "The 'Second Wang Ming Line' (1935-38)," The China Quarterly, 61 (March 1975), pp. 61-94.

influential group of leftist writers including Lu Hsün, Hu Feng, Feng Hsüeh-feng, and Mao Tun shortly after organized another association of their own, the Chinese Literary Workers. They adopted a slogan which they felt was both more comprehensive and more radical than that of their rivals, namely, "mass literature of national revolutionary war."¹⁰

Central to Chou Yang's slogan of national defence literature was the concept of "national forms" (min-zu xing-shi), the ideas behind which were largely those of Ch'ü Chiu-pai, the CCP leader who had been executed by the Nationalists in 1935. As certain of Ch'ü's literary ideas were to influence the attitudes of Ch'en Po-ta and ultimately Mao Tse-tung towards Marxist-Leninist theory, a brief comment on Ch'ü's literary thinking is in order. In the early 1930's, Ch'ü had developed his own views on the question of "common speech" in language and "national forms" in literature. Regarding language, he felt that the May Fourth Movement had not gone far enough in making the written language accessible to the common people. The so-called "plain speech" (bai-hua) of the twenties was in fact an awkward mixture of Chinese and foreign elements, and was to a large extent incomprehensible to the ordinary man when read aloud. Ch'ü therefore advocated the creation of a real bai-hua which ordinary people could

¹⁰For an outline of this literary debate, see Merle Goldman, Literary Dissent in Communist China, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 5-17. For more detail see Hsia Tsi-an, "Lu Hsün and the Dissolution of the League of Leftist Writers," in Hsia Tsi-an, The Gate of Darkness (Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China), Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, pp. 101-145.

understand when spoken, but he did not favour the uncritical use of the language of the peasants, which he regarded as often obscure. Instead, he felt that the language of China's new urban working class, who were exposed to the modernizing influences of the cities, was fast becoming a kind of national "common speech" (pu-tong-hua). As such, this developing language of the proletariat could be the starting point of a new mass revolutionary literature, although this did not preclude the use, when necessary, of local dialects in written form. He even suggested that in the future it might be desirable to encourage particular regional literatures; for example, a Kwangtung or a Fukien literature. In fact, Ch'ü called for a flexible attitude toward the written language, providing the starting point was the easily understood pu-tong-hua of the urban proletariat. Given this, it was even possible to use certain foreign expressions if it were felt desirable or necessary.¹¹ On the question of literature, Ch'ü sharply rejected the common view in left-wing literary circles that new contents demanded new forms. On the contrary, he argued that traditional literary forms could be given new content, and suggested that the yan-yi (historical romance) of the past could be used to illustrate modern revolutionary history. For example, one could envisage a new yan-yi entitled "The Canton Commune" (Guang-zhou gong-she) or, perhaps, "Chu and Mao Boldly Descend the Ching-kang Mountain" (Zhu Mao da xia Jin-gang shan). Ch'ü also maintained that certain

¹¹Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, "Da-zhong wen-yi de wen-ti" (The Problem of Literature and Art for the Masses), (5 March 1932), in Qu Qui-bai wen-ji (Collected Works of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai), Peking: Ren-min wen-xue chu-ban-she, 1953, II, pp. 884-893. See especially pp. 887-889.

old forms in literature were superior to certain new forms, in that they were linked directly to traditional oral literature and took the form of easily understood narration. He criticized the arrogance of those writers who held that while the literary level of the masses should be raised, there could be no lowering of standards in order to cater to their existing tastes. According to this view, the masses should be taught to appreciate new forms in literature, and there should be no going back to traditional forms. Ch'ü did not deny the value of new forms in literature; rather, he believed that old and new forms could be used at the same time, with the masses gradually coming to accept the new forms. Providing the content of revolutionary mass literature was suitably progressive, it was possible to experiment with many different forms both old and new.¹²

These were the basic ideas behind the concept of national forms promoted by Chou Yang's new organization, for Chou himself had been greatly influenced by Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai in the early 1930's when they worked together in the League of Left-Wing Writers. But the group of writers centered around Lu Hsün remained suspicious of Chou Yang's new writers association and the literary ideas it espoused. They felt that Chou's organization would be diluted with non-Marxist writers, and that the revolutionary content of national defence literature would succumb to the tide of nationalism that was sweeping over the country. In later years Mao Tun, one of the Lu Hsün group, complained that the emphasis laid upon nationalism at this time

¹²Ibid., pp. 890-892.

"overshadowed the importance of the class outlook."¹³ The dispute was embittered by various personal quarrels among some of the leading personalities on both sides, but it was essentially ideological in nature. It was also quite serious; in her study of the issue, Merle Goldman has concluded that Lu Hsün and Feng Hsüeh-feng in particular "masterminded and spearheaded a policy of deliberate insubordination to the party's cultural directives."¹⁴ This open dispute in the cultural field was an acute embarrassment to the CCP in its efforts to launch a new united front, and Ai Ssu-ch'i complained bitterly that the "most important danger at the present time is...left-wing dogmatism." These left-wing dogmatists, wrote Ai, "have a most advanced appearance, but they repeatedly sell out, and their surrender harms those who are united to save the country."¹⁵ Ai's accusation was of course directed at the "literary leftists" in Shanghai, but it was similar to the charges Mao Tse-tung was leveling against the Returned Student faction within the leadership of the Party in the remote fastness of Yen-an.

In October 1936, with the dispute over the two slogans in full

¹³Mao Tun, "Literature in the Kuomintang Controlled Areas", in The People's New Literature, Peking: Cultural Press, 1950, p. 75.

¹⁴Goldman, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁵Ai Ssu-ch'i, "Lun si-xiang wen-hua wen-ti" (On the Problem of Thought and Culture), in Hsia Cheng-nung, Xian jie-duan de Zhong-guo si-xiang yun-dong (Contemporary Intellectual Movements in China), Shanghai: Yi-ban shu-dian, 1937, p. 30.

swing, Ch'en Po-ta intervened with a proposal which he hoped would unite the two sides.¹⁶ He recognized that disputes were an inevitable part of life, but felt that this particular one had dragged on for so long that the only people benefiting from it were the enemy; hence his call for an "armistice" among the warring factions on the literary front. Nonetheless, he immediately endorsed the slogan of national defence literature and called upon its left-wing opponents to recognize its validity in a united front setting. He acknowledged that certain people felt that this slogan lacked a radical ring, but he pointed out that it was designed to further the goals of the united front against Japan. As such, it had to be broad enough to appeal to large numbers of people who were opposed to Japan for a wide variety of reasons arising from their differing social interests. Also, argued Ch'en, the idea of national defence should be liberally interpreted to include such revolutionary causes as "opposition to darkness and oppression, demands for freedom and transformation of the life of the people, and opposition to orthodoxy and superstition." All these things, Ch'en pointed out, are equally concerned with national defence. With national defence defined so broadly, was there any need for the alternative slogan of mass

¹⁶The discussion in this paragraph is based on Ch'en Po-ta, "Wen-yi-jie liang-ge kou-hao de lun-zheng ying-gai xiu-zhan" (There Should be a Truce in the Dispute Over the Two Slogans in the Literary and Art World) (October 1936), in Guo-fang wen-xue lun-zhan (The Debate on National Defence Literature), Shanghai: Xin-chao she, 1936, pp. 597-602. The text of Ch'en's essay used here is in ZGYJ, V:8 (10 August 1971), pp. 112-113.

literature of national revolutionary war? Yes, said Ch'en, there was. This slogan should represent the forces of the Left in the literary world, but only under the umbrella of national defence literature, and not as an opposing slogan. The more radical form of literature should be a key element and the major force in national defence literature. Hence, the slogan of the Lu Hsün group was to represent the "individual standpoint of left-wing writers" within the united front in the literary field, but it could not be the slogan of the united front in literature itself. Having suggested this compromise by which the two opposing groups might cooperate in a common struggle against Japan, Ch'en called upon the individuals involved on both sides to "sacrifice their prejudices" and reunite. As the war with Japan ominously approached, the leftist faction among the Shanghai writers reluctantly accepted the idea of a broad united front against Japan, and Ch'en's efforts certainly played a role in this development.¹⁷ Nevertheless, several important members of the original group never really accepted the CCP's authority in the cultural field, until they were forced to do so during the Rectification Movement at Yen-an in the early 1940's, or after the Communists' victory in 1949.

¹⁷ Soon after his fall from power in 1970, Ch'en's support of national defence literature in 1936 was denigrated as an example of "right capitulationism" on the literary front. For an exhaustive discussion of this issue, see Hsüan Mou, "Chen Bo-da yu san-shi nian-dai wen-yi liang-ge kou-hao de lun-zheng" (Ch'en Po-ta and the Dispute over the Two Slogans in Art and Literature During the 1930's), ZGYJ, V:8 (10 August 1971), pp. 4-22.

(ii) Ch'en's "New Enlightenment Movement"

Although the December Ninth Movement helped the Communists in their efforts to form a new united front, the literary dispute in Shanghai illustrated the difficulty in finding the right slogans which would be accepted by all the major political groupings concerned. On 10 September 1936 the left-wing Shanghai periodical Du-shu sheng-huo (Reading Life) published a special issue in an attempt to spark off a broad movement on the cultural front, and Ch'en Po-ta rose to the occasion by calling for a "New Enlightenment Movement" (xin qi-meng yun-dong, henceforth simply NEM).¹⁸ According to a contemporary account by Ho Kan-chih, Ch'en was the first person "consciously" to raise the question of a new intellectual movement to accompany the political forces generated by the December Ninth Movement. Ho also declared that Ch'en's first two articles on the NEM were the "earliest calls" for and the "foundation stones" of the entire movement.¹⁹ Ch'en's proposals provoked a lively debate in political and intellectual circles throughout the country, and won the immediate support of Chou Yang, Ai Ssu-ch'i, Ho Kan-chih, Hu Ch'iao-mu and other leading CCP intellectuals. The response from non-Marxists

¹⁸Ch'en Po-ta, "Xin zhe-xue-zhe de zi-ji pi-pan he guan-yu xin qi-meng yun-dong de jian-yi" (A New Philosopher's Self-criticism and Proposal for a New Enlightenment Movement), Du-shu sheng-huo (Reading Life), IV:9 (10 September 1936), pp. 453-455.

¹⁹Ho Kan-chih, Jin-dai Zhong-guo qi-meng yun-dong shi (A History of the Modern Chinese Enlightenment Movement), Shanghai: Sheng-huo shu-dian, 1938, pp. 206-208.

was more reserved and critical, as could be expected, but from this time on Ch'en became an increasingly well known figure in the numerous debates on the united front prior to the Japanese invasion in July 1937.

What exactly was the NEM? Or, perhaps more accurately, what did Ch'en think it should be? In a series of related essays, Ch'en developed the theme that the NEM should be a "second New Culture Movement -- a cultural salvation movement", similar to yet different from the May Fourth Movement of 1919. During this famous movement, argues Ch'en, there was no conflict of interest between enlightenment and patriotism, the reason being that:

Fighters of the New Culture Movement were at the same time fighters of the patriotic movement, and fighters of the patriotic movement equally became fighters of the New Culture Movement.²⁰

Yet in spite of this important similarity, there is a crucial difference between the May Fourth Movement and the NEM, for in the intervening years dialectics (dong de luo-ji) have replaced formal logic as the dominant philosophical system in China. Consequently, Marxists are to be the main force of the present NEM, and the "concrete application of dialectics will become the central concern" of this new movement. As in the case of the united front in literature, so in the NEM; the Communists will willingly cooperate with other groups in the united front, but will not voluntarily relinquish their leading role. Having established this point, Ch'en then

²⁰Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun xin qi-meng yun-dong" (On the new Enlightenment Movement), Xin shi-ji (New Century), 1:2(1 October 1936). The text used here is in Hsia Cheng-nung, op. cit., pp. 67-75. The passage cited is on p. 68.

declares that the "recognition or denial of dialectics" is by no means the criterion for participation in the NEM; the only criteria are the "defence of the motherland and the enlightenment of the people." Ch'en concludes that the NEM will develop widely only if it is constructed on the basis of "non-sectarianism." Accordingly, it should include individuals from various social strata, providing they support the defence of China against Japan and resist the current attempts to revive traditionalism.²¹ In spite of these efforts to broaden the appeal of the NEM, Ch'en's proposals were attacked as being "excessively narrow in scope and excessively leftist in expression," and his ultimate insistence on the leading role of Marxism in the NEM probably did much to undermine its general appeal to non-Marxists in the cultural field.²² Nonetheless, the NEM's normal course of development was cut short by the Japanese invasion in mid-1937, when intellectual debate in Peking and Shanghai came to an abrupt halt. The NEM might have been more successful had it not been for the intervention of the war, but this must remain speculative.

Although Ch'en declared that Marxists should play the main role in the NEM, this did not imply that they were without serious shortcomings. On the contrary, in his original article calling for the NEM, Ch'en suggested that in the field of philosophy (his own special area of interest) Marxists should carry out a thorough "self-criticism" as part of their contribution to the new movement. Specifically,

²¹Ibid., pp. 73-75.

²²Ho Kan-chih, op. cit., p. 220.

they should criticize themselves for having failed to (1) make a systematic critique of China's traditional philosophical systems, and (2) integrate in a satisfactory way Marxist theory and the practical politics of China. Both of these points are relevant to our discussion. In Ch'en's opinion, Marxism has become the dominant philosophy in China in the years since the failure of the revolution of 1925-27, yet Marxists have failed to deal effectively with the two important problems referred to above. In the first place, laments Ch'en:

There is, in general, a lack of a systematic, penetrating critique of China's old traditional thought, and this millenia-old ruling traditional thought has become today a powerful tool which the imperialists (especially the Japanese imperialists) and traitors are using to enslave the consciousness of the Chinese people.²³

In calling for a "systematic, penetrating critique" of China's philosophical heritage, Ch'en is by no means implying that it should be totally rejected. In another article, for example, he suggests that in struggling for "a China with a new culture" it is necessary to "defend the best traditions in Chinese culture."²⁴ One of these traditions no doubt relates to his earlier discovery that dialectical materialism existed independently in China prior to the introduction of Marxism in the twentieth century. The time has come,

²³Ch'en, "Xin zhe-xue-zhe de zi-ji pi-pan", p. 453.

²⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Wen-hua shang de da lian-he yu xin qi-meng yun-dong de li-shi te-dian" (The Great Unity in Culture and the Historical Characteristics of the New Enlightenment Movement) (Summer 1937), in Hsia Cheng-nung, op. cit., pp. 128-137. The reference is to p. 128. Also see Ch'en Po-ta, "Xue-xi pi-ping (Study and Criticism) (Spring 1937?), in Ch'en, Zai wen-hua zhen-xian shang, pp. 28-33.

argues Ch'en, for China's Marxist philosophers to evaluate the legacy of the past on the basis of dialectical materialism. However, in addition to having failed to deal adequately with China's intellectual heritage, Ch'en also complains that:

The greater part of China's Marxist philosophers have not integrated practical politics into their philosophical writings, and have not successfully used examples from China's living politics to elucidate dialectics, thus concretizing dialectical materialism in Chinese problems and further enriching it....Hence Marxism can easily become empty talk and can be misrepresented by others.²⁵

In a later article Ch'en suggests that Ai Ssu-ch'i's efforts in the popularization of Marxist philosophy are "epoch-making," but are "still inadequate" regarding the union of philosophy and the "total reality of China's history."²⁶ For Ch'en, this inability of Marxist theorists to combine their new philosophy with the historical and contemporary reality of China is deplorable; in such a situation theory becomes separated from reality and this in turn strengthens the tendency of theory to lag behind reality. Thus, Marxist-Leninist theory loses its ability to serve as the guiding ideology of the revolutionary movement, dooming the Chinese revolution to ultimate failure.

Ch'en's twin calls for the preservation of the "best traditions" in Chinese culture, and for the "enrichment" of Marxism by "concrete-

²⁵Ch'en, "Xin zhe-xue-zhe de zi-ji pi-pan", p. 453.

²⁶Ch'en Po-ta, "Zai lun xin qi-meng yung-dong: si-xiang de zi-you yu zi-you de si-xiang" (Again on the New Enlightenment Movement: Freedom of Thought and Free Thought), in Ren-shi yue-kan (Knowledge Monthly), I:1 (16 May 1937?). The text used here is in Hsia Cheng-nung, op. cit., pp. 84-99. The reference is to p. 90.

tizing" it in Chinese reality were probably worrying to certain sections of the CCP. Marxism appeared to be in very great danger in Ch'en's hands of losing its status as the scientific philosophy of the international proletariat, and becoming rather a cultural philosophy serving only the interests of the Chinese nation. The strong cultural overtones in Ch'en's thinking were even more pronounced in the views of Chang Shen-fu, another young Marxist theorist involved in the debate on the New Enlightenment Movement. In an essay of 4 May 1937, for example, Chang supported Ch'en's proposal for such a movement, declaring that it should be "rational, synthetic, and scientific." Marxism, of course, was to provide the basic "rational" and "scientific" content of the NEM, but this should be seen in the context of Chang's ideas concerning "synthesis" as applied to the cultural sphere. Chang strongly defended the need to infuse Chinese culture with the new culture from the West, and he rejected the stubborn defence of Chinese tradition to the exclusion of Western influences. The task at hand, argued Chang, was to strike the proper balance between traditional Chinese and modern Western elements in the "genuinely new culture" that the NEM was to create for China:

There should be a dialectical or organic synthesis [zong-he] of the various cultures existing at the present time. As a rule, the creation of a genuinely new culture results from the fusion [jie-he] of two dissimilar cultures. When a foreign culture (or civilization) is transplanted, it cannot grow if it does not conform to the soil in the local place....[and does not] bear a national character.²⁷

²⁷Chang Shen-fu, "Wu-si yun-dong yu xin qi-meng yun-dong" (The May Fourth Movement and the New Enlightenment Movement) (4 May 1937), in Hsia Cheng-nung, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

It should be noted that Chang equates "culture" with "civilization," and does not limit his discussion of cultural synthesis merely to the narrower fields of art and literature. This is in keeping with the broad sociological approach to culture characteristic of Marxists like Chang, but it does raise questions about Marxism itself. Surely, the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat was itself part and parcel of the Western cultural (or civilizational) impact of the West. If so, would not Marxism also be synthesized with traditional Chinese culture in Chang's formulations? In his essay, Chang did not deal specifically with the possible theoretical implications of his argument for cultural synthesis. However, there were apparently other Marxists who were not blind to the nuances of Chang's ideas, which were similar to those of Ch'en Po-ta himself.

Small wonder, then, that Ch'en felt it necessary to attack certain unnamed "literary Pharisees" for suggesting that in a new united front Marxism would quickly degenerate into "united philosophy" (lian-he zhe-xue) or "patriotic philosophy" (ai-guo zhe-xue), and would lose its "philosophical party nature"²⁸. These charges of course implied that Marxism and nationalism were irreconcilable, and this was the brunt of the criticism the literary leftists levelled against the united front policy and the probable consequences that would flow from it. But were Marxism and nationalism indeed incompatible? Not according to Ch'en, who agreed with his critics that Marxism in the present era in China would have the appearance of being a patriotic philosophy. In the face of Japanese aggression, argued Ch'en, any

²⁸Ch'en, "Wen-hua shang de da lian-he", pp. 128-130.

philosophy which was not patriotic would be of no use to the Chinese people. But the patriotism he was advocating was not to be confused with "ordinary" patriotism. Ch'en's kind of patriotism had its "own historical characteristic," in that under the right circumstances it might "rather quickly transform itself into [the basis of] a new rational social life." In other words, Ch'en's patriotic philosophy was at one and the same time Marxist philosophy, for it emerged in a historical situation characterized by a patriotism that was different from ordinary patriotism (i.e., bourgeois nationalism).²⁹ In firmly rejecting the charge that there was any conflict of interest between Marxist philosophy and Chinese nationalism, Ch'en provides us with the key to his fundamental understanding of Marxism itself:

The real task of our philosophy [viz., Marxism] is to transform the world, but in our present circumstances the task of our philosophy is to serve the defence of the motherland. Our philosophy is the philosophy that will liberate all mankind, but at the same time it is also the present patriotic philosophy of us Chinese people. Our new philosophy is not abstract dogma; it must struggle under each concrete historical situation, and within each concrete historical environment, for each genuinely progressive cause. In China, which is suffering annexation [by Japan], the cause of national liberation is a very great progressive cause.³⁰

For Ch'en, Marxism is not "abstract dogma" which exists independently of a specific time and place; it is rather a living philosophy which is intimately bound up with the "concrete historical situation" and "concrete historical environment" peculiar to China.

²⁹Ibid., p. 136.

³⁰Ibid., p. 130.

While Ch'en played a major role within the CCP in redefining the nature of Marxism in the light of growing nationalism in the immediate years prior to 1937, this is not to suggest that he was alone in his efforts. Rather, he was simply one of the leading spokesmen of the important group of urban Party intellectuals who enthusiastically accepted the Party's demand for a new united front in the face of Japanese aggression. In the spring of 1937, some six months after the NEM had been launched by Ch'en, the CCP theorist Hsia Cheng-nung edited a collection of articles relating to the movement. Three of Ch'en's most important articles were included, in addition to contributions by such well known figures as Ai Ssu-ch'i, Ho Kan-chih, Chou Yang and others. In his concluding essay, Hsia attempted to uncover the "principles of China's ideological movement at the present stage."³¹ Ideology, says Hsia, is based on class, and the ideology of the leading class at a given moment in history is the "leading element" in any contemporary ideological movement. Hence, this leading element establishes the fundamental principles of the ideological movement in question. In European intellectual history the leading role of the bourgeoisie and its ideology is quite clear, but in China things are different. Both in terms of political progressiveness and sheer numbers, the "labouring masses" play this leading role in present-day China, and in China's contemporary ideological movements as well. In other words, the ideology of the labouring masses (viz., Marxism-Leninism) is to be the leading element in the New Enlightenment Movement. However, because of China's "special character" the labouring

³¹The discussion in this paragraph is based on Hsia Cheng-nung, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

masses have certain limitations in comparison with their European counterparts. First, the Chinese masses are undertaking two historic tasks, one of which is their own and one the bourgeoisie's. They must first help satisfy the demands of the bourgeoisie, and only then move on to the realization of their own aspirations. Second, the Chinese masses have not yet gone through the tempering process of capitalist society, nor have they fully experienced the effects of the (bourgeois) liberation of the individual. In the realm of thought, these two historical limitations have not been conducive to the thorough elimination of feudal thought from the ranks of the Chinese labouring masses, nor to the systematic establishment of their own class ideology and fighting forces. In consequence, the Chinese masses are "a little backward" in comparison with the labouring classes of Europe, America and certain other countries. In light of this analysis, Hsia is forced to the conclusion that:

Although it takes the ideology of the labouring masses as its guide, China's ideological movement in its present stage [i.e., the NEM] definitely cannot take the philosophy of the European proletariat and transfer it to China in an unchanged form. It is only when it is applied to real problems that dialectical materialism can exist and be of significance. It itself will then develop. We cannot deny that the sharpest and most correct weapon in today's ideological movement is dialectical materialism, but we must pay special attention to the fact that the present stage is one in which dialectical materialism will develop in China.³²

By early 1937, then, there was a feeling among certain CCP intellectuals in the cities that the time had come for Marxism-Leninism to "develop" in China. Only if it took form in the course of concrete

³²Loc. cit.

struggles in China, they argued, would Marxism-Leninism be relevant to the special needs of the Chinese people at this crucial moment in their history. In proposing his New Enlightenment Movement, Ch'en Po-ta had clearly indicated that it was only through the reconciliation of the philosophy of the international proletariat and the rising nationalism of the Chinese people that Marxism-Leninism could develop in China. In his support for "national forms" in literature, for the preservation of the "best traditions" in Chinese culture, for a "systematic critique" of China's traditional philosophy, and for the "enrichment" of dialectical materialism by "concretizing" it in Chinese problems, Ch'en was pointing -- however imprecisely -- toward the later concept of the "Sinification of Marxism." Indeed, left to itself Ch'en's New Enlightenment Movement might well have led to a more or less explicit theory along these lines, but events intervened to deny this as a possibility. Prior to the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937, many of the active participants in the movement (including Ch'en himself) fled to the safety of Yen-an. There they were to become the core of the ideological and propaganda machine which Mao Tse-tung was busily assembling in the course of his struggle with the Returned Students. At this point in our study it becomes necessary to discuss Mao's rise to power and his attitude toward Marxism-Leninism, for he achieved supremacy within the CCP precisely at the moment when Ch'en Po-ta and his urban colleagues were calling for the development of Marxism-Leninism in China. Mao was thinking similar thoughts, although he had somewhat different views on the specific question of the correct attitude toward China's history and traditional philosophy.

(iii) Mao Tse-tung's Rise to Power

Mao Tse-tung's rise to supreme power in the CCP dates from late 1934, when the military failures of the Returned Students gave him the chance to re-establish his power in both the Red Army and the Party organization at Juichin. This in turn placed him in a strong position at the crucial meeting at Tsunyi in January 1935, when the Party leadership convened to reorganize itself during the Long March.³³ The precise details of the Tsunyi Conference remain obscure to this day, but there can be little doubt that the meeting was a most important milestone in Mao's career. He was re-elected to the Politburo and to the chairmanship of the important Military Affairs Committee, positions which provided the basis for his eventual domination of the Party.³⁴ Nonetheless, Mao's support was far from overwhelming and, as Hu Chi-hsi has pointed out, came largely from the army, especially the dedicated Maoist faction which by that time probably dominated it.³⁵ The delicate balance of power is indicated by the fact that in spite of Mao's real gains it was Chang Wen-t'ien who was elected secretary-general of the Party, and there was no criticism of the

³³For a plausible account of Mao's political comeback prior to the Tsunyi Conference, see Dieter Heinzig, "The Otto Braun Memoirs and Mao's Rise to Power," CQ, 46 (April-June 1971), pp. 274-288.

³⁴Henry G. Schwartz, "The Nature of Leadership: The Chinese Communists, 1930-1945," World Politics, XXII:4 (July 1970), p. 560.

³⁵Hu Chi-hsi, "Hua Fu, the Fifth Campaign of Encirclement and the Tsun-yi Conference," CQ, 43 (July-September 1970), p. 46.

Party's political line (i.e., the political line of the Returned Students).³⁶ While some of the Returned Students were prepared to admit to errors in the military sphere, they would not countenance criticism in the more important realm of politics.

In spite of Chang Kuo-t'ao's open opposition to Mao's growing power after Tsunyi, Mao's First Army completed its epic Long March in October 1935 and settled down in its new home in Shensi. During a temporary stay in the small town of Wayaopao, the Politburo convened a full meeting to review the situation in the Party and the country as a whole. Official sources have called this meeting "one of the most important ever called" by the CCP Central Committee, and the reasons are not hard to fathom.³⁷ Convened in mid-December, the conference declared its support for the policy of a united front in China in line with the Comintern's decisions earlier that year. This policy gave the CCP a new lease on life and set the stage for the Party's rapid growth during the war against Japan. It was also at Wayaopao that Mao abandoned the compromise he had made at Tsunyi, and came out with a direct attack on the political line of the Returned Students. In a Politburo resolution of 25 December (which clearly

³⁶ Mao Ze-dong ji (Collected Works of Mao Tse-tung), edited under the direction of Takuechi Minoru, Tokyo: Hokubo sha, 1970-74, IV, p. 393. This ten-volume collection of Mao's writings in their original form will be used as the standard reference to Mao's works except for those released after 1949, when the present official Chinese texts will be used. On Mao's position at the Tsunyi Conference, see also Jerome Ch'en, "Resolutions of the Tsun-yi Conference," CQ, 40 (October-December 1969), p. 13.

³⁷ Mao Ze-dong xuan-ji (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung), Peking: Ren-min chu-ban she, 1967, I, p. 128.

reflected his opinions), Mao paid lip-service to the need to guard against the right, yet he went on to declare that the "main danger" was a "'left' closed-door tendency" which had existed for some time within the Party. That the leftists in question were none other than the Returned Students is suggested by the resolution's conclusion that the "basic source" of leftism within the Party is its proponents' "inability to apply Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism in a living way to China's specific concrete environment, thus rendering Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism a lifeless dogma."³⁸ This charge of "dogmatism" was to become a major theme in Mao's struggles with the Returned Students, and the "living" application of Marxism-Leninism to China the very cornerstone of his approach to problems of ideology.

The Wayaopao Conference was crucial to Mao's rise to power because it turned the tables on the Returned Students and placed them squarely on the defensive. No longer the tireless scourgers of "right opportunism" in the Party, they would now have to devote their energies to deflecting the charge that they themselves were guilty of a serious left deviation. Mao's growing prestige within the CCP following the meeting at Wayaopao is reflected in the comments of Edgar Snow, the American journalist who interviewed Mao and other Party leaders in July 1936. After spending some time with the Communists in the small town of Paoan, Snow reported that in his dealings with a wide variety of people, "I never met one who did not like 'the Chairman' -- as everyone called him -- and admire him. The role of his personality in the movement was clearly immense." Broadening his

³⁸Mao, Ji V, p. 36.

scope, Snow further declared that "the influence of Mao Tse-tung throughout the Communist world of China is probably greater than that of anyone else." Yet in spite of Mao's dominant position Snow could observe that there was " -- as yet, at least -- no ritual of hero-worship built up around him. I never met a Chinese Red who drivelled 'our-great-leader' phrases."³⁹ This was in mid-1936; by the summer of the following year the cult of the "great leader" was beginning to make its appearance.

The last few months of 1936 were of supreme importance to both Mao and the CCP. They witnessed the destruction of Chang Kuo-t'ao as a force to be reckoned with, and the legitimization of the Party as a result of the Sian Incident in December of that year, when Chiang Kai-shek was forced to agree to a new united front with the Communists. The first of these two events further consolidated Mao's leading position within the CCP; the second presented him with the opportunity of becoming a truly national leader as well, in direct competition with Chiang. In April 1937 the Politburo met in Yen-an to discuss the new situation arising from the Sian Incident, and in May a national conference of the Party was convened to discuss the new line. According to Chang Kuo-t'ao, Mao further strengthened his position at this conference by supporting Liu Shao-ch'i's critique of the Party's leftist errors in the past. Liu's report antagonized the Returned Students, and Mao's support of Liu's position marked the beginning of the Mao-Liu coalition that was eventually to dominate the Party.

³⁹Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937, pp. 82-83.

Certainly, it was soon after the May conference that Liu was transferred to Yen-an, and took up an increasingly important number of Party posts, probably with the personal support of Mao.⁴⁰ In a few months' time Mao was to be confronted by Wang Ming, the one remaining Returned Student who could pose a serious challenge to Mao's position in the Party. Wang's attitude toward Mao was clearly revealed in an article of mid-1937, in which he twice referred to "Comrades Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung" as the leaders of the Chinese Red Army. Not only was Mao ranked second to Chu, but both were described solely as military as opposed to political leaders of the Chinese Communist movement.⁴¹

In spite of Wang Ming's hesitations, by the late spring of 1937 Mao Tse-tung was very much the first among equals in the CCP, and early signs of a personality cult began to make their appearance. On 22 June, Liberation, the CCP's new central organ, published its first woodcut portrait of Mao, and a close comparison of this with the portrait of Chu Teh published in the same journal on 16 June reveals Mao's growing pre-eminence. The two pictures in question were done by the same artist, but his treatment of the two leaders is radically

⁴⁰ Chang Kuo-t'ao's version of the beginnings of the Mao-Liu alliance is in his introduction to the Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, I (1968) pp. vi-viii. For further details on this admittedly obscure episode, see James Pinckney Harrison, The Long March to Power (A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-72), New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972, pp. 282-283 and notes.

⁴¹ Wang Ming, China Can Win! (The New Stage in the Aggression of Japanese Imperialism and the New Period in the Struggle of the Chinese People), New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1937, pp. 10, 28.

different. Both Chu and Mao are shown full face, but the background scene to Mao -- marching columns with flags flying -- is much more dynamic than the scene backing up Chu. In addition, Mao's face is strikingly illuminated by the glowing rays of the sun, a motif which has associations with the emperor in traditional China and which was to become the hallmark of the later cult of Mao. Finally, whereas an empty space beside Chu's picture is filled with decorative lines, a similar one below Mao's portrait contains a quotation from Mao calling for the "complete liberation of our nation and society." The marching columns, the rays of sun, the apt quotation -- all of these indicate that the cult of Mao was definitely in the making by June 1937, and possibly earlier.⁴² This is further suggested by the publication of Mao's first collection of writings, the Collected Essays of Mao Tse-tung, in Shanghai in December 1937.⁴³ No other Communist leader at the time was to have a similar honour, and none has had since during his own lifetime.

⁴²For Chu's portrait, see Jie-fang, 6 (14 June 1937), p. 25; for Mao's portrait and quotation, see JF, 7 (22 June 1937), p. 24. The sun motif reached its zenith during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's, when a popular song ("Dong-fang hong" -- "The East is Red") directly comparing Mao to the rising sun virtually became the national anthem of China. Likewise, the use of quotations from Mao reached its peak in the "Little Red Book" phenomenon of the same period. For a detailed treatment of the cult of Mao at the height of its development, see Robert W. Rinden, "The Cult of Mao Tse-tung," a paper delivered at the Conference on Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China, Sante Fe, USA, 2-6 August 1971. Interestingly, Mao later acknowledged his support for the cult as a means of increasing his political power during the Cultural Revolution, but confessed that it had perhaps been overdone, and should henceforth be toned down. See Edgar Snow's conversation with Mao Tse-tung (10 December 1970) in Edgar Snow, The Long Revolution, New York: Random House, 1971, pp. 168-170.

⁴³The volume in question is Mao Ze-dong lun-wen ji (Collected Essays of Mao Tse-tung), Shanghai: no pub., 1937.

Thus far we have not discussed the question of Moscow's attitude toward Mao, but with his rapid rise to a commanding position in the CCP it now becomes necessary to do so. Prior to Tsunyi the Comintern always had a major say in selecting the top leadership of the Chinese Party, but this tradition was broken at Tsunyi itself. No doubt Moscow's likely attitude was heatedly debated by everyone concerned; would Mao's victory be accepted as a fait accompli, or would there be efforts made to replace him with someone -- perhaps Wang Ming -- with closer personal links to the CPSU? Charles B. McLane has made a close study of Soviet attitudes toward Mao during these critical years, and he has concluded that on the whole Mao was highly regarded in Moscow. Yet while the Comintern was appreciative of Mao's efforts as a rural peasant leader, there was some reluctance to promote his claims as a top Party leader. Indeed, when Li Li-san fell from power in late 1930 Moscow replaced him with a leadership of its own choosing, thus ignoring whatever claims Mao and others in the field might have had to Li's post.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Moscow's success in this instance marked the end of an era; it was the "last identifiable instance of outright Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of the Chinese Communist Party."⁴⁵ As McLane pointed out in his study of the period, the early 1930's witnessed a gradual decline in Moscow's interest in maintaining strict supervision over the internal affairs of the CCP, and Moscow's gradual disengagement from the affairs of the Chinese

⁴⁴For details on Moscow's early attitude toward Mao, see Charles B. McLane, Soviet Policy and the Chinese Communists, 1931-1946, New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 29-34.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 9

Party was accelerated by the Sian Incident in December 1936.⁴⁶ Stalin placed great hopes on the united front which emerged from this episode, and his attention soon focused on the task of strengthening the KMT and its armies in the struggle against Japan. Thus it was that Mao's rise to power in the CCP was accompanied by a marked decline in Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of the Chinese Party. After years of subordination to the will of Moscow, the center of the world revolution, the Chinese Communists under Mao were at last becoming masters of their own house.

(iv) Mao's Search for "Correct" Theory

It was in this favourable environment -- growing power within the Party and declining interference by Moscow -- that Mao turned to what was probably his first concerted attempt to master Marxist-Leninist theory. When Edgar Snow met Mao in the summer of 1936, he found him to be an "ardent student of philosophy:"

Once, when I was having some nightly interviews with him on Communist history, a visitor brought him several new books on philosophy, and Mao asked me to postpone our engagements. He consumed these books in three or four nights of intensive reading, during which he seemed oblivious to everything else.⁴⁷

The summer of 1936, we will recall, was precisely when Ch'en Po-ta and his colleagues were preparing to launch their New Enlightenment Movement. From a later essay of Mao's we know that he was aware of the main outlines of the NEM, for he referred to the "broad movement of dialectical materialistic philosophy" which had recently developed

⁴⁶For Soviet attitudes on the Sian Incident and its aftermath, see *ibid.*, pp. 79-91.

⁴⁷Snow, Red Star, pp. 85-86.

in China's intellectual circles.⁴⁸ Mao's interest in philosophy was probably genuine, but there is no doubt that his voracious appetite for new books in mid-1936 was whetted by the fierce ideological dispute which had erupted at Wayaopao a few months previously. The argument over "correct" theory was at the core of Mao's struggle with the Returned Students, all of whom had studied Marxism-Leninism at Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow for several years, spoke and read Russian fluently, and were well versed in the history of the CPSU. If Mao had one outstanding vulnerability in his new position as leader of the CCP, it was to be found in his inadequate grasp of formal Marxist-Leninist theory. In light of this, Snow's description of him in the summer of 1936 as an "ardent student of philosophy" certainly rings true.

While Mao lacked a systematic knowledge of Marxism-Leninism at this time, it should not be construed from this that he had no views on theory, or ideology, as such. On the contrary, by the time of the Tsunyi Conference Mao had come to some very firm conclusions about the role of ideology in the revolutionary movement. At Tsunyi he had been unable to drive home his attack on the Returned Students' political line, but at Wayaopao he was in a much stronger position and could speak more openly on political and ideological matters. It was at this important meeting that he firmly established the key principle that was basic to his understanding of the revolution, namely, that the CCP's proletarian nature was determined by its ideology, not by its social composition. In a resolution expressing Mao's line

⁴⁸Mao, Ji VI, p. 275.

(adopted 25 December 1935), the Politburo emphasized the need to expand the Party rapidly if the new united front strategy was to be successful. Since China was an economically backward country, this implied that peasants and petty bourgeois intellectuals would always be in the majority within the Party. However, this in no way jeopardized the CCP's status as a proper Bolshevik party, the reasons being that:

The major criterion in the Party's absorption of new members is whether or not they are able to struggle resolutely for what the Party advocates. Attention should be paid to social composition, but this is not the major criterion. We should make the Party a smelting furnace of communism [yi-ge gong-chan-zhu-yi de rong-lu], and take numerous new members who wish to struggle for what the Communist Party advocates and temper them into Bolshevik fighters with the highest class consciousness. The struggle between the two lines within the Party and communist education are the methods to achieve this aim. Bolshevik unity in ideology within the Party is the concrete expression of the firm proletarian leadership of the Party.⁴⁹

Several comments should be made regarding this passage. One, it reaffirms Mao's earlier belief that ideology, not social composition, determines the CCP's ability to exercise the hegemony of the proletariat.⁵⁰ Two, it extends the analogy of the "smelting furnace"

⁴⁹Mao, Ji V, p. 38. For the Returned Students' earlier critique of Mao's "mistaken viewpoint" on the role of the peasants in the revolution in China, see Ch'en Shao-yu, Wei Zhong-gong geng-jia Bu-er-sai-wei-ke-hua er dou-zheng (Struggle for the Further Bolshevization of the CCP), Moscow: no pub., March 1932. The complete text of this important pamphlet is in Hsiao Tso-liang, Power Relations within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930-34, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961, 1967, II (The Chinese Documents), pp. 499-609. The reference is to p. 559. See also Hsiao, op. cit., I (A Study of Documents), pp. 202-207, for information on the background to the pamphlet.

⁵⁰Needless to say, this view was squarely at odds with repeated Comintern directives reminding the CCP that its proletarian nature lay "not only in its political line but in its composition and the role played by the workers in all of its leading organs." For further

(which Mao had used at the Kut'ien Conference in December 1929) from the Red Army to the CCP itself, thus opening the Party's doors wide to peasant and intellectual elements. Three, in calling for a struggle between the "two lines" in the Party, the passage virtually declared war on the Returned Students, as the same resolution also declared left deviationism to constitute the main danger in the Party at that time. It is important to remember the political context of this resolution, which simply restated ideological positions at which Mao had arrived between 1927 and 1930. When he propounded them in the earlier period he did so merely as a rural cadre in the CCP; when the Politburo repeated them at Wayaopao Mao was the de facto leader of the entire Party. The union of organizational power and political ideology had eluded Mao during the period of the Kiangsi Soviet (1931-34), but at Wayaopao the fusion at last began to take place.

At Wayaopao Mao had declared unequivocally that the leftists in the Party (viz, the Returned Students) had reduced Marxism-Leninism to a "lifeless dogma" because they were unable to unite theory with "China's specific concrete environment." Yet in calling for the union of Marxist theory and Chinese practice Mao was by no means offering original views on the subject, for the CCP had been attempting to do this very thing ever since its founding in 1921. There was general agreement that in applying Marxism-Leninism to China, full account would have to be taken of the country's particular socio-cultural

details on this Comintern resolution of 26 August 1931, see Hélène Carrère d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, Marxism and Asia, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969, p. 246.

characteristics. This of course begs the question of how one is to distinguish between "correct" and "incorrect" integration of theory and practice, but by late 1936 Mao had clearly made up his mind about this. In an important series of lectures delivered in December 1936 to the students of the newly-established Red Army College at Paoan, Mao had the following to say about the military theories of the Returned Students:

Without a doubt all of these theories were incorrect. They were mechanistic...and were the theories and practices of stupid and ignorant people. They did not have the slightest flavour of Marxism about them; indeed, they were anti-Marxist.⁵¹

Mao's comments were of course directed at the Returned Students' military theories in this instance, but the implications must have been fairly obvious to all concerned. It would be highly unlikely that such "stupid and ignorant people" would be able to handle the broad scope of Marxist-Leninist theory in an intelligent way. In the course of these lectures, Mao was primarily concerned with military affairs, but he did provide a few clues to his developing approach to more general Marxist-Leninist theory as well.⁵² Very early on he stressed the need to study military problems in the context of a specific time

⁵¹Mao, Ji V, p. 127.

⁵²Many writers have noted the intimate connection between Mao's military thought and his thinking in general. Stuart Schram, for example, has stressed the "organic link between Mao's military thought and his mind and personality as a whole." Schram, Political Thought, p. 265. In addition, the Communist writer Hu Ch'iao-mu has claimed that the book based on Mao's military lectures of 1936 constitutes an "important political and philosophical work, because it makes a penetrating analysis of the laws of the Chinese revolution as a whole." Hu Ch'iao-mu, Thirty Years of the Communist Party of China, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1954, pp. 42-43.

and place, and declared his opposition to a "mechanical approach to the problem of war." He called upon the Party and army to learn from countries other than China, but rejected the notion that this fund of knowledge provided all that was needed to be known. Instead, he suggested that the military theories of the past were simply the raw materials from which people today would fashion new theories to meet new situations. It is necessary to study the conclusions derived from the experience of the past, argued Mao, but:

We should verify these conclusions in the light of our own experience and assimilate what is useful, reject what is useless, and create what is specifically our own. The latter is very important, for otherwise we cannot direct a war.⁵³

Mao is of course dealing here with the correct approach to the theory of revolutionary war, but it is immediately obvious that the creative adaptation which he is advocating was coming to characterize his approach to the theory of revolution itself. No longer content with simply exposing the shortcomings of the theories expounded by the Returned Students, he was now groping toward the union of theory and practice that would be at one and the same time "correct" and "specifically our own." Indeed, any new theory that resulted from the union of Marxist theory and Chinese practice would by necessity be distinct from the Marxist theory that existed prior to such a union. As Ch'en Po-ta had pointed out a few months previously, Marxism which was not concretized in Chinese problems soon degenerated into mere "empty talk" and could easily be misrepresented by others. Surely this was the essence of Mao's critique of the Marxist-Leninist theory

⁵³Mao, Ji V, pp. 96-97.

espoused by the Returned Students, theory which had been concretized in Russian rather than Chinese problems. Had they not, after all, misrepresented Marxism-Leninism by taking its specific Russian form and treating it out of context of time and place as a universal form?

During 1935 Mao's attacks on the "anti-Marxist" theories of the Returned Students were accompanied by his increasing insistence on the autonomy of the CCP vis-à-vis Moscow. At no time did Mao repudiate the CPSU's leading position in the international Communist movement, but there is no mistaking his efforts to gain a greater degree of independence for the CCP than the Comintern had previously tolerated. This is seen in his remarks to Edgar Snow in the summer of 1936, remarks which Mao knew would find their way back to the Kremlin. While acknowledging the leading role of the Comintern, and the CCP's membership in it, Mao made it quite clear that:

This in no sense means that Soviet China is ruled by Moscow or by the Comintern. We are certainly not fighting for an emancipated China in order to turn the country over to Moscow!⁵⁴

Mao was not purely defensive in his attitude toward the CCP's role in the world revolutionary movement. Not only was he beginning to assert the autonomy of the CCP with regard to Moscow, but he was also claiming a more positive role for the Chinese Party in an international context. This claim was most clearly articulated in the series of lectures Mao delivered in December 1936 to the students of the Red Army College. Although he was primarily concerned with military

⁵⁴Mao Tse-tung, as reported by Edgar Snow in his interview with Mao on 23 July 1936. The passage cited is translated and documented in Schram, Political Thought, p. 419.

questions in these lectures, he was able to touch on international affairs as well. Turning to the subject of the CCP's impact abroad, he stated in no uncertain terms that:

The Chinese Communist Party has led and continues to lead a stirring, magnificent and victorious revolutionary war. This war is not only the banner of China's liberation, but possesses international revolutionary significance as well. The eyes of the revolutionary people around the world are upon us. In the new stage, the stage of the anti-Japanese national revolutionary war, we will lead the Chinese revolution to its completion, and exert a profound influence on the revolution in the East and throughout the world.⁵⁵

For Mao, the often-thwarted Chinese revolution was at last coming of age, and the CCP was about to claim its legitimate place in the forefront of the international struggle. It is in this broader international context -- as in the national context too -- that we must see Mao's later efforts to improve his credentials as an important Marxist-Leninist theorist in addition to his standing as a successful political and military leader.

(v) Mao, Ch'en, and Marxism-Leninism

By mid-1937 it was apparent that Mao Tse-tung and Ch'en Po-ta (and their like-minded colleagues) were moving toward a common position regarding Marxist-Leninist theory. Both of them felt that Marxist-Leninists in China had failed to integrate in a satisfactory way the universal truth of dialectical materialism and the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. For Mao, this failure reduced Marxism-Leninism to "lifeless dogma" and, for Ch'en, to mere "empty talk." This emasculated the theory of the proletariat, and it lost its ability to serve as a reliable guide to the revolutionary

⁵⁵ Mao, Ji V, p. 102.

process in China. Yet, change was in the air; Mao's rapid rise to power in the CCP gave him the chance to put forward his own "correct" interpretation of the doctrine, while Ch'en and his urban colleagues perceived in their New Enlightenment Movement the possibility of Marxism-Leninism actually "developing" in China. Both Mao and Ch'en were searching for a new ideology that was at once Marxist and Chinese, and their later collaboration in Yen-an is not surprising. But this growing similarity in their views prompts at least two questions which should be dealt with briefly. First, is there any reason to believe that the two men were aware -- and possibly influenced by -- each other's writings on Marxism-Leninism during 1936 and the first half of 1937? Second, despite the apparent similarity in their views, is there any evidence to suggest that there were major differences in their approaches to the problem of Marxism-Leninism in China? It is impossible to answer the first question definitively, but it seems that the two men were not greatly influenced by each other at this time. Ch'en was no doubt aware of general developments concerning the Party's struggle deep within China, but it is unlikely that he and his colleagues in Peking had access to detailed information concerning inner-Party affairs until some months after the Sian Incident in December 1936, when the CCP was able to operate more openly. This is especially true of Mao's important speeches on the Party's internal problems, most of which were delivered at closed meetings and not circulated at the time. In any event, in none of Ch'en's articles during this period does he once refer to Mao by name, nor does he discuss the affairs of the CCP as such in view of its status as an illegal party. Likewise, while Mao was aware of the New Enlightenment

Movement in urban China, he never discussed it at any length, nor referred to Ch'en and his connection with it.

That the two men were unaffected by each other except in the most general sense is further suggested by a comparison of their attitudes toward the relationship between Marxism-Leninism and China's traditional philosophies. Both men believed that Marxist-Leninist theory should be integrated with Chinese reality, but this similarity of opinion in fact masks an important difference in their overall approach to the problem. This reinforces the likelihood that they developed their views independently of each other, and in response to different values they held and different situations they faced. Ch'en Po-ta was a Communist, but he was also a professor of ancient Chinese history and philosophy at one of Peking's leading universities. His professional milieu was academic, and even in his political activities he was primarily concerned with cultural matters, philosophy in particular. This is not to deny his practical experience in political struggle, for he had worked in Chang Chen's army, had been imprisoned and exiled, and had been directly involved in the December Ninth Movement. Nonetheless, it was rather typical of the man that when he called for the union of Marxist theory and Chinese reality, he linked this demand with another for a thorough study of China's traditional thought. Nor was his attitude entirely negative, for elsewhere he had called for the preservation of the "best traditions in Chinese culture," one of which was undoubtedly the existence (in his opinion, at any rate) of dialectical materialism in China prior to its introduction from the West. Ch'en's attitude toward China's traditional

philosophy at this time appeared to be selective; he would ruthlessly discard its reactionary elements, but with equal fervor defend and preserve its more progressive aspects. This approach became more evident in Ch'en's writings as time went on, and was doubtless encouraged by the current upsurge of nationalism in China. The temper of the times demanded that Marxists who wished to remain politically relevant should seek to find elements of congruence rather than dissonance between their new philosophy from the West and China's own philosophical heritage.

At this time, however, Mao Tse-tung took a much harder line on China's traditional philosophy than did Ch'en. Mao had a good general education in the early part of the century, and was still at normal school at the time of the Russian revolution of 1917. The tides from the West were flowing strongly then, and Mao and his contemporaries tended to be somewhat indiscriminate in their rejection of the past. Since the early 1920's Mao had been a busy political activist, with little opportunity for study, and for the past ten years he had lived mostly in the countryside. Like Ch'en, Mao had come to advocate the more effective union of Marxist theory and Chinese practice, but he saw little congruence between Marxism and traditional Chinese philosophy. In the spring and summer of 1937 he delivered a series of lectures in Yanan on the subject of dialectical materialism, in which he concluded that:

Because of the backwardness of China's social development, the dialectical materialist philosophical currents developing in China today have not emerged from the inheritance and transformation of our own philosophical legacy, but have emerged from the study of Marxism-Leninism. If we wish to ensure that the dialectical materialist currents of thought will deeply penetrate into and continue to develop in China, and moreover will firmly direct the Chinese revolution along the road to complete victory, then we must struggle with the various decadent philosophies currently existing [in China]. [We must] hoist the flag of criticism on the ideological front throughout the whole country, and thereby liquidate the philosophical heritage of ancient China. Only thus can we reach our goal.⁵⁶

This is certainly a blunt statement, and it was written for a militant audience at the Anti-Japanese University. But it is unlikely that Ch'en Po-ta would have endorsed it at the time; apart from his own convictions, by mid-1937 it had simply become impolitic to call for the "liquidation" of China's philosophical heritage. In the ensuing months, Mao was to change his stand on this issue, doubtless under the urgings of his new political secretary.

This difference in Mao's and Ch'en's attitudes toward China's philosophical legacy serves to highlight a subtle but significant difference in their approaches to the problem of the union of Marxist theory and Chinese reality. Both men were good Marxists in that they firmly believed the union of theory and practice to be the essential prerequisite to the successful direction of the revolutionary process. To this extent they shared a common approach to the question of the unity of Marxist-Leninist theory and Chinese reality. Yet Mao's concern in this regard had a certain practical/political ring to it. It was practical insofar as it emerged as a result of Mao's long

⁵⁶ Mao, Ji VI, p. 275.

struggles on the revolutionary front to reconcile the theory he had read with the rather different reality he had encountered. His concern emerged from a pressing practical need to find theories which were useful to the survival and growth of the political and military movement he was leading. As a young man he had rather uncritically accepted the basic premises of Marxism-Leninism, and it was only in the course of actual revolutionary practice that he had perceived the rather noticeable divergences between the Western theory and the Chinese reality. His concern to bring theory more into line with reality was thus firmly grounded in the concrete tasks he faced in leading the practical movement deep in the Chinese countryside.⁵⁷

This concern was also political in nature insofar as it emerged and developed in the context of a fierce struggle for supreme power in the CCP between Mao and the Returned Students. The unity of theory and practice was desirable to Mao because the new theory it produced would -- provided he could claim it as his own -- confer a much-needed ideological legitimacy on his leadership of the Party. Mao's rise to power in the CCP would then be seen as not merely the result of historical chance, but rather as the inevitable consequence of Mao's correct grasp of theory. Thus the new theory (by whatever name) could well become a political weapon which Mao could wield in his

⁵⁷By his own admission, it was only in the spring of 1925 that Mao first began to appreciate the revolutionary potential of the peasantry as opposed to that of the urban proletariat. See his comments in Snow, Red Star, p. 157. It was not until 1927, when he was thirty-four years old, that Mao began to translate his new awareness of the peasants' revolutionary potential into important political writings such as his famous "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," (March 1927). Key passages from this important report have been translated in their original form in Schram, Political Thought, pp. 250-259.

efforts to consolidate and strengthen his leading position in the Party. It would, at the same time, assist him in establishing a certain degree of ideological and organizational independence from Moscow and the Comintern.

Ch'en approached the unity of Marxist theory and Chinese reality from quite a different perspective. His concern was much more theoretical in that it grew out of Ch'en's strong grasp of Marxist-Leninism (picked up in Moscow) being filtered through the "Controversy on China's Social History" which dominated urban intellectual circles in the early 1930's. While Mao was refining his ideas in the practical struggle in the countryside, Ch'en was re-defining his concept of Marxist theory in heated polemics with a wide range of political theorists in China's major cities. It was in the course of these rather academic and theoretical debates that Ch'en began to work out the correct relationship between Marxist-Leninist theory and Chinese reality. There was also a much stronger cultural element in Ch'en's desire to unite theory and practice than in the case of Mao. As a young lecturer in ancient Chinese history and philosophy at a Peking university, he was well placed to respond favourably to the rising tide of nationalism in China's cities after 1931. For Ch'en, the new theory which would result from the union of Marxism-Leninism and Chinese reality was desirable because it would establish a living relationship between Marxism and Chinese culture, make Marxism more acceptable to the average Chinese person and -- very importantly -- symbolize China's cultural independence from the West.

All this is not to suggest that there was no overlapping in the attitudes of Mao and Ch'en on the question of uniting Marxist theory and Chinese reality. It is obvious, for example, that Mao's desire for political independence from the Soviet Union (and its more zealous allies in the CCP) contained elements of Ch'en's desire for cultural independence from the West in general. In time, Mao came to place much greater emphasis on the broader cultural dimensions of the unity of Marxism-Leninism and the distinctive features of the Chinese people and nation. Thus by October 1938 he had moved to the position of equating the union of Marxist theory and Chinese reality with the new and startling concept of the "Sinification" of Marxism, a more culturally charged term than he had ever used before. In fact, Mao had picked up the term from Ch'en, who first used it in an essay of May 1938, several months before it was adopted by Mao in his important report to the CCP's Sixth Plenum in October of that year. Even so, Mao was to employ this cultural term in decidedly political ways, for it very quickly became identified with the swelling Maoist campaign against Wang Ming and the Returned Students.

CHAPTER III

TOWARD THE MAOIST MYTH, 1937-38

(i) Mao's Philosophy of 'Sinification'

In the months since Wayaopao Mao had relentlessly attacked the Returned Students' version of Marxism-Leninism, but he had not come up with a clear-cut alternative which was distinctly his own. By the spring of 1937 the time had come for Mao to put forward such an alternative, for the emerging united front necessitated a substantial intake of new Party members, and provided unprecedented opportunities for open propaganda work in the Nationalist-controlled areas of China. At such a critical juncture it would not do if the CCP were itself in ideological disarray, especially among the Party's top leadership. Mao revealed his awareness of this problem in his opening report of 3 May 1937 to the Party's national conference in Yen-an. He reaffirmed the need to struggle resolutely against the twin evils of right and left deviationism, and called for the education of thousands of cadres to meet the demands of the new united front. In his concluding remarks, he once again turned to the importance of ideology within the Party:

In order to overcome [these] undesirable tendencies, it is necessary to raise the Marxist-Leninist theoretical level of the entire Party. This theory alone is the compass to guide the Chinese revolution to victory.¹

¹Mao, Ji V, p. 204.

In calling for a new campaign to raise the Party's theoretical level, Mao did not fail to make his own personal contribution. In the spring and summer of 1937, he delivered a series of lectures on dialectical materialism at the Anti-Japanese University in Yanan (the former Red Army College). These lectures are available today in two forms, neither of which is complete in itself: (1) some "lecture notes" originally published in 1938; and (2) two philosophical essays published separately in 1950 and 1952. Most scholars have accepted the original lecture notes as genuine, and this is the position taken here.² As for the two later essays, the editors of Mao's Selected Works have themselves pointed out that in their present form they are revisions of the original lectures Mao delivered in 1937.³ That they were actually delivered in 1937 (in however different a form) is apparent from the basic similarity in the ideas expressed in the earlier lecture notes and those in the later essays. Nevertheless, since the two essays have indeed been revised, we propose to confine our analysis basically to the earlier lecture notes. We will only refer to the later essays when there appears to be a definite continuity in thought

²Schram (Political Thought, pp. 84-88) discusses at some length the question of the authenticity of Mao's early lectures on Marxist philosophy, and accepts them as genuine. He rejects in particular John E. Rue's suggestion that they were forged by Mao's enemies in the Party with a view to discrediting him as a theorist. On this point see John E. Rue, "Is Mao Tse-tung's 'Dialectical Materialism' a Forgery?," Journal of Asian Studies, XXVI:3 (May 1967), pp. 464-468.

³Mao, XJ I, pp. 259, 274. For the argument that these two essays were substantially revised prior to publication, see Cohen, op. cit., pp. 22-28.

on a certain issue which is of importance to our discussion.⁴ In his lectures on dialectical materialism Mao argued the case for certain immediate political concerns such as the united front with the Nationalists, but the real importance of these lectures lies elsewhere. As D.W.Y. Kwok has suggested, Mao's philosophical efforts at this time "clearly reveal his determination to become both the theoretical and practical scientist of society and its revolution."⁵ Mao had already proven himself a master of practice, but to establish his reputation as a theoretician as well was a prerequisite to his being accepted as the top leader of a political party calling itself communist. The ideal of unity of theory and practice embodied in one leading individual was deeply ingrained in the Marxist-Leninist tradition (and, incidentally, in the Chinese political tradition also), especially since the example of Lenin himself. Even Stalin was busily establishing his reputation as a theorist in the course of the bitter inner-party disputes which dominated Soviet politics in the 1930's. It is most improbable that Stalin's efforts in this regard went unnoticed in Yenan,

⁴In a private communication, Stuart Schram has brought to the author's attention the existence of an anonymous version of Mao's lectures which contains one of the essays ("On Practice") in "substantially its present form." Said to be a reprint of an edition which originally appeared in Chungking in September 1944, this anonymous version is Bian-zheng-fa wei-wu-lun (Dialectical Materialism), Chungking?: Zhong-guo chu-ban she, 1946. Interestingly, the preface to the 1946 reprint claims that these lectures are "extremely good," for they discuss dialectical materialism in an idiom much more relevant to Chinese needs and conditions than do most texts on the same subject. This of course is precisely the strength of Mao's lectures, in spite of their shortcomings in other ways, and they probably had much appeal to a Chinese readership for this reason.

⁵D.W.Y. Kwok, Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, p. 197.

where Mao was likewise attempting to establish his undisputed supremacy in the Chinese Party.

In the course of his lectures Mao expressed the hope that he might one day publish a book on dialectical materialism, for those existing in China at the time were either mistaken in content or badly written. In particular, he felt that China had no "explanatory book" on dialectical materialism which was effective in its "use of common language and discussion of personal experience." Nevertheless, he confessed that he himself was just beginning the study of dialectical materialism, and was unable to write a "good book" for the time being.⁶ With the upsurge of the Anti-Japanese War in mid-1937 it is unlikely that the book was ever written; in any case, the incomplete lecture notes are all that are available for study at the present time. It is not our intention to discuss the entire content of Mao's lectures, or to evaluate their merits as Marxist philosophy. Most students of the subject tend to agree with Mao that in 1937 he was as yet unable to write a "good book" on dialectical materialism. Karl Wittfogel and C.R. Chao, for example, have amply demonstrated that the lectures are full of plagiarisms from Chinese translations of contemporary Soviet writings on Marxist philosophy.⁷ Apparently, even some of Mao's colleagues in the higher echelons of the CCP were less than enthusiastic about Mao's efforts in this field. It is said that Teng Fa in particular once remarked that the lectures were "full of errors," with

⁶Mao, Ji VI, p. 303.

⁷K.A. Wittfogel and C.R. Chao, "Some Remarks on Mao's Handling of Concepts and Problems of Dialectics," Studies in Soviet Thought, III:4 (December 1963), pp. 251-277.

Chou En-lai agreeing that this was possible.⁸ It was perhaps for this reason that the lectures never received extensive publicity outside Yen-an, it not being until the spring of 1942 that Chang Ju-hsin publicly referred to them in Liberation Daily.⁹

Regardless of their shortcomings as Marxist theory, Mao's lectures are of the utmost importance to our present discussion; it is in his critique of idealism that Mao developed, at least in outline, a philosophical justification for the Sinification of Marxism. When individuals think, argues Mao, they are compelled to use concepts, and this can easily cause their knowledge to be split into two aspects. One aspect is reality, which is of an individual and particular nature; the other is concepts, which are of a general nature. With idealists, this separation of the general and the particular can be dangerous, for they push this separation -- which is necessary in the process of thinking -- to the point where it distorts their view of reality itself. That is, idealists come to regard generality (concepts) as objective reality, and particularity (reality) merely as a form of existence of generality. In other words, the real is subordinated to

⁸Allen S. Whiting and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958, pp. 229-231. This information is based on the personal recollections of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai, who apparently discussed some of Mao's early philosophical writings with Teng and Chou in late 1939 or early 1940.

⁹Chang Ju-hsin, "Xue-xi he zhang-wo Mao Ze-dong de li-lun he ce-lue" (Study and Grasp Mao Tse-tung's Theory and Strategy), JFRB (18-19 February 1942), p. 3 both issues. This article will be discussed fully in Chapter VII in the context of the Rectification Movement of 1942-43.

the conceptual, and becomes simply a form of existence of the conceptual. For Mao, this is not valid because:

Particularity and generality are in actual fact interconnected and inseparable; if separated, they depart from objective truth. Objective truth is manifested in the unity of the general and the particular. If there is no particularity, generality cannot exist; if there is no generality, it is not possible to have particularity.¹⁰

Mao does not carry this line of argument any further in his original lecture notes (or at least in the fragments available for study), but he does so in the revised version of his lecture on contradictions. In "On Contradiction," Mao applies the theory elucidated above to the study of actual historical phenomena such as the "historical roots of Leninism." According to Mao, Stalin, in his discussion of Leninism in his Foundations of Leninism (1924), provided a "model" for understanding the particularity and generality of a thing, and their interconnection. Stalin pointed out that Leninism has a universal character insofar as it is "Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution"; at the same time Leninism has a particular character inasmuch as Russia was the specific "birthplace of the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution." Further, argues Mao, Stalin explained that the universal character of Leninism (its Marxian-ness) is contained within its particular character (its Russian-ness).¹¹ Given Mao's belief that the general and the particular character of a thing cannot be separated, the implication is that Leninism as a theory of revolution cannot be separated from its societal background.

¹⁰Mao, Ji VI, p. 269.

¹¹Mao, XJ I, pp. 293-295.

In other words, Mao is saying that there is no pure, abstract Marxist theory in Leninism that can rise above Leninism's concrete Russian origins. Therefore, Leninism is nothing more or less than the union of Marxist theory and Russian practice; it is 'Russianized' Marxism.¹²

If this analysis is correct, it raises two important questions. First, is Leninism simply the sum total of its parts (Marxism plus Russia), or is it in fact something qualitatively different? Second, since Leninism has both a general (Marxist) and a particular (Russian) character, can it be applied to countries other than Russia -- China for example? The answer to the first question is suggested by Mao's treatment of Leninism as the integral union of the general and the particular, i.e., the conceptual and the objectively real. But, one might ask, what relationship is established between concept and reality or, in other words, between consciousness and matter? Mao responds by using the idealists as a negative example, for they are unable to grasp the "materialist truth" that "consciousness is limited by matter," and think instead that "only consciousness is active, whereas matter is merely an inert, composite entity." He then concludes that "only dialectical materialism correctly shows the active role of thought, and at the same time points out the limitation imposed upon thought by matter."¹³ If indeed matter is more than an "inert, composite entity" and is able to impose limitations upon thought, this leads to the logical conclusion that Leninism is not

¹²Mao does not use this term, but his line of argument leads directly to this conclusion, and was eventually to lead to the coinage of the term, "Sinification."

¹³Mao, Ji VI, pp. 269-270.

simply the sum total of Marxism plus Russia; rather, it is the integral combination of the two, in which the original Marxism (thought) has been changed (limited) by Russia (matter). To repeat for the sake of clarity, Leninism is not simply Marxism in its original German form dressed up in a Russian idiom; it is instead 'Russianized' Marxism which is qualitatively different from Marx's original theoretical formulations.

Turning to our second query, it would appear that Leninism, because of its Russian character, cannot be transplanted successfully to any other country. Or if it can, does this imply that Leninism would have to be applied to the new country in its entirety, in its pure Russian form? Mao could easily reject the first possibility as Marxism in its West European form had been successfully transplanted to Russia. Yet Mao had to reject the second possibility also in light of the fact that he had been criticizing the Returned Students for attempting to do that very thing, and with disastrous results. Nevertheless, Mao does affirm the applicability of Leninism to China, but in a new form, by pointing out that general character represents "universal truth for all times and all countries, which admits of no exception," while individual character "exists conditionally and temporarily and hence is relative."¹⁴ This would mean that Leninism's general character (its Marxian-ness) would be valid for China because it represents "universal truth." As for Leninism's particular character (its Russian-ness), it could be dispensed with because it is merely "relative." The implication is that once transplanted to

¹⁴Mao, XJ I, pp. 294-295.

China, Leninism would have to shed its Russian particular character and adopt a Chinese particular character. Thus, the integral combination of Marxist general character and Chinese particular character would be 'Sinified' Marxism; as such, it could not be referred to as Leninism, for Leninism is 'Russianized' Marxism containing both universal and particular character.

Would 'Sinified' Marxism be different from but equal to Leninism, or would it be both a different and superior form of Marxism? We will recall that Ch'en Po-ta had claimed earlier that modern dialectical materialism (Marxism-Leninism) is a higher stage of development over both the crude dialectical materialism of classical Greece, and the more sophisticated dialectical idealism of Hegel. From his lecture notes, it would appear that Mao fully accepted the idea of the qualitative development of Marxism from its original nineteenth-century form to newer and higher forms. For example, while acknowledging the role of Marx and Engels in founding the modern form of dialectical materialism, Mao does not hesitate to point out that "Lenin developed this theory." As he sees it, Leninism is not simply a different but equal form of Marx's original theory, but rather a different and superior form. Nor is development beyond Leninism an impossibility; in light of the victory of the socialist revolution in Russia and the arrival of the era of world proletarian revolution, the theory of dialectical materialism "has entered a new stage of development which will enrich its content even more."¹⁵ For Mao, Leninism represented both the adaptation and development of Marxism in a particular Russian

¹⁵Mao, Ji VI, p. 300.

setting. Now, in the summer of 1937, he was contemplating a similar adaptation and development of Leninism in China's particular environment. This suggests that the new theoretical synthesis which would appear in China would represent a higher formulation than did Leninism itself. Such a claim would obviously have had serious repercussions on the CCP's (and Mao's) relations with Moscow, and it is probably for this reason that its full implications were not spelled out at the time. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that the essential philosophical basis of the claim was worked out by Mao in 1937, and this formed the theoretical underpinning of the later creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought. For Ch'en Po-ta and his like-minded urban colleagues, it was a claim they could accept. Had they not themselves predicted that with the advent of their New Enlightenment Movement the time had come for Marxism to develop in China?

(ii) Ch'en's Rise in the Maoist Camp

In the summer of 1937, when Mao was delivering his lectures on dialectical materialism, where was Ch'en Po-ta, and what was he doing? It seems that he left Peking sometime in June, shortly before the Japanese invasion of north China the following month. As a member of the CCP's Northern Bureau, Ch'en made his way secretly to Yanan, where he was in a position to meet Mao personally for the first time. According to some reports Mao was not immediately impressed by Ch'en, because the latter was a rather inarticulate individual who did not enjoy social activities. Mao, however, was increasingly impressed by Ch'en's abilities as a writer, and shortly thereafter Ch'en was

asked to act as Mao's political secretary (zheng-zhi mi-shu).¹⁶ The fact that he was chosen for this important assignment from among the numerous young Party intellectuals who were then flooding into Yanan is an indication of Mao's high regard for Ch'en, who was then thirty-three years old. As political secretary, Ch'en was responsible for drafting and/or editing many of Mao's speeches, articles, and telegrams, including those concerned with foreign affairs.¹⁷ Ch'en was now at the very centre of the Maoist camp at Yanan, and it was from this time on that the two individuals developed what one writer has called their "symbiotic" relationship.¹⁸

Ch'en had other responsibilities as well, some of which likely preceded -- and prepared the ground for -- his appointment as Mao's political secretary. According to Boyd Compton, an outstanding feature of the Yanan period was the rather important educational system that functioned under the CCP Central Committee. Prior to 1935, selected cadres from national Communist parties were sent to Moscow for advanced training in Marxism-Leninism, as indeed Ch'en had been himself. After the Comintern's Seventh Congress in 1935, however, there was an increasing emphasis on the development of higher Party schools in individual countries. With regard to China, for example,

¹⁶Boorman and Howard, op. cit., I, p. 221. Also see Ch'ao Wen-tao's biography of Ch'en in Xin Zhong-guo ren-wu zhi (Biographies of New China), Hong Kong: Zhou-mou bao-she, 1950, p. 227.

¹⁷FQYJ, II:2 (February 1968), p. 98.

¹⁸Robert S. Elegant, Mao's Great Revolution, New York: World Publishing Company, 1971, p. 257.

the early years of the Yen-an period saw the establishment of the Central Party School, the Marxist-Leninist Institute (reorganized in 1941 as the Central Research Institute), the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, the Lu Hsün Academy of Arts and Letters, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and other similar bodies.¹⁹ This mushrooming educational system, which developed side by side with Mao's growing power in the Party, provided him with the means to exercise a degree of ideological control over the Party which had never been possible before. It was this educational system that was to serve as the incubator for Mao's later Rectification Movement of 1942-43. In the meantime, these new educational and research organizations provided a natural outlet for the talents of the many CCP intellectuals from the nation's cities who were then streaming into Yen-an in the wake of the Japanese invasion. Ch'en Po-ta occupied a prominent position in this important group of people from shortly after his arrival in Yen-an. He was appointed head of the research section in the CCP's Propaganda Bureau -- an obviously key position -- and undertook unspecified responsibilities at the Marxist-Leninist Institute as well. He also lectured on political questions at Lu Hsün Academy and, according to one account, even found time from his many political duties to write a musical drama entitled Song of the Villages for the itinerant theatrical troupes of the Academy. Of more immediate interest, however, was his appointment at the CCP's Central Party School, where he became director of the "China Problems Research Section" (Zhong-guo wen-ti yan-jiu shi) and lectured primarily on

¹⁹Compton, op. cit., pp. xxx-xxxii.

"China Problems" (Zhong-guo wen-ti).²⁰ This special research section within the Central Party School seems to have dealt with problems of the revolution peculiar to China as opposed to problems of the world revolution in general. This certainly fits in with Ch'en's long-standing concern that Chinese Marxists should unite their "new philosophy" more successfully with the concrete problems posed by the revolution in China. Indeed, many of the articles Ch'en wrote during 1937-38 specifically dealt with the problem of the application of Marxism-Leninism in China, and we shall discuss them in due course.

Ch'en's arrival in Yen-an in mid-1937 prompts an interesting question. Was he in any way involved in the preparation of Mao's lectures on dialectical materialism, in which Mao developed the rationale for the Sinification of Marxism? On the face of it, it seems highly unlikely that Ch'en had anything to do with these lectures in their original form.²¹ In the first place, Ch'en arrived in Yen-an just as Mao was preparing to deliver the lectures; given the normal amount of delay before the two men could have met -- and considering the earlier suggestion that it took some time for Mao to warm to Ch'en -- it seems doubtful that Ch'en was involved in Mao's initial steps in philosophy. Second, Ch'en had spent the ten years since 1927 primarily engaged in the study and interpretation

²⁰Boorman and Howard, op. cit., p. 221; Ch'ao Wen-tao, op. cit., p. 227; Klein and Clark, op. cit., p. 122. Elegant (p. 257) is the only source to mention the play, but gives no further details.

²¹Ch'en's influence is more likely to have been felt in the revision of part of Mao's lectures for publication in 1950 and 1952, but this is a separate question beyond our present concerns.

of Marxism-Leninism, whereas by his own admission Mao had only recently commenced the serious study of dialectical materialism. In light of this, it is highly unlikely that, if Ch'en indeed did have a substantial influence on the preparation of these lectures, they would have been full of the "plagiarisms" and "errors" referred to previously. Ch'en was fluent in Russian and well-versed in Soviet developments, and his early writings display a ready familiarity with both Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy; he had no need to plagiarize Chinese translations of Soviet works on philosophy. Third, Ch'en's influence is denied by Mao's rather harsh call in these lectures for the "liquidation" of China's traditional philosophy, a position that Ch'en would scarcely have endorsed in mid-1937. For all these reasons it is most improbable that Ch'en had any substantial influence on Mao's early efforts in philosophy. He was, however, to have a definite influence on Mao's thinking in 1938 and subsequent years.

We will recall that at the Party's national conference in May 1937 Mao had called upon everyone in the Party to raise their "Marxist-Leninist theoretical level." His own philosophical lectures were designed to be his personal contribution to this new ideological campaign, and Liberation naturally enough lent its support. In the special issue of 6 September 1937 it introduced a supplement concerned with the problems of theory and research. The editor noted that the new section was designed to assist the reader in his study of theoretical questions, and the hope was expressed that such a supplement would be published regularly once or twice a month in the future. The first supplement (and the second) was taken up by

translated excerpts of Stalin's new official history of the CPSU, but the editor declared his intention of publishing in future issues study materials specifically relating to the "problems of the Chinese revolution."²² Ch'en Po-ta, as the director of the special section of the Central Party School dealing with the "China Question," was probably responsible for preparing these materials for the newspaper. Yet after only a few issues this new theoretical supplement died out, having confined itself exclusively to translated materials from Russian sources. Nothing further was mentioned about the special study materials on the Chinese revolution, and it appears that none were ever published. In spite of his personal encouragement, Mao's ideological campaign seemed to be getting off to a bad start.

In late 1937 Ch'en wrote a long article which was obviously intended for publication in Liberation's new supplement. In this essay Ch'en refutes the allegation that Sun Yat-sen had rejected Marxism as a solution to China's problems. He argues on the contrary that Sun's basic ideas are in harmony with much of Marxism, although he does admit that on certain important points Sun "misunderstood" the real nature of Marxist theory. Hence he proceeds to clarify the position regarding (1) the materialist view of history; (2) the nature of the class struggle; (3) the question of surplus value; (4) the problem of social reformism; and (5) the methods of achieving

²²JF, 13-14-15 (joint issue of 6 September 1937), pp. 166-167.

socialism.²³ It is the last section which is of interest to us here, for in it Ch'en deals with the question of Marxism's applicability to China. Marxism, argues Ch'en, is without doubt the essential intellectual key to understanding the development of society, but it is not a dogma -- when history changes Marxism must change along with it. For example, Lenin and Stalin developed Marxism to accord with new problems arising after Marx's and Engel's death, but their development of Marxism was firmly based on Marxism itself. Hence, says Ch'en, "Leninism is merely the development of Marxism under new historical conditions."²⁴ In developing Marxism, Lenin and Stalin did not depart from the "fundamental thinking" of Marxism, i.e., the core idea that socialism can be constructed only after the proletariat have become the "political masters" of the social system in question. The seizure of political power by the proletariat was characteristic of the socialist revolution in Russia, and will be equally true of socialist revolutions in all other countries as well. Apart from this essential point, however, Marxism is really quite flexible; indeed, there can be a wide variety of specific methods employed in bringing about the socialist revolution, methods which vary "in accordance with the historical and economic conditions of each country." For example, Ch'en agrees with the idea that the proletariat can seize power

²³Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu Ma-ke-si xue-shuo de ruo-gan bian-zheng" (Some Clarifications Concerning Marxist Theory), in Sun Zhong-shan xian-sheng xuan-ji (Selected Works of Sun Yat-sen), no pl.: Xin-hua shu-dian, 1945, pp. 310-335. Ch'en's article is part of an appendix to this collection of Sun's writings. According to a note by Ch'en, the essay was originally drafted in the winter of 1937, but only published (with revisions) in 1939, when it was assigned as study material for the Red Army.

²⁴Ibid., p. 330.

through peaceful means provided the concrete historical conditions are right, although he does not elaborate further on this. In his concluding comments, he reminds the reader that when Marxism was first introduced into Russia the Slavophiles claimed that the new philosophy was foreign and unsuitable to Russia, and would be harmful if introduced into the country. Nonetheless, he says, Marxism was in fact successfully applied in Russia and the cries of the Slavophiles came to nothing.²⁵

There are a few points we should make regarding this essay: One, Ch'en's ideas on the need for Marxism to change in response to new historical situations are similar to the opinions Mao expressed in his lectures on philosophy the previous summer. (These ideas are closely linked to the views on Marxism which Ch'en developed in 1935-36.) Hence the two men appear to have shared a similar attitude toward Marxist theory, and this similarity no doubt formed the basis of their close cooperation during the Yenan years and after. Two, Ch'en re-affirmed his belief that traditional Chinese philosophy contains elements of 'Marxism', however tenuous. Mo-tzu, for example, was aware of the idea of the class struggle, as seen in his statement that "the strong are certain to oppress the weak; the rich are certain to be pitiless toward the poor" (qiang bi ling ruo, fu bi bao gua).²⁶ This attitude toward traditional philosophy constituted a

²⁵Ibid., pp. 332-334.

²⁶Ibid., p. 318.

major difference between Ch'en's and Mao's views on the relationship between Marxism and Chinese culture, although the difference was to be resolved in due course. Three, this essay contains what appears to be Ch'en's first reference to Mao Tse-tung, whom he quotes briefly on the desirability, if conditions are appropriate, of the peaceful seizure of power by the proletariat.²⁷ Significantly, Ch'en quotes Mao on a question of Marxist theory (not political or military concerns), and this probably indicates Ch'en's acceptance of Mao's growing claims as the CCP's pre-eminent theoretician. In any event, Ch'en does not refer to or quote any other CCP leader in the course of his lengthy article; there is no mention, for instance, of Chang Wen-t'ien, who was apparently considered at the time to be "one of the [Party's] best theorists, second to Mao."²⁸

Ch'en wrote this article in the winter of 1937, but for some unexplained reason it was not published until 1939. This is possibly due to Ch'en's concern with pointing out Sun Yat-sen's many "misunderstandings" of Marxist theory, and his insistence that socialism in China could not be constructed until the proletariat had become the "political masters" of the nation. In late 1937, with the new united front with the Nationalists just taking shape, Ch'en's article was probably regarded as being too leftist in tone. By

²⁷Ibid., pp. 333-334.

²⁸This at any rate is Nym Wales' observation, based on her visit to Yen-an in the summer of 1937, and it seems to confirm Chang's continuing status as a top Party theoretician. It is equally clear, however, that even he had by this time fallen into Mao's growing shadow. See Nym Wales (Helen F. Snow), My Yen-an Notebooks, Madison, Conn: mimeo., 1961, p. 200.

1939, however, the united front had been reduced to a fiction, and the publication of the article would have been less of an embarrassment to CCP-KMT relations. It is also likely that Ch'en's essay was shelved for the time being partly as a consequence of the failure of Mao's ideological campaign in the latter half of 1937 to get off the ground. This failure is not difficult to explain, for Wang Ming returned from Moscow to Yen-an shortly after the campaign got under way. Wang was the acknowledged leader of the Returned Students, and the only remaining person with sufficient stature (other than Stalin) to challenge Mao's growing domination of the CCP.

(iii) Mao, Ch'en, and the "Maoist Myth"

Wang Ming arrived in Yen-an in late October 1937 aboard a Soviet military aircraft, and Mao and other Party leaders were on hand to greet him. As a prominent figure both in the CCP and the Comintern, Wang's credentials were very strong indeed, and Mao must have felt uneasy about Wang's return to China. More worrying, perhaps, were the official instructions from Stalin that Wang was sure to be bringing with him, for there was no certainty that they would be favourable to Mao. As it turned out, Stalin's instructions had a mixed impact on Mao's fortunes, although they ultimately worked to his advantage. According to Wang, Stalin felt that Mao Tse-tung should be confirmed as the CCP's top leader in deference to the existing situation, and Mao must have taken considerable satisfaction from this. His triumph was bittersweet, however, for Stalin apparently urged the Russian-educated leaders in the Party (viz, the Returned Students) to help Mao overcome his ignorance of Marxism-Leninism,

lack of an internationalist outlook, and tendency toward narrow empiricism. This must have been particularly galling to Mao, for he had only recently delivered his lectures on dialectical materialism in an effort to improve his reputation as a theorist. Yet, he was probably pleased with another of Stalin's instructions to the effect that Chang Wen-t'ien was unsuitable for the post of secretary-general of the CCP, a position he had held since January 1935. (Chang was apparently under suspicion in Moscow because of his connections with the Trotskyists while he was a student at Sun Yat-sen University.) Chang understandably took umbrage at this accusation, and the unity of the Returned Students began to fragment as Wang played off Chang and Po Ku against each other in an attempt to succeed to the post of secretary-general of the Party. Mao's hand was further strengthened by yet another of Stalin's directives, suggesting that in the new conditions of the Anti-Japanese War the CCP should be as self-reliant as possible, and no longer bound by Comintern policy regarding China. Notwithstanding Stalin's slur upon Mao's theoretical abilities, the overall impact of the instructions from Moscow was to strengthen Mao's position. He had been confirmed as the Party's top leader, the erstwhile unity of the Returned Students had been fractured, and the Party's movement towards self-reliance had been approved by no less an authority than Stalin himself.²⁹

²⁹This interpretation of Stalin's "three-point instruction" is based on the factual account given in Warren Kuo, Analytical History of the Chinese Communist Party, Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1966-1971, III, pp. 326-330.

Nevertheless, it took some time before the full implications of Stalin's directives began to work decisively in Mao's favour. In the meantime, a fierce struggle for power erupted between Mao and Wang, with the initial advantage going to the latter. Upon Wang's return to Yen-an, a lengthy session of the Politburo was convened to listen to his report on Moscow's (and his own) desire for faster progress towards a close united front with the Nationalists. Mao apparently held his tongue for the time being, but in November an important meeting of "Party activists" was held at which Mao launched a stinging attack on Wang and his supporters. Mao claimed that Wang and his group had become unprincipled opportunists in their excessive zeal for co-operation with the Nationalists. As such unprincipled co-operation with the KMT could easily lead to subversion within the CCP, Mao maintained that the only correct policy for the Communists was one of "independence and initiative within the united front."³⁰ The details of the dispute do not concern us here, but one recent study has concluded that, compared to the line espoused by Mao, Wang Ming's policies towards the KMT "were 'accommodationist' and framed with one eye on Moscow's foreign policy needs."³¹ The struggle flared up again in December, when the Politburo met in formal session to make a complete review of the Party's general line. According to Chang Kuo-t'ao, it was at this meeting that Wang suddenly (without consulting anyone beforehand) proposed a new slate of members for the Politburo, in which Chang Wen-t'ien was demoted to seventh place. Mao resented

³⁰Mao, XJ II, pp. 358-364.

³¹Benton, op. cit., p. 94.

the fact that Wang had not consulted him prior to submitting his new slate, but upon Wang's assurance that he had no intention of "seizing the commander's seal," Mao went along with Wang's proposals.³² Wang's tactics succeeded in placing Mao on the defensive, and in the following months Wang was able to win a good deal of support for his "conciliationist" policies towards the KMT, even from such people as Chu Teh and Chou En-lai. Indeed, Wang's return to China had the immediate effect of "temporarily shifting the CCP towards the Right," and this in turn strengthened the position of Wang and the Returned Students in the Party hierarchy.³³

Wang Ming's hand was further strengthened by the Politburo's decision (13 December) to convene the CCP's Seventh Congress in the "shortest possible time." Wang no doubt regarded a new congress as the proper forum in which to realign the Party leadership, and especially to undo what had been done at Tsunyi in 1935. This must have been extremely worrying to Mao, for the Tsunyi Conference had been a hastily arranged affair with some important Politburo members missing (e.g., Chang Kuo-t'ao, and Wang Ming himself), and it had been held without the knowledge (let alone approval) of the Comintern. That the Seventh Congress was going to be a real showdown between the Maoists and the Returned Students is clearly suggested by the agenda. The "central task" of the congress was to discuss and decide upon the best way to carry out the united front against Japan. In addition, the congress was to make a "basic summation" of the CCP's history

³²Chang Kuo-t'ao, *op. cit.*, II, p. 572.

³³Benton, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 94.

since the Sixth Congress in 1928, which had been held in Moscow.³⁴ In his study of the subject, Gregor Benton has concluded that, upon his return to Yen-an, Wang Ming's "political onslaught on Mao...and his arrogant behavior in the Party added up to an indisputable bid for leadership."³⁵ Certainly, the decision to convene the Seventh Congress in the near future presented Wang with a perfect opportunity to attempt this very thing. As for Mao, it was incumbent upon him to prevent the congress from being held until such time as his position was secure from the "onslaught" of Wang and the Returned Students.

Being under severe attack on the political front, it was perhaps natural that Mao should turn to the military sphere to strengthen his position. Numerous articles began to appear in early 1938 on the importance of the army; on 11 January, for example, the army commander Ch'en Po-chün published an article in Liberation which was little more than a public relations effort on behalf of Mao. It consisted of a lengthy excerpt of a military text written by Mao in 1934 ("Guerrilla Warfare"), with Ch'en expressing the hope that it would be helpful to "leading cadres" throughout the Party involved in active warfare.³⁶ Mao personally added to his growing stature as the CCP's pre-eminent military thinker at this time. On 30 May 1938 he published a new article on guerrilla warfare, and between 26 May and 3 June he gave an important series of lectures on protracted war, which were published in Liberation on 1 July 1938. Mao's lengthy

³⁴JF, 28 (11 January 1938), pp. 21-22.

³⁵Benton, op. cit., p. 77.

³⁶Ch'en Po-chün, "Lun kang-Ri you-ji zhan-zheng de ji-ben zhan-shu -- xi-ji" (On the Raid -- the Basic Tactic in the Guerrilla War Against Japan", JF, 28 (11 January 1938), pp. 14-19.

treatise took pride of place in this special issue of Yen-an's leading journal, which celebrated the second anniversary of the Sino-Japanese War and the seventeenth anniversary of the founding of the CCP. Mao's growing prestige is further indicated by the fact that the opening page of this special issue is half covered by a handwritten message from Mao himself, encouraging people to persist in the war against Japan.³⁷ In spite of Mao's efforts in Marxist philosophy, we would agree with Noriyuki Tokuda that at this critical juncture in Mao's rise to power, his theory of warfare was perhaps the "corner-stone of the foundation supporting the legitimacy of his leadership."³⁸ Not surprisingly, then, we see that Mao abandoned philosophy in favour of strategy when it came to a final showdown between himself and his Moscow-educated opponents.

Wang Ming's line in early 1938 was to a considerable extent based on two propositions, namely, "genuine" co-operation with the KMT, and all-out defence of Wuhan, the new national capital. This was in sharp contrast to Mao's line, which stressed a looser relationship with the Nationalists, and mobile warfare rather than the defence of fixed points. As it turned out, Wang's two-point strategy was in tatters by the autumn; the KMT had arbitrarily closed down the CCP's organizations in Wuhan, and the city itself was about to fall to the encircling Japanese. Wang's personal power quickly eroded along with his political and military strategy, and as a result his campaign against Mao failed to sustain its momentum. If Wang had planned to

³⁷JF, 43-44 (joint issue of 1 July 1938), p. 1.

³⁸Tokuda, op. cit., p. 16.

attempt a re-organization of the Party leadership at the coming Party congress (a reasonable assumption), his hopes were rudely shattered. First, the proposed Seventh Congress never took place; the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Congress was held instead, with Mao explaining that "because of the tensions of war" it had been impossible to prepare adequately for a formal congress.³⁹ Second, rather than being dislodged by Wang Ming and his supporters, Mao was actually able to reinforce his position. Indeed, official sources claim that although Mao had been severely challenged by Wang and his group, their "right deviation" was at last "basically overcome" at the Sixth Plenum, the result being "unanimity of thought" in the Party leadership.⁴⁰ There may be some exaggeration in this claim, but most students of the period agree that it is essentially correct. According to Lyman P. van Slyke, for example, at the Sixth Plenum "no purge was carried out, but the Returned Students, the last group standing in the way of Mao's complete control of the Party, were probably reduced in importance and forced to recognize Mao's supremacy."⁴¹ This conclusion is reinforced by the acknowledgement of Mao's supremacy within the CCP in an article on him in the 1938 edition of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia published in Moscow.⁴² We do not know whether Stalin had ultimately

³⁹Mao, Ji VI, p. 164.

⁴⁰See the editorial comments in Mao, XJ II, pp. 357, 502, 506.

⁴¹Lyman P. van Slyke, Enemies and Friends (The United Front in Chinese Communist History), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967, p. 107.

⁴²For details on this reference, see McLane, op. cit., p. 34.

backed Wang Ming in his final attempt to wrest power from Mao, but with Wang's failure to do so it now became prudent on Moscow's part to acknowledge publicly Mao's pre-eminence in the CCP.

In the meantime, Ch'en Po-ta had established himself in the Maoist camp, and his writings began to reflect Mao's growing power. Ch'en made his first appearance in Liberation on 1 April 1938 with a short article on Sun Yat-sen's views on the concept of the united front. Both Ch'en and Ai Ssu-ch'i (who also contributed to this issue of the journal) were introduced to the readers as "professors" whose "new interpretations" of Sun's theories were worthy of some attention.⁴³ In this article and others in the spring of 1938, Ch'en avoided any discussion of Marxist theory, an omission probably dictated by the tense situation within the Party resulting from Wang Ming's return from Russia. Nonetheless, Ch'en returned to the question of Marxist theory on 1 July 1938, the seventeenth anniversary of the CCP. Liberation's special issue on that date contained three articles celebrating the Party's anniversary, one each by Lo Fu (Chang Wen-t'ien), Lin Po-ch'ü (Lin Tsu-han), and Ch'en himself (in that order). Lin's essay was a brief eulogy to the CCP and its heroic struggle against Japan, and was probably contributed by Lin in his relatively neutral capacity as the chairman of the government of the

⁴³Ch'en Po-ta, "Sun Zhong-shan xian-sheng guan-yu min-zu geming tong-yi zhan-xian si-xiang de fa-zhan" (The Development of Mr. Sun Yat-sen's Thought Concerning the United Front in the National Revolution), JF, 33 (1 April 1938), p. 136.

Yenan base area.⁴⁴ Lo's essay was more substantial (and will be discussed below), and no doubt represented the general views of the Returned Students. Ch'en's lengthy article, while coming last, was clearly the most important of the three pieces, and should be seen as representing the views of the Maoist faction. Indeed, the three articles represented a kind of united front within the upper echelons of the CCP itself, and it is significant that Ch'en, a relative newcomer to Yenan, should have been chosen by the Maoists to articulate their position. Ch'en's relationship with Mao had become very close by this time, and the publication of his essay on the Party's anniversary marked his emergence as a leading spokesman for the Maoist camp.⁴⁵ In the space of a single year, Ch'en had made the transition from his obscure lectureship in Peking to the inner circle of the Maoist machine at Yenan. He was on his way to the top.

Ch'en's article of 1 July is representative of much of his later writings, for it is equally concerned with Marxist theory and CCP history. For the time being we would like to consider the latter only, saving his treatment of theory for discussion a little later. (See Chapter IV following.) It is Ch'en's contention that the CCP has become an important factor in Chinese politics due to the fact that it has persisted in the "struggle between two lines." This struggle, says Ch'en, commenced at the birth of the Party in 1921,

⁴⁴Lin Po-ch'ü, "Wei-da de qi-yueh" (Glorious July), JF, 43-44 (joint issue of 1 July 1938), pp. 70-71.

⁴⁵Material on the personal aspects of Ch'en's relationship to Mao is extremely scarce. For a rare anecdote reflecting Mao's concern for Ch'en in 1938, see Ho Ch'ing-hua, "Sui-cong Mao zhu-xi zai Shen-bei" (With Chairman Mao in North Shensi), Hong-qi piao-piao (Red Flag Flying), XIII (October 1959), pp. 52-53.

and has continued right up to the present day. He then chronicles this history of struggle within the Party, and one is immediately reminded of the treatment of Party history formally adopted by the Seventh Congress in 1945. The "right opportunism" of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the "adventurism" of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai (who is unnamed), and the "leftist" line of Li Li-san are all included in Ch'en's account. Indeed, in light of Ch'en's later concern with Party history in 1943-44, it is more than likely that his essay of 1938 was the prototype of the official history adopted in 1945. (See Chapter X for a discussion of this issue.) In spite of this similarity with the 1945 resolution on Party history, however, there is a basic difference in Ch'en's treatment of the Returned Students. They are nowhere mentioned by name, either individually or collectively; neither is Mao nor any other member of his faction. Ch'en is clearly writing to a formula agreed upon by Mao and the Returned Students. The only people to be mentioned by name are (1) the negative examples -- Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Li Li-san, Chang Kuo-t'ao, etc.; and (2) the martyrs -- Li Ta-chao, P'eng P'ai, Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, etc.⁴⁶ But if Ch'en did not criticize the Returned Students by name, he did so indirectly, with one of the negative examples taking the blame.

Ch'en conceded that the Party's Fourth Plenum in January 1931 had maintained the Party's "Bolshevik unity," but he also claimed that this plenum was followed during the years of the Kiangsi Soviet by a struggle against both left and right opportunism. Left opportunism,

⁴⁶Ch'en Po-ta, "Wo-men ji-xu li-shi de shi-ye qian-jin" (We Will Continue to Advance Toward our Historical Goal), JF, 43-44 (joint issue of 1 July 1938), pp. 74-75, 77.

according to Ch'en, was characterized during this period by a lack of understanding of the nature of the democratic revolution, a neglect of the consolidation of the worker-peasant alliance, and "adventur-istic proposals" for attacks on key cities at times of military successes. Right opportunism, on the other hand, exhibited a pessimistic, defeatist attitude in times of difficulty, and a tendency toward flight-ism. It is quite obvious that the characteristics of left opportunism are in fact those of the Returned Students (as perceived by the Mao-ists), while the short-comings of the right opportunists are without a doubt those of Chang Kuo-t'ao. Unable to refer to the Returned Students by name, Ch'en gets over the difficulty very simply by de-clarating that both left and right opportunism are best represented by Chang Kuo-t'ao! Chang is also charged with having carried out suc-cessive left and right lines during the Party's attempts to co-operate with the KMT in the new united front.⁴⁷ For the time being Ch'en and the Maoists had to use Chang Kuo-t'ao as a whipping-boy in place of the Returned Students. It was pretty obvious, however, that if Ch'en's account in any represented the Maoist reconstruction of Party history, the Returned Students were not going to fare very well at all.

Ch'en's account of Party history is as significant for its timing as its content. As we will recall, one of the tasks assigned to the coming Seventh Congress was to make a "basic summation" of Party history since the Sixth Congress in 1928. Although no mention was made of the proposed congress, the editors of Liberation announced

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 75.

in the special issue of 1 July 1938 a campaign to collect as much material as possible on the Party's past. People were urged to send in whatever materials they possessed: documents and publications issued by both the Party center and local organizations; essays, articles, and books written by individual Party members; personal reminiscences concerning the Party's history -- all were requested. According to the editorial note, the purpose of the collection was to further the study of the "experience and lessons of the Chinese revolution," and it was hoped that everyone would co-operate in the task of gathering materials.⁴⁸ In light of the review of Party history due at the coming Seventh Congress, and seen in the context of this call for historical materials on the Party, Ch'en's account of 1 July must be seen as the initial step in the Maoists' official reconstruction of Party history. As such, it is also a firm indication that the Maoists were finally asserting their supremacy over Wang Ming and the Returned Students. This is further suggested by the fact that Lo Fu's article commemorating the Party's seventeenth anniversary makes no detailed analysis of Party history comparable to Ch'en's. The Returned Students were to have little say in the forthcoming reconstruction of Party history in the wake of Mao's rise to supreme power.

⁴⁸JF, 43-44 (joint issue of 1 July 1938), p. 69. This campaign to gather documentary material on the CCP's history was of considerable importance, for nearly all of the Party's official records had been lost during the Long March. For Hsü Meng-ch'iu's comments on this problem, see Nym Wales, Red Dust, pp. ix, 57, 76.

By the summer of 1938 the major elements of the future "Maoist myth" were clearly discernable: (1) Mao's successful leadership of the practical movement since the Tsunyi Conference; (2) his gradual displacement of all opposition groups in the Party; (3) his increasing independence from the influence of Moscow; (4) his growing stature as the Party's leading military strategist; and (5) his emergence (however tentatively) as a Marxist-Leninist theorist in his own right.⁴⁹ Mao was by this time very much the first amongst equals, and we have already noted the initial signs of his cult appearing in June 1937. Two more indicators should be noted now: In a report of 9 July 1938 Lin Piao, president of the Anti-Japanese University and one of the Red Army's leading commanders, openly praised "Comrade Mao's leadership genius", and on 15 July Liberation published its second woodcut portrait of Mao.⁵⁰ By mid-1938 the Maoists were in a position to incorporate the key elements of the Maoist myth into the official review of Party history promised at the coming Seventh Congress. As the individual chosen to write the first draft of the Maoist reconstruction of the CCP's history, Ch'en Po-ta emerged as one of the leading architects of the Maoist myth itself.

⁴⁹For an interpretation of certain aspects of the "Maoist myth," see William F. Dorrill, "Transfer of Legitimacy in the Chinese Communist Party: Origins of the Maoist Myth," in John Wilson Lewis, ed., Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 69-113.

⁵⁰Lin Piao is cited in Jerome Ch'en, Mao, p. 20. For Mao's second portrait in Liberation, see JF, 45 (15 July 1938), p. 4.

CHAPTER IV

THE SINIFICATION OF MARXISM, 1938

(i) Ch'en and the "Sinification" of Chinese Culture

By 1938 both Mao Tse-tung and Ch'en Po-ta were equally concerned with the problem of developing Marxism in China according to China's own characteristics. Yet, we have noted a difference in their attitudes toward traditional Chinese culture, with Ch'en adopting a more positive attitude than that displayed by Mao. The burning issue in early 1938, however, was not the development of Marxism in China, but rather China's ability to sustain herself in the face of the recent Japanese invasion. In the months that followed Mao's lectures on philosophy, China sank deeper into despair as the Japanese rapidly subjugated large parts of the nation. In his lectures on protracted war in late May and early June 1938, Mao noted that the "predatory policy" of the Japanese had two aspects, the material and the spiritual. Besides simply plundering the country, claimed Mao, the Japanese were, in the realm of the spirit,

...robbing the Chinese people of their national consciousness; under the flag of the Rising Sun all Chinese can be nothing but docile subjects, beasts of burden forbidden to have the least bit of Chinese national spirit."¹

Mao's concern with this "Chinese national spirit" (Zhong-guo qi) was shared by many of his fellow countrymen at the time, and great propaganda campaigns were carried out by both the KMT and the CCP to

¹Mao, Ji VI, p. 70.

fan the flames of nationalism.² In his lectures on protracted war, Mao turned to the question of the political mobilization of the people in the face of Japanese aggression. He acknowledged that much had already been done to mobilize the mass media for this purpose, but felt that so far it could only be considered "a drop in the ocean." Further, he complained that too much of the propaganda to date had been "uncongenial to the tastes of the masses," with the result that "barriers had arisen" between the actual propaganda and the people to whom it was intended to appeal. All this, concluded Mao, had to be changed as soon as possible if the people were to be effectively mobilized for the war effort.³

One obvious way of making Communist ideology and propaganda more congenial to the Chinese people -- regardless of class -- was to soften the conflict that existed between Marxist theory and China's traditional culture. Ch'en Po-ta had long been sensitive to the charge that Marxism was a "foreign dogma" hostile to the spirit of Chinese culture, and as such could have no future in China. The time had now come for him to elaborate on his belief that this charge was groundless, and that there was no real conflict between Marxist theory and Chinese "national essence." Indeed, the effective union of these two crucial ingredients would provide the intellectual basis for a new type of ideology and propaganda that would

²Ironically, it was the Japanese invaders themselves who were the most effective catalysts of Chinese nationalism. On this important point, see Chalmers A. Johnson, Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power (The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962, pp. 69-70.

³Mao, Ji VI, p. 102.

prove appealing to the Chinese masses. Although Ch'en avoided the delicate issue of Marxist theory in the spring of 1938, he had been working hard in helping to formulate a cultural policy for the CCP. Mao had tended to neglect the cultural side of both the revolution and the war against Japan, but for Ch'en the cultural dimension was a major concern. In an essay written in the winter of 1937, but not published until May the following year, Ch'en is at pains to emphasize the importance of the cultural factor in the war. The Japanese attack on Chinese culture, he claims, is simply a part of the general Fascist attempt to destroy world civilization and plunge mankind into a new era of darkness. Since Chinese culture -- both traditional and contemporary -- reflects the genius of no less than one-quarter of humanity, the struggle of the Chinese in defence of their own culture is far from being parochial:

Our defence of the existence and development of Chinese culture is simultaneously linked to the existence and development of world culture, and to its ultimate destiny.⁴

For Ch'en, the struggle against Japan was the crucible of the new Chinese culture that would emerge from the fusion of past and present. The basic existence of Chinese culture would be assured through this struggle; equally, the war would provide the immediate context in which Chinese culture would further develop.

Ch'en's emphasis on the development of Chinese culture was likely to disturb his non-Marxist readers, many of whom felt that all

⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun kang-Ri wen-hua tong-yi zhen-xian" (On the Anti-Japanese United Front in Culture) (Winter 1937), in Ch'en, Zai wen-hua zhen-xian shang, p. 52.

talk of developing Chinese culture was out of place in the critical war-time situation, and in any event was probably no more than a guise for the introduction of Marxism. However, Ch'en is quick to reassure his readers that the creation of a new culture is an important aspect of the national struggle against the Japanese, and need not conflict with the preservation of traditional culture. With regard to China's cultural legacy, especially the key areas of morality and thought, Ch'en states his basic premise:

We are historicists, and we believe that the emergence of a new morality cannot be unconnected with the development of the old morality....Further, we do not consider that the old thought has no legacy of tradition to pass on to the new thought.⁵

In calling for the fusion of old and new in the cultural sphere, Ch'en had gone farther towards striking a compromise between Chinese history and Marxist theory than had most of his colleagues in the CCP. Yet as a Marxist he could not abandon the central proposition that, in the course of this reconciliation of history and theory, the basic content of the culture that would emerge would be new in the sense that it would bear the characteristics of the current age. And the age, as we know from Ch'en's earlier assertions, was one in which the new science of dialectical materialism was rapidly assuming a commanding position in China's intellectual life. Consequently, Ch'en had to return to the question that had so embittered leftist literary circles in 1936-37, namely, the relationship between content and form. In a letter

⁵Ibid., p. 56. There is a striking similarity between this passage and another from Mao Tse-tung's report to the CCP Sixth Congress a few months later. On this point, see the long quotation from Mao on p. 129 following. It is not unreasonable to assume that Ch'en had a hand in drafting Mao's speech, especially the section dealing with problems of theory and culture.

published in May 1938, Ch'en reaffirms his support of the movement to make the written word more accessible to China's millions. Given the need to mobilize the masses in the war against Japan, he continues, the popularization movement is essential to China's very survival. Yet Ch'en's fervent support of the popularization movement placed him on the horns of a dilemma: Too much emphasis on Marxism (by whatever name) in the movement to mobilize the masses would surely alienate them; on the other hand, excessive stress on traditionalism (in whatever guise) would amount to a betrayal of the proletarian revolution. Ch'en quickly resolves this dilemma, however, by going back to the issue of national forms in literature. "Regarding the popularization movement," he states, "I consider that the use of traditional forms to introduce new contents will be especially effective."⁶ In a longer essay of the same month, he elaborates considerably on the need to use traditional forms to get through to the masses successfully, and to prepare the ground for the gradual creation of a new Chinese culture:

If we are to transform our traditional national culture and morality into a new national culture and morality in a living, vital, intelligent and scientific way, [we must allow] new contents to emerge in traditional forms. This is not to deny our need for new forms. What we are saying is that new contents in our culture will give birth to new forms, but new contents in our culture may emerge in any form, however old.⁷

⁶Ch'en Po-ta, "Jiu xing-shi de li-yong" (The Use of Traditional Forms) (23 May 1938?), in Ch'en, Zai wen-hua zhen-xian shang, p. 35. To illustrate his point, Ch'en refers approvingly to two recent literary productions of a Mr. Tung Chen-hua, namely, The Romance of May Fourth (Wu-si yan-yi) and his Record of the National Disaster (Guo-nan ji).

⁷Ch'en Po-ta, "Wo-men guan-yu mu-qian wen-hua yun-dong de yi-jian" (Our Opinions Concerning the Present Cultural Movement) (4 May 1938?), in Ch'en, Zai wen-hua zhen-xian shang, p. 93.

These were basically the ideas of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, but Ch'en had espoused them ardently since the early 1930's. In 1938, after much acrimonious debate with the literary leftists, Ch'en Po-ta, Chou Yang and other advocates of Ch'ü's literary theories were about to win the day. With the official support of Mao himself, the CCP's official policy on the cultural front came to reflect Ch'ü's dualism: Marxist ideology was to be transmitted to the masses in forms both old and new, the main object being the mobilization of the nation's millions in the struggle for national and social emancipation.

Ch'en's essays on cultural problems in the spring of 1938 made an important contribution to the formulation of the CCP's official policies in this area, and they also prepared the way for his long article of 1 July 1938 on the occasion of the Party's seventeenth anniversary. It was in this essay that Ch'en returned to the central issue of Marxist theory and Chinese history. He states that the Chinese Communist Party firmly believes in the "scientific communism of Marx and Lenin," and is the political representative of the proletariat, a new class on the ascent in China. But, he cautions, it should not be thought that communism is something that has been "dreamed of" throughout the centuries only in foreign lands. On the contrary:

It is something which has been dreamed of for several thousands of years by the most outstanding representatives of our nation. Mo-tzu [for example], one of our country's ancient philosophers...used to dream of this kind of society.⁸

⁸Ch'en Po-ta, "Wo-men ji-xu li-shi de shi-ye qian-jin," p. 72.

Nonetheless, dreams have to be realized in practice, and for this it is necessary to have an adequate theory of society -- a theory which only Marxism-Leninism provides. But Marxism is not a "lifeless dogma"; it is a "living science" which takes into full account the individual characteristics and historical conditions of the various nations. Since Marxism is a living science it is not static, but must change in response to new circumstances. Hence, says Ch'en, Chinese Communists must be able to "concretely develop and fill out" the principles of Marxism-Leninism in accordance with the special characteristics and historical circumstances of China. Pulling all of these strands of thought together, we may conclude that in Ch'en's view, Marxist theory (1) has antecedents in traditional Chinese culture; (2) can be adapted to the specific environment of China; and (3) can be enriched and developed through application in China.

In light of this it is not surprising that Ch'en disclaims any conflict between Marxism and Chinese culture; nor does the CCP reject everything in China's "rich legacy in culture and thought" simply because it believes in Marxism. Quite the reverse:

The Chinese Communist Party is one which takes over all the best in China's inherent cultural traditions, and all of China's most outstanding [Intellectual] theories. Members of the Chinese Communist Party consider themselves to be the inheritors of the revolutionary essence of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, the inheritors of all the outstanding enlightened thought of the modern Chinese reform and revolutionary movements, and the inheritors of all the most outstanding cultural legacy of ancient China.⁹

Surely, if the CCP undertook to inherit this tremendous cultural and intellectual legacy from the past, Marxism-Leninism would go by the

⁹Ibid., p. 73.

board. Would it not be impossible for the Party to maintain its revolutionary integrity exposed to such an immense influence from the past? On this point Ch'en is confident that in addition to inheriting this cultural legacy, the CCP will be able to "transform, develop, and enrich" it on the basis of Marxism. Yet this cultural legacy is not simply a pliable mass that Marxism can shape at will; rather, a complex process of interaction will be triggered off between the foreign theory and the native tradition which will remould both. As Ch'en phrases it:

The Chinese Communist Party's skill at accepting all the best in our nation's cultural and intellectual legacy is increasing the limitless value of Marxism-Leninism in China. At the same time, it is increasing the value of all the best in our nation's cultural and intellectual legacy.¹⁰

Ch'en does not indicate at this time the probable consequences of this interaction between theory and culture, but it was a subject to which he returned a few weeks later.

Ch'en was strongly arguing the case for the combination of Marxist theory and Chinese culture in his article of 1 July. Interestingly, this is a subject which Chang Wen-t'ien assiduously avoided in an essay in the same issue of Liberation, although he too dealt with the question of the role of Marxism in China. Marxism-Leninism, argues Chang, should be regarded as a modern science; like other scientists, Marx and Lenin contributed their discoveries to the general store of human knowledge. Hence, Marxism-Leninism represents a body of scientific thought which is as applicable to China as to any other country;

¹⁰Loc. cit.

indeed, as the only correct theory of society Marxism was readily accepted once it was introduced into China. Marxism-Leninism can thus be said to have roots in Chinese thought and culture insofar as (in accordance with the dialectic of history) Chinese thought and culture would inevitably have developed in the direction indicated by Marxism.¹¹ For Chang, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the compatibility of Marxism and Chinese culture is established by the scientific nature of Marxism; unlike Ch'en, he sees no need to prove that some of China's ancient philosophers were proto-Marxists. Chang, then, is silent on the alleged necessity to effect some kind of combination of Marxist theories with specific, concrete elements in China's cultural tradition. Nor is he prepared to declare, as did Ch'en, that Marxism itself will be enriched by interaction with China's cultural legacy. Retaining the scientific analogy, Chang maintains that the introduction of Marxism-Leninism into China greatly speeded up the development of Chinese thought and culture, and at the same time raised their general level. This, says Chang, is similar to the way the introduction of modern science and technology into China greatly advanced and improved the level of science and technology at that time existing in China.¹² Although he did not say it in so many words, it was apparent that Chang believed the idea of

¹¹Lo Fu (Chang Wen-t'ien), "Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang shi-qi zhou-nian ji-nian" (In Commemoration of the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party), JF, 43-44 (joint issue of 1 July 1938), p. 68.

¹²Loc. cit.

combining Marxist theory with Chinese culture was as futile as the notion that modern science and traditional culture (of whatever nationality) should somehow be amalgamated.

In stressing the scientific nature of Marxism, Chang Wen-t'ien reflected the growing concern of the Returned Students that in the hands of people like Ch'en Po-ta, Marxism was in danger of being "nationalized." Many of them knew Ch'en from their student days in Moscow, and they probably remembered that in 1936 he had proudly accepted the charge that he was an advocate of "patriotic philosophy."¹³ Having formally opened the debate on the relationship between Marxist theory and Chinese culture in his important article of 1 July, Ch'en quickly moved on to the offensive. On 23 July he published another major article in Liberation, entitled "On National Traditions in the Cultural Movement." In this essay, Ch'en laments the fact that many "outstanding revolutionaries" and cultural workers have fallen into "formalism" and "dogmatism"; consequently, they have been guilty of neglecting the study of their own nation's history, preferring to talk about world philosophy and literature to the neglect of China's traditional philosophy and literature. In a scarcely veiled reference to the Moscow-trained Returned Students, Ch'en attributes the

¹³Interestingly, by this time some of the Returned Students were beginning to adopt a more positive attitude toward China's traditional culture. In an article in the summer of 1938, for example, Po Ku declared in passing that the Chinese Communists "understand the necessity for respecting and accepting all the good traditions and theories of our nation." See Ch'in Po-ku (Ch'in Pang-hsien), "On the Development, the Difficulties, and the Future of the National Anti-Japanese United Front," in Ch'en Shao-yu, Old Intrigues in New Clothing, Chungking: New China Information Committee, Bulletin No. 7, 1939, pp. 22-23.

shortcomings of the dogmatists in the cultural field to their failure to understand the theory of the relationship between socialist content and national form which Stalin had formulated concerning the development of culture in the Soviet Union. Failing to understand this theory, these dogmatists have consequently been unable to apply it in practice, "in accordance with the revolutionary movement in their own nation, their own nation's characteristics, and the cultural movement needed by their own nation."¹⁴ This neglect and even dismissal of China's own national cultural traditions, warns Ch'en, is most worrying, for it plays into the hands of the Trotskyists and other renegades. In particular, it gives strength to the Trotskyists' views that the peasants constituted a reactionary force in Chinese history and society, and that the two main camps of idealism and materialism were absent in traditional Chinese philosophy. Besides playing into the hands of the class enemy, the neglect of China's long historical tradition is fundamentally unsound from a theoretical point of view.

As Ch'en sees it:

Genuine Marxists all understand that a new culture cannot fall out of the sky (ping-kong diao-xia-lai) and be unconnected with the development of history and culture in the past. If one is unable to accept and transform one's traditional culture in a critical way, it is impossible to create a new culture.¹⁵

This, says Ch'en, was a truth taught by Lenin arising from his own experience during the Russian revolution, but it is universally

¹⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun wen-hua yun-dong zhong de min-zu chuan-tong" (On National Traditions in the Cultural Movement), JF, 46 (23 July 1938), p. 26.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 28.

applicable. If the Chinese Communists wish to create a new culture for China, they must be able to comprehend the vast panorama of Chinese history, and must be "good at accepting and developing the best traditions in the past."¹⁶ In invoking the authority of both Stalin and Lenin, Ch'en was able to strengthen his position against the Returned Students, most of whom were well versed in Marxism-Leninism, and prone to use their mastery of the classical texts as an ideological weapon against the less theoretically-qualified Maoists. As a Moscow 'returned student' himself, Ch'en was well able to employ the same tactics on behalf of the Maoist faction in the Party.

Besides being basically unsound theoretically, and playing into the hands of the Trotskyists politically, the tendency of the dogmatists to ignore China's cultural traditions had another, more serious consequence. It encouraged the production of a good deal of CCP ideology and propaganda that was ineffectual in appealing to the broad masses of the people. Supporting Lu Hsün's rejection of the theory that "old bottles cannot contain new wine," Ch'en complains that in the past too many of the Party's cultural workers have neglected the use of "traditional (i.e., old) national forms." They have failed to realize that in order to get through to the masses of ordinary Chinese people (most of whom are peasants), it is necessary to transmit new ideas in well-known national forms relevant to particular parts of China. In short, says Ch'en, the new national culture that Communists are trying to create should be both "Sinified" (Zhong-guo-

¹⁶Ibid., p. 27.

hua) and "localized" (di-fang-hua).¹⁷ Ch'en's use of these two terms is most interesting, for one of them (Sinification) was to be adopted by Mao Tse-tung in his report to the Sixth Plenum of the CCP in October 1938. Ch'en had first used these terms as early as 4 May the same year, in his essay, "Our Opinions Concerning the Present Cultural Movement," and they appear to have originated with him, or at the very least to have become identified with him at this time.¹⁸ However, the ideas behind the two slogans were not Ch'en's, but rather Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai's. By 1938, however, Ch'ü's ideas had greatly influenced a large number of intellectuals in the CCP, including Ch'en himself. Indeed, Ch'en had probably known Ch'ü personally from as early as 1925, when the two men were at Shanghai University -- the former as student and the latter as instructor.

Ch'en does not go into any detail as to what he means precisely by his terms "Sinification" and "localization," apart from equating the former term with "nationalization" (min-zu-hua). Nevertheless, their general intent is clear. Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, it will be remembered, had felt that "plain speech" (bai-hua), the new form of Chinese which had emerged by the 1920's was not really an effective "common speech" (pu-tong-hua). This was because, in the course of absorbing foreign influences (many of which were beneficial), bai-hua had been to a large extent "Westernized" as well as "modernized." That is, it contained a good many foreign words and speech patterns which were

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

¹⁸ Ch'en Po-ta, "Wo-men guan-yu mu-qian wen-hua yun-dong de yi-jian", pp. 93-95.

difficult for ordinary people to understand and assimilate. The result was a bai-hua that was really an awkward mixture of Chinese and foreign elements that had not been effectively fused into a true pu-tong-hua that was readily comprehensible to ordinary people. Hence, the existing form of bai-hua was unable to perform the linguistic role for which it was intended; it was neither fully modern (linguistically comprehensible) nor fully Chinese (culturally acceptable). On the other hand, Ch'ü's proposed form of pu-tong-hua (the modern speech of the urban proletariat) would represent the development of the existing bai-hua into a spoken and written language of a new kind, one that was at one and the same time modern and Chinese. To employ the terminology of Ch'en Po-ta, pu-tong-hua as Ch'ü conceived it would be a "Sinified" form of bai-hua. In calling for the Sinification of Chinese culture in general (not just language and literature), Ch'en was in effect rejecting the theory that culture in twentieth century China must be either modern (Western) or traditional (Chinese), but not both simultaneously. By establishing the correct relationship between modern and traditional influences in China's emerging culture, argues Ch'en, one can proceed to Sinify it by retaining the essence of the modern influences, but casting them in a form which preserves the genius of the traditional culture. Like Ch'ü's pu-tong-hua, Ch'en's Sinified culture is both modern and Chinese. Hence, although the Chinese Communists are firm believers in Marxism-Leninism -- an essentially Western philosophy -- Ch'en does not hesitate to claim that they are equally the defenders of China's

genuine "national essence" (guo-cui), though certainly not its "dregs" as well.¹⁹

Ch'en's concept of localization, like that of Sinification, is also based on the literary theories of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai. Ch'ü believed in encouraging local and regional literary traditions if conditions permitted. Provided they remained subordinate to the national pu-tong-hua, they could serve as useful media of communication with ordinary people living within a particular dialect area. If, as Ch'en was suggesting, the CCP rigorously applied these two concepts in the broad field of culture, the Party's ideology and propaganda would likely prove more congenial to the tastes of ordinary Chinese people, regardless of their regional background or social class. Ch'en had strongly implied that his two concepts were to be applied not merely to language and literature, but to the broad field of culture which included Marxist-Leninist theory itself. In light of this, two interesting questions arise: One, can the new Marxist wine be poured into old Chinese bottles; i.e., can Marxism be Sinified yet retain its a-cultural scientific nature and hence its universal applicability? Or, on the contrary, would Marxism become so Chinese in content and form that -- while being more acceptable in China -- it would be rendered irrelevant to the rest of the world? Further, would the interaction between "socialist content" and "national form" (Ch'en's terms) in fact change the very nature of Marxism itself; in other words, would Sinified Marxism really be Marxism at all? Two, can

¹⁹Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun wen-hua yun-dong zhong de min-zu chuan-tong, p. 28. Ch'en further defines "national essence" as "min-zu de jing-hua," a term no more precise in meaning than the more common "guo-cui."

Marxism -- like language and literature -- be localized; i.e., can there be different varieties of Marxism which are geared to the particular conditions in different areas of China (e.g., a "Kwangtung Marxism" or a "Fukien Marxism")? This at first glance seems absurd, but is it; if it is possible to Sinify Marxism (i.e., make it Chinese) surely it is equally possible to "Fukienize" it (i.e., make it Fuki-
 enese)? Again the problem mentioned above is raised: If Marxism were to be both Sinified and localized, would there be much left of it that Marx and Lenin would recognize and claim as their own?

This was obviously a question that troubled Ch'en, for he knew that it would be on the minds of both potential supporters and opponents of the slogans he was proposing. He assures his readers, however, that in the final analysis the new contents in culture (such as Marxist philosophy) will not be compromised by their appearance in national or even local forms. In the dialectical relationship between the new contents and the old forms, it is the former which will dominate in the end:

The extensive use of traditional cultural forms is precisely the condition which is conducive to the widespread development of new cultural contents. Moreover, in the process of development the new cultural contents will continuously fu-duan de achieve supremacy over the old forms, continuously make the old forms become subsidiary to the new cultural contents, and thus effect the transition to new cultural forms.²⁰

In the first stage of this complex process of interaction, new Marxist contents will fuse with traditional Chinese forms, but the process

²⁰Ch'en Po-ta, "Wo-men guan-yu mu-qian wen-hua yun-dong de yi-jian", p. 93.

will not terminate at this point. On the contrary, it will progress to a second and higher stage in which the interaction of content and form will transform the traditional Chinese forms into modern Chinese forms. In such a synthesis, the final product (although, in Ch'en's mind, nothing is ever final) will be a distinctive culture which represents the total integration of modern Marxist (scientific) contents and modern Chinese (national) forms. A new nation will be born with a culture that is at once truly modern and unmistakably Chinese; this new culture will be both scientific and national in character. It was such a culture that Mao Tse-tung was to call for in these very terms in his famous work of 1940, "On New Democracy," a text that was certainly influenced by Ch'en Po-ta.

(ii) Mao's Call for the "Sinification of Marxism"

Ch'en's call on 1 July for the CCP to reassess its attitude toward China's national traditions was the signal for a new ideological campaign within the Party. Ch'en's article was soon followed by those of Ai Ssu-ch'i, Chang Ju-hsin, Yang Sung, and others (including Ch'en himself) on a wide variety of subjects relating to Marxist theory and Chinese history. Indeed, the intellectual life of the entire Party was rapidly being re-oriented; henceforth, Marxism was to be studied and applied in light of China's distinctive history and culture, and not in a foreign context. As for the education of the ordinary people of the country -- the sea in which the Communist fish swam -- Mao declared that the "great task" in this regard was twofold: It was necessary to "heighten the national culture and national

consciousness of the people," and to "educate the new generation in the national spirit."²¹ Mao's concern with the "national spirit" was understandable in light of China's plight in the autumn of 1938; Japanese armies were sweeping over the country, and the huge industrial complex at Wuhan was about to fall into their hands. By the spring of 1939 the CCP's campaign to reassess its attitude toward China's national history and traditions had blended with a "national spiritual mobilization," which tried to bolster the people's sagging morale in the face of repeated Japanese victories.

When Mao delivered his major report ("On the New Stage") to the Party's Sixth Plenum in October 1938, he did so within a very specific context -- increasing nationalism within and without the CCP, his growing supremacy within the Chinese Party, and Moscow's acceptance of his pre-eminent position. Mao's report, delivered between 12-14 October, was a lengthy summary of the state of the nation, the Party, and the revolution. In the latter part of the report he addressed himself to the question of Marxist-Leninist theory, reaffirming his belief that the "study of theory is the precondition of victory" in the revolution. The CCP had made great strides in raising its theoretical level, but there was still much to be done in this regard. Hence his call for a "Party-wide competition" in the study of the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, to commence after the conclusion of the Sixth Plenum. This ideological campaign, then, was to coincide with the flood of articles on Chinese history and tradition which had begun to appear on the pages of Liberation. This

²¹Mao, Ji VI, pp. 216-217.

linkage of Marxist theory and Chinese history was by no means fortuitous, for the burden of Mao's comments on ideological study in his report was on the absolute necessity to unite the two. Mao first of all pointed out that members of the CCP should regard Marxism-Leninism merely as a guide to action, not as a rigid dogma:

We must not study the letter [zi-mu] of Marxism-Leninism, but the standpoint and methodology by which they [viz, Marx and Lenin] investigated and solved problems. It is only this guide to action, only this standpoint and methodology, that constitute revolutionary science, and provide the only correct orientation enabling us to appreciate the object of revolution and to direct the revolutionary movement.²²

In Mao's eyes, one must distinguish clearly between the "letter" and the "standpoint and methodology" of Marxism-Leninism; the latter is the part of Marxism-Leninism that constitutes "revolutionary science," while the former does not. What does all this mean? In his lectures on dialectical materialism in 1937, Mao had distinguished between the general and the particular character of all phenomena. The general character was absolute and enduring, while the particular character was relative and hence temporary. Applying this analysis to Leninism, Mao argued that Leninism's general character was its Marxist content, while its particular character was its Russian form. If in turn we apply this analysis to Marxism-Leninism (not merely Leninism), we can say that the general character of Marxism-Leninism is its content (i.e., it is "revolutionary science"), and that its particular character is its form (i.e., it is both European and Russian). Thus, in distinguishing between the "letter" and the "standpoint and methodology" of Marxism-Leninism, Mao was in fact distinguishing between

²²Ibid., pp. 259-260.

absolute content and relative form. He was exhorting the Chinese Communists to assimilate the revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism, but to reject its national form.

Yet Mao had previously argued that a thing's general character is contained within its particular character; that is, the revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism is contained within its European and Russian form. If, as Mao suggested in his report to the Sixth Plenum, Communists in China were to strip Marxism-Leninism of its national form in order to expose its revolutionary content, what would be left -- a highly abstract "standpoint and methodology" divorced from any concrete environment or context, perhaps best expressed in the language of pure mathematics? Mao was quick to reject this conclusion:

There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we refer to as concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in China's concrete environment, and not applied abstractly.²³

Mao appeared to be calling for the creation of a new variant of Marxism-Leninism particular to China, but how was this to be achieved? We will recall that Ch'en Po-ta had previously declared the time had come for Chinese culture to be Sinified, that is, to be rendered both modern and Chinese -- modern in content and Chinese in form. This is very similar to what Mao had in mind for Marxism, namely, the creation of a new variant of Marxism that exhibited a scientific revolutionary content within a Chinese national form. Thus Mao borrowed Ch'en's terminology (though not the basic idea) in declaring to the

²³Loc. cit.

Sixth Plenum of the CCP that:

The Sinification of Marxism [Ma-ke-si-zhu-yi de Zong-guo-hua] -- making it exhibit a Chinese character in all its manifestations, that is to say, applying it in accordance with China's characteristics -- becomes a problem which the entire Party must understand and solve without delay.²⁴

The process of creating a new variant of Marxism was to be described as Sinification, but Mao gave no indication of what the new variant itself was to be called. In May 1939, however, Liberation suggested that of all the CCP's leaders, it was Mao Tse-tung who was most successful in combining the theory of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. From this it was but a short jump to the proposition that Mao's thought represented the new variant of Marxism that was emerging from the process of Marxism-Leninism's Sinification.

Interestingly, Mao's call for the Sinification of Marxism was accompanied by a softening of his attitude toward China's historical heritage, especially traditional philosophy. In the past, Mao had called for two fundamentally contradictory things -- the adaptation of Marxism to China's concrete environment and the liquidation of China's traditional philosophy. This of course overlooked the fact that China's contemporary environment had not, in the words of Ch'en Po-ta, "fallen out of the sky"; it was itself the creation of history and intimately linked to history. As we will recall, the proper

²⁴Loc. cit. For rather obvious reasons Mao did not apply Ch'en's concept of localization to Marxism-Leninism. This idea had its place in the field of art and literature, for example, but it would have proved rather awkward if applied to political theory. This would have been especially true in 1938, when Mao was doing his best to unify CCP ideology under himself as an emerging national leader.

attitude toward China's historical heritage was an important point of disagreement between Ch'en and Mao. Mao's rather hard stance vis-à-vis the traditional heritage was certainly philosophically unsound, but in the face of growing Chinese nationalism and the concern over China's "national spirit" his attitude was fast becoming politically unsound as well. Doubtless with these considerations in mind, in his report to the Sixth Plenum Mao finally dropped his call for the destruction of China's philosophical heritage. He pointed out that in addition to the Sinification of Marxism:

Another task of our study is to examine our historical legacy and to evaluate it critically by the use of Marxist methodology....Today's China is a development from historical China, and as Marxist historicists we should not cut ourselves off from history (ge-duan li-shi). We should sum it up from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen, and adopt all that is precious in this legacy.²⁵

In 1936 Ch'en Po-ta had lamented the failure of Marxists in China to make a systematic evaluation of China's traditional philosophy; Mao echoed this sentiment in declaring that vis-à-vis this very problem the Communists in China were "still elementary school pupils."

Still on the subject of China's historical legacy, Mao further comments that "the assimilation of this legacy...becomes a methodology that is of substantial help in directing the great [revolutionary] movement at the present time."²⁶ What exactly does he mean by this? We should bear in mind that Mao had previously said that Marxism provides a methodology to guide the revolution; therefore there are in fact two methodologies -- Marxism and the Chinese legacy -- that

²⁵Ibid., p. 260.

²⁶Loc. cit.

serve as guides to the revolution in China. Yet Mao had previously argued that present-day China had emerged from yesterday's China, and that the two were inseparably linked. Therefore, by the assimilation of the "legacy" he really means the assimilation of the characteristics of both China's past and China's present, that is, the sum total of the Chinese environment, material and mental alike. Mao's previous exhortations on the need to adapt Marxism to China's concrete environment had focused on the present-day environment, but now a historical dimension had been added. China's historical heritage had been successfully absorbed into the new concept of the Sinification of Marxism. Of the two methodologies -- Marxism and the Chinese legacy -- which Mao had put forward as the essential guides to the Chinese revolution, what is the relationship between them? Are they of equal importance, or is one more valuable than the other? Mao answers this question by giving firm precedence to Marxism, for we have already quoted him to the effect that "our historical legacy" must be evaluated critically "by use of Marxist methodology." Therefore, Marxist methodology serves as the indispensable guide to both the revolution and the historical legacy. Once correctly evaluated by Marxism, however, the historical legacy itself becomes a methodology which evaluates Marxism's relevance to guiding the concrete revolutionary struggle in China. This seems to accord with Ch'en Po-ta's previous assertion that in the dialectical interaction between content and form, new contents gradually transform old forms into new ones. Applied to Mao's discussion of Marxist theory (new content) and Chinese history (old form), this implies that Marxism's

interaction with traditional Chinese history will eventually lead to the creation of modern Chinese history. Yet in the process Marxism itself will have been changed; i.e., it will have developed to a higher stage, and its contents will be richer than before its application in China. Hence Mao at the Sixth Plenum called upon all Party members to improve their understanding of both Marxism and Chinese history, for their dialectical interaction was the essential key to the success of the revolution.

For Mao, then, it is not sufficient that Chinese Marxist-Leninists merely "evaluate" their historical heritage; they should also "assimilate" it into their own world view, for this would provide them with a new methodology to help guide the revolution. What Mao seems to be saying is that in assimilating China's historical legacy (i.e., China's total environment), Chinese Marxists are not simply adopting a new particular form in which general content (revolutionary science) can reside. Or, perhaps more precisely, they are adopting a new form, but this new form is not merely an inert receptacle into which the content is poured. Instead, the new form itself plays an active role vis-à-vis the old content; in other words, the new Chinese form becomes a methodology by which to evaluate Marxist content. In his lectures on dialectical materialism in 1937 Mao had emphasized the "materialist truth" that "consciousness is limited by matter," and had firmly rejected the proposition that matter is an "inert, composite entity." From this we deduced that in Mao's eyes Leninism was the creation of a process in which European Marxism (consciousness) was transformed (limited) by the Russian environment

(matter); that is, Lenin had adapted, transformed and developed Marxism in the course of his own revolutionary practice in the Russian context. Now, in the autumn of 1938, Mao was openly arguing in the CCP that Marxism-Leninism in China should undergo a similar process of adaptation, transformation and development.

In Mao's mind theory was composed of two distinct though inter-related elements -- methodology and form, or more precisely, scientific methodology and national form. In calling for the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism, Mao was rejecting the application in China of both Marxist theory (revolutionary science in a European form) and Leninist theory (revolutionary science in a Russian form), and was instead proposing the creation of new revolutionary theory adapted to China (revolutionary science in a Chinese form). This is possible in view of the fact that theory itself has both a general scientific (absolute) character, and a particular national (relative) character, the general character being contained within the particular. Providing the general character of the original theory were retained, a new particular character could be grafted on to it, the resulting union being new theory. Let us look at this process of Sinification: Marxist-Leninist theory is separated into two distinct conceptual elements, revolutionary science ("methodology") and European and Russian national form ("letter"). In the course of concrete revolutionary practice in China the original national forms are dropped, and the (now abstract) revolutionary science takes on a new Chinese national form. This fusion of content and form ("methodology" and "letter") results in the creation of new theory to be added to the

general storehouse of revolutionary science. This new theory is not simply the original content dressed up in a new Chinese garb, for the new form exerts a certain transforming influence on the original content. Mao thus conceives of the new Chinese national form as confirming, rejecting or supplementing the variety of propositions which the original revolutionary science (Marxism-Leninism) had brought to bear on the Chinese environment. After all, in 1935 Mao had declared that, with regard to the world's existing body of military theory, Chinese Marxists should "assimilate what is useful, reject what is useless and create what is specifically our own." In his report to the Sixth Plenum Mao did not name the new theory he was calling for; he simply called for the process of Sinification to commence. Steps were soon afoot, however, to designate this theory (as in the case of Marxism and Leninism) after the revolutionary scientist who created it -- Mao Tse-tung himself.

This is all very abstract theorizing, and we can agree with Stuart Schram that the meaning of the Sinification of Marxism was both "complex and ambiguous" in Mao's own mind at the time.²⁷ Unfortunately, Mao devoted little attention to developing his ideas on the subject of Sinification. Nor did he give any specific examples of what he really meant, apart from saying that as far as literary style was concerned, "[foreign] dogmatism must be put to rest and replaced by a fresh and lively Chinese style and manner pleasing to the eye and ear of the Chinese common people."²⁸ As a busy leader

²⁷ Schram, Mao's Thought, pp. 112-113.

²⁸ Mao, Ji VI, p. 261.

in time of war, Mao was thinking on his feet and not in the solitude of his study, and he probably had not worked out all the implications of what he was proposing. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that he was consciously proposing the creation of new revolutionary theory based on the application and development of Marxism-Leninism in China. This new theory would be a fresh contribution to the general body of Marxist-Leninist theory; it would represent an addition to Marxism-Leninism, but certainly not its replacement. (In his lectures on dialectical materialism Mao had suggested that Lenin had applied and developed Marxism in Russia, and had greatly added to its value, but had not replaced it. Henceforth Marxism should never be studied in isolation from Leninism, but likewise Leninism should always be studied in conjunction with Marxism.) Indeed, any theories created in the course of concrete revolutionary practice (no matter where) should be added to the general storehouse of scientific revolutionary theory originating with Marx.

(iii) Ch'en, Mao, and the Sinification of Marxism

We have previously discussed Ch'en Po-ta in connection with Mao's proposal for the Sinification of Marxism, but now it is desirable to try to pin-point the exact relationship between Ch'en's and Mao's thinking. We know that Ch'en was working closely with Mao at this time as his political secretary, and that he had gained enough of Mao's confidence to be asked to write Liberation's main article on Party history on the occasion of the CCP's seventeenth anniversary. Mao's report, "On the New Stage," was extremely long, and it is quite likely that as a competent theorist and Mao's political

secretary Ch'en assisted in the preparation of this report. We know that as an active leader Mao did not personally draft all of his numerous writings; it was the responsibility of his political secretary to assist him in this. (Indeed, we have already noted a striking similarity in one key passage which appears in both Mao's report to the Sixth Plenum and an earlier essay written by Ch'en.) Certainly, some of Ch'en's ideas appear linked to Mao's call for the Sini-
fication of Marxism: (1) Mao's two major demands for the integration of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, and for the Marxist evaluation of China's historical heritage (especially the philosophical heritage "from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen") are identical with the two main tasks Ch'en set for China's Marxist theorists in October 1935, in connection with the New Enlightenment Movement. (2) Mao's more sympathetic attitude toward China's historical legacy represents a distinct reversal of his position in 1937, and is in keeping with Ch'en's repeated calls for Marxists to adopt a more constructive attitude toward the positive aspects of Chinese history. (3) The term "Sinification" (which Mao first used in his October report) seems to have originated in Ch'en's essay of 4 May 1938, in which he called for the Sinification and localization of all Chinese culture. In short, Ch'en provided Mao with the slogan and much of the rationale (but not the basic concept, which Mao had formulated independently) for the union of Marxist theory and Chinese practice, and he encouraged Mao's appreciation of the need for the CCP to adopt a more positive attitude toward China's historical legacy. Finally, the basic concept of the Sinification of Marxism

fully accords with Ch'en's opinions since at least 1936, and after Mao's proposals in 1938 Ch'en was to become a leading exponent of the theory within the Party. All of these factors would seem to confirm Ch'en's role in the original formulation of the concept itself, and his growing importance as a Party theoretician and advisor to Mao.

In calling for the Sinification of Marxism Mao was clearly moving into uncharted theoretical terrain. A lack of enthusiasm within the Party for the concept is suggested by the omission in the Sixth Plenum's political resolution of any mention of the need to Sinify Marxism-Leninism.²⁹ Many Party leaders probably feared that the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism would deprive it of the prestige and authority associated with its two famous European exponents, and would isolate Communists in China from the mainstream of the international Communist movement. Also, the concept would possibly antagonize Stalin and the Comintern, who might see in the Sinification of Marxism the unhealthy influence of Chinese petty bourgeois nationalism in the CCP. A hint of possible inner-Party dissension on this issue is provided by an important discrepancy between the official Chinese and English texts of Mao's report, "On the New Stage." While both texts warn against the separation of "internationalist content from national forms", the Chinese version calls upon the Party to purge "dogmatism" from its ranks, while the English version urges the liquidation of "chauvinism" from the CCP. Thus, Mao's original charge

²⁹JF, no. 57 (25 November 1938), p. 41. See also Qun-zhong (The Masses), II:12 (25 December 1938), p. 593.

of dogmatism, directed most certainly against the Returned Students, is deftly transformed into an accusation of chauvinism turned against Mao himself.³⁰ Again, as Merle Goldman has pointed out, in the spring of 1939 such famous CCP cultural leaders as Hu Feng and Feng Hsiueh-feng openly rejected the implications of Mao's idea of the union of Marxist theory and Chinese national form in the field of literature. (Both writers had previously rejected as bogus the idea that, in literature and art, new Marxist contents could be combined with traditional national forms.)³¹ Indeed, Mao was to have a difficult struggle ahead before his proposal for the Sinification of Marxism was to be accepted within the Party, especially by the Returned Students and other theoretically competent people. This struggle was to become one of the main themes in the future Rectification Campaign of 1942-43, when Mao's undisputed position as the leading theorist of the CCP was established.

In spite of the opposition which his proposal stirred up, there is little doubt that the concept of the Sinification of Marxism was immensely valuable to Mao in his efforts to achieve ideological supremacy within the Party. His idea of Sinification may have been "complex and ambiguous," but by this very standard it effectively placed Marxism-Leninism in a vacuous limbo divorced from the absolute

³⁰Schram, Political Thought, p. 173. Stuart Schram, who first brought this discrepancy to light, was told by Edgar Snow that it might well have been Po Ku who was responsible for altering the English text of Mao's report. However, it is impossible to confirm the validity of Snow's hypothesis.

³¹Goldman, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

authority of either the classical texts or Stalin, the CPSU, and the Comintern, the official living interpreters of the texts. One question in particular must have been on the minds of many of the Party leaders assembled for the Sixth Plenum: Who would control the actual process by which Marxism-Leninism was to be Sinified, and who would define the correctness or incorrectness of the finished theoretical product? If Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and the Comintern were to be displaced as the ultimate authorities on whether or not the Chinese Communist Party was guided by "correct" Marxist-Leninist theory, who was to take their place? Mao's theory of Sinification was thus doubly useful; properly used, it could help him establish his ideological pre-eminence in the CCP, and at the same time strengthen his ideological position (and that of the Party as a whole) vis-à-vis Moscow and the Comintern. His main task, having proposed the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism, was to exert his control over both its process and its finished product. He was not to be alone in this endeavour. On 30 September, just two weeks prior to Mao's call for the Sinification of Marxism at the Sixth Plenum, it was announced that the New Philosophy Society had been founded in Yanan. Its declared aim was to discourage the study of "pure theory" (chun li-lun) and to promote the study in depth of more concrete theoretical problems in light of China's real needs. Like the rest of the nation, it was stated, philosophers in China should fulfill their responsibilities in the "war of resistance, the reconstruction of the nation, and the development of theory in China."³² Among the leading

³²JF, 53 (30 September 1938), p. 22.

founders of this new philosophy society were such "proto-Maoist" theorists as Ai Ssu-ch'i, Chou Yang, Chang Ju-hsin, Yang Sung and, of course, Ch'en Po-ta himself. The campaign for the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism -- and the conscious creation of Mao Tse-tung's thought -- was about to begin in earnest.

CHAPTER V

THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROPHET, 1939-40

(i) Ch'en's Efforts to Sinify Marxism

By the autumn of 1938 Mao had emerged as the de facto leader of the CCP. He had overcome the opposition of both Chang Kuo-t'ao and Wang Ming, and had at long last been recognized by Moscow as the top man in the Chinese Party. Even Wang Ming acknowledged Mao's supremacy, for in a speech in Yen-an on 15 January 1939 he referred to Mao as "the leader" of the CCP.¹ Nor was Mao's prestige growing only within the Party; following an interview with Mao in the summer of 1938 the American correspondent Haldore Hanson suggested that, next to Stalin, Mao Tse-tung was the "most powerful Marxian thinker and leader in world politics."² Interestingly, Hanson regarded Mao as both a practical leader and a "Marxian thinker" at a time when his credentials as a theorist were by no means universally accepted within the CCP. Yet Hanson seems to be typical of his colleagues in this regard, for, as Kenneth Shewmaker has suggested, Western correspondents who visited Yen-an during the war years tended to overestimate Mao's originality and stature as a Marxist theoretician.³

¹Ch'en Shao-yu, Old Intrigues in New Clothing, p. 13.

²As quoted in Kenneth E. Shewmaker, Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971, p. 186.

³Ibid., p. 189.

Many of Mao's colleagues high in the Party were by no means similarly disposed. In an article of 30 June 1939, for instance, Mao revealed that his two important reports, "On Protracted War" and "On the New Stage," had been subjected to "criticism, challenge and doubt" from various quarters since their publication in 1938.⁴ Mao did not identify the sources of these criticisms, but it is likely that they came at least in part from Wang Ming and his supporters among the Returned Students. Mao was probably also referring to the criticisms that Ch'en Tu-hsiu and his fellow Trotskyists had been levelling at the CCP's (i.e., Mao's) strategy in the war. Following the formation of the new united front, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and many other political prisoners had been released as part of a general amnesty proclaimed by Chiang Kai-shek. Upon his release, Ch'en went to live in Wuhan and later in Chungking, where he engaged in polemics with the CCP on a wide range of issues relating to the CCP's conduct of the revolution in China.⁵

While the Maoists were battling to defend their line against the criticisms of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and the Returned Students as well, the Nationalists launched their own ideological offensive against the Communists. Never a popular leader previously, Chiang Kai-shek's personal prestige soared after the Japanese invasion in July

⁴Mao, Ji VI, p. 343.

⁵For a somewhat garbled but useful account of the polemic between Ch'en Tu-hsiu and the CCP in the course of 1938, see Warren Kuo, op. cit., III, pp. 391-402. For one of the CCP's many attacks on the Trotskyists, see Ch'en Po-ta, "Ping Chen Du-xiu de wang-guo-lun" (A Critique of Ch'en Tu-hsiu's Theory of the National Disaster), JF, 60-61 (joint issue) (15 January 1939), pp. 23-29.

1937. In the spring of 1938, despite his military reversals, Chiang was elected General Director, or Leader, of the KMT. A few months later, the fall of Wuhan marked the end of the Japanese offensive (until it was revived briefly in 1944), and the war in China settled into a long period of stalemate. With both increased authority and opportunity, Chiang turned his attention once again to the problem of dealing with the Communists. At its Fifth Plenum in January 1939, the KMT's Central Executive Committee adopted certain "Measures for Restricting the Activities of Alien Parties," and followed them up with appropriate steps to ensure enforcement.⁶ It was a shrewd move on Chiang's part to infer that the CCP was an "alien" political party, for this would help to undermine whatever appeal Mao had generated among the public by his recent determination to Sinify Marxism-Leninism and thus make it more acceptable to the average Chinese. Besides weakening the Communists, Chiang wished to reinforce his own position as the nation's true saviour in the eyes of the public. The task was not easy, for by early 1939 Japan's seeming invincibility, Wang Ching-wei's sensational defection, and the ravages of uncontrolled inflation had produced a feeling of defeatism among the Chinese population. Accordingly, Chiang took a leaf from his pre-war New Life Movement, and in the spring of 1939 he launched a rather grandiose "National Spiritual Mobilization." According to Paul Linebarger, who witnessed it first hand, the campaign lacked a "broadly popular character," and never really got off the ground.⁷

⁶Lawrence K. Rosinger, China's Wartime Politics, 1937-1944, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1945, p. 38.

⁷Paul M.A. Linebarger, The China of Chiang Kai-shek (A Political Study), Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941, p. 157.

In spite of its shortcomings, however, the movement did heighten nationalistic feelings among at least some of the population, and as such it helped to shape the environment in which the CCP had to formulate its own policies at the time. With or without the Nationalists' encouragement, however, nationalism was on the ascent in China, and the Communists could not be seen to be lagging behind.

It was in this context that Ch'en Po-ta rose to prominence as one of the CCP's leading proponents of the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism. By the summer of 1938 Ch'en had become a well-known figure in the Maoist camp, owing to his position as theoretician, Party historian, and personal adviser to Mao himself. In the ensuing months Ch'en's star rose even higher, for he was elected in early 1939 to the standing committee of the presidium of the first elected Council of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region.⁸ In addition, he was entering upon one of the most prolific periods in his career as a writer. At the Party's Sixth Plenum Mao had called for the study of Marxism-Leninism in the context of China's own history, and not in abstraction. At the same time he had declared that there was no basic incompatibility between Marxism-Leninism and Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, at least in the short run. Accordingly, he had urged all Party members to study Sun's principles "from

⁸ Warren Kuo, op. cit., III, p. 581. Kuo's source is JF 68 (4 April 1939), a special issue on the first Council of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region. The Council, which met in Yen-an between 17 January and 4 February 1939, elected Ch'en to its presidium (ranked twentieth out of twenty-five), and to its standing committee (ranked third out of seven). Presumably, Ch'en's high rank on the presidium's standing committee reflected his position as a representative of the Maoists, and not his individual standing in the Yen-an hierarchy.

the perspective of Marxism," and to strive for their realization in practice.⁹ The task, then, was to effect a reconciliation between Chinese history and culture, the principles of Sun Yat-sen, and Marxist-Leninist theory. Such a reconciliation was sorely needed, for the CCP under Mao was being attacked from both Left and Right on the question of ideology. The Trotskyists (and the Returned Students as well) doubted that Mao's theoretical and practical leadership was sufficiently Marxist-Leninist, while the Nationalists alleged that the CCP was in fact an "alien party," and not truly Chinese. Under these conditions, Mao and his supporters had only one course of action; they had to demonstrate that the CCP under the leadership of Mao was genuinely Marxist-Leninist and Chinese. Ch'en Po-ta spearheaded this ideological offensive, for in early 1939 he published a series of writings in which he attempted to establish Marxism-Leninism firmly within the context of Chinese history and culture. His ideas and arguments are scattered throughout the numerous articles he wrote during these months, but we shall try to indicate sources as accurately as possible in the following discussion.

Ch'en locates the beginnings of dialectical materialism in China at the time of the fall of the Shang dynasty. Certain thinkers (e.g., the Duke of Chou) began to doubt the constancy of Heaven in ordering human affairs, and exhibited a growing confidence in the innate ability of men to look after their own interests. Ch'en con-

⁹Mao, Ji VI, p. 227.

cedes that this suspicion of Heaven's "inconstancy" (wu-chang) on the part of the early Chou rulers was prompted by their own interests in the preservation of the new dynasty, for it undermined the Shang claim to unceasing Heavenly grace and divine protection. Nonetheless, Chou's doubts represented a distinct advance beyond the "rigid superstition" of the Shang rulers concerning the omnipotence of Heaven. Although the Chou rulers still believed in the "Lord-on-High" (Shang-di) and in the "Mandate of Heaven" (Tian-ming), their new found suspicion (not disbelief) of Heaven and growing confidence in man represents the "earliest beginnings of the development of materialist and dialectical thought in ancient China."¹⁰ In a later article on the philosophy of Lao Tzu, Ch'en detects in the sage's thought an "insurmountable contradiction between idealism and materialism, and between dialectics and metaphysics." Still, Lao Tzu did demonstrate that (1) the rulers of any given society do not exist independently of the material universe (i.e., they are not divine); and (2) their rule is not permanent, but is in constant flux and subject to decline. Hence, concludes Ch'en, because Lao Tzu wrote of the earthly nature and the changing fortunes of the ruling classes, his thought exhibits an "initial materialism and a crude dialectics."¹¹

¹⁰Ch'en Po-ta, "Zhong-guo gu-dai zhe-xue de kai-duan" (The Beginnings of Philosophy in Ancient China), JF, 62 (28 January 1939), p. 27.

¹¹Ch'en Po-ta, "Lao Zi de zhe-xue si-xiang" (Lao Tzu's Philosophic Thought), JF, 63-64 (joint issue) (16 February 1939), p. 29.

It is Mo Tzu, however, whom Ch'en regards as China's "greatest and most enduring philosopher of ancient times", detecting in his thought elements of the "materialist view of history and the theory of the class struggle."¹² Mo Tzu, for example, was a representative of the lower strata of society in ancient China, and he denounced the oppression of the rich and the powerful and dreamed of a new, more equitable society in the future. Of all the ancient philosophers, it was Mo Tzu who best understood the two major problems in the history of Chinese philosophy, namely, the relationship between "appearance and reality" (ming-shi wen-ti) and the relationship between "knowledge and action" (zhi-xing wen-ti). [In modern philosophical terminology, says Ch'en, these two problems are referred to as ontology (ben-ti-lun) and cognition (ren-shi-lun).] Mo Tzu realized, however imperfectly, that reality exists independently of human cognition, and that practice is the sole criterion for evaluating cognition. Further, he did not view the seeming opposites -- knowledge and action -- as being fragmented, but regarded them instead as being locked in a single unity. Thus, concludes Ch'en, Mo Tzu grasped the fundamentals of materialism and the unity of opposites, and his thought should be regarded as the "original precursor of modern Chinese dialectical materialism."¹³

¹²Ch'en Po-ta, "Ji-nian Ma-ke-si yu Sun Zhong-shan" (In Commemoration of Marx and Sun Yat-sen), JF, 66 (8 March 1939), pp. 19-20.

¹³Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu zhi-xing wen-ti de yan-jiu" (Concerning the Study of Knowledge and Action), JF, 50 (28 August 1938), p. 10. For further details see Ch'en Po-ta, "Mo Zi de zhe-xue si-xiang" (Mo Tzu's Philosophic Thought), JF, 82 (30 August 1939), pp. 20-23; and "Mo Zi zhe-xue si-xiang" (Mo Tzu's Philosophic Thought), JF, 102 (31 March 1940).

Nowhere does Ch'en attempt to prove that full-blown dialectical materialism existed in ancient China, or even in traditional China up to the beginning of the twentieth century; his argument is only that certain "elements" of dialectical materialism can be found in China's past. For example, his description of T'an Ssu-t'ung's "crude" materialism and "incomplete" dialectics is rather similar to his estimation of Lao Tzu's "initial" materialism and "crude" dialectics. (Likewise, Ch'en detects in the thought of Sun Yat-sen certain "elements of materialism," and some "individual, spontaneous elements of dialectics.")¹⁴ Ch'en does not adequately account for the sluggish development of dialectical materialism in the more than two millenia that separate Lao Tzu and T'an Ssu-t'ung. He suggests only that the necessary social conditions for the effective development of dialectical materialism in China did not exist until the twentieth century. (Wang Yang-ming, for example, was an important dialectical thinker, but his philosophy was severely weakened by his espousal of idealism rather than materialism.)¹⁵ Even so, argues Ch'en, when dialectical materialism in China finally did develop to its present level as "scientific communist ideology," it

¹⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Lun gong-chan-zhu-yi-zhe dui-yu san-min-zhu-yi guan-xi de ji-ge wen-ti" (On Several Problems in the Relationship of Communists to the Three People's Principles), in Lo Fu, et al., San-min-zhu-yi yu gong-chan-zhu-yi (The Three Principles of the People and Communism), Hong Kong: Xian-shi chu-ban-she, 1947, p. 60. An English translation of this article is Ch'en Po-ta, "Several Problems in the Relationship of Communists to the Three People's Principles", in Wang Chia-hsiang, et al., Communists and the Three People's Principles, Chungking: New China Information Committee, Bulletin No. 16, 1940, pp. 23-54.

¹⁵Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu zhi-xing wen-ti de yan-jiu," pp. 10-11.

was not due only to the impact of the Russian revolution, which merely "influenced and accelerated" the development of Marxism in China.¹⁶

On the contrary, Ch'en emphasizes the internal, indigenous factors which provided the complex social environment conducive to the growth of Marxism-Leninism in China:

The emergence of Marxism as a self-conscious current [of thought] and a self-conscious force in China was based on the development of the foundation and strength of the Chinese working class, at a time when the working-class movement was developing from being a class-in-itself to becoming a class-for-itself. Generally speaking, this was after the May Fourth Movement. This was a time when, in accordance with the above [evolution] in the social [i.e., class] base, social consciousness emerged in China, and when the development of China's cultural traditions was best able to link up with the growth of Marxism. It was thus a time when the foundations existed for the acceptance of Marxism into the modern culture of China. Consequently, the emergence of Marxism in China cannot simply be regarded as [the introduction of] a 'foreign import.'¹⁷

By demonstrating that elements of dialectical materialism are to be found in China's traditional philosophy, and that the development of Marxism in modern China is primarily due to internal factors, Ch'en hoped to refute the arguments of the Right. Their allegation that Marxism was totally inapplicable to China because of China's "special national conditions" was, in Ch'en's eyes, quite insupportable. Yet this exposed him to attack from the Left, who claimed that -- precisely because China did not have any so-called "special

¹⁶Ch'en Po-ta, "Ji-nian Ma-ke-si yu Sun Zhong-shan," pp. 19-20.

¹⁷Ch'en Po-ta, San-min-zhu-yi gai-lun (An outline of the Three People's Principles), Chungking: Sheng-huo shu-dian, 1939, pp. 120-121.

national conditions" -- Marxism itself could not have any "peculiar-ity" when applied to China. This argument, claims Ch'en, is nothing more than the Left's "empty verbiage," for to say that Marxism in China should have no special characteristics is simply to render it a "dead, abstract dogma." It amounts to cutting Marxism in China off from real life instead of basing it on a concrete historical foundation. Hence, claims Ch'en, to be really effective Chinese Marxists must be able to grasp five intellectual keys in their own revolutionary struggles: (1) the revolutionary theories of the West and the rest of the world; (2) the methods by which the proletariat in the West and Russia have "creatively applied" the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin; (3) the best elements in traditional Chinese culture and thought; (4) the central features of Chinese revolutionary tradition of the past hundred years; and (5) the revolutionary essence of Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People. By synthesizing these five essential elements and uniting them with the actual practice of the Chinese revolution, concludes Ch'en, Chinese Marxist-Leninists will be able to "concretize" and thus "Sinify" Marxism-Leninism in China.¹⁸

By including Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People as merely one of the five major ingredients of fully Sinified Marxism, Ch'en anticipated his interpretation of Sun's ideology as a transitional phenomenon. In his An Outline of the Three People's Principles, Ch'en complains that none of the many books written on

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 119-122.

Sun's ideology has treated it on the basis of "scientific principles." This Ch'en proposes to do, arguing that a correct, scientific interpretation of Sun's system of thought is necessary to ensure the "development of the science of revolution in China." Basically, Ch'en maintains that Sun's ideology must be seen in its specific historical context, as something that emerged from China's own history and is today being rapidly transformed by actual revolutionary practice. It is not a permanent and immutable phenomenon, but merely a transitional element in the broad stream of history. Ch'en claims that the three individual principles of Sun Yat-sen were developed from three major strains in traditional Chinese thought. Sun's concept of "nationalism," for example, grew out of the racial thought that was common in China especially at the time of the Mongol and Manchu conquests, i.e., the concept of the "defence of China against the barbarians" (yi xia zhi fang). His idea of "democracy" evolved from certain of the ideas of the traditional Chinese philosophers such as Mencius, who believed that "the people are precious and the rulers inconsequential" (min gui jun qing). As for Sun's third principle, "people's livelihood it is based on the traditional Chinese concept of the "great harmony" (da-tong), especially as it was interpreted by the late Ch'ing reformers K'ang Yu-wei and T'an Ssu-t'ung.¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Having established that Sun's ideology grew directly out of China's traditional thought, Ch'en hastens to add that Sun's ideas have developed far beyond those of the past. The Three Principles of the People did not and could not have existed in traditional China, for they are "historical products of modern semi-colonial and semi-feudal China, and reflect the national and social contradictions in modern China." Sun's ideas did not spontaneously emerge, but were gradually developed by Sun in the course of his long years of revolutionary practice. Nor were the Three Principles of the People Sun's exclusive creation, for they evolved from the "unending bloody revolutionary struggles of the modern Chinese people, and the revolutionary practice of the radical vanguard of the modern revolution."²⁰ When he wrote his book in late 1938, Ch'en's purpose was to emphasize the domestic Chinese sources of both Sun's ideology and Marxism-Leninism as well, yet in this reference to the "radical vanguard of the modern revolution" he acknowledges, albeit indirectly, that Sun's system of thought was also influenced by radical currents of thought in the West, including Russia. Of course, Ch'en continues, Sun's ideology must progress beyond its origins; being a product of history, it must change with the passage of time. It must evolve along with the "development of the contradictions in our nation and society, and the development of revolutionary practice in China."²¹ Indeed, argues Ch'en, the Three Principles of the People were developing right up to the time of Sun's death in 1925. Were

²⁰Ibid., pp. 2-4.

²¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

they not greatly enriched, for example, by the addition of the CCP's "Three Great Policies" (alliance with the Soviet Union, co-operation with the Communists, and assistance to the workers and peasants) in the early 1920's?

In his discussion of Sun Yat-sen's ideology and Marxism-Leninism, Ch'en makes it perfectly clear that there is a fundamental difference between them. The former is the ideology of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China, while the latter most definitely represents the ideology of the more advanced international proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, at the present time in history the two different systems of thought have much in common, and can be regarded as "good friends" for some time to come. Yet in the long run the Chinese Communists will never abandon their belief in "scientific communism" (Marxism-Leninism), and will struggle to the end to establish a true communist society. At the appropriate stage in this revolution the Three Principles of the People will be by-passed by Marxism-Leninism, which even now is assimilating all other revolutionary ideologies, and is in turn being assimilated into the new cultural system evolving in China. We can now begin to appreciate just how complex a process the Sinification of Marxism is going to be, involving as it does the forging of a new ideological synthesis by the complicated interplay of at least five separate elements -- foreign non-Marxist theories, Marxist-Leninist theories and methods, traditional Chinese thought and culture, modern Chinese revolutionary tradition, and the revolutionary essence of Sun Yat-sen's thought. Ch'en does not demonstrate exactly how this new synthesis is to be worked out in detail,

but simply repeats his belief that it can be forged only in the crucible of actual revolutionary practice in China. Yet he does not doubt in the least that such a synthesis can be achieved:

Our nation is the oldest and largest in the history of world civilization, and possesses unlimited intelligence and ability. Regarding the acceptance of various foreign cultures and ideologies in the course of its history, it has always been especially able to embellish and develop them, thus rendering them particular creations [te-chan] of our nation. [To illustrate this,] there is no need to go beyond the introduction of Indian Buddhism into China. The result was an especially colorful [period of] creativity and development, in which Buddhism was made extremely glorious.... This is the most famous [example of this]. We can see that by relying on the intelligence and ability of this great nation of China, we will certainly be able to take Marxism-Leninism and, on the basis of China's new society, discover its [Marxism-Leninism's] especially glorious colours. [We can thus] lead China forward to a new history of civilization, creating happiness in both our own nation and the entire world.²²

One can question the amount of purely scientific reasoning in this line of argument, and no doubt there were many in the CCP who were not enthusiastic at seeing Buddhism and Marxism-Leninism compared in this way. Yet Ch'en Po-ta was carrying on the great Chinese tradition of syncretism, believing intensely that the sheer power of China's massive cultural heritage would ultimately transform Marxism-Leninism into something both scientific and Chinese. After all, even after Indian Buddhism had been transformed by China's indigenous culture, did it not in the end remain unquestionably Buddhist? The answer to this question -- and to the similar question of whether or not Sinified Marxism would really be Marxism at all -- is beyond the scope of this study. In any event, Ch'en believed that the fundamental, underlying

²²Ch'en Po-ta, "Ji-nian Ma-ke-si yu Sun Zhong-shan," p. 21.

essences (whether religious or scientific) of both Buddhism and Marxism were fully capable of surviving their cultural transformation, and we will leave it at that. Apparently many of his comrades in Yen-an agreed, for Ch'en's writings during this period were said to be popular with Party cadres both old and young.²³ Indeed, by mid-1939 Ch'en had done perhaps more than any other Party theoretician to give substance to Mao's call for the Sinification of Marxism. In the process he had established himself as one of the CCP's leading theoreticians, and the leading advocate of the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism within the ranks of the Party. During the cadre education movement of 1939-40, for example, an important essay of his ("Certain Clarifications Concerning Marxist Theory") was reprinted in large numbers by the Eighth Route Army, and widely distributed for study by officers and men alike.²⁴

(ii) The Campaign to Study Mao's Writings

We have dealt at length with Ch'en Po-ta's writings in the spring of 1939 because they played a major role in establishing the ideological climate which directly preceded the CCP's first important cadre education movement. In his report to the Party's Sixth Plenum in late 1938, Mao had called for a "Party-wide competition" in the study of Marxist-Leninist theory as part of a wider educational movement among the cadres. Accordingly, the Sixth Plenum adopted a political resolution which called for strenuous efforts to "raise the theoretical level of the entire Party," particular attention being paid to

²³Ch'ao Wen-tao, op. cit., p. 227.

²⁴FQYJ, II:2, p. 98.

the problem of "how to apply in a living way Marxism-Leninism and international experience in China in the course of practical struggle."²⁵ In the last weeks of 1938 the Party established a Bureau of Cadre Education which was to be responsible for carrying out the program in a "planned and organized way." We will not discuss the details of this education movement here, except to note that it lasted for exactly one year (May 1939-June 1940), and involved approximately 4000 cadres and students within a thirty-mile radius of Yen-an. Its main content was the study of Marxism-Leninism in a Chinese context, but this was supplemented by courses in various basic skills essential to effective political and government leadership.²⁶ Lo Mai (Li Weihan), one of the Returned Students, played a leading role in guiding the movement, and in an important speech of 1 June 1939 he declared that the Sixth Plenum had elevated the study of Marxism-Leninism to a "position of primary importance in party-building." Accordingly, Lo set the cadres the task of making a "general and systematic study" of Marxism-Leninism, political economy, dialectical and historical materialism, history of the CPSU, and the program of the Communist International. Chinese history was also to be studied from the standpoint of Marxist methodology, said Lo, at the same time lamenting the lack of a good "comprehensive textbook" on Chinese history, and calling for greater research efforts in this regard. The "laws of party-building" were next on Lo's list of subjects, and he

²⁵JF, 57 (25 November 1938), p. 41.

²⁶For further details on the cadre education movement, see Mark Selden, The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 191-192.

recommended the cadres to read the draft copy of Communism and the Communist Party, a text recently approved by the Central Committee. Finally, reminding his audience that Communists were not mere academicians, Lo exhorted them to pay careful attention to current national and international events. All this study was necessary, concluded Lo, to respond to the call of the Sixth Plenum and to prepare the way for the convocation of the CCP Seventh Congress.²⁷

Where did Mao Tse-tung's writings fit into this elaborate program of study? Although Ch'en Po-ta and others had quoted Mao on several occasions in their recent writings, nowhere did they hold up Mao as a model to be studied and emulated. Yet Lo Mai, while not recommending the study of Mao's writings as such, did urge his audience to "learn from the spirit of hard study without tire of the Party's important leaders such as Comrade Mao Tse-tung and others."²⁸ Although Lo did add the "and others," there is little doubt that Mao was being singled out as the outstanding model for emulation within the ranks of the CCP. Thus, a campaign for the emulation of Mao and his writings appears to have developed side by side with the cadre education movement. Fortunately, we can pinpoint the inauguration

²⁷Lo Mai (Li Wei-han), "Wo-men yao xue-xi shen-ma? Zen-yang xue-xi?" (What Should We Study? How Should We Study?), JF, 79 (5 August 1939), p. 7. The text is dated 1 June 1939. The text referred to by Lo is Gong-chan-zhu-yi yu gong-chan-dang (cao-gao) [Communism and the Communist Party (Draft)], first published in Yen-an on 18 May 1939 by the "Communism and the Communist Party" Editorial Committee. A reprint was issued in April 1941 by the "Party Life" Editorial Committee, the initial two chapters of which can be found in You-guan Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang cai-liao (Materials on the Chinese Communist Party), Tokyo: Yushodo Bookstore Microfilms, 1970, Reel 12.

²⁸Lo Mai, "Wo-men yao xue-xi shen-ma?," p. 10.

of this campaign in a special editorial which appeared in the 1 May 1939 edition of Liberation. This editorial purported to review the work of Liberation since its first issue just over two years previously. After summarizing the journal's strengths and weaknesses, the editors declared that:

There is no doubt that the documents published in this journal by the CCP Central Committee, and the articles likewise published by various responsible comrades in the Central Committee constitute the soul of all this journal's proposals and opinions. [Those which] may be specially mentioned are "On Protracted War" and "On the New Stage," two works by Comrade Mao Tse-tung which were published successively in this journal. They sum up the experience of the War of Resistance, indicate the future [development] of the War of Resistance, and are of historic significance.²⁹

This carefully worded statement was clearly intended to establish Mao's pre-eminence within the leadership of the CCP, especially in the field of theory. It was supplemented by a large handwritten slogan in praise of Liberation which accompanied the editorial. Signed simply "Wang Ming," this slogan was obviously designed to indicate publicly that Wang had agreed (however unenthusiastically) to indentify his name with the editorial and -- in consequence -- with the ideological supremacy of Mao Tse-tung.³⁰ References to Mao's writings became increasingly common in the months following the appearance of the May first editorial. In an article of 30 May 1939, for example, the theoretician Yang Sung quoted Mao on several occasions regarding various national and international questions, thus

²⁹Bian-zhe (Editors), "Jie-fang er zhou-nian ji-nian" (In Commemoration of the Second Anniversary of Liberation), JF, 70 (1 May 1939), p. 7.

³⁰Ibid., p. 8.

helping Mao to shed his somewhat parochial image.³¹ Similarly, in an essay of 30 August 1939, the well-known Marxist theorist Ai Ssu-ch'i encouraged his readers to study such "famous works" of the Chinese Communist Party as "On Protracted War," "On the New Stage," and "On Guerrilla Warfare."³² And on 15 November 1939, in a speech to a local Party conference, Kao Kang praised Mao's theories concerning the three stages (defence, stalemate, offense) in the war against Japan, although he bracketed Mao's name with the Central Committee.³³

In the course of the cadre education movement Mao appears to have established effective control over the CCP mass media, which was expanding rapidly at the time. For example, he wrote prefaces or leading articles for the inaugural issues of a host of new journals that the CCP now began to publish, including the Military and Political Journal of the Eighth Route Army, The Communist (a new theoretical journal), Chinese Culture, The Chinese Worker, and others.³⁴ Mao quickly became the most sought after writer in the entire CCP, and he was lionized by the Communist press. Gone were the days when his contributions to the Party's leading journals were rejected and scorned (by Ch'en Tu-hsiu in the late 1920's, and the Returned Students in the early 1930's). He was now hailed as the foremost of

³¹Yang Sung, "Lun zui-jin Ou-zhou de ju-shi yu wo guo min-zu kang-zhan" (On the Most Recent Situation in Europe and Our Country's National War of Resistance), JF, 72 (30 May 1939), p. 12.

³²Ai Ssu-ch'i, "Zen-yang yan-jiu bian-zheng-fa wei-wu-lun" (How to Study Dialectical Materialism), JF, 82 (30 August 1939), p. 17.

³³Cited in Jerome Ch'en, Mao, p. 20. Ch'en's source is JF, 95 (30 December 1939), p. 20.

³⁴The various texts are in Mao, Ji VI, pp. 307-310; Ji VII, pp. 69-83; Ji VII, pp. 147-206; SW II, pp. 403-404; Ji VI, pp. 343-348; and Ji VII, pp. 57-68.

the Party's theoretical writers as well as its greatest practical leader. By the summer of 1939 there were no clear indications of a highly developed cult centering on Mao or his thought, but all the signs were pointing in that direction. Yet there were hints that Mao's growing pre-eminence was not whole-heartedly endorsed by all Party leaders, including some of those who might be considered pro-Maoist, or at least neutral. In an important writing of 30 May 1939, for example, Ch'en Yun urged Party members to study both Marxism-Leninism and Chinese history, but nowhere did he even so much as refer to Mao or his writings.³⁵ Likewise, in his review of the "history of Marxism-Leninism" on the occasion of the CCP's eighteenth anniversary in July 1939, Chang Wen-t'ien referred to Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin (and Sun Yat-sen, too), but failed to mention Mao and his writings.³⁶

However, it was Liu Shao-ch'i, who was in due course to become a staunch supporter of Mao, who appears to have openly voiced his misgivings at Mao's growing power in 1939. In a lecture given at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Yen-an on 7 August 1939, Liu reflected the current line in declaring that the CCP had inherited all the

³⁵Ch'en Yun, "How to be a Communist Party Member," (30 May 1939), as translated in Compton, op. cit., p. 106.

³⁶Lo Fu, "Zai min-zu zi-wei-zhan zui qian-xian de gang-wei shang" (On the Most Advanced Position in the National War of Self-Defence); Lo Fu, "Lun gong-chan-dang de jie-ji li-chang yu min-zu li-chang de yi-zhi" (On the Unity of the Class Stand of the Communist Party and the National Stand), both in JF, 75 (7 July 1939), pp. 26-29, 30-36.

"fine traditions of the many progressive thinkers and prominent men" in China's long history, but nowhere does he refer to the current attempts to Sinify Marxism.³⁷ More surprising is his total avoidance of any mention of Mao or his writings. Yet he referred to a wide range of Chinese traditional thinkers and Soviet theoreticians such as M. Mitin. He urged his audience to become "best pupils of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin," but avoided listing Mao Tse-tung as someone to be emulated in like fashion.³⁸ Finally, in what was most certainly a direct reference to the dangers of the increasing veneration of Mao at the time, Liu declared that Party members must adopt a proper attitude toward the various good and bad phenomena in the Party:

We must first of all recognize and distinguish which of the various phenomena, ideologies, diverse opinions and views in the Party are correct...and which are incorrect. ...If both sides of an argument are wrong, a third opinion or viewpoint should be correct. After sober analysis and consideration, we should decide on a clear and correct attitude of our own, and take our stand on the correct side. We should not follow blindly, nor worship any idols.³⁹

Two points should be made here: First, in suggesting that there might be a third -- and better -- way in a two-sided quarrel, Liu was probably pleading for a compromise between the ascendant Maoists and the Returned Students. The signs of the times, on the contrary, were all pointing in the direction of a complete Maoist victory over their

³⁷Liu Shao-ch'i, Lun gong-chan-dang yuan de xiu-yang, (On the Self-Cultivation of Communist Party Members), Hong Kong: Xin min-zhu chu-ban she, 1949, p. 76. This is a reprint of the original text as published in 1939.

³⁸Ibid., p. 12.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 86-87.

erstwhile opponents. Second, in anticipation of this total victory -- and in fear of its possible consequences -- Liu went so far as to warn his audience to be wary of the "idol worship" which had recently appeared in the form of growing praise of Mao and his writings.⁴⁰

That Liu's implied criticism of Mao was perhaps too pointed is strongly suggested by the fact that in 1962, when Liu revised the text of this lecture, Mao was cited no less than eight times, and the reference to idol worship was replaced by a caution not to "drift with the tide."⁴¹ By that time, of course, Liu had emerged as one of Mao's most ardent eulogizers, and his earlier writings had to be altered to reflect his later enthusiasm for Mao. In light of Liu's growing importance in the Party from 1939 on, and his remarkable volte-face on the question of Mao's supremacy in the CCP, we shall have occasion to return to Liu at regular intervals in the years up to 1945. To a certain extent, Liu's changing attitude toward the growing cult surrounding Mao probably reflects the position of many of the Party's other top leaders as well.

In discussing the coolness with which top Party leaders like Liu Shao-ch'i greeted the increasing glorification of Mao and his writings, it is not intended to suggest that they were totally

⁴⁰Of course, few of the top leaders in the Party personally idolized Mao at this time. In an interview with Edgar Snow on 9 October 1939, for example, Po Ku revealed his dissatisfaction with Mao's excessively hostile attitude toward Britain and the United States. See Edgar Snow, Random Notes on Red China, 1936-1945, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1957, pp. 24-25. Nonetheless, as the cult of Mao developed in the early 1940's, even people like Po were ultimately forced to participate in it.

⁴¹Liu Shao-ch'i, Collected Works, I, pp. 207-208.

opposed to Mao's leadership as such. Nonetheless, apart from the disagreement in principle that many of them might have harboured toward a Maoist cult, they probably also felt that in any case Mao's theoretical accomplishments were less than outstanding. Constant reference was now being made in the Party press to the importance of two of Mao's writings of 1938, "On Protracted War" and "On the New Stage." These were certainly important contributions to the Party's development, but hardly sufficient in themselves to sustain a claim to theoretical pre-eminence for their author. No mention was made of any of Mao's many writings prior to 1938, and even his philosophical efforts of 1937 were ignored even by such supporters of Mao as Ch'en Po-ta himself. Clearly, if the current campaign to study Mao's writings was going to succeed, it would be very helpful if Mao were to strengthen his own position as a Marxist-Leninist theoretician. Also, as John E. Rue has pointed out, Mao was increasingly desirous of counteracting the influence of Stalin's new history of the CPSU, which had been published in 1938 and assigned as required reading in the cadre education movement in Yen-an.⁴² If Mao was to wean the CCP away from over-reliance on "foreign models" (however Bolshevik), it would make sense to provide the Party with a few basic texts of its own. Likewise, it would be desirable to discredit even further the Returned Student leadership and the policies they had pursued in the past.

⁴² John E. Rue, Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927-1935, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 282.

Mao tackled the latter problem by turning to the question of Party history, a subject which Chang Wen-t'ien had studiously ignored in his two essays on the CCP's eighteenth anniversary. As Mao noted in his important preface (4 October 1939) to The Communist, the Party's new theoretical journal, it was only by delving into the CCP's history that the correct means could be found to build up a Bolshevized party. In his review of these eighteen years, Mao declared that it was only after the Tsunyi Conference in January 1935 that the CCP "definitely took the Bolshevik road and laid the foundations for the establishment of the national united front against Japan."⁴³ But it had long been the Returned Students' thesis that it was their own Fourth Plenum in January 1931 that had marked the CCP's maturation as a truly Bolshevik party (hence another of their inner-party nicknames, the "Twenty-eight Bolsheviks"). They were now being asked by Mao to accept a new interpretation of Party history that still accorded the Fourth Plenum a positive role in the Party's development, but considerably reduced its overall importance. Even worse, the new interpretation prepared the way for the total discrediting of the Fourth Plenum (and hence of the Returned Students themselves) in the course of time. Indeed, Mao's preface to The Communist is a landmark in the Maoist reconstruction of Party history, and it helped set the tone for Ch'en Po-ta's later writings on the CCP which glorified Mao and completely disparaged the Returned Students.

⁴³Mao, Ji VII, p. 80.

Shortly thereafter, Mao turned to the problem recently raised by Lo Mai, namely, the lack of a comprehensive textbook on Chinese history written from the Marxist standpoint. On 15 December 1939 Mao published a treatise which met this very need, entitled "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party." Official sources have revealed that the text was written jointly by Mao and "several other comrades" in Yen-an in the winter of 1939. Chapter I (a survey of Chinese history) was drafted by the "other comrades" but revised by Mao, while Chapter II (the modern Chinese revolution) was written by Mao himself. Chapter III (party-building) was for some unexplained reason "left unfinished by the comrades working on it."⁴⁴ In this important text Mao introduced the term "new democracy," which he further developed in his major essay by that name of 19 January 1940. In light of this, we will postpone our discussion of this concept until we deal with the later and more famous (although not necessarily more important) work, but there are two questions arising from the earlier text which we would like to raise now. One, who were the "other comrades" who wrote Chapter I on Chinese history? Two, why was Chapter III on party-building left unfinished? In view of Ch'en Po-ta's close relationship to Mao, his numerous posts in the Party's research establishment, and his recent writings on Chinese history and culture, it seems reasonable to conclude that Ch'en participated in drafting Chapter I, probably along with certain other intellectuals in the Maoist camp. This is further suggested by the rather more positive attitude toward traditional history in the original

⁴⁴Mao, XJ II, p. 584.

text of 1939 than in the later revised version published in Mao's Selected Works in the 1950's.⁴⁵

The case of the missing chapter on party-building is also an interesting problem, and probably involves Ch'en as well. In the original version of the text, Mao concludes Chapter II by saying that "Below, we will discuss step by step the question of building up the Chinese Communist Party."⁴⁶ It would seem then, that when Chapter II was printed it was intended that Chapter III would be included, but that it was withdrawn only at the very last minute. In light of the importance of the chapter on party-building, one would have thought that the publication of the entire text would have been delayed to allow for the late completion of the chapter, if it were merely a question of time. Hence, the conclusion must be that the chapter was deleted for a more important reason than at first seems apparent. Some light is shed on this when we realize that the special Party committee responsible for the study and preparation of materials on the history of the CCP was headed by Chang Wen-t'ien, and included Ch'en Po-ta as one of its important members. In spite of his key position on the committee, Chang had dodged the issue of Party history in his recent articles on the CCP's eighteenth anniversary. This forced Mao personally to tackle the question in his preface to The Communist, where he launched a direct attack on

⁴⁵ Compare, for example, the passage on China's revolutionary progenitors in Mao, Ji VII, p. 99 and Mao, XJ II, p. 586. As Stuart Schram has suggested in a private communication, however, this diminution of the importance of Chinese history might have been inspired more by Soviet pressure than by Mao himself during the general revision of Mao's writings before publication.

⁴⁶ Mao, Ji VII, p. 135.

the Returned Students' line (heretofore the Party's official line) on Party history. As the proposed chapter on party-building would have entailed a review of Party history, the committee was probably paralyzed by the conflict between its pro- and anti-Maoist members. Certainly, as chairman of the committee, Chang Wen-t'ien was well placed to frustrate the Maoist faction (including Ch'en Po-ta), and he appears to have succeeded in having the controversial chapter shelved.⁴⁷ For their part, the Maoists seem to have given in on the issue at this time, and to have acquiesced, however unwillingly, in the publication of Mao's textbook in its truncated version. Nonetheless, the issue no doubt aggravated the already bad relations between the two factions, and by late 1939 the struggle for control of the Party's history began to emerge as one of the key areas of conflict between the Maoists and those Returned Students still willing to fight. It was a struggle in which Ch'en Po-ta was to play a particularly prominent role on behalf of the Maoists.

(iii) Mao's Theory of "New Democracy"

In addition to the internal Party pressures compelling Mao to strengthen his position as the CCP's leading theorist, there were certain external needs that required his strengthening of the position of the Party on the national scene. By the end of 1939 the Nationalists had virtually blockaded the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region, and repeated Japanese victories in China had induced a mood

⁴⁷For a brief discussion of this committee on Party history, see Warren Kuo, op. cit., III, p. 235.

of despair throughout the nation. These developments necessitated a positive response from the Party leadership, demonstrating to the nation that the CCP was a genuinely national Party capable of leading the Chinese people to victory. Mao met the need by publishing, on 15 February 1940, "On New Democracy," a lengthy treatise in which he attempted his first systematic exposition of the nature of the Chinese revolution. It was regarded by all sides as a major writing when it was published (in the new CCP journal, Chinese Culture), and it has remained one of the key texts in Mao's body of writings. However, our interest here is limited to Mao's concept of the term, "new democracy," and its theoretical implications. As "On New Democracy" was written for the general public, it is sometimes less useful for understanding Mao's ideas than is his important textbook of the previous December, which was written for internal Party purposes. Consequently, we will refer to both writings in our discussion of new democracy, a concept used in the earlier text but (according to Mao's editors) "considerably developed" in the later work.⁴⁸

Due to China's particular national conditions, argues Mao, the bourgeois-democratic revolution that China is going through at the present time is not the old type, but is a "new, special type":

We call this type of revolution a new-democratic revolution ...an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution of the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat. That is, it is a revolution carried out under a united front of the various revolutionary classes.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Mao, XJ II, p. 584.

⁴⁹Mao, Ji VII, p. 129.

Mao does not say in so many words that he is offering a new theory for the guidance of revolutionaries both within China and the wider world, but this is certainly the implication of his argument. He makes it clear that his new-democratic revolution is not a mere tactic, something to be dispensed with if the proletarian forces were to become powerful enough to carry out the revolution on their own. On the contrary, "China must go through this revolution, for only thus can it progressively develop toward the socialist revolution; there is no other way."⁵⁰ New democracy, then, is to occupy a central place in Mao's (and hence the CCP's) theory of the Chinese revolution, and it is to be the distinctive characteristic of the proletarian revolution in China. It is a new type of revolution to produce a new type of society -- "no longer democracy in general, but democracy of the Chinese type [Zhong-guo-shi de], a new and special type, namely, new democracy [xin min-zhu-zhu-yi]."⁵¹ Mao's new-democratic revolution is proletarian in content but Chinese in form; that is, it is a "Chinese type" of proletarian revolution. The theory of the new-democratic revolution is thus the product of the correct application of Marxist-Leninist theory to the practice of the revolution in China. It represents the proper integration of the "universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution", a fusion which Mao and Ch'en Po-ta had been seeking for many years. Although Mao does not use the actual term, it is obvious that his theory of the new-democratic revolution is a

⁵⁰Loc. cit.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 151.

direct product of the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism. The new theory is at one and the same time Marxist in content and Chinese in form. This is further suggested by the nature of the distinctive new culture to which the new-democratic revolution will give rise. Mao declares that, in his opinion, new democratic culture is "scientific" and "national," or in other words, Marxist and Chinese.⁵²

This of course poses the question of whether the new theory -- precisely because of its essential Chineseness -- is applicable outside of China. In other words, is it a culture-bound theory that is irrelevant to the entire non-Chinese world? Not according to Mao, who suggests in his Party text that the new-democratic revolution is in the course of developing not only in China, but "in all other colonial and semi-colonial countries as well as China."⁵³ As Mao does not see the new-democratic revolution developing in Europe, North America and other non-colonial countries, the implications of his line of reasoning are obvious. He is suggesting that the Russian revolution of 1917, hitherto the sole example of an internationally valid Marxist-Leninist revolution, is to be supplemented (not replaced) by a new revolutionary model. That is, the Russian proletarian revolution is to remain the prime example of a Marxist revolution in the non-colonial (developed) world. On the other hand, a new revolutionary model -- China's new-democratic revolution -- is henceforth to be regarded as the major example of a Marxist revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial (under-developed) world.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 201-202.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 129.

Mao's new theory was likely to raise a few eyebrows in Moscow, whose ideological authority would be considerably weakened if the CCP's claim were to be sustained. By 1940, however, the Russians were much too preoccupied with the rapidly developing war in Europe to pay much attention for the time being to what the CCP was saying, as opposed to what it was doing. As long as the Chinese Party was supporting the united front against Japan, its precise ideological status could be left for closer consideration until after the war was over.

Mao's concept of the new-democratic revolution provided the corner-stone to the CCP claim that Mao Tse-tung was a creative theorist in his own right, and not merely a simple imitator of Marxism-Leninism. In fact, Mao had originated neither the actual term "new democracy," nor the general idea behind it, for both had been common coinage for some time. In late 1937, for example, Wang Ming referred to China's future as a "new style democratic republic," and in 1938 Po Ku predicted that China would surely become a "new, democratic state....the Republic of China of the Three People's Principles."⁵⁴ Nonetheless, it was Mao who took this previously ill-defined concept and fleshed it out into a comprehensive, systematic theory of the Chinese revolution and its international significance. Even so, Mao was not alone in this endeavor. According to O. Brière, the Jesuit priest then living in China and paying careful attention to the philosophical aspects of the Chinese Communist movement, it was Ch'en

⁵⁴Wang Ming is cited in Benton, op. cit., pp. 83-84; on Po Ku, see his essay, "On the Development, the Difficulties, and the Future of the National Anti-Japanese United Front," in Ch'en Shao-yu, Old Intrigues in New Clothing, pp. 30-31.

Po-ta who "developed the philosophical aspect" of Mao's concept of new democracy. D.W.Y. Kwok also states that Ch'en "is reputed to have provided a good part of the philosophy" of new democracy, and a Japanese source claims that Ch'en took an active part in the "New Democratic Culture Movement" in 1940.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, these authors give no sources for their claims, nor do they elaborate on exactly what they mean. One suspects that Kwok and the Japanese are simply referring to Brière (who made his observation in 1949), although they do not name him.

Yet it appears that Ch'en did exert a significant degree of influence on the formulation of the philosophical and cultural aspects of new democracy. From the philosophical, or ideological, point of view, the major distinguishing feature of the new-democratic revolution is that it is a "democratic" revolution under the leadership of the ideology of the proletariat, viz, Marxism-Leninism. This sharply distinguishes it from the "old" type of democratic revolution, which was guided by the ideology of the bourgeoisie. We will recall that Ch'en Po-ta's New Enlightenment Movement of 1936-37 was "new" precisely because it was guided by Marxist dialectics, the "new philosophy" of the Chinese proletariat. It is thus apparent that the general philosophical/ideological rationale behind Mao's new democracy is directly derived from Ch'en's earlier movement. "New democracy" and "new enlightenment" are both "new," and hence different from and superior to "old" democracy and "old" enlightenment, because

⁵⁵For these references, see O. Brière, Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy, 1898-1950, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956, p. 81; Kwok, *op. cit.*, p. 192, n. 48; and Gendai Chūgoku jimmei jiten, p. 488.

they are social movements under the leadership of the "new philosophy" of the proletariat, Marxism-Leninism. Mao paid close attention to the Marxist philosophical debates in Shanghai and Peking in the late 1930's, and there can be little doubt that he was influenced by them. This was even more true after 1937, when many of the leading participants in these debates (including Ch'en Po-ta himself) came to play important roles in shaping the CCP's ideology in Yen-an. On the question of culture, let us recall Ch'en's earlier proposal for the Sinification of China's modern culture, broadly defined. In the process of modernization, argued Ch'en, China's modern culture was in danger of losing its distinctive Chinese character. The task, then, was to establish the proper balance between the genuine requirements of modernization (which entailed the risk of Westernization) and the need to preserve a genuine Chinese character (which risked encouraging narrow nationalism) in China's new cultural forms. The concept of Sinification outlined by Ch'en referred to the process by which this balance could be found, the result being the gradual emergence of a new Chinese culture which was both modern and Chinese. Mao had later applied Ch'en's concept of Sinification to the narrower field of ideology, but he had avoided any extended comments on the cultural sphere in general. By 1940, however, Mao was clearly more confident in cultural matters, and he dealt with them at length. In calling for a "new-democratic culture" that was equally a "national, scientific and mass culture," Mao was in fact repeating Ch'en's proposals of 1938 for the Sinification of China's culture. The essential logic behind Ch'en's proposal, as Mao's new slogan

takes into full account, was that it was only a truly Sinified culture that stood any chance of appealing to the broad masses of the Chinese people in the modern twentieth century.

By 1940 Mao's standing within the Chinese Communist Party was clearly at a new height. This was due to the gradual campaign to glorify him -- and the burst of new theoretical efforts on Mao's part accompanying it -- which developed in the course of the cadre education movement. Mao's growing stature did not pass unnoticed by the editors of Liberation, who undertook a new review of the journal's successes and failures on the occasion of its hundredth issue, 29 February 1940. Since Liberation was the official journal of the CCP Central Committee, said the editors, many "leading comrades" in the Party had directly participated in its work. For example, over the years the journal had published "many great works" of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, including "On Protracted War" and "On the New Stage," and now, most recently, "On New Democracy." The editorial represented a further escalation of Mao's personal prestige, for it described him as being no less than the "leader of the people who is esteemed by the masses both at home and abroad."⁵⁶ The editorial thus went much further than its predecessor of 1 May 1939 in elevating Mao personally head and shoulders above all of the other top leaders in the Party. In deference to these leaders, however, the editors took pains to refer collectively to the "valuable writings" of (1) eight

⁵⁶Editorial, "Zhan zai Zhong-hua min-zu jie-fang shi-ye de qian-jin gang-wei shang" (Standing in the Advanced Position in the Cause of China's National Liberation), JF, 100 (29 February 1940), p. 3.

Party leaders of the first importance (Chu Teh, Wang Ming, Lo Fu, Chou En-lai, K'ang Sheng, Ch'en Yun, Wang Chia-hsiang and Liu Shao-ch'i, in that order); and (2) eighteen additional Party and/or army leaders who were presumably of lesser importance than the first eight named. This careful listing of these twenty-six top Party and army leaders was clearly designed to satisfy both the real (e.g., Chu Teh) and the symbolic (e.g., Wang Ming) leading personalities in the CCP. They may well have supported (or at least accepted) the new campaign to elevate Mao above themselves, but they were obviously determined not to let their own achievements pass unnoticed in the process.⁵⁷

Mao's prestige was growing outside the confines of the CCP as well. Paul Linebarger, an American scholar who was in China at the time, and who was by no means sympathetic to the Communists, wrote that Mao Tse-tung is an "expert dialectician, skilled in rationalizing the policies of the Communist International, and keenly critical within the limits of his Marxian orthodoxy."⁵⁸ This description of Mao is very interesting, for it accurately reflects the exact image that Mao was trying to promote of himself. That is, even so critical an observer as Linebarger concluded that Mao was a competent Marxist-Leninist theorist who maintained a firm spirit of independence from Moscow. Mao could not have described himself better,

⁵⁷Note the similarity in the title of this editorial and the first of Lo Fu's articles on the eighteenth anniversary of the CCP. (See p. 159, n.36 above.) Was Lo finally persuaded to praise Mao openly in this special editorial, or was it written by someone else in response to Lo's neglect of Mao in his earlier essay? Perhaps there was a compromise; Lo agreed to praise Mao provided the other important Party and army leaders were given due regard at the same time.

⁵⁸Linebarger, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

and Linebarger's comments reflect the remarkable degree of success enjoyed by the effective propaganda machine that the ascendant Maoists had built up in Yenan. Even the Nationalists, who had no love for Communists of any hue, were increasingly forced to acknowledge that Mao Tse-tung stood apart from the normal run of CCP leaders. Writing in the autumn of 1939, for example, Yeh Ch'ing scathingly reviewed Mao's recent comments on the outbreak of World War II in Europe, concluding that his erroneous views arose from the fact that:

Mr. Mao has not yet thoroughly imbibed the idea of 'Sinifying' things. I express my sympathy for him in his policy of 'Sinification'....What I mean by sympathy is that I like the way he appreciates the Chinese national culture, and wants to be a one hundred per cent Chinese. In this respect he is more worthy of Ch'en Shao-yu, and hence deserving of greater achievement.⁵⁹

Although Ch'en's article is filled with venom from beginning to end, it is interesting that he clearly distinguishes between Mao and Wang Ming on the basis of their attitude toward Sinification. Wang had long been intimately associated with Moscow and the Comintern, and had regarded himself as the leading spokesman of the true Bolsheviks in the Chinese Communist movement. This may have gone down well in the CCP (prior to Mao's ascendancy), but it was scarcely calculated to impress the Nationalists or other non-communist groups in China.

⁵⁹Ch'en Kuo-hsin (Yeh Ch'ing), "A Discussion of Mao Tse-tung's Comments on the Present State of International Relations," as translated in Linebarger, op. cit., pp. 403-417. The quotation is from pp. 416-417. Stuart Schram, in a private communication to the author, has suggested that "Ch'en Kuo-hsin" is probably a mistransliteration (or a variant) of Jen Cho-hsüan, the real name of Yeh Ch'ing. We have substituted "Sinification" for Linebarger's "Chinafication," which is obviously a literal translation of "Zhong-guo-hua." For a fuller discussion of Yeh's critique of Mao and his theory of Sinification, see Chapter VI of this study, especially pp. 185-195.

Mao's connections with Moscow were never so close, and his posture of independence from the Comintern was considerably enhanced by his recent policy of Sinification of Marxism-Leninism. Apparently, if Yeh's views are representative of the Nationalists, Mao was a more acceptable leader of the CCP than Wang Ming or any of his Returned Student followers. Even if Mao's policy of Sinification did not actually appeal to people like Yeh, it did provide them with another opportunity to drive a wedge between the two major factions of the CCP. Without in any way discounting this possibility, there is little doubt that Mao's growing appreciativeness of Chinese history and traditional culture did strike a responsive chord even among those Chinese who had little love for the Communists. If nothing else, Mao's new policy of Sinification represented a step in the right direction; today Marxism might merely be Sinified, but tomorrow it could be completely assimilated in the traditional Chinese fashion, and thereby deprived of its Western, revolutionary pretensions.

Nineteen thirty-nine was an important year in Mao's gradual rise as the top leader -- and the leading theoretician -- in the Chinese Communist Party. Thus Stuart Schram is correct in concluding that by the winter of 1939-40, "Mao was at last in complete control of the policy and ideology of the Chinese Communist Party....Wang Ming was relegated to subordinate functions and ceased to play any real role by the end of 1939."⁶⁰ Yet this statement has to be qualified, for Mao was to encounter a series of challenges to his authority during much of 1940 and part of 1941. It was in the summer of

⁶⁰Schram, Mao, p. 216.

1940, for example, that Wang Ming and his supporters organized their last clear act of defiance of the Maoists, before completely losing their influence in the Party. These challenges to Mao's ascendancy were by no means of the same magnitude as those of Chang Kuo-t'ao, or Wang Ming in his prime, but they were apparently serious enough to convince Mao that greater efforts were required to place the Party squarely under his leadership, and to root out once and for all the remaining pockets of opposition that lingered on in the Party organization. This determination led to his call for a "rectification movement" that was to dominate the life of the Party during most of 1942, and to establish Mao Tse-tung finally as the undisputed leader of both the theory and practice of the CCP.

CHAPTER VI

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE, 1940-41

(i) The Challenge to Mao's Authority

Mao Tse-tung's power and prestige reached a new height in the winter of 1939-40, but this coincided with an important development in the war against Japan. After the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, the Japanese did not undertake any further major offensives in China, and a period of relative stalemate set in. This gave the Nationalists an opportunity to turn their attention to the Communists, and during 1939 severe strains began to appear in the united front. Apparently, the KMT's increasing harassment of the Communists caused certain groups in the CCP to call for a tougher line against the Nationalists. "Such an extreme leftist tendency," runs one official account, "emerged as the principal danger within the Party, which hindered the Party in its effort to further enlarge and consolidate the united front against Japan."¹ This leftism was contrary to the Party's policy, and Mao had to take steps to nip the "tendency" in the bud before it became too powerful. In light of this, the Hundred Regiments Offensive in the summer and autumn of 1940 was as much designed to convince certain groups in the Communist camp as others in the Nationalist side that the war of attrition

¹Wang Shih, et al., Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang li-shi jian-bian (A Brief History of the Chinese Communist Party), Shanghai: Ren-min chu-ban she, 1958. Translated in Joint Publications Research Service, 8756 (16 August 1961), p. 214.

against Japan was still the number one priority for all concerned. However, Chu Teh and P'eng Teh-huai apparently overruled Mao regarding the exact tactics and timing of the offensive. This alleged dispute between Mao and his top military commanders remains obscure, but it does seem in keeping with the general loosening of discipline in both the Party and the army occasioned by the leftist currents which had emerged in the spring of 1940.²

Yet one man's difficulty is often another's opportunity. In July 1940, when Mao was facing the leftist upsurge discussed above, Wang Ming reissued the pamphlet he had originally written in 1931, The Two Lines. At this late stage Wang probably had no hope of actually regaining his former powerful role in the Party. Nonetheless, he capitalized on the leftist climate within the CCP in an attempt to have the general line of the Returned Students (which the Maoists were now claiming was "left opportunist") accepted as correct within the context of its times. Wang was perhaps prepared to accept the validity of Mao's general line since the Tsunyi Conference, but not at the cost of having his own line in the early 1930's completely repudiated in the Party's history. In Wang's opinion, there was nothing inconsistent in viewing the Returned Students' line as correct for its times, at the same time regarding Mao's present line as correct in light of changing circumstances

²The Maoists have singled out P'eng Teh-huai as the leading culprit in this regard. See the Red Guard materials collected in Current Background, 851 (26 August 1968), pp. 6, 28; and also in The Case of Peng Teh-huai, 1959-1968, Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968, pp. 191-193, 212. According to these documents, P'eng admitted to his errors in the Hundred Regiments Offensive in the course of a "self-examination" at the Lushan Plenum in 1959.

between the early 1930's and early 1940's. How else are we to interpret Wang's plea, in the new preface (March 1940) to his pamphlet, to the effect that:

Every true dialectical and historical materialist cannot deal with a problem apart from the conditions of a certain time and place. He cannot regard what was correct yesterday as entirely wrong today, nor decide that what is incorrect today could not have been right yesterday. Likewise, he cannot regard what was right there as entirely incorrect here, nor decide that what is incorrect here could not have been right there. Everything is decided by time and place, by the various concrete conditions and circumstances of a given time and place.³

Wang's ultimate intention may have been merely to seek a modus vivendi which would save face on the part of the Returned Students, but it is unlikely that the reissue of his pamphlet was well received by the Maoists. Mao's difficulties in the spring of 1940 gave Wang an opportunity that might not be repeated, but his precipitate action likely convinced the Maoists that he could not be trusted. Should they face even greater difficulties in the future, might not Wang and his supporters pose a real threat to Mao's ascendancy? In any case, Wang did not help his position by studiously retitling his pamphlet Struggle for the Further Bolshevization of the Chinese Communist Party. This was clearly a rejoinder to Mao's recent claim that the CCP had "definitely taken the Bolshevik road" only after the Tsunyi Conference in 1935, and not at the Fourth Plenum in 1931. Wang's republication of his controversial treatise on Party history was probably his last clear act of defiance of the ascendant Maoists

³As quoted in Warren Kuo, op. cit., II, p. 264; revised translation based on the Chinese text, II, pp. 209-210. For more details on Wang's book and its role in CCP history, see Hsiao Tso-liang, op. cit., pp. 202-207.

before he was to suffer the humiliation of the Rectification Movement. As Gregor Benton has pointed out, the New Fourth Army was the last stronghold of Wang's united front policy, and when this army was destroyed by the Nationalists in January 1941, Wang's remaining political influence perished along with it.⁴

Apart from Wang's opposition, Mao was still facing other pockets of dissidence in the Party. In a directive of 25 December 1940, for example, he complained that the "ultra-left viewpoint is creating trouble, and is still the main danger in the Party."⁵ Undoubtedly, this leftist tendency had been strengthened by the outcome of the Communists' Hundred Regiments Offensive. Greatly perturbed by this dramatic display of Communist power, the Nationalists decided that the time had come for greater efforts to contain their united front allies. The existing blockade of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region was intensified, and, as we have seen, in early 1941 Nationalist armies destroyed the CCP's New Fourth Army in southern Anhwei province. This incident strengthened the position of the leftists within the CCP, for it seemed to confirm their theory that the class contradictions between the KMT and the CCP had come to overshadow the national contradictions between China and Japan. Although the CCP was able to weather the Nationalists' new offensive between October 1940 and March 1941, there was apparently some disarray in its ranks. In a directive of 8 May 1941, for example, Mao noted that "some comrades" felt that under the new circumstances "we no longer need the

⁴Benton, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Tokuda, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁵Mao, XJ II, pp. 723-724.

kind of state power that includes all those who stand for resistance and democracy, but need a so-called state of power of workers, peasants, and urban petty bourgeoisie."⁶ This amounted to a total rejection of Mao's recently formulated concept of the new-democratic revolution. The leftists were treating his new theory of the Chinese revolution as a mere tactic, something that could be dispensed with according to changes in the practical situation. This, of course, was unacceptable to Mao, and it is not surprising that he complained that the "Party's correct policy has become blurred in the minds of these comrades, at least for the time being."⁷ By the spring of 1941, however, Mao was no longer prepared to tolerate the ideological and organizational dissension that had wracked the CCP since early 1940. The Party was facing a crisis, and Mao no doubt believed that only decisive action on his part would save it from disaster.

It could be argued that the leftist tendency we have been discussing was serious, but not severe enough to precipitate a crisis of leadership in the CCP. Mao, after all, had made great gains at the Sixth Plenum in 1938, and there appeared to be no single leader (Wang Ming included) strong enough to challenge him with any great hope of success. Nonetheless, when the internal Party conflicts discussed above are seen in the context of the difficult problems the Party was facing in other areas, one can appreciate just how explosive the situation really was. Rapid expansion had placed fresh

⁶Mao, XJ II, p. 742.

⁷Loc. cit.

strains on the Party's organization, and the premature termination of the cadre education movement in mid-1940 had hampered the indoctrination of the flood of new members. In the economic sphere, the increasing effectiveness of the Nationalist blockade of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region had led to commodity scarcity and "rampant inflation," resulting in increased taxation of the population in the Communist areas.⁸ Militarily, the destruction of the New Fourth Army in January 1941 had reduced the united front to a fiction, and the Japanese soon seized the opportunity to step up their pressure on the Communists. Although conditions in the various Communist base areas were to deteriorate further, it is obvious that by the spring of 1941 the Communists were indeed facing a crisis.

In a recent study of the Yen-an period, Mark Selden has gone so far as to compare the crisis of 1941 with those of 1927 and 1934, each of which involved the Communist movement in "crippling defeats verging on annihilation." In each of these instances Mao Tse-tung emerged as the "leading architect" of the new line that was to save the CCP from destruction at the hands of its enemies. The break-up of the first united front in 1927 gave rise to Mao's rural strategy, the liquidation of the Kiangsi Soviet in 1934 saw Mao espouse the cause of the second united front, while the military and economic blockade of the Communist base areas in 1941 gave birth to Mao's theory and practice of the mass line.⁹ Selden is undoubtedly correct

⁸Selden, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181. Selden has collected a great deal of economic information on the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region between 1935 and 1945.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 177.

in equating the crisis of 1941 with those of 1927 and 1934 in terms of its potential danger to the continued existence of the CCP, but there is a major difference between the crisis of 1941 and the two earlier ones. In 1927 and 1934 Mao was very much on the fringe of things in terms of Party leadership; in 1927 he was a relatively minor figure in the Party's top echelons, while in 1934 he had already been dropped from his important Party and army positions under the Returned Students' ascendancy. Consequently, when things went wrong at these respective crisis points, those leaders actually in power (Ch'en Tu-hsiu in 1927, Wang Ming and Po Ku in 1934) became the inevitable scapegoats. Mao was then well placed to emerge from the wings as a leading critic of the fallen leaders, and on both occasions he was able to establish himself as the pivotal figure in the new leadership group that emerged. In 1941, however, the situation was quite the reverse. Mao himself was clearly in command of the Party, and should the CCP succumb to the growing crisis of 1941 it would be Mao who would carry the lion's share of the blame. This time it would perhaps be Wang Ming and/or a Returned Student-military coalition group who would step from the wings as Mao's chief accusers and successors. Mao had survived the crises of 1927 and 1934 partly because he had little responsibility for them in the first place, but the same would not be true if the Party failed to weather the crisis of 1941.

(ii) Yeh Ch'ing Attacks Mao

No doubt realizing that Mao was in a difficult situation, Yeh Ch'ing (Jen Cho-hsüan) seized the opportunity to launch a sharp attack on Mao's personal leadership, and in particular on his competence as a Marxist theoretician. Yeh was a former CCP leader who left the Party in 1928, having been arrested and threatened with execution by the Nationalists. He adopted an "independent Marxist" stance thereafter, and rose to prominence in Shanghai during the 1930's as a vigorous participant in the various intellectual debates of that decade. Disturbed by the Japanese invasion of 1937, Yeh quickly abandoned his polemics with the CCP's urban theorists (including Ch'en Po-ta), and he renewed his contacts with the Nationalist Party, with which he had cooperated at various times in the past. Becoming increasingly nationalistic in his outlook, he toned down his Marxist beliefs somewhat (without abandoning them entirely), and rejoined the Nationalist Party in 1939. After holding many posts in the KMT's political education system, in 1942 he became head of the research section of the Party's organization department, and in 1943 he was elected an executive secretary of the KMT's San-min zhu-yi Youth Corps.¹⁰ Yeh's rise to power in the Nationalist Party was due in part to the success of a book he published in the spring of 1941, A Critique of Mao Tse-tung. Reprinted and expanded many times since it was first published, Yeh's Critique was perhaps the most comprehensive and sophisticated attack against Mao to have

¹⁰For these details on Yeh Ch'ing's career, see the listing under Jen Cho-hsüan in Boorman and Howard, op. cit., II, pp. 218-219.

issued from the Nationalist camp at the time it was published.¹¹ Yeh dealt at some length with Mao's theoretical concepts, in particular with his proposal for the Sinification of Marxism, and it is this issue which interests us here. Although in its broad outlines Yeh's critical analysis of Mao and the CCP is representative of official KMT attitudes, Yeh consistently argues from within the "socialist" tradition as an avowedly objective student of "scientific communism." Obviously, such an approach would best appeal to the particular audience at which Yeh was directing his message, namely, those literate individuals within the broad leftist movement in China who were weighing the merits of Mao's call for a "new democracy" the previous year. Indeed, Yeh time and again declares that Mao's aim in proposing the idea of new democracy is to establish a "basis for the existence...and development" of a communist party in China, i.e., the CCP. Not unexpectedly, Yeh hastens to assure the reader that Mao's attempt to plant the roots of new democracy in China, however ingenious it may be, will in the final analysis "fail completely." It will fail, says Yeh, because the idea of new democracy is the defective concept of a so-called Chinese Communist leader who understands neither the essence of communism

¹¹Yeh Ch'ing (Jen Cho-hsüan), Mao Ze-dong pi-pan (A Critique of Mao Tse-tung), 5th ed., Taipei: Pa-mi-er shu-dian, 1961. Yeh's book was completed in March 1941, and published immediately thereafter in Chungking and other places throughout China. It has gone through many revisions since then, largely involving the addition of new material rather than substantive alteration of the original text. For details on the book's publication history, see Yeh's preface to the 5th edition used here.

nor the process by which it can be adapted to the special needs of China.¹²

Yeh is not entirely dismissive of Mao. Indeed, since he is more experienced than Wang Ming and his generation of CCP leaders, Mao has recognized the need to resolve the contradiction between "Marxist methods" and "Chinese reality." For this he should be congratulated. Nonetheless, because Mao's understanding of Marxism is basically faulty, his grasp of the concept of the Sinification of Marxism is correspondingly confused, and his efforts along this line have been unsuccessful. Since the time of Sun Yat-sen's emergence as a theorist, argues Yeh, the world "communist" or "socialist" movement (Yeh uses the two terms interchangeably) can be divided into two major schools of thought. Employing their own terminology, one school advocates "communism," while the other espouses the "Principle of People's Livelihood." In terms of content, argues Yeh, there is no fundamental difference between these two "isms" (zhu-yi); rather, their distinctive characters emerge from the differing methods they employ in realizing their aims in practice. In other words:

This similar aim constitutes the generality of socialism, and is applicable to the world. These dissimilar methods constitute the peculiarity of socialism, and are applicable to specific countries.¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 91.

¹³Ibid., pp. 99-100.

From this one can immediately see that the kind of socialism that is universally applicable regardless of time or place is only socialism in its generalized or abstract form, namely, the "concept" (yi-nian) of the common ownership of property. This type of abstract socialism, says Yeh, has been talked about since ancient times in China and the rest of the world, but it has never been realized in practice. Since it did not accord with the concrete conditions in specific countries at particular times, it was unscientific and hence utopian in character. Yet, argues Yeh, the world has already moved beyond this utopian socialism of the past, and contemporary socialism or communism may be divided into two concrete, specific types according to regions of the globe -- European socialism and Chinese socialism.

One is naturally intrigued as to how these two distinctive types of concrete socialism came about, and Yeh is quick to oblige with an answer. All theories or "isms," he suggests, are created by the flesh and blood individuals for whom they are named, individuals who lived a "concrete" existence in a specific time and place, and whose thought is coloured by these temporal and spacial characteristics. Hence, the precise qualities of the thought that emerges from the minds of these gifted individuals cannot but be determined by the particular era and specific country in which they lived. Nowhere is this general truth more evident than in the case of the emergence of the two different types of socialism to which Yeh refers. In the momentous transition from utopian to scientific socialism, claims Yeh:

It was Marx and Sun Yat-sen who particularized the general. The former's particularization was Europeanization [Ou-zhou-hua], and the latter's particularization was Sinitification [Zhong-guo-hua]. All particularities are concrete. Therefore, European socialism and Chinese socialism are both particular socialisms, concrete socialisms. Because they accord with the conditions under which they exist, they may both be termed scientific socialism. They each use particular methods to arrive at a general goal, and traverse different paths to the same destination.¹⁴

Yeh's concept of "particular methods" is of considerable importance to his entire argument, for he believes that Marxism is the particular method by which the general goal of socialism can be realized in countries in which capitalism is fully developed. Hence, since capitalism is not by any stretch of the imagination fully developed in China, Marxist methods are not applicable. Furthermore, says Yeh, capitalism -- with the resulting division of society into two antagonistic classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) -- will never develop in China, because the implementation of Sun Yat-sen's theories will enable China to skip the stage of capitalism on the way to socialism. Under the guidance of Sun's ideas, China can avoid the costly "two-stage revolution" (i.e., political and social revolution) which is the particular product of the capitalist class system, and which in turn is the only method for the transformation of capitalism into socialism. As for China, things will be entirely different, because, in the course of that country's "one-stage revolution":

¹⁴Loc. cit.

State operation of industry, regulation of capital, and equalization of power are the most appropriate methods, and they will lead to the common ownership of property. A Sinified communism will have gradually emerged, but this will be called the Principle of People's Livelihood. It will be the socialism of Sun Yat-sen, not Marxist socialism.¹⁵

On the basis of the foregoing argument, Yeh scornfully dismisses Mao's attempts at Sinifying Marxism as both futile and misleading. "Thus," he concludes, "the Marxism of Mao Tse-tung is Sinified in name but rigidly foreign in reality, and is purely a form of 'dogmatism'."¹⁶ This pessimistic conclusion naturally has implications for the political party which Mao leads, and it is no surprise that Yeh finds the CCP to be neither a genuine product of Chinese society, nor needed by the Chinese people in their struggle for liberation. It is all too obvious, he says, that the CCP is entirely the creation of external, non-Chinese forces, the USSR and the Comintern in particular. Indeed, the short history of the CCP has already indicated that it only has three paths open to it in the years ahead. One, it can be "Russified" (E-guo-hua) if it adopts Russian Bolshevism as its ideology and the CPSU/Comintern as its organizational form, as it has done at various times in the past. Two, it can be "Sinified", but falsely, and in a backward form, if it adopts the ideology and behaviour of such traditional Chinese "roving bandits" as Li Tzu-ch'eng (who led a peasant rebellion against the Ming dynasty), as it is now doing in spite of the united front. Third, suggests Yeh, it

¹⁵Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 106.

can be truly "Sinified" in a modern, progressive form if it adopts the Three Principles of the People as its ideology and genuinely joins forces with the Nationalists, as it did at least partially in the past. In abandoning their allegiance to the CCP, Yeh adds reassuringly, Party members need not give up their hopes for the future of their homeland. They should realize that mere labels can be deceiving, that while the Communist party in Europe is a progressive force, in China it is reactionary. In joining the Nationalist Party, former members of the CCP are at the same time embracing the ideas of Sun Yat-sen, whose ideology is in full accord with the realities of China's contemporary one-stage revolution. As such, this ideology is both scientific and progressive, because it is a "product of the age, and can undertake the historical task of transforming China."¹⁷

In conclusion, Yeh reaffirms his belief that Mao and himself (and Karl Marx and Sun Yat-sen, too) share the common conviction that "world history is moving toward socialism." The crucial differences that exist between them lie in their conflicting interpretations of the "historical laws" which govern this process of change from one social system to another. Since, argues Yeh, the two-stage revolution of Marx is applicable to countries "in which capitalism is developed and class divisions are distinct, we may designate it as the path for advanced countries." Sun Yat-sen's theory of the one-stage revolution, however, is quite distinct. Since it is applicable to China and to other countries "in which capitalism

¹⁷Ibid., p. 113.

is not developed and class divisions are not distinct, we may designate it as the path for backward countries." Although Yeh is audacious in claiming that China represents the revolutionary model for all "backward" countries in their march toward socialism, he hastens to reassure his readers that China and her fellow underdeveloped countries will not remain inferior to Europe indefinitely. While he pays tribute to Europe for pioneering the initial impetus toward the formulation of correct theories leading to the movement toward socialism, he continues:

Once Europe pointed out clearly the inevitability of moving toward socialism, China was able to take this as an example and consciously 'catch up' [yīng-tou gǎn-shàng], and cannot but take the shortest route....[to socialism.] This is of course a special situation.¹⁸

Although Yeh claims that the socialist movement in China and other underdeveloped countries can "catch up" with the movement toward socialism in Europe and the advanced world, he does not claim that the path pointed out by Sun Yat-sen is thereby superior to that indicated by Marx. "All things are composed of the unity of the general and the particular," he states, indicating that in the era of scientific socialism, the European path to socialism is a "general law" in the sense that it preceded and provided the basis for the emergence of the Chinese path to socialism, which is a "particular law." [This does not contradict his earlier proposition that, in the decisive transition from utopian to scientific socialism, Marxism represented the particularization (viz, "Europeanization") of the abstract notion of socialism and communism.] Like everything

¹⁸Ibid., p. 119.

else, concludes Yeh, the "historical laws of the world" are formed by the unity of the general and the particular:

They are formed by the unity of the historical laws of Europe and the historical laws of China. In other words, the historical laws of the world are formed by the unity of Europe's two-stage revolution and China's one-stage revolution....Communism is European socialism, and the Three People's Principles represent Chinese socialism. Each has its own framework, and each has its own countries to which it is applicable.¹⁹

We do not wish to discuss the merits of Yeh's general argument, for that is something best left to the reader. Two points are worthy of brief mention, however, the first being Yeh's rather sweeping assumption that the sum total of world historical development can be encompassed by the European and Chinese revolutionary models. Throughout Yeh's discussion, he reveals a consistent tendency to equate the global significance of Europe (and North America) on the one hand, and China on the other. The suggestion of such equivalence was, of course, very flattering to those Chinese nationalists who were struggling to free their countrymen (and themselves) from the crippling sense of cultural inferiority that had resulted from the decline of China at the hands of the more powerful West. On this particular issue, Yeh had much in common with the emerging views of Mao Tse-tung and his colleagues, who had also concluded that the Chinese revolutionary model (i.e., the Maoist revolutionary model) was of increasing international significance, especially in relation to the colonial world of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. While they were to remain bitterly divided in the

¹⁹Loc. cit.

political sphere, both Yeh and Mao betrayed an unmistakable sense of nationalism that gave a similar hue to the way in which they conceived China's role in the world, and its relations with other nations.²⁰ On the other hand, Yeh berated Mao for attempting to apply the methods of the European socialist revolution (viz, Marxism) to China's special conditions, As we have seen from our previous discussions, Mao would have heartily agreed with Yeh that such an attempt would be futile. It was precisely for this reason that Mao constantly distinguished between the inner content of Marxism and its outer form, rejecting the latter as "dogma" in the Chinese context, but retaining the essence of the former. In actuality, however, Yeh's critique of Mao revolved around the correct interpretation of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. To Yeh, Sun's ideology represented above all the Sinified form of the universal socialist idea, so it naturally followed that any attempt such as Mao's to concoct yet another (and necessarily bogus) form of Sinified socialism was misguided at best, and subversive in actual practice. Hence his appeal to Mao to give up his foolish endeavours, join forces with the Nationalist Party, and strive ardently for the realization of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. Only by doing so, concluded Yeh, could the Chinese Communist Party and its ideological

²⁰ For a general discussion of the international significance of Sun Yat-sen's ideology, see Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, "Sun Yat-senism as a model for Syncretistic Ideologies of Developing Countries," in Richard Lowenthal, ed., Issues in the Future of Asia, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969, pp. 149-176.

doctrines be truly Sinified, and hence of use to the Chinese people and their revolutionary cause. Failing that, the Chinese Communists were doomed to final destruction.

Yeh Ch'ing's attack on Mao came at a time when the CCP was facing most serious threats to both its internal and external stability. As these threats also endangered Mao's own position as the Party's top leader, it is not surprising that in the spring of 1941 he moved to reassert his authority in the Party. The cadre education movement had been wound up in June 1940, but this was probably dictated more by necessity than by choice. The leftist upsurge in the Party in the spring of 1940 had inaugurated an entire year of inner-Party dissension, and the formal study movement had to be abandoned before it had penetrated deeply into the rank-and-file membership of the Party. Mao clearly indicated his impatience with this inner-Party discord by attempting to breathe new life into his ill-fated educational campaign. In February 1941 the Party published for the first time Mao's "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," a series of lectures he had delivered in 1936. Their belated publication over four years later at first glance seems odd, but not when it is realized that it was in these lectures that Mao had developed his first systematic critique of the military strategy of the Returned Students during the early 1930's. By 1941 it was common knowledge in Yenan that Mao characterized the military line of the Returned Students as "left adventurism", and this was doubtless borne in mind by those leftist comrades who were then arguing in

favour of an open split with the Nationalists, and a reversion to the military strategy of agrarian revolution. As Mao saw it, the careful study of his lectures would be a salutary experience for those Returned Students who might be repeating their former errors, and equally for those individuals who had no wish to become personally identified with the military line of this now-discredited faction.²¹

In a preface and postscript to a volume entitled Rural Surveys (March-April 1941), Mao made a thinly veiled attack on the military policies of the Returned Students. He pointed out that the Party's present "dual policy"-- synthesizing both alliance and struggle (with the Nationalists) -- "is the most revolutionary policy for China today. It is mistaken to oppose and obstruct this line."²² Having laid down the law in the military sphere, Mao moved on to the consideration of broader concerns in the life of the Party. Emphasizing that the CCP was working in a "most complicated Chinese environment," he drew the conclusion that at the present stage in the revolution one of the Party's "indispensable historical tasks" was the "scrupulous and resolute preservation of the communist purity" of all its members.²³ In the following month of May, Mao formally called for the revival of the defunct cadre education move-

²¹Stuart Schram has also suggested that the publication of these lectures in early 1941 might have symbolized the de facto end of the Nationalist-Communist united front. See Schram, Mao, pp. 218-219.

²²Mao, Ji VII, p. 298.

²³Loc. cit.

ment, and by early 1942 this had been transformed into the Rectification Movement, one of the pivotal episodes in the history of the CCP.

(iii) Ch'en Po-ta's Dispute with Wang Shih-wei

Before moving on to a consideration of the beginning of the Rectification Movement, it is necessary to discuss a rather obscure quarrel in the winter of 1940-41 between Ch'en Po-ta and Wang Shih-wei, both of whom worked in the Party's Marxist-Leninist Institute. This dispute appears to have had a considerable impact on the course of the Rectification Movement itself, and as such it deserves to be discussed in some detail. In early 1940 Ch'en took an active part in promoting Mao's call for a new-democratic government, and in February of that year he was elected to the Executive Committee of the Yen-an Association for the Promotion of Constitutional Government. Shortly thereafter, on 8 March, he published an essay calling for a "democratic constitution of the dictatorship of the various revolutionary classes."²⁴ By mid-1939 Ch'en had begun to cut down on his writings on purely cultural topics, feeling that he was not really a specialist on questions of art and literature. In addition, he acknowledged that many literary specialists were now working in Yen-an, and he reiterated his belief that the problems in this field could only be solved in the course of practice. Excessive verbalizing

²⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu mu-qian xian-zheng yun-dong ji-ben wen-ti de yi-jian" (Opinions on Basic Problems in the Current Movement for Constitutional Government), JF, 101 (8 March 1940), p. 19. On Ch'en's election to this new association, see the communique issued in its name on 20 February 1940 in Mao, Ji VII, p. 252.

was both unnecessary and undesirable.²⁵ Indeed, after the publication of Mao's treatise on new democracy, Ch'en's interests began to turn to more practical matters such as political economy, an interest that persisted to the very end of his political career. His growing neglect of purely philosophical and cultural concerns was a direct reflection of his steady rise to power in the Maoist faction in the Party. More than ever before, Ch'en was beginning to play an increasingly conspicuous role as a leading Maoist spokesman on general policy issues. It was during the Rectification Movement in particular that he clearly emerged as an important personality in his own right, and not simply a shadowy figure manoeuvring behind the scenes.²⁶

Although much against his will (or so he says), Ch'en was from time to time dragged into disputes with some of the literary specialists in Yanan to whom he had previously deferred. Although he clashed with a certain Hsiang Lin-ping on the question of national forms in literature, his major conflict in this field was to be with Wang Shih-wei.²⁷ Wang had joined the CCP in 1926 (just before Ch'en), and had become known in Marxist circles primarily as a

²⁵Ch'en Po-ta, "Xie zai Shi-wei tong-zhi 'Wen-yi de min-zu xing-shi duan-lun' zhi-hou" (Written After Comrade Shi-wei's 'Short Essay on National Forms in Art and Literature', JFRB (3-4 July 1942), p. 4. Although published only in July 1942, the article is dated 7 January 1941. The references are to the first part of the essay.

²⁶This is not to deny Ch'en's lack of a personal power base within either the Party or the army, and his consequent dependence on Mao's support both at this time and in later years.

²⁷Ch'en Po-ta, "Xie zai Shi-wei tong-zhi," p.4.

translator of Marxist-Leninist writings from the Russian. He had also written a few short stories, however, and maintained a strong interest in general literary problems. Around 1929 he had become associated with the Chinese Trotskyists, published in their journals, and translated some of Trotsky's works. Nonetheless, in the early 1930's he went to Moscow to study Marxist philosophy, but continued to correspond with Ch'en Tu-hsiu right up to 1936. Upon his arrival in Yenan in the late 1930's, Wang was considered to be a specialist in ideological and literary matters, and was appointed to a research post at the Marxist-Leninist Institute.²⁸ Very little is known of his activities at the Institute, and to a large extent one has to rely on the account provided by Ch'en Po-ta himself, which can hardly be regarded as detached. It seems, however, that in the autumn of 1940 Wang drafted an essay on the question of national forms in literature, and the essay was circulated to various members of the Institute. Ch'en took strong exception to most of Wang's views, and -- tearing himself away from other work he was then engaged in -- he hastily drafted a point by point rebuttal of Wang's major contentions. Ch'en was agitated by the fact that Wang had attacked some of Ch'en's earlier essays on literary problems, and Wang in turn was so incensed by Ch'en's rebuttal that he attempted to prevent its publication. A compromise was worked out by which Wang agreed to revise his article in light of Ch'en's criticisms, with Ch'en himself foregoing the right to have his critique published alongside

²⁸Merle Goldman, "Writers' Criticism of the Party in 1942," CQ, 17 (January-March 1964), p. 210.

Wang's article. Wang's revised essay was published in the spring of 1941, but Ch'en's rebuttal did not appear until 3-4 July 1942, when it was published in Liberation as "reference material" in the campaign against Wang and other ideological deviationists.²⁹

We will not enter into a detailed discussion of the substantive issues that were raised in the dispute between Ch'en and Wang. Nonetheless, a few comments are in order. Essentially, Ch'en defended his prior advocacy of the use of certain traditional cultural forms to convey new political contents, but agreed with Wang that the danger always existed of the new contents being subverted by the old forms. The key to the problem, maintained Ch'en, was in the intelligent use of the old forms, so that the new contents would remain unimpaired. It would not do, he said, to

... 'utilize old forms' by depicting Chu Teh and P'eng Teh-huai, representatives of the proletariat and the ordinary people, as the 'Gods of War' [Guan Gong Lian], or by transforming the actions and behaviour of Chu and P'eng into the actions and behaviour of aristocrats.³⁰

If this were done, argued Ch'en, the whole exercise would be counter-productive, and would simply amount to a capitulation to tradition; this was certainly not what he was advocating in calling for the creative use of national forms in literature. In any event, he con-

²⁹Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu Wang Shi-wei" (Concerning Wang Shih-wei), JFRB (15 June 1942), p. 4. This is a speech given by Ch'en on 9 June 1942, at a meeting held at the Central Research Institute in the course of the campaign against Wang. Also see Ch'en's article in n. 25 above. Wang's revised essay was published in Chinese Culture, II:6, 1941.

³⁰Ch'en Po-ta, "Xie zai Shi-wei tong-shi," p. 4.

cluded, there was no need to insist on the exclusive use of either old or new forms, experimentation with both being the preferable course. The pressing need was to abandon further discussion on the theory of national forms, and to test the ideas that had already been advanced in the course of actual practice. In rebutting Wang's criticisms of the use of national forms in culture, Ch'en drew attention to Wang's apparent confusion of the "proletarian revolution" with the "national war of resistance." Indeed, Wang gave far too much emphasis to the proletarian nature of the current revolutionary movement in China. This in turn led him to place too much importance on the necessity of there being in existence a well-developed proletariat with a fairly high level of culture. These conditions simply did not exist in China, argued Ch'en, for the broad masses of the people (not just the proletariat) were united against an external foe (and not against the internal bourgeoisie). Further, the ordinary people were fully capable of raising their own cultural level in the course of actual struggle, and were not dependent on the prior achievement of a high cultural level on the part of the proletariat. Wang's views, concluded Ch'en, were detrimental to the cause of the Chinese people's national war of resistance, and only served to give comfort to the Japanese.³¹

It is immediately obvious that Wang's alleged emphasis on the proletarian nature of the current revolutionary movement in China -- and his simultaneous depreciation of its broad national significance -- identified him as a "leftist" of some sort. Was he, for

³¹Loc. cit.; also in Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu Wang Shi-wei," p. 4.

example, part of the "leftist tendency" within the ranks of the Party or, even more sinisterly, a representative of Trotskyism within the CCP's highest research, educational and cultural organs? Wang was evidently aware that such thoughts might be going through the minds of certain of his colleagues at the Institute and elsewhere, and he decided to clear the air before things got out of hand. After reading Ch'en's critique of his views, he belatedly admitted to the Party authorities that he had close connections with the Trotskyists in the past, but that he had long since severed this relationship.³² Wang no doubt hoped that a timely confession would prevent the situation from deteriorating further. Certainly, as we have seen, what appears to have been a temporary compromise between Wang and Ch'en (and the Party authorities) was worked out in due course. Ch'en later claimed that at the time he wrote his rebuttal of Wang's views on national forms, he knew "absolutely nothing" about the latter's former Trotskyist associations, and had wondered why Wang had become so agitated over the affair. With the benefit of hindsight, Ch'en now realized that he had unintentionally exposed Wang Shih-wei's "Trotskyist ideological fox's tail." Wang, said Ch'en, had attempted in his original article to propagate Trotskyist ideology under cover of a discussion on questions of art and literature.³³

³²Ch'en, "Guan-yu Wang Shi-wei," p. 4.

³³Loc. cit. In fact, Wang's ideas on art and literature were very close to those of the "literary leftists" in the debate on "national defence literature" in 1935-36, a debate with which Ch'en was very familiar. Although Wang was now being labelled a Trotskyist, the basic issues were linked directly to the earlier debate.

We have discussed this little known dispute between Ch'en Po-ta and Wang Shih-wei in some detail because it had three possible consequences of importance for the coming Rectification Movement. First, occurring as it did in the winter of 1940-41, it probably helped convince the Maoists that the leftist tendency that had been developing in the Party since early 1940 was beginning to find reflection (and reinforcement) in the Party's leading research and propaganda organs. This probably strengthened Mao's determination in the spring of 1941 to crack down on this growing ideological deviationism before it got out of hand, and prompted him to call for the revival of the cadres educational movement that had been temporarily suspended. Second, the existence of ideological heterodoxy among a small group of influential but organizationally powerless intellectuals (as revealed in the Ch'en-Wang dispute) might well have suggested to Mao the possibility of using them as scapegoats. These intellectuals were relatively isolated from the Party's main political and military organizations, and they could be attacked either individually or collectively without causing any major upheavals in the Party organization. Thus, the campaign against ideological deviationism throughout the Party could be carried to a high pitch with little damage to either the morale of the ordinary cadre who might be in need of some ideological rectification, or the essential work he was doing under very trying conditions. Certainly, as the Rectification Movement unfolded this appeared to be the pattern, with a small group of intellectuals taking the brunt of public criticism. Third, as Merle Goldman has suggested, Ch'en most likely

had some influence on the decision to single out Wang Shih-wei as the principal target in the summer of 1942.³⁴ Indeed, as Mao Tse-tung's closest advisor in cultural affairs, Ch'en probably played a key role in Mao's decision to aim the spearhead of the Rectification Movement not only at Wang Shih-wei, but at the so-called dissident writers as a group. Given Ch'en's other influential positions in the Party's Propaganda Department, the Yen-an mass media, and various government and cultural bodies, it seems likely that his influence was far from minimal. Certainly, he played a personal role of considerable prominence in the Rectification Movement itself, especially as it reached its peak in the summer of 1942.

(iv) Prelude to Rectification

The Rectification Campaign of 1942 has usually been regarded as a consequence -- and an illustration -- of Mao Tse-tung's growing ascendancy in the CCP, and we do not wish to question the basic soundness of this evaluation. Nonetheless, this key episode in Party history can be better understood by bearing in mind the unsettling events of 1940 and early 1941. Mao's personal authority had been challenged on a number of fronts, from politics to culture, and it is not surprising that he decided to confront the issue without delay. His initial reaction was to seek a revival of the defunct cadre education movement of 1939-40. In an important speech of 5 May 1941, Mao characterized the entire history of the CCP as "twenty years in which the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism

³⁴Goldman, Literary Dissent, p. 37.

has become more and more integrated with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution."³⁵ In spite of this, continued Mao, the Party still had "very great shortcomings," and if they were not soon corrected the CCP would inevitably fail in its historical mission. The three main areas of study in which improvements were in order were current affairs, history (Chinese history in particular), and the practical application of Marxism-Leninism in the course of revolutionary work. But Mao cautioned the assembled cadres that they were not all equally guilty of such shortcomings, the last of which was the most troublesome. The most susceptible to a "subjectivist attitude" toward the study of Marxist theory were (1) the students, especially those who had studied in Europe, America, and Japan; and (2) "cadres of the middle and higher ranks."³⁶ In bracketing these two specific groups as the main culprits, it was obvious that Mao was attacking the most prominent "returned students" in the Party, namely, the "Twenty-eight Bolsheviks" who had dominated the Party leadership after their return from the Soviet Union, and who remained very influential among "cadres of the middle and higher ranks."

The Returned Students were doubtless not amused by Mao's indirect suggestion that they should return to the classroom for

³⁵Mao, Ji VII, p. 315. Because of its controversial nature, this speech was not published in Liberation until 27 March 1942, when it appeared in revised form under the title of "Reform our Study" (Gai-zu wo-men de xue-xi). By that time the cheng-feng campaign was well under way, and Mao had no need to be concerned about the adverse reactions of the Returned Students.

³⁶Ibid., p. 317.

further instruction in what they regarded as the subject of their greatest expertise, Marxist-Leninist theory. In any event, who was to be the new instructor, and whose texts were to be the required reading? Mao modestly recommended that Stalin's well-known History of the CPSU should be the "principal material, [with] everything else as supplementary material." Mao referred to Stalin's text probably as a token gesture to Moscow, but that his real interest lay elsewhere is suggested by the priority he assigned to the unspecified "supplementary material":

For the education of cadres in service and in schools, research should be focused on the actual problems of the Chinese Revolution, and then on the study of Marxism-Leninism. The method of static and isolated study of Marxism-Leninism should be eliminated.³⁷

It is readily apparent from this that the "actual problems" of the revolution in China were going to occupy pride of place in Mao's proposed curriculum. Students were to approach the study of Marxist theory only after they had attained an adequate understanding of Chinese conditions. Gone were the days when aspiring Marxist theorists were to turn their attention to Chinese conditions only upon completion of a rigorous course of study of classical Marxist-Leninist texts, whether in China or abroad. Mao's proposal of 5 May 1941 represents a rather important turning point in the ideological history of the CCP. It was tantamount to suggesting that henceforth Chinese reality was to provide a methodology by which to study Marxist theory, rather than the other way around. This is very similar to his earlier argument of 1938, when he proposed that the study of Chinese history (a part of the total reality of China)

³⁷ Ibid., p. 324.

itself constitutes a methodology for the evaluation of the applicability of Marxist theory to the revolution in China. If this were to be so, the classical Marxist-Leninist writings would lose a good deal of their sanctity, and Moscow's cherished role as keeper of the seals and protector of the faith would in consequence be severely undermined.

If Mao was indirectly proposing that his writings on China's "actual problems" should henceforth take pride of place in the CCP's educational curriculum, one might ask whether or not the intrinsic quality and scope of these works were adequate to the task. It was painfully obvious to all but the most committed that, in terms of both intellectual sophistication and sheer volume, Mao's writings did not stand comparison with the truly impressive corpus of theory and practice in the writings of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Certainly, an essay by Shih Fu (a pseudonym?) in Liberation on 16 January 1941 did not unduly stress Mao's unique talents in adapting Marxism to China. True enough, Shih did claim that the "Chinese Communist Party, with Mao Tse-tung as leader," had "correctly grasped creative Marxism," and had even "pushed Marxism-Leninism a step forward" in the course of arduous revolutionary struggles. Still, this bracketing of Mao with the Party as a whole does attenuate the uniqueness of Mao's role, and this is reinforced by Shih's references to Wang Ming and Lo Fu in addition to Mao, and his praise of all three leaders for having creatively applied Marxism-Leninism

to the practical situation in China.³⁸ It was surely with the aim of establishing Mao's singular importance within the CCP that Chang Ju-hsin, a young Party theoretician, wrote his important essay, "Advance Under the Banner of Comrade Mao Tse-tung." Chang's article appeared in Liberation on 30 April 1941, just a few days before Mao's key speech of 5 May on the problem of study within the Party, and it was clearly intended to strengthen Mao's image as the Party's top theorist. Chang had been active in left-wing circles in Shanghai prior to the Japanese invasion, and he had already published a number of articles in Yenan newspapers after his arrival in the Red capital. According to Chang, Mao Tse-tung was not simply one important revolutionary leader among many others; nor was he merely the first amongst equals. On the contrary, claimed Chang:

It should be pointed out that the leading, most typical person in applying creative Marxism to Chinese problems is our Party leader, Comrade Mao Tse-tung. He is our Party's great revolutionary, a talented theorist, a strategist, and one of the most creative Marxist-Leninists in China. With a mastery of the theory of Marxism-Leninism and almost twenty years of extremely rich experience in revolutionary struggle, he is able skillfully to unite within himself the profound theory of Marxism-Leninism and the extensive, concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, and to link together organically the fixed principles and the flexible strategies of Marxism-Leninism. He is the most qualified, most typical person to be our Party's political leader and military strategist.³⁹

³⁸Shih Fu, "Take Hold of Creative Marxism," JF 123 (16 February 1941), as cited in K'ung Te-liang, "First Appearance of 'Mao Tse-tung's Thought'," p. 37.

³⁹Chang Ju-hsin, "Zai Mao Ze-dong tong-zhi de qi-zhi xia qian-jin" (Advance Under the Banner of Comrade Mao Tse-tung,) JF, 127 (30 April 1941), pp. 17-18.

One would have thought that Chang could have added little to this glowing appraisal of Mao's singular importance to the revolutionary cause in China. Yet there was more, for he concluded that Mao's creative development of Marxism-Leninism was of great significance not only for the Chinese revolution and the Chinese people's struggle for liberation, but also for the "revolutionary movements" in the colonies and semi-colonies around the world. To Chang, Mao's Sinification of Marxism-Leninism was of more than parochial interest, for it provided a concrete model of the successful nationalization of a foreign theory in one specific country. With effective leadership, this model could be applied elsewhere other than China.⁴⁰

Considering that Mao's keynote speech calling for a new study campaign was not published at the time, it is not surprising that the campaign itself got off to a somewhat uncertain start. July 1, 1941, the CCP's twentieth anniversary, was the logical occasion to launch the new movement, and the editorial in Liberation Daily on that day duly addressed itself to the task. After summing up the CCP's twenty glorious years, the editorial declared that all the Party's successes were due to

...the Chinese Communist Party's union of the scientific truth of Marxism-Leninism and Chinese reality over the past twenty years, the undaunted leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung over the past twenty years, and the unceasing sacrificial struggles on behalf of the Party of countless martyrs, cadres and Party members over the past twenty years.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Loc. cit.

⁴¹ Editorial, *Ji-nian Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang nian zhounian*! (Commemorate the Twentieth Anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party) JFRB, (1 July 1941), p. 2.

This passage is noteworthy for the neat parallelism it sets up between the "holy trinity" of Marxism-Leninism -- theory, leader and party -- and for the implication that Mao Tse-tung, having correctly grasped theory, had successfully led the Party for twenty years, i.e., since the day of its birth. This is indeed a heady claim on behalf of Mao, but the editorial went on to strengthen its case by discussing in brief detail the body of "theories and policies of the Chinese revolution" which had emerged during the course of the past twenty years. Specifically, these theories and policies were said to be manifested in (1) the CCP's "basic political orientation"; (2) the "revolutionary Three People's Principles and the three great policies" of Sun Yat sen; and (3) "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's 'On Protracted War,' 'On New Democracy,' and the 'Shen-Kan-Ning Border Area Administrative Program'" which he edited, all three of which are the "highest crystallizations of the twenty years of the Chinese revolution." Yet in spite of this build-up of Mao's theoretical stature, the editorial ended in a strange note, calling upon the entire Party to plunge into renewed study only of Marxism-Leninism, the union of theory and Chinese reality, and the Three People's Principles. Although cadres were exhorted to unite closely "under the Party's Central Committee, led by Comrade Mao Tse-tung," there was no specific call to study Mao's writings as such.⁴²

⁴²Loc. cit.

This omission was most strange, and seemed to reflect an ambivalence as to the real merits of Mao's theoretical writings. Shortly after the appearance of this editorial, Chang Ju-hsin intervened to make good the deficiency, penning an article, "On Creative Study." This title is obviously an allusion to Shih Fu's essay of the previous January which failed to stress Mao's singular importance in the Party. Lamenting that not only Mao's writings, but also the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin were being given insufficient attention within the CCP, Chang nonetheless was quite unambiguous as to the Party members' priority in the forthcoming study movement:

Certain of our comrades still do not understand that without careful study and mastery of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's writings, one is incapable of becoming a Chinese Marxist, for these are the most typical writings for our Party to use to Sinify Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, they should be one of the best guides for all of our comrades in their study and analysis of Chinese society, and in solving the problems of the Chinese revolution.⁴³

With this injunction in mind, Party members could study the works of Mao and his four famous predecessors, especially their method of analyzing the distinctive characteristics of Chinese society. Thus, all members of the Party could become effective disciples of Mao Tse-tung in creatively applying Marxism-Leninism to the practical problems of the revolution in China. In the course of his essay, Chang referred specifically to three of Mao's major works to date ("On Protracted Warfare," "On the New Stage," and "On New Democracy"), claiming them to be "works of genius in creative

⁴³Chang Ju-hsin, "Lun chuang-zao-xing de xue-xi" (On Creative Study), JF, 131-132 (joint issue of 7 July 1941), p. 45.

Marxism," and to be numbered amongst the "world's greatest contributions of historic significance to Marxism-Leninism."⁴⁴ Chang did not at this time undertake a systematic study and classification of Mao's writings and their significance, but this was a task to which he turned nearly a year later, just as the Rectification Movement was moving into high gear. Nonetheless, these two essays of 1941 did establish Chang as a new voice in the swelling Maoist chorus.

In spite of Chang's efforts, there appeared to be a strange dualism in the Party's attitude toward Mao's stature as a theoretician, and toward the value of his writings as study materials for the unfolding campaign to raise the Party's theoretical level. As in years past, Mao was having difficulty in shaking off his image as a practical leader, however important, one whose chief accomplishments lay in the field of organization, strategy, and tactics, and not in theory. Nor was it only the Returned Students and other Party antagonists who remained doubtful as to Mao's theoretical credentials. This hesitation is well illustrated in the remarks of Chu Teh, the Party's top military leader, who on 1 July 1941 published a short essay to commemorate the CCP's twentieth anniversary. Chu maintained that the armies led by the CCP were guided in all their work by the "army-building principles" of Sun Yat-sen, and that, moreover, the Party had gone on to "inherit and develop" these principles of Sun. "The Chinese Communist Party," said Chu, "has created its own strategies and tactics...[which]...are great dis-

⁴⁴Loc. cit.

coveries and creations in the history of warfare."⁴⁵ Yet nowhere in the essay did Chu even refer to Mao by name, let alone credit him with innovation in the military field. Considering that all of Mao's important military writings had been published by this time, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Chu was deliberately slighting Mao on this key issue. The slight was doubly insulting insofar as it was precisely in the military field that Mao could claim to have added significantly to the Party's store of theoretical knowledge.

The attitude of Liu Shao-ch'i is also interesting. Liu, who had shown some concern at the first signs of a Maoist cult during the cadre study movement of 1939-40, appears to have remained ambivalent in his attitude to Mao as the Party's supposed leading theorist. Liu clearly recognized Mao as the Party's top leader, for in a series of lectures delivered in 1941, he instructed his audience to the effect that:

We obey the Party, the Central Committee and the truth, not individuals. Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung have done good work and represented the truth. Hence we obey them.⁴⁶

It is true that Liu's warning against obedience to mere "individuals" as opposed to the Party and Central Committee is reminiscent

⁴⁵Chu Teh, "Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang yu ge-ming zhan-zheng," (The Chinese Communist Party and Revolutionary War), JFRB (1 July 1941), p. 2.

⁴⁶Liu Shao-ch'i, "Training in Organization and Discipline," a series of lectures delivered to the Central China Party School in mid-to-late 1941, as translated in Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, I; p. 385.

of his earlier attitude in 1939, when he cautioned against the "worship of idols." However, this is more than compensated for by his bracketing of Mao with Marx and Lenin, his claim that Mao, like his two great predecessors, represents "the truth," and his declaration that Mao is worthy of the Party members' obedience. Yet in another letter of 13 July, in which he discussed questions of theory at some length, Liu completely ignored Mao. While lauding the organizational and revolutionary strength of the CCP, Liu equally deplored the Chinese Party's "relative immaturity" in the important area of "ideological preparation and theoretical cultivation." There were good reasons for this inadequacy, conceded Liu, including previous ideological quarrels within the Party, the short history of Marxism in China, the pressing need for practical revolutionary work, and the acute shortage of Chinese translations of Marxist-Leninist writings. This last problem, said Liu, was aggravated by the scarcity of Party members who were competent in foreign languages. (Although Liu did not say so, the small body of foreign-language readers included himself and all of the Returned Students, but not Mao Tse-tung.) For all these reasons, concluded Liu, the "Sinification of Marxism, that is, using the principles of Marxism-Leninism to interpret the historical practice of Chinese society, and to guide this practice, is exceedingly difficult."⁴⁷ By 1941 the alleged difficulty of Sinifying

⁴⁷Liu Shao-ch'i, "Da Song Liang tong-zhi de xin" (A Letter in Reply to Comrade Sung Liang), in Liu Shao-qi wen-ti zi-liao zhuan-ji (A Special Collection of Materials on the Question of Liu Shao-ch'i), Fang Chun-kuei, ed., Taipei: Institute for the Study of Chinese Communist Problems, 1970, pp. 113-115. The letter is dated 13 July (1941?). Stuart Schram first brought attention to Sung

Marxism had become a cliché within the CCP, and Liu was simply restating the problem. But what of Mao's major treatise of 1940, "On New Democracy," which was supposed to have effected in a systematic way the union of Marxist theory and Chinese practice, and which had been accepted both at home and abroad as the CCP's single most important theoretical and programmatic document to date? Of this Liu made no mention. Having totally ignored Mao's theoretical contributions, Liu concluded in a most forthright manner that:

What we regard as the desired theoretical standard of the Chinese Party includes a unified grasp of the principles and methods of Marxism-Leninism and the laws of development of the history of Chinese society. Regardless of what aspect of this we wish to consider, the large majority of comrades in the Chinese Party are still extremely inadequate. A great work wei-da de zhu-zuo has still not yet appeared, and this remains an exceedingly important task for the Chinese Party.⁴⁸

Though Liu perhaps did not realize it at the time, "On New Democracy" was as great a work as any Mao was to produce in the future.⁴⁹

By mid-1943, however, Liu had reconsidered his position, and had discovered "great works" by Mao where he had earlier perceived none to exist.

Liang's letter and its implications in an article of 1970, "The Party in Chinese Communist Ideology," in Lewis, ed., op. cit., p. 177, n.3.

⁴⁸Lui, "Da Song Liang tong-zhi de xin," pp. 113-115.

⁴⁹We do not wish to imply that Mao's many writings since 1940 are neither interesting nor important. Nonetheless, "On New Democracy" was offered in 1940 as a polished, comprehensive synthesis of Mao's thinking on the Chinese revolution, and it had a dramatic impact at the time on both Chinese and foreign audiences. Even today, it is widely regarded as one of his most important writings.

By mid-1940 Mao personally was not faring too well in the new study campaign he had proposed in May. This is not to suggest that the study campaign itself was faltering, for on both 1 July and 1 August the Party's Central Committee passed resolutions approving the campaign and establishing guidelines for its implementation. In particular, these resolutions called for "personal reform with the weapon of self-criticism and the method of intensified study," and urged the entire Party to "oppose the evil of separating the study of Marxist-Leninist theory and principles from the understanding of the conditions of Chinese society and the solution of the problems of the Chinese Revolution."⁵⁰ Yet the fact remains that none of these resolutions referred to Mao as the CCP's outstanding theoretician who was worthy of emulation, nor did they recommend any of his writings as official study materials in the upcoming movement. It thus becomes clear that the Central Committee was caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it was urging the rejection of the abstract study of Marxism-Leninism divorced from Chinese reality. At the same time, it refused to recommend the study of the works of Mao Tse-tung, the Party leader who had specialized in the concrete application of Marxist theory to the practice of the revolution in China. The Party had reached an impasse. The Returned Students were understandably reluctant to support a campaign for the study of Mao's works, as they were most likely to be used as the negative examples in any such movement.

⁵⁰"Central Committee Resolution on Strengthening the Party Spirit" (1 July 1941), in Compton, op. cit., p. 159; "Central Committee Resolution on Investigation and Research" (1 August 1941), in Compton, op. cit., p. 73.

Even seemingly pro-Maoist leaders like Chu Teh appeared reluctant to see their own personal contributions swept aside in a mass movement to elevate Mao. Liu Shao-ch'i, who represented a wing of the Party which was hostile to the Returned Students, but who was not really in the Maoist camp, was obviously troubled over Mao's credibility as the Party's leading theoretician. As became increasingly evident during cheng-feng, the intellectuals within the Party were also seriously divided on their attitude to Mao, and their internecine blood-letting was to provide the focus of the campaign during the spring and summer of 1942.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAOISTS RECTIFY THE PARTY, 1942

(i) Mao's Ascendancy in the Party

The Rectification Campaign of 1941-42 is one of those pivotal points in the history of the CCP that has generated endless analysis. That it was essentially an indigenous Chinese phenomenon is no longer seriously questioned. Boyd Compton pointed out in 1952 that the campaign benefited from the new permissiveness of the Comintern's Seventh Congress in 1935, but he concluded nonetheless that the "general reform movement...was a Chinese idea."¹ There has been little dissent from this early evaluation of the role of Moscow in the cheng-feng movement; rather, controversy has focused on the difficult problem of divining the various motivations behind the campaign. The by-now classic realpolitik interpretation is stated succinctly by Wang Ming, writing in 1969 from Moscow. Mao Tse-tung, claimed Wang,

...repeatedly said that by carrying out the campaign he wanted to achieve three aims: (1) to replace Leninism by Maoism; (2) to write the history of the Chinese Communist Party as the history of Mao Tse-tung alone; (3) to elevate the personality of Mao Tse-tung above the Central Committee and the entire Party...[in order to]... capture the chief leading place in the Party leadership and all power in the Party in his own hands.²

¹Compton, op. cit., p. xlv.

²Wang Ming, China: Cultural Revolution or Counter-Revolutionary Coup?, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1969, p. 46.

Whether or not Mao actually ever said any such thing can be disputed, but that the passage provides an excellent summary of what in fact happened cannot. Nor is Wang's conclusion simply a later rationalization of the obvious, for it accurately reflects unmistakable trends in the Party since the Tsunyi Conference in 1935, and especially the Party's Sixth Plenum three years later.³ By 1941 these trends towards Mao's domination of the CCP had become pronounced. They were strongly reinforced by the Rectification Movement and subsequent developments, and, allowing for certain fluctuations, they have persisted up to the present time.

Yet, as recent research has made abundantly clear, the cheng-feng campaign involved much more than a mere struggle for power on the part of Mao and his faction. Certain "revisionist" historians such as Mark Selden have focused attention away from the purely political aspects of cheng-feng and towards the social significance of the plethora of secondary campaigns that sprang up in the wake of rectification. It was this series of intensive campaigns in all

³We do not wish to suggest that prior to the Rectification Movement Mao had wanted to create a personal cult to the extent that it later developed. Nonetheless, although domestic and foreign circumstances conjoined in 1943 to provide the appropriate political climate for such a cult, there is little evidence to suggest that Mao took any decisive steps to nip the burgeoning cult in the bud. As became clear during the Cultural Revolution over twenty years later, Mao was quite prepared to foster his own cult as a means of strengthening his political power if he felt such a step was necessary. In the mid-1940's no less than the late 1960's, it was clearly in Mao's interest to promote -- or at the very least not hinder -- his personal cult as pre-eminent thinker and leader of the Chinese Communist movement. On this point, see Edgar Snow's interview with Mao to which previous reference has been made, in Snow, Long Revolution, pp. 168-170.

sectors of Yen-an life, argues Selden, that gave rise to the mass line -- "a conception of leadership in which mobilization of the masses was enshrined as the Party's fundamental approach to the problems of war, revolution, politics and production."⁴ This is undoubtedly true, but the "revisionist" argument sometimes goes a little farther, as in the case of Peter Seybolt, who notes the close correlation between the reformist slogans of cheng-feng and specific criticisms of the educational system that appeared in Liberation Daily between 1942-44. The education campaign that accompanied cheng-feng was a genuine effort at real reform, argues Seybolt, not just window-dressing to disguise the fierce power struggle within the top echelons of the Party. Thus, he concludes, "these criticisms bring to life all of the clichés of the cheng-feng campaign and serve to refute the common contention that cheng-feng was primarily a means employed to resolve a power struggle within the Party."⁵ This, however, is simply not the case: Seybolt's research (like that of Selden and others) indicates that the power struggle was not the sole motivating factor in cheng-feng, but it fails to provide a satisfactory rank-order of all possible factors ranging from "primary" on down the scale. Indeed, it is perhaps futile to attempt to construct such a rank order; attention should rather be focused on the interplay of the many diverse factors that undoubtedly went into cheng-feng, considerations of power being among

⁴Mark Selden, "The Yen-an Legacy: The Mass Line," in A. Doak Barnett, ed., Chinese Communist Politics in Action, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, pp. 110-112.

⁵Peter J. Seybolt, "The Yen-an Revolution in Mass Education," CQ, 48 (October - December 1971), p. 657.

the most important of them. If in the following pages we focus mainly on the power aspect of the Rectification Movement, it is simply because it is the most relevant to our present discussion, and not because we wish to slight the importance of other contributing factors.

Certainly, Mao Tse-tung was not one to ignore the problem of power, especially in light of the multi-faceted attacks on his own position during the course of the previous year. Nor was he likely to have been appreciative of the ambiguities in the attitudes of many of the Party's top leaders regarding his personal claim to theoretical and political pre-eminence, and the indecision to which this state of affairs had given rise. This was probably worrying to Mao, for he felt that the time was appropriate for some decisive action to give the CCP a clearly acknowledged leader. As early as 18 March 1941, Mao had concluded that Chiang Kai-shek was making renewed efforts to play up his stature as a "national leader" above class or party loyalties, concerned only with China's resistance to the Japanese.⁶ It is not surprising, then, that Mao moved quickly to resolve the indecisiveness in his own Party, all the better to counteract this attempt by Chiang and the Nationalists to project themselves as the only true representatives of the Chinese nation. Mao had no need to fear a possible counter-move by Wang Ming, for by this time Wang was very much on the fringe of things in Yanan. As late as 15 February 1941, Wang was still ranked second to Mao in an official Party document, but in the ensuing months Wang's power

⁶Mao, XJ II, p. 736.

rapidly ebbed and his contributions disappeared from the Party press.⁷ In all likelihood, Wang's fall from power was officially confirmed at the "enlarged session" of the Political Bureau which was convened in Yen-an in early September 1941. This important meeting made a thorough review of the "question of the political line in the past history of the Party, especially during the period of the Second Revolutionary Civil War."⁸ Unfortunately, as James Harrison has pointed out, "virtually nothing" is known of this meeting of the enlarged Politburo.⁹ We do know, however, that the session was of unusual importance. Mao himself ranked this meeting alongside certain other "inner-Party struggles" (Tsunyi 1935, Sixth Plenum 1938, Rectification 1942, Party history study movement 1943) as one of the decisive milestones in eliminating "factions which formerly existed and played an unwholesome role in the history of our Party."¹⁰ According to one official account, this Politburo meeting called for the "development of an all-Party ideological revolution" to overcome problems of organization and the separation of theory and practice.¹¹ And, writing in 1943, Jen Pi-shih revealed that this same session passed a formal resolution concluding that the "political line predominant in the Party during the period from the September

⁷Tokuda, op. cit., p. 48.

⁸Mao, XJ III, p. 903.

⁹Harrison, op. cit., p. 334.

¹⁰Mao, XJ III, pp. 893-894.

¹¹Chao Han, Tan-tan Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang zheng-feng yun-dong (Talks on the Chinese Communist Party Rectification Movement), Peking: no pub., 1957, p. 19. Cited in Harrison, op. cit., p. 334

Eighteenth Incident to the Tsunyi Conference was erroneous."¹² The deadlock in the Party had thus been resolved; Wang Ming and the Returned Students had fought and lost their last rearguard action, the other Party factions had been won over or at least neutralized, and the victorious Maoists were free to move ahead with their plans. And their plans were becoming more ambitious; as Harrison has concluded, the September 1941 Politburo meeting "probably made the formal decision to escalate the cadre education movement into the much more intense and politically orientated rectification movement."¹³

We have no knowledge of the debates that went on behind the closed doors of this Politburo meeting. The main arguments of the Maoist faction, however, can be deduced from the contents of an important editorial that appeared in Liberation Daily on 2 September 1941, on the very eve of the session. The editorial pointed out that as long ago as the Sixth Plenum in 1938, "Comrade Mao Tse-tung, our Party's leader," had called for the Party-wide study of Marxist theory and Chinese history. Specifically, Mao had urged the Sinification of Marxism as an antidote to "dogmatism" within the Party. Yet, asked the editors, have Mao's "instructions" in this regard been adequately implemented in the course of the past three years? "Very unfortunately, we can only answer: No, or very little."¹⁴ Somewhat impatiently, the editors claimed that Mao's

¹²Jen Pi-shih, "Guan-yu ji-ge wen-ti de yi-jian" (Opinions on Several Problems), n.pl: n. pub., 1943. Cited in Tokuda, op. cit., p. 47.

¹³Harrison, op. cit., p. 334.

¹⁴"Fan-wei xue-xi zhong de jiao-tiao-zhu-yi" (Oppose Dogmatism in Study), JFRB (2 September 1941), p. 1.

call for the Sinification of Marxism was fully in accord with Marxist-Leninist tradition, and warned that the time had come for a "decisive change" in the Chinese Party's handling of ideology. After all, had not Stalin himself stressed the need to distinguish clearly between "dogmatic Marxism" and "creative Marxism," and had not both Lenin and Stalin themselves departed from Marx and Engels in various significant ways, e.g., on the questions of the Soviet republic, the victory of socialism in one country, and the persistence of the state under socialism? Regarding Marxist-Leninist theory, did not the recently published CPSU History itself call upon all Marxist revolutionaries to be

...good at enriching this theory with the new experiences of the revolutionary movement, good at enriching it with new principles and new conclusions, good at developing and advancing it, and not being afraid, on the basis of the substance of this theory, of replacing certain outdated principles and conclusions with new principles and conclusions suitable to new historical environments.¹⁵

Having established the orthodoxy of the principle of theoretical innovation, the editors concluded most forthrightly that, like Lenin, Stalin, and the CPSU before them:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the leader of our Party, and the Central Committee of our Party are also developing and filling out Marxist-Leninist theory in accordance with the practical experiences of our country's revolution and the war of resistance.¹⁶

This editorial was probably a direct rebuttal of the line of argument advanced by Liu Shao-ch'i in his letter to Sung Liang of the previous July. The editors fully agreed with Liu that, in comparison with its

¹⁵Loc. cit.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

work in other areas, the theoretical level of the CCP was "extremely backward" and "unusually low," and that the Sinification of Marxism was not an easy task. Nonetheless, the essential point of difference between Liu and Liberation Daily was the latter's claim that Mao Tse-tung (and, as a concession to the principle of collective leadership, the Central Committee too) had gone a long way toward Sinifying Marxism in accordance with Chinese reality. Further, it was the Party's continued reluctance to implement Mao's instructions regarding theory that had perpetuated the CCP's backwardness in this crucial area. Hence, there was a need for a "decisive change" in the Party's (and undoubtedly much of the Central Committee's) attitude toward Mao's repeated calls for the rejection of "dogmatic Marxism" and the acceptance of "creative Marxism" on the ideological front.

This important editorial set the mood for the debates at the Politburo meeting of September 1941, and it most likely represents a close approximation of the argument of the victorious Maoists. Consequently, the "decisive change" they demanded of the Party was not long in manifesting itself; it came in a Liberation Daily editorial of 21 January 1942, entitled "Grasp the Key to Marxism-Leninism." Written to commemorate the eighteenth anniversary of Lenin's death in 1924, the editorial called upon the Party to distinguish clearly between the "physical body" and the "spirit" of Marxism-Leninism. The physical body is the "individual formulas and set phrases" of Marxism-Leninism, while its spirit is its "standpoint and methods." Most important, it is only the latter

which is the "genuine Marxist-Leninist weapon" which will ensure the eventual victory of the CCP. The editorial goes on to praise Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as "great teachers well-versed in the application of dialectics," and in particular lauds the CPSU History as an excellent source for the study of Lenin's and Stalin's correct application of dialectics. Nonetheless, the editorial continues:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung is applying dialectics and solving various practical problems in the present stage of the Chinese revolution. Therefore, his works are even more closely connected to and urgently needed by us, and should be carefully studied by us first of all [i.e., before anything else].¹⁷

Mao's important writings had of course been praised in the past in the Party media, but this appears to have been the first time that an official organ of the CCP declared in no uncertain terms that the study of Mao's works should take precedence over the voluminous writings of the four founders and directors of the international communist movement. As such, this editorial marks a watershed in the ideological history of the CCP, for it brings to a close the era of ideological diversity which had characterized the development of the Chinese Party since its founding in 1921. Marxist-Leninist theory had at last entered upon the correct path in its application to China's concrete environment. Henceforth, it would evolve dialectically into a new and higher form, "Mao Tse-tung's thought."

¹⁷"Zhang-wo Ma-Lie-zhu-yi de suo-yao" (Grasp the Key to Marxism-Leninism), JFRB, (21 January 1942), p. 1.

But this is anticipating events. Returning to 1942, we should note that the editorial of 21 January claimed that the work of the Party's ideological reconstruction had just begun. Mao personally contributed to the task ahead by issuing, only two days later, an order instructing the Border Region armies to publish and study the Party's "Kut'ien Resolutions" of December 1929. These resolutions, which are equally concerned with combatting organizational and ideological deviations within the Party and the army, were in actual fact written by Mao himself, although this was not revealed until 1944. This belated revelation was probably designed to relieve Mao of the embarrassment of being seen to be ordering the "attentive study of his own works," to use Stuart Schram's apt phrase.¹⁸ The Rectification Campaign was formally inaugurated by Mao in the opening days of February, when he delivered two major speeches on the need for ideological reform within the CCP. In these two addresses, Mao asserted unequivocally that the "general line of the Party is correct." Still, he felt compelled to acknowledge that in view of the CCP's rich store of revolutionary experience, the "advance of our theoretical level has been exceptionally slow and retarded."¹⁹ In particular, the CCP suffered from three "rather serious" problems -- subjectivism in thought, sectarianism in organization, and formalism in literary expression. These three problems could be reduced to one, namely, subjectivism, for "all sectarian thoughts

¹⁸On this point, see Schram, Mao, p. 233.

¹⁹Mao's two speeches inaugurating the cheng-feng campaign are "Reform in Learning, the Party, and Literature" (1 February 1942); and "In Opposition to Party Formalism" (8 February 1942). Both are translated in Compton, op. cit., pp. 9-32, 33-53. The passages cited are on pp. 9-12.

are subjectivist...[and]...subjectivism and sectarianism use Party formalism as their propaganda tool and form of expression."²⁰ Having singled out subjectivism as the chief source of ideological error in the Party, Mao complicated the issue by claiming that there were in fact two major forms of subjectivism, viz, "empiricism" and "dogmatism." Both deviations were unwholesome, warned Mao, but of the two there was no doubt that dogmatism was the "more important and dangerous."²¹

Thus, without directly naming them, Mao had pointed to the Returned Students as the chief source of subjectivism (and hence sectarianism and formalism) in the Party. He reinforced the case against them by suggesting that there were those within the Party who had ignored the Sixth Plenum's resolutions on the elimination of formalism "as if they were intentionally opposing these decisions."²² Yet, by the time Mao delivered this rebuke to the Returned Students, their fate had already been sealed. According to a Liberation Daily account, the meeting of over 800 higher-level Party cadres to whom Mao had addressed his remarks rendered a "final judgment" (mo-ri shen-pan) on the surviving phenomenon of Party formalism within the ranks of the CCP.²³ Castigating the Returned Students as the leading negative examples in the ideological sphere was but one side of the Maoist coin; the other was putting forward

²⁰Ibid., pp. 30-33.

²¹Ibid., p. 20.

²²Ibid., p. 53.

²³See the relevant news item in JFRB (10 February 1942), p. 3.

a positive model for the Party cadres to emulate. Mao of course named no names, but he did go into considerable detail in describing the exact image he had in mind:

What type of theoretician do we need? We need theoreticians who base their thinking on the standpoints, concepts, and methods of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, who are able to explain correctly the actual problems issuing from history and revolution, who are able to give a scientific interpretation and theoretical explanation of the various problems of Chinese economics, politics, military affairs, and culture. This is the type of theoretician we need.²⁴

In describing his model theoretician, was Mao Tse-tung immodestly referring to himself? This was most certainly the case, and it was probably appreciated as such by the high-level cadres in Mao's audience. Ten days later, however, Chang Ju-hsin removed any lingering doubts as to who was to be the CCP's theoretical paragon by publishing his two-part essay, "Study and Grasp the Theory and Strategy of Mao Tse-tung." In this article Chang concluded that to "endeavour to study and grasp Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy is the glorious fighting task of the entire Party at the present time."²⁵

Chang's essay of 18-19 February 1942 is of considerable interest, for it represents the first official attempt to systematize the content and structure of Mao Tse-tung's thought on the basis of an integrated study of Mao's most important writings prior to 1942. In the course of his exposition, Chang goes to considerable lengths in detailing the particular writings of Mao which best express the essence of the various component parts of his thought. Hence,

²⁴Compton, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁵Chang Ju-hsin, "Xue-xi he zhang-wo Mao Ze-dong de li-lun he ce-lue" (Study and Grasp the Theory and Strategy of Mao Tse-tung), JFRB, (18-19 February 1942), p. 3, both issues.

Chang's discussion provides the first "annotated bibliography" of Mao's writings, and it was obviously intended to follow up the Liberation Daily editorial of 21 January, which had designated Mao's writings as the most important study material for the CCP. Chang's article provided the Party cadres and others with an approved reading list on Mao's thought in preparation for the coming Rectification Campaign, during which non-Chinese Marxist-Leninist texts were relegated to a position of secondary importance in the CCP's ideological curriculum. To return to the main point, however, Chang argues that Mao's thinking can be divided into three "component parts," namely, "ideological line," "political line," and "military line." The first of these (defined alternatively by Chang as "ideological methodology") is the most important part, as it determines the other parts, but it cannot be regarded as distinct from them. Rather, argues Chang, the "internal organic unity of these three component parts forms the system of Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy."²⁶ For Chang, then, Mao Tse-tung's thought as of early 1942 consisted of a body of correct political and military doctrines based on the creative application of a correct theoretical methodology to the concrete problems of the revolution in China. As for the relationship of Mao's "theory and strategy" to classical Marxism-Leninism, Chang makes it perfectly clear that:

²⁶Loc. cit. It should be mentioned in passing that Chang thought highly of Mao's "Lecture Notes on Dialectical Materialism." He regarded them as an important source for the study of Mao's methodology, and drew particular attention to Chapter II, Part 11, entitled "On Practice." Apart from content analysis, Chang's attribution is our principal corroborative evidence for believing that Mao actually wrote these lecture notes during the Yanan period. For additional comments by Chang on Mao's "Lecture Notes," see his earlier essay on Mao in JF, 127 (30 April 1941), p. 20.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy is precisely the application and development of the theory and strategy of Marxism-Leninism in a colonial, semi-colonial and feudal society. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory is Chinese Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, whoever wants to become a Chinese Marxist-Leninist must study and grasp Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy and, moreover, become his loyal disciple.²⁷

On the reasonable assumption that Chang Ju-hsin's analysis reflected the point of view of the Maoist faction in Yen-an, we can conclude that the CCP was at last formally entering the period of Mao Tse-tung's ideological dominance.

Yet if we are to believe Chang Ju-hsin, even at this late date there were those within and without the Party who were less than happy with this state of affairs. Chang naturally enough dismisses as Trotskyist slander Yeh Ch'ing's accusation that Mao's thought is little more than "Chinese peasantism" or "Hung Hsiu-ch'uanism." Renegades like Yeh, scoffs Chang, are unable to understand that Mao Tse-tung's thought is the "theory and strategy of the twentieth-century Chinese proletariat, the scientific weapon of the liberation of the Chinese nation and society." The criticisms of Yeh Ch'ing and his ilk are perfectly understandable to Chang, but he finds it rather surprising that in the CCP there are still a "small number of people who, right up to the present day... persist in maintaining an insufficiently respectful, and individually even a scornful attitude" regarding Mao's theory and strategy of the Chinese revolution. These people, continues Chang, can be divided into two major groups: (1) those lacking in theoretical knowledge and political experience;

²⁷ Loc. cit.

and (2) those with "stubborn and conservative" minds, i.e., the "dogmatists" and the "sectarians." The first group can be helped by means of proper education, says Chang, but the second group must be resolutely exposed and made to discard their "anti-scientific, anti-Marxist-Leninist" attitudes. This task accomplished, the Party can then concentrate on using Mao's theory and strategy to train large numbers of "Mao Tse-tung-style" (Mao Ze-dong shi de) cadres, thus ensuring the eventual triumph of the revolution. The development of as few as one or two hundred cadres in the upper echelons of the Party, cadres who are able to "genuinely grasp Mao Tse-tungism [Mao Ze-dong zhu-yi] in theory and practice," will certainly ensure final victory.²⁸

Chang's essay did much to strengthen Mao's claim to be a systematic theorist in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, but nonetheless Chang failed to clarify the issue sufficiently well on at least two important points. In the first place, he failed to come up with a precise term which would adequately convey the essence of the body of theory associated with Mao. In the course of his essay, Chang employed at least three separate terms to represent Mao's ideological system: "Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy"; "Chinese Marxism-Leninism"; and "Mao Tse-tungism." Chang seems to have been the first known CCP theorist to have used "Mao Tse-tungism" in an official Party publication, and, for reasons we shall consider

²⁸Loc. cit.

later, appears to have been the last during the period under review.²⁹ His preferred usage was clearly "Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy" (i.e., theory and practice), but this is an excessively cumbersome term, whether in Chinese or English. Chang's failure to come up with a more adequate term should not be dismissed lightly in the context of a political movement that places great importance on exactness of terminology (if not always of thought), and it required another year and more before "Mao Tse-tung's thought" was accepted as the official term. A more worrisome problem for the Maoists was Chang's somewhat narrow interpretation of the content of Mao's thought. There could be little disagreement with Chang's claim that Mao's correct "ideological methodology" was the basis of his correct "political line" and "military line." The probable disagreement was likely to be centered on Chang's argument that these three component parts constituted the sum total of Mao's thought. That is, was the content of Mao's thought merely of an ideological, political and military nature, and if so, would this provide a sufficient basis for Mao's claim to be the CCP's undisputed theoretical leader? Embarrassingly enough, Mao had already answered this question in his key speech of 8 February to the Party's leading cadres. At that time, Mao emphasized that the kind of theoretician the CCP needed was one who was

²⁹During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-68, certain Red Guard groups used the term "Mao Tse-tungism" in some of their writings, but this usage was never approved officially, and it quickly passed from the scene. For a discussion of some terminological problems regarding "Mao Tse-tung's thought," see James Chieh Hsiung, Ideology and Practice, (The Evolution of Chinese Communism), New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, pp. 126-147.

competent in four distinct areas, namely "Chinese economics, politics, military affairs, and culture." These four categories were not chosen randomly. Rather, they carefully reflect the comprehensiveness expected of anyone claiming theoretical leadership, and, true to Marxist tradition, economics is listed in first place.

Given the integrated and systematic nature of Marxist thought, one had to be a complete theorist or none at all, a truth well understood by Stalin in his own drive to consolidate power in the Soviet Union. Yet as of early 1942 Mao Tse-tung fell far short of the mark, and this was made all the more obvious by Chang Ju-hsin's emphasis on Mao's political and military thought, and his failure to even mention, let alone analyze, Mao's contributions in the fields of economics and culture. Chang was a prisoner of his sources, however, for the fact was that over the years Mao had devoted little attention to either economics or cultural matters, and his writings on these two subjects were very thin indeed. Mao never had been much interested in purely economic matters, and his admittedly growing concern with cultural problems had been of very recent origin.³⁰ In any event, as of the early spring of 1942 he had failed to produce

³⁰Mao's relative lack of interest in questions of economic theory prior to 1942 is undeniable. Recently, however, certain scholars have questioned Mao's alleged neglect of economics after 1942. Jack Gray, for example, claims that "Mao's theories concerning the economic aspects of social organization are as important as his theories concerning political leadership, but they have been almost totally ignored in the West." See Gray's chapter on "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung," in Jack Gray and Patrick Cavendish, Chinese Communism in Crisis (Maoism and the Cultural Revolution), New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968, p. 62.

any single, comprehensive treatise in either the economic or cultural fields which stood comparison with his many important writings dealing with political and military problems. Mao was thus in danger of being hoisted on his own petard in his quest for theoretical supremacy, as any thoughtful Party cadre who listened to his speech of 8 February and read Chang's essay ten days later must have been aware. With this perspective in mind, it would appear more than fortuitous that before the end of the year, Mao had delivered himself of the two most comprehensive treatises he was ever to write in the economic and cultural fields. The first of these is his celebrated "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art" (2, 23 May 1942), which have since served as the fundamental Maoist documents on cultural matters, and to which we shall return later. The second (and much more obscure) dissertation is his "Economic and Financial Problems," a lengthy report Mao delivered in December 1942 at a conference of senior cadres in the Border Region. Only the first chapter of this treatise was to be included in Mao's Selected Works, but there is little doubt that the text as a whole is regarded by the Maoists as forming the cornerstone of Mao's claim to competence in the economic field. According to the introductory note to the chapter in the Selected Works, Mao "severely criticizes the mistaken notion of concentrating on public revenue and expenditure to the neglect of economic development."³¹ Since economic development is at the very heart of the Marxist materialist conception of history, Mao could thus be portrayed as having redirected the CCP to the correct

³¹See the editorial comments in Mao, XJ III, pp. 846-847.

economic path under the trying and near-fatal conditions of the combined Nationalist-Japanese blockade of the Yen-an Border Area. Indeed, as the same editorial note points out, Mao's report of December 1942 (plus two other related articles on economic matters) "formed the Party's basic programme for leading the production campaign in the Liberated Areas...[which in turn]...provided the Party with a rich store of experience for guiding economic construction in later years."³² By the end of 1942, then, Mao had made good the two glaring deficiencies in his theoretical credentials, and he was ready to take his place as the CCP's undisputed theoretical spokesman.

(ii) High Tide of Rectification

The cheng-feng movement developed rapidly following Mao's two key speeches in early February 1942. In line with its formal decision to move ahead with a rectification campaign, the Politburo passed a special resolution on cadre education (28 February) which clearly delineated the CCP's dual orientation in study. In ideology for example, Party cadres were to take as their focus of study "Marxist methodology in thought," and the "history of the development of Chinese thought in the last hundred years." In political science, the required topics were to be "Marxist-Leninist writings on tactics and strategy," and the "history of our Party's twenty-year struggle."³³ Characteristically, the Politburo failed to recommend the study of Mao's writings, but this deficiency was made good a few days later by K'ang Sheng, who emerged as the leading

³²Loc. cit.

³³Compton, op. cit., p. 86.

Maoist manager of the campaign. Addressing two large meetings of Party cadres in the opening week of March, K'ang provided the study guidelines for cheng-feng. Mao Tse-tung's speech of 1 February, said K'ang, is

...the guide for the ideological reconstruction of the entire Party, the primer in the dialectical materialist method for all those who engage in scientific work. It embodies both Marxist-Leninist theory which is genuinely combined with reality, and the development of the Party's correct line since the Tsunyi Conference.³⁴

K'ang's reference to the Party's "correct line" since Tsunyi was clearly a warning sign to the audience. In their eagerness to uproot the three "evil tendencies" in the Party, the cadres were to exercise careful discrimination in their choice of targets. To eliminate all confusion on this important issue, K'ang once again referred to Mao's speech of 1 February:

When studying this report, one should distinguish between the periods before and after the Tsunyi Conference, because prior to the conference subjectivism and sectarianism occupied a ruling position in the Party, while remaining merely as remnants after the conference.³⁵

It was apparent from this remark that the spearhead of attack during cheng-feng was to be the Returned Students, or, more specifically, the mistaken line they had pursued prior to Tsunyi, and the lingering

³⁴"Kang Sheng tong-zhi tong-chi dang ba-gu" (Comrade K'ang Sheng Bitterly Denounces Party Formalism), JFRB (8 March 1942), p. 1. See also "Zheng-dun xue-feng, dang-feng, wen-feng -- Kang Sheng tong-zhi liang-ci bao-gao zhai-yao" (The Rectification of Learning, the Party, and Literature -- Extracts from Two Reports by Comrade K'ang Sheng), in Zheng-feng wen-jian (Reform Documents), 4th ed., n. pl.: Ji-lu-yu shu-dian, 1944, I, pp. 101-105. The passage cited is on p. 102.

³⁵Loc. cit. For a great deal of information (and hostile comment) on K'ang Sheng's key role in directing cheng-feng, see Vladimirov, op. cit., references throughout the book.

influence it still exercised within the Party. Equally clear was the warning that the main target of the campaign was not to be the Party's present dominant line (viz., Mao's line) as it developed after Tsunyi.

K'ang did not specifically exempt the Party's current leadership and policies from criticism, but he left no doubt as to where the bulk of any criticism was to lie. It is surprising, then, that the "barrage of critical essays" that suddenly flooded the Yen-an press from mid-March seems to have ignored K'ang's words of advice and warning. These essays, from the able pens of such left-wing writers as Ting Ling, Hsiao Chün, Ai Ch'ing, and others, have been studied in detail by Merle Goldman. Goldman has classified these critical essays (za-wen) into two types: (1) criticisms of specific shortcomings of the CCP organization and its cadres, who were depicted as betraying the true ideals of communism in the pursuit of short-term goals; and (2) assertions of the writer's role as the true guardian of man's spiritual needs, and the relegation of the Party's power to his material and physical needs.³⁶ In actual fact, these two main types of essays were best exemplified in the writings not of the authors above, but in those of Wang Shih-wei, the relatively obscure theorist and translator with whom Ch'en Po-ta had quarrelled in early 1941. In "The Wild Lily" (13, 23 March 1942), Wang accused the Party leadership of having failed to build a truly classless society, and lamented the fate of the young people who had eagerly come to Yen-an "in search of beauty and warmth, but saw

³⁶Goldman, Literary Dissent, pp. 21-22.

only ugliness and coldness." In his "Statesmen and Artists," he called upon his fellow writers and artists to play their due role in reforming the Communist movement, for it was they who "stimulated the moral strength of the revolution."³⁷ It is obvious that criticisms of this type fell far outside the rather definite parameters set for the cheng-feng campaign by K'ang Sheng. We can thus agree with Goldman that as of April 1942 the Maoists had not gained the "full concurrence" of the Party's intellectuals, but had on the contrary "come up against a hard core of resistance."³⁸

The publication of Wang's articles and other critical essays gave rise to immediate repercussions in the Yen-an mass media. On 16 March the Party's Propaganda Department issued instructions regarding the reorganization of all Party newspapers in accordance with the needs of the Rectification Movement. It was stipulated that "well intentioned" opinions different from those of the Party were to be published, although no specific guidelines were given in this regard.³⁹ In a speech reported on 2 April, however, Mao personally clarified this important issue. He commented favourably on the "enthusiastic discussions" that had marked the inauguration of cheng-feng, especially in certain organizations. Nevertheless, he felt compelled to criticize "some people" who had recently been speaking from "incorrect standpoints," e.g., the "viewpoint of absolute egalitarianism," and the "method of ridicule and intrigue."

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

³⁹ See the relevant news item in JFRB, (1 April 1942), p. 2.

He rejected these individuals' recent demands for "absolute equality" as mere illusion both now and in the future, and condemned their method of criticism as detrimental to the unity of the Party.⁴⁰ Mao's comments were clearly directed at Wang Shih-wei and his fellow literary leftists, but his warning appears to have gone unheeded. According to Goldman, the stream of critical essays went unchecked until the middle of April, when it "abruptly stopped."

Although this literary assault was quickly terminated by the Maoists, it was not before considerable damage had been done to the Rectification Movement itself. As Goldman has pointed out, the writers helped to shape the course of cheng-feng, for the strength of their criticisms forced the Maoists to focus more attention on the problem of the intellectuals' dissidence, and less on the genuine shortcomings of the Party as such.⁴¹ Obviously concerned lest the movement get bogged down in side issues concerning the writers, the Propaganda Bureau on 4 April approved a report setting out in some detail the precise framework within which the campaign was to unfold. Complaining that the current "revolution in Party thought" was not developing properly, the report mapped out a rigorous course of study and struggle, the overriding aim of which was to contribute to the "consolidation of the entire Party." The report then listed eighteen readings (later increased to twenty-two) which were to form the core of the cadres' study materials in cheng-feng; of the total, no less than one-third came from the pen of Mao Tse-tung

⁴⁰See the report on Mao's speech in JFRB (2 April 1942), p. 1.

⁴¹Goldman, Literary Dissent, p. 33.

himself. In contrast, although about one-quarter of the readings were from Soviet writers, they were only brief extracts, the majority of which were added to the reading list later on, almost as an afterthought.⁴² Nonetheless, although the Maoists took these necessary steps to prevent the campaign from being blown off course, they could not ignore the serious problem of dissidence that the writers' criticisms had posed. Actually, the writers' attack had given Mao a Heaven-sent opportunity to present in a formal way his emerging theories in the cultural field, a subject he had hitherto largely neglected. Also, as noted previously, the writers served as a convenient target for cheng-feng, for the spearhead of criticism could be aimed at them as negative examples, with the least possible damage being done to the fabric of the Party organization. In addition, the Returned Students had much to gain from the focus of attention passing to the writers, for it was thereby at least partially deflected from themselves. The political power of the Returned Students as an inner-Party faction was certainly broken during cheng-feng, but it is surely significant that not one of them -- not even Wang Ming -- became an individual target of public criticism and struggle. That dubious distinction was reserved for the unfortunate Wang Shih-wei, who had survived his quarrel with Ch'en Po-ta in the spring of 1941, but was not to be so fortunate during the cheng-feng campaign.

⁴²For a full translation of this report, see Compton, op. cit., pp. 1-8.

Mao Tse-tung's counter-attack on the dissident writers was heralded by his opening and closing addresses at the series of forums held in Yenan during May 1942, when the general problem of culture ("art and literature") was discussed. We will not concern ourselves with the content of Mao's ideas on culture as he articulated them here. As Howard Boorman has well expressed it, Mao's talks in large part "represented his summation of theories which had been widely discussed in leftist literary circles in China since the 1930's."⁴³ Coming from Mao's mouth, though, these cultural theories now became official CCP policy, and they filled an important gap in Mao's claim to be a leading Marxist-Leninist theorist in his own right. Mao's key concern was not art and literature at all, but rather politics, the subject that came first in his list of interests. In an obvious reference to the dissident writers, Mao insisted that all Party members, including those involved in literature and the arts, "adopt the stand of the Party, the stand of Party spirit and Party policy." Unfortunately, continued Mao, "many comrades have themselves frequently departed from the correct stand," with the inevitable result that many defects exist on both questions of content and style in revolutionary art and literature.⁴⁴ On the relative importance of content and style, Mao made it clear where his priorities lay: "As I see it," he informed his audience, "the political side [i.e., content] is more of a problem at present.

⁴³Howard L. Boorman, "The Literary World of Mao Tse-tung, CQ, 13 (January-March 1963), p. 24.

⁴⁴Mao, Ji VIII, p. 112.

Some comrades lack basic political understanding and consequently have all sorts of muddled ideas."⁴⁵ Mao was not one to tolerate "muddled ideas" within the Party if he were in a position to do something about it, and he accordingly praised the ideological struggle which was "already underway in literary and art circles in Yen-an." The existence of such a struggle came as no surprise to the assembled cadres, but some were perhaps unprepared for the bitterness with which it was to be carried out in the ensuing months. Mao had given them a hint, however, for he described the unfolding struggle as one of "proletarian ideology against non-proletarian ideology." This served fair warning that no one was to expect an easy ride if he were engaged in oppositional activities, whether in speech, print, or behaviour.⁴⁶

Mao's talks on art and literature were not published in Liberation Daily until 19 October 1943, nearly one and a half years after he delivered them.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, there was no delay in stepping up the ideological struggle, for the forum on art and literature was soon followed by another, the "Forum on Party Democracy and Discipline." This conference, held between 27 May and 13 June 1942, at the Central Research Institute, is much less well known than the famous one that preceded it. Yet there is little doubt that it is

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 139.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 146.

⁴⁷This long delay was probably due to a lingering reluctance on the part of Mao's ranking colleagues to support his theoretical claims uncritically, especially in the cultural sphere, which was not really one of his areas of expertise. On this point see pp. 259-261 following.

of equal, if not greater, importance in the development of cheng-feng. It was at this series of meetings that the Maoists drove home their attack on the dissident writers and, through them, on all manifestations of opposition within the Party. Fortunately, the Liberation Daily reporter Wen Chi-tse has left us with a skeleton outline of the forum in his "Diary of a Struggle," published on 28 and 29 June. According to Wen, in its early days the forum focused on the general problem of reconciling the need for both democracy and discipline in the Party. Very soon, however, the main topic of discussion turned out to be Wang Shih-wei, and as the days went by his exposure and denunciation became the chief preoccupation of those participating in the sessions.⁴⁸ As Goldman has suggested, there were several good reasons why Wang was singled out as the main public target of cheng-feng. Wang, after all, had been the "most caustic" of the writers in his criticisms of the Party, he was one of the least well known and hence "most vulnerable" in the group, and there was little doubt that he had definite connections with Trotskyism, if only in the past. Finally, Wang had been in "constant conflict" with Ch'en Po-ta ever since their quarrel in the fall and winter of 1940-41. Given Ch'en's closeness to Mao, this probably sealed Wang's fate.⁴⁹ This last consideration is probably of some importance, for during the campaign Ch'en emerged as the Party's leading spokesman on the "Wang Shih-wei problem," and his

⁴⁸Wen Chi-tse, "Dou-zheng ri-ji" (Diary of a Struggle), JFRB (28-29 June 1942), p. 4 both issues.

⁴⁹Goldman, Literary Dissent, p. 37.

speeches and articles attacking Wang were given due prominence in the Yen-an press. For a few weeks in the summer of 1942, this shy and stammering scholar was to become the pivot of the Maoist purge of ideological dissidence within the Party, a role he was to repeat on a much larger scale during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's.⁵⁰

In the course of the forum sessions, Wang was denounced by a wide variety of critics besides Ch'en Po-ta; of particular poignancy was the fact that his accusers also included such fellow literary leftists as Ting Ling and Ai Ch'ing. Nevertheless, the bitterness between Wang and Ch'en appears to have poisoned the atmosphere of the forum meetings, and to have at times reduced the debate to the level of a witch hunt. Wang claimed to have been discriminated against "on all sides" from the time he arrived in Yen-an, remarking in particular that Ch'en had labelled him an "opportunist" in their debate on national forms in literature. At this point, according to Wen's account, Wang became very agitated and loudly denounced Ch'en as a "sectarian" to his face, and had to be restrained from continuing with his denunciation of Ch'en at the session in question.⁵¹ In spite of his stammer, Ch'en was not one to mince words with his enemies, and in his major speech to the forum he gave vent to his undoubted talent for invective pun, both witty and vulgar. According to Ch'en, "Wang Shit-stench" (王屎味) described himself as

⁵⁰For a useful, though limited, study of Ch'en's role in the Cultural Revolution, see the article by Parris Chang, of which previous mention has been made (p.19).

⁵¹Wen Chi-tse, op. cit.(pt. 2), p. 4.

a "man of integrity" (ying-gu-tou), the literal meaning of which is a man with "hard bones." Not so, said Ch'en. Not only does Wang not have hard bones, he is little more than a leech, which of course has no bones at all. Leeches may only be small and harmless-looking insects, cautioned Ch'en, but they are very dangerous, for they suck people's blood and harm them in many other ways. One cannot be too vigilant in guarding against these harmful little creatures, he reminded the audience, for they are often hidden deep within such seemingly beautiful flowers as "wild lilies" (a reference to Wang's by now infamous essay of the same title).⁵²

Ch'en's deft use of multiple pun was both clever and vicious, but it did not detract from the list of more serious charges he leveled against his cornered opponent. Ch'en's major speech attacking Wang was delivered to the forum on 9 June, and reprinted in part in the 15 June edition of Liberation Daily. In his address, Ch'en assembled such a long list of serious charges against Wang that one can sympathize with the latter's reputed characterization of Ch'en as one of his "biggest enemies" in Yen-an. In a lengthy speech which Wen Chi-tse described as "brilliant," Ch'en accused Wang of, amongst much else, ideological dogmatism, cultural elitism, personal careerism, and splittist activities directed against Mao Tse-tung. Ch'en's accusations against Wang illustrate the powerful combination of theoretical disputation, political manoeuvring, and

⁵²Ch'en Po-ta, "Guan-yu Wang Shi-wei," p. 4.

⁵³For details of these and other charges against Wang, see loc. cit.

personal vindictiveness which characterized the struggle against Wang Shih-wei. In this sense, Ch'en Po-ta probably set the general tone (albeit in a more intense manner) of much of the ideological struggle that permeated the entire Party structure at Yen-an during the rest of 1942 and early 1943. As for the unfortunate Wang Shih-wei, he became a model negative example of all that was wrong with the Party as the Maoists conceived it. Needless to say, Ch'en's final pronouncement on Wang was of the harshest kind:

The content of Wang Shih-wei's ideology is Trotskyism, which is anti-masses, anti-nation, anti-revolution and anti-Marxist, and serves the ruling classes, Japanese imperialism and international fascism.⁵⁴

Although the odds were heavily stacked against Wang, he apparently did not meekly give in to the unbearable pressure to which he was exposed. In fact, Ch'en complained that even though the essential Trotskyist nature of Wang's ideological position was fully exposed, he refused to admit guilt and persisted in his erroneous views. In particular, Wang claimed that cheng-feng was nothing more than a campaign in which "Chairman Mao is uniting the orthodox people [in the Party] to oppose those who are unorthodox."⁵⁵ Wang disappeared from the scene shortly after the conclusion of the formal struggle against him; it was only much later that Mao personally admitted (with regret) that Wang had been executed as a result of a local-level decision during the evacuation of Yen-an in 1947.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁵⁵Wang's claim, as reported by Wen Chi-tse, op. cit. (pt. 1) p. 4.

⁵⁶According to Mao, the decision to execute Wang "did not come

Wang Shih-wei was the outstanding victim of the initial negative phase of the cheng-feng movement, a phase which came to an end with the final session of the forum at the Central Research Institute on 13 June. Thenceforth, the focus of the movement switched from the heated denunciation of all "incorrect" ideas within the Party to the affirmation of what the Maoists perceived to be the "correct" ideological position. Ch'en Po-ta continued to play a prominent role in this more positive phase, and endeavoured in the second half of 1942 and early 1943 to spell out the general guidelines of thought reform among the Party's cadres. In a series of articles and speeches, Ch'en hammered home the importance of eliminating the evil of petty-bourgeois ideology from the minds of certain of the Party's cadres. These unfortunate people, in Ch'en's diagnosis, were suffering from the "illness" of dogmatism, and they were in urgent need of the services of a reputable physician. Needless to say, Ch'en highly recommended "Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the Party Central Committee" as "good doctors" (hao de da-fu) in the specialized field of ideological pathology.⁵⁷ In their quest for mental health, the cadres

from the Centre." Wang's unfortunate case later became a prime example of how not to treat political deviants within the Party. On this issue, see Mao Tse-tung, "Talk at an Enlarged Central Work Conference (30 January 1962), as translated in Stuart R. Schram, ed., Chairman Mao Talks to the People (Talks and Letters: 1956-1971), New York: Pantheon Books, 1974, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁷Ch'en Po-ta, "Jiu jie-ji ben-xing de gai-zao" (The Transformation of Traditional Class Nature), JFRB (27 June 1942), p. 4.

were urged by Ch'en to "continuously arm their minds with Marxism-Leninism," for only by doing so could they successfully make the all-important transition from perceptual to conceptual knowledge, thereby achieving a true understanding of the real world. Such a transition is not to be easily achieved, however. For example, although over the years the CCP has produced many notable theorists and leaders, none of those who have been active mainly in the theoretical field has been successful in creating a distinctive Chinese revolutionary theory. Even his own efforts in this regard have achieved very little, confesses Ch'en, because he has not been sufficiently industrious and persistent.⁵⁸ Ch'en's emphasis on the importance of sincere self-criticism among the Party's cadres is a constant theme in his writings during this entire period. In one speech in particular he stresses the need for every individual cadre to make a full confession to the Party of his personal shortcomings and errors in the past, so as to achieve a "new life" and a "new ideology."⁵⁹ In response to those who fear that such a total surrender to the Party would entail the destruction of human individuality, Ch'en argues that this fear is not well grounded. Basic human nature, says Ch'en, is essentially the same as class nature,"

⁵⁸Ch'en Po-ta, "Si-xiang de fan-xing" (Reflection in Thought), JFRB, (28 August 1942), p. 4.

⁵⁹Ch'en Po-ta, "Tan-bai yun-dong yu zi-wo fan-xing" (The Self-Confession Movement and Self-Reflection) (1943?), in Zheng-dun san-feng can-kao cai-liao (Reference Materials on the Rectification of the Three Evil Workstyles), edited by the Central Soviet Party Committee, n. pl.: n. pub., n. d., X, pp. 14-17.

so it naturally follows that the character of the Chinese Communist Party is the concentrated expression of the nature of the Chinese proletariat, which in turn is the manifestation of the most progressive form of human nature in China. Hence, in surrendering to the Chinese Communist Party, a cadre is not liquidating his own particular individuality but is in fact filling it with a new content -- proletarian human nature. Nowhere does Ch'en deny the existence of individual character, which is the product of social conditioning, and he urges the Party to take into full account the individuality of its many diverse members. Nonetheless, the basic interests of a truly proletarian political party and its individual members should be identical, and the individual member should constantly strive to maintain this fundamental harmony. If an individual Party member perceives a clash between his personal interests and those of the Party, it is incumbent upon him to subordinate his own interests to those of the Party.⁶⁰

In all of this disputation on the importance of self-criticism and thought reform, Ch'en did not appear to differ significantly from the views held by other top Party leaders such as Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-ch'i and Ch'en Yun, all of whom were currently devoting

⁶⁰ Ch'en Po-ta, "Ren-xing, dang-xing, ge-xing" (Human Nature, Party Character, Individual Character), JFRB (27 March 1943), p.4. This short essay has been reprinted many times in both the original and a revised version. For an example of the latter, see Ch'en Po-ta, et. al., Ren-xing, dang-xing, ge-xing (Human Nature, Party Character, Individual Character), Peking: Zhong-guo qing-nian chubanshe, 1957, pp. 5-14.

some attention to similar questions.⁶¹ Yet, Ch'en's essay on human nature is of special interest to us, for it has been carefully scrutinized by David S. Nivison, who has concluded that it represents an excellent case study of "Sinification and synthesis" in the Chinese Communist handling of ethical questions.⁶² Indeed, Nivison claims that Ch'en's essay is "of a piece" with the techniques of the Buddhist missionaries who came to China in the early years of the Christian era. That is to say, Buddhist texts which seemed relevant to Taoist interests were selected for emphasis, and Buddhist concepts, where possible, "were conveyed by equating them with Taoist ones." In effect, argues Nivison, Ch'en "ostensibly picks up the problem [of human nature] where Chinese philosophy leaves off." Of all the ancient philosophers, Ch'en picks Kao Tzu (a heterodox opponent of Mencius) as being closest to the truth in his understanding of human nature; i.e., human nature is not cast in an absolute mould, but is "good" or "bad" according to the specific circumstances in which it takes form. In Kao Tzu's view, says Ch'en, human nature

⁶¹See, for example, Liu Shao-ch'i's essay of June 1941, "The Class Character of Man." Although Lui's basic understanding of human nature is similar to Ch'en's, it is unlikely that Ch'en would have endorsed Liu's harsh characterization of the "narrow-mindedness" and "backwardness" of the peasantry, and his unfavourable comparison of them with the industrial proletariat, whom he praises lavishly. Unlike Liu, who came from a small landlord background, Ch'en was born into a "poor peasant" family, and he invariably emphasizes the strengths of the peasant masses rather than their weaknesses. Liu's essay is included as an appendix in Liu Shao-ch'i, How to be a Good Communist, 1st ed., Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1951, pp. 113-120.

⁶²The discussion in the following paragraph is based on David S. Nivison, Communist Ethics and Chinese Tradition, mimeo., Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1954, pp. 35-41.

is like a stream of water: "Open a way to the east and it will flow to the east; open a way to the west and it will flow to the west." Kao Tzu's concept of the relativity of man's nature is immediately recognizable in Ch'en's modern Marxist concept of human nature as being "progressive" or "reactionary" according to the special class environment in which it is moulded. Likewise, argues Nivison, Ch'en establishes other linkages between past and present in seeming to equate party nature with the Neo-Confucian concept of li, the undesirable part of individual human nature with the Buddhist idea of (bad) karma, the desirable part of individual human nature with the Neo-Confucian idea of "individuality" (especially after Wang Yang-ming), and unselfish devotion to the Party with the Confucian concept of "sincerity." In these and other ways, argues Nivison, Ch'en Po-ta is able to introduce Marxist concepts of human nature (as Ch'en understands them) in a format that would make sense within the Neo-Confucian tradition. In his Chinese definition of the Marxist view of human nature, concludes Nivison, Ch'en is clear as to where Marx differs from Chinese tradition, but he states his definition "in such a way as to make it read easily as a chapter in Chinese ethical literature." This, of course, is precisely Ch'en Po-ta's strength as perhaps the CCP's leading proponent and practitioner of Sinification.

By late 1942 the cheng-feng movement had been well and truly launched in Yen-an, and it was decided to extend the campaign to other areas as well. Such was Ch'en Po-ta's importance that he was sent in late 1942 to spearhead the Rectification Movement among

Party cadres and left-wing intellectuals in Chungking, the Nationalists' war-time capital. Little is known of his precise job assignment in Chungking, but he seems to have joined the editorial boards of both the New China Daily and the Life Bookstore.⁶³ These two organizations were the CCP's major instruments of propaganda in Nationalist-controlled China, and they were the logical vehicles for the expansion of cheng-feng outside Yen-an. As in Yen-an, Wang Shih-wei was held up to criticism as the model negative example in the campaign, and the same Party ideologists -- Ch'en Po-ta, Ai Ssu-ch'i, and Chou Yang -- remained his chief accusers. The well-known Communist literary critics Feng Hsüeh-feng and Hu Feng emerged as the Party's prime targets on the local scene in Chungking, and they were bracketed with Wang Shih-wei as the leading symbols of ideological dissidence in the Communist movement. The Party authorities obviously were less able to carry out as thorough a campaign in Chungking as in Yen-an, but the same methods of small-group study and self-criticism were used.⁶⁴ In addition to his specific cheng-feng duties, however, Ch'en took advantage of his opportunity of living in Chungking to familiarize himself with the general ideological climate within the Nationalist camp. Indeed, late 1942 and early 1943 was a period of intense intellectual activity in Chungking, as the Nationalists prepared to capitalize on the increasing evidence of an

⁶³Boorman and Howard, op. cit., p. 221; Klein and Howard, op. cit., p. 123.

⁶⁴See Goldman, Literary Dissent, pp. 51-66, for a discussion of the impact of cheng-feng on Party intellectuals in the Nationalist-controlled areas, especially Chungking.

ultimate Allied victory over the Axis powers. Ch'en was thus well-placed to sensitize himself to the changing atmosphere among the Nationalists, and to become relatively well-informed on the important ideological offensive that Chiang Kai-shek was to launch with the publication in March 1943 of his key treatise, China's Destiny. The CCP's counter-offensive on the ideological front was to be one of the Party's primary concerns in the coming years, and Ch'en Po-ta, upon his return to Yen-an, was to play a central role in the unfolding drama. Mao Tse-tung was to be cast as the heroic lead, and Ch'en Po-ta emerged as the acknowledged playwright.

(iii) Emergence of a Maoist Cult?

Mao Tse-tung's prestige as the CCP's top leader -- and leading theorist -- soared to new heights during the Rectification Movement. Mao delivered the keynote speeches calling for cheng-feng, and he was the single most important theorist to be studied during the movement. In addition, he set the Party's policy in the controversial field of art and literature in May 1942, and he delivered the definitive report on the Party's economic work the following December. On top of all this, leading Party officials like K'ang Sheng had declared the Party's general line since Tsunyi to be entirely correct. Mao's growing stature was reflected in seemingly insignificant ways too; on 14 December, for example, Liberation Daily revealed that Hsiao San, a boyhood friend of Mao, had recently completed a long manuscript on his recollections of Mao as a youth. Pleading lack of space, the newspaper published only a few brief extracts from Hsiao's original text, one of which established Mao's intellectual

inheritance from Li Ta-chao, who was himself gradually emerging posthumously as the CCP's official founding father. Hsiao's article, though brief, was accompanied by a picture of Mao as a young student, and it seems to have been the first biographical study of Mao to have appeared in the official CCP press.⁶⁵ As such, it was the beginning of a definite trend toward the increasing glorification of Mao in the immediate years to come, as was the poem "Mao Tse-tung" published sometime in late 1941 or early 1942 by the well-known left-wing poet, Ai Ch'ing.⁶⁶ Likewise, a brief news item in Liberation Daily on 28 August 1941 revealed that one of Yen-an's institutes for the education of young cadres had been named after Mao Tse-tung, although it was later amalgamated into the newly-created Yen-an University.⁶⁷ Finally, on 10 March 1942, a headline in Liberation Daily referred to "Chairman Mao and various comrades on the Central Committee." This is probably the newspaper's first official reference to Mao as "chairman" (zhu-xi), and taken in context indicates that Mao was now being regarded as the chairman of

⁶⁵Hsiao San, "Mao Ze-dong tong-zhi de shao-nian shi-dai" (The Era of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's Youth), JFRB (14 December 1941), p. 4. During the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's, Li Ta-chao, Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai and many other once-revered CCP leaders were downgraded in the Chinese press, but this is probably only a temporary phenomenon. Like Teng Hsiao-ping, they will probably be rehabilitated in due course and take their former esteemed place in CCP history.

⁶⁶Goldman, Literary Dissent, p. 29.

⁶⁷See the news item in JFRB (28 August 1941), p. 2..

the Party's Central Committee, and not merely of its Military Commission.⁶⁸ Mao's formal elevation to this key position did not take place until sometime in the spring of 1943, but this early reference indicates which way the wind was blowing. The doctrinal implications of Mao's growing supremacy are most graphically illustrated in a prominent cartoon which appeared in Liberation Daily on 6 April 1942. It immediately brings to mind Franz Schurmann's observation in 1966 that:

If Mao's picture were ever to be ranged alongside the sacred quadrumvirate [of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin], symbolically this would mean that Mao would have become the creator of new theory, binding on all Marxist-Leninist parties.⁶⁹

That some in the Maoist camp were thinking along these lines is suggested by the cartoon in question, for it clearly depicts an arrogant young man comparing himself with the "greats" of the international communist movement. The young man is strutting in front of a wall upon which are hanging portraits of no less than five of the classical masters -- Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung himself! The individual depicted may be no one in particular, but it is hard to resist the conclusion that he represents the Returned Students and their claim to ideological pre-eminence within the leadership of the CCP. The cartoon, signed by one Chang O, candidly

⁶⁸For this reference to "Chairman Mao," see the news item on the funeral of Chang Hao, a Central Committee member who had recently died, in JFRB (10 March 1942), p. 3. This date is a little more than a month earlier than the date (15 April 1942) cited by Jerome Ch'en as the first occurrence of the term, "Chairman Mao," in a Liberation Daily headline. See Jerome Ch'en, Mao Papers, p. 177, item 216.

⁶⁹Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, 2nd ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968 (1966), p. 29.

ridicules the pretensions of the youth, who is said to regard himself as "Lao Zi tian-xia di-liu," which may be translated freely as, "I'm the sixth greatest in the world!"⁷⁰

Regardless of the precise significance of the cartoon, its addition of Mao to the sacred quadrumvirate of Communist leaders and theorists was indicative of the cult that was about to emerge. A more substantial indication of Mao's growing prestige as a theorist of distinction was provided in the short essay Chu Teh wrote to commemorate the CCP's twenty-first anniversary. Published on 1 July 1942, the essay appears to have been Liberation Daily's sole effort to commemorate the date in any formal way; considering the importance of Chu's position in the Party and army however, the solitary appearance of his commemorative article only serves to underscore its significance in buttressing Mao's claim to undisputed leadership. Never one to dwell unduly on ideological questions, Chu nonetheless was at pains to point out that the CCP, in its long and arduous years of struggle, had "correctly grasped Marxist-Leninist theory," and had even "created a Sinified Marxist-Leninist theory to guide the Chinese revolution." Lest the reader linger in suspense as to the leading architect of this Sinified theory, Chu made the following observation:

⁷⁰For this revealing cartoon by Chang O, see JFRB (6 April 1942), p. 4.

Today, having been tempered by a long period of revolutionary struggle, our Party now has its own most talented leader in Comrade Mao Tse-tung. He has genuinely comprehended Marxist-Leninist theory, and moreover is adept at using this theory to guide the Chinese revolution step by step to victory. Not only is he the most authoritative person in our entire Party, but he also enjoys the greatest political confidence among the people throughout the country. In addition, a large number of sincere and courageous Party cadres, fully experienced in struggle and having close relations with the masses, have been nurtured for the Party and the revolution under his education and care.⁷¹

Mao could not have written a better appreciation himself, for Chu had depicted him virtually as the soul of the Party and the revolution, equally talented as leader, thinker, and educator. Nor was his greatness limited to the Chinese Communist movement, but it spread beyond to the whole of the nation itself. Significantly, other military leaders took up Chu's praise of Mao during the month of July; P'eng Teh-huai lauded Mao's concept of "new democracy," and claimed he had effectively synthesized Marxist theory and Chinese practice. Ch'en Yi for his part generalized the nature of Mao's strategy, insisting on the international significance of the Chinese revolution.⁷² Once again, as in the months following the Party's Sixth Plenum in late 1938, it was the military commanders rather than the Party's top officials who took the lead in putting forward the claims of Mao Tse-tung to supremacy within the Chinese

⁷¹Chu Teh, "Ji-nian dang de er-shi-yi zhou-nian" (In Commemoration of the Party's Twenty-first Anniversary), JFRB, (1 July 1942), p. 1.

⁷²P'eng Teh-huai and Ch'en Yi are cited in Tokuda, op. cit., p. 52.

Communist movement. It was not until the summer of 1943, fully a year after Chu Teh's commemorative essay, that such eminent Party officials as Liu Shao-ch'i, Chou En-lai, and Wang Chia-hsiang (not to mention such obviously reluctant spokesmen as Po Ku) were to join their military colleagues in the public glorification of Mao.

In fact, in spite of the obvious rise in stature which Mao and his writings experienced during cheng-feng, one can detect a reluctance on the part of most leading Party officials to push things too far. While the trend towards the glorification of Mao as the single most important leader was clear enough, it appeared to be coupled with an equally strong tendency to maintain the prestige and authority of the Central Committee itself. For example, even Chu Teh felt constrained in his commemorative essay to point out that it was the "Party Central Committee and Comrade Mao Tse-tung" who alerted the Party to the dangers of ideological deviance, and he concluded that the successful implementation of cheng-feng required the joint leadership of "Comrade Mao Tse-tung and our Party Central Committee."⁷³ For his part, Ch'en Po-ta also felt obliged to pay lip service to the notion of collective leadership; in one speech in particular he attributed the success of the CCP to the key role of the Party's "great leaders," represented by "Comrade Mao Tse-tung and others."⁷⁴ It is not surprising, then, that Mao himself took care not to be seen to place himself above the top Party organ. In a Politburo resolution of 1 September 1942, for example (which Mao wrote himself),

⁷³Chu Teh, "Ji-nian dang de er-shi-yi zhou-nian," p. 1.

⁷⁴Ch'en Po-ta, "Tan-bai yun-dong yu zi-wo fan-xing," p. 17.

it was stated that the ideological education of cadres was to be carried out on the basis of "Central Committee resolutions and Comrade Mao Tse-tung's reports."⁷⁵ It would appear, then, that while Mao was not adverse to recommending the study of his own writings during cheng-feng, he still felt it necessary to acknowledge the collective leadership of the Central Committee. This constant bracketing of Mao and the Central Committee leads us to an important observation, namely, that the Rectification Movement did not by itself lead directly to the undisguised cult of Mao Tse-tung which burst upon the Chinese Communist movement in the summer of 1943, culminating in the incorporation of "Mao Tse-tung's thought" in the Party constitution of 1945. This would appear to be at odds with current interpretations of the cheng-feng campaign, which uniformly tend to view the cult of Mao in 1943 and later as the planned and inevitable result of the movement. Stuart Schram, for instance, reflects this close connection of campaign and cult in declaring that the appearance of Liu Shao-chi's unashamedly hagiographic praise of Mao in July 1943 "may be taken as marking the symbolic ending of the campaign."⁷⁶ This appears to be a reasonable conclusion, and one would be hard pressed to deny that some kind of Maoist cult inevitably had to flow from cheng-feng. Yet, there are cults and cults, and it is our conclusion that the cult of Mao

⁷⁵Mao, Ji VIII, p. 162.

⁷⁶Stuart R. Schram, "The Cultural Revolution in Historical Perspective," in Stuart R. Schram, ed., Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 22.

that appeared in mid-1943 -- in the broadness of its claims, the intensity of its propagation, and the variety of its forms -- was partly the product of a very special set of inter-related domestic and international conditions which developed over the winter of 1942-43. Had these specific conditions been absent at this time, it is unlikely that the personal cult of Mao would have reached the heights that it did, or that the final triumph of Mao Tse-tung's thought would have been as thorough as it was. It was these conditions, then, which led to Mao's spectacular triumph over the Party between 1943 and 1945, and which helped to establish the distinctive relationship between leader and party that was to colour much of Chinese politics in the years after 1949.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRIUMPH OF "MAO TSE-TUNG'S THOUGHT," 1943

(i) The Nationalists' Ideological Offensive

The individual cult of Mao Tse-tung (and the unabashed glorification of his thought) which burst upon the CCP in July 1943 was truly amazing in its intensity and scope, and provides a major theme of Party history during 1943-45. A good deal of the cult can be explained by the impressive control that Mao and his faction had gained over the Party by the end of 1942; the Returned Students had been routed, and during cheng-feng Mao's political and military pre-eminence within the Chinese Communist movement had been augmented on the ideological front. Even in the economic sphere the Gods had been favourable to Mao, for by the end of 1942 the worst effects of the Japanese and Nationalist blockades of the Red areas had been surmounted, thus demonstrating the validity of Mao's economic and fiscal policies. As Mao claimed in his lengthy report on the economy in December 1942, between 1941 and the end of 1942 the "firm foundation of self-reliance in production was laid....We are overcoming difficulties."¹ By the spring of 1943, then, Mao's personal position within the Party was extremely strong, definite signs of a cult had already made their appearance, and it is likely that they would have become ever more unmistakable in the normal course of events. Accordingly, the suggestion that the cult of Mao and

¹Mao, Ji VIII, p. 187.

his thought was more or less an inevitable product of Mao's political supremacy within the CCP is evident in the writings of many students of Chinese communism. Noriyuki Tokuda, for example, has concluded that:

Considered as a consequence of the process of strengthening Mao's leadership which began in 1935, [the] eruption of the Mao cult indicated...that Mao's 'big push' toward his complete domination of the CCP had been successful.²

That the cult developed with such rapidity, vigour, and depth, however, can best be explained by the fortuitous set of foreign and domestic circumstances that took shape in late 1942 and the spring of 1943. In particular, the Battle of Stalingrad, the publication of Chiang Kai-shek's China's Destiny, and the dissolution of the Comintern conjoined in early 1943 to provide a most suitable environment for the blossoming of the cult of Mao Tse-tung and his thought. This observation in no way invalidates the fundamental causal connection between Mao's rise to power in the CCP and the subsequent emergence of his dual cult, a connection which this study has established in some detail. Nonetheless, the three additional factors suggested above have usually been underestimated in most discussions of the appearance of the cult, and this tends to give too much emphasis to the apparent inevitability of the cult emerging from the internal political processes of the CCP. Assigning due weight to the contemporary domestic and foreign environment at the precise moment when the cult erupted will lead to a better understanding of the total scenario giving rise to the cult of Mao and his thought. Like all complex social organizations, the CCP is shaped in large part by

²Tokuda, op. cit., p. 55.

the particular environment in which it functions, and which helps to determine the precise configuration of forces which governs its internal evolution. This point will become clearer in the course of the ensuing discussion, and does not need to be pursued further for the time being.

It is essential to bear in mind that Mao's cult developed in the context of ever increasing Nationalist-Communist rivalry, in which each side attempted to elevate its leader and ideology to a position of first importance in Chinese political life. A powerful impetus was given this rivalry by the sharp deterioration of the united front, as witnessed in the New Fourth Army Incident of January 1941, and subsequent "incidents" too numerous to mention. In spite of this, the first part of 1941 was hardly a propitious time for the two rivals to force a showdown. The Japanese were well entrenched in China, and were beginning to expand into Southeast Asia with little effective resistance coming from the European powers or the United States. Most of Europe had in fact been conquered by the invading Germans, and Britain was just recovering from the onslaught of the Luftwaffe. Russia had gained an unknown amount of breathing space through her mutual non-aggression treaties with both Germany and Japan, and the United States appeared reluctant to enter the fray unless forced to do so by direct attack upon her own soil. With the international situation so menacing, neither the Nationalists nor the Communists were really in a position to drive the wedge between themselves even deeper. Indeed, Chiang Kai-shek was forced to divert a good deal of his energy to the task of

repairing the damage done to the Nationalists' image by the defection of Wang Ching-wei and the establishment of his puppet government in Nanking. Mao Tse-tung, for his part, was fending off the fissiparous tendencies within the CCP that were undermining his own position as leader. Under these circumstances, it made better sense for each leader to put his own house in order and await a more favourable war situation before forcing a final confrontation with the other.

This more favourable situation began to take shape in the second half of 1941; Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June of that year brought the reluctant Russians into the struggle, while Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour in December dragged in the equally hesitant Americans. From the point of view of both Chinese sides, Nationalist and Communist alike, the war could not have taken a better turn, and it is not surprising that they both adopted a scarcely disguised attitude of "sitting on a mountain top to watch the tigers fight." In deciding upon the attack on Pearl Harbour, even the Japanese leaders themselves realized they could not survive a long war of attrition with the United States, and this observation was not entirely lost on their Chinese adversaries.³ The Chinese were disappointed, then, when Washington decided to give immediate priority to the Western front, thus giving the Japanese a bit more breathing space than would have been the case otherwise.

³For this interpretation of Japanese war strategy, see Chihiro Hosoya, "Twenty-five Years After Pearl Harbour: A New Look at Japan's Decision for War," in Grant K. Goodman, comp., Imperial Japan and Asia: A Reassessment, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 52-63.

Nonetheless, the Chinese were gratified to see that the reckless over-extension of Japan's military capacity gradually began to take its toll, and their thoughts soon turned to the problem of the appropriate offensive response. The whole process was speeded up by the addition of a most powerful catalyst -- Stalingrad. Between September 1942 and February 1943, the beleaguered Russians not only stopped but even turned back the German invasion of Russia in a bloody victory reminiscent of the repulse of Napoleon Bonaparte in the autumn and winter of 1812. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad effectively turned the tide of the war in favour of the Allies, and it had a tremendous psychological impact not only on the Western world, but in the Far East as well. Certainly, the momentous significance of Stalingrad was well appreciated by Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung, both of whom saw in Russian victory their own personal opportunity to take the offensive.⁴ The offensive they had in mind, however, was not to be directed primarily at the Japanese, who had been faring rather badly in the maritime struggle with the United States, and whose fortunes had further declined in the wake of Stalingrad. Rather, each side in the faltering Nationalist-Communist united front regarded the other as the chief focus of attack, although the continuing demands of an at least nominal war-time unity prevented the upsurge of actual civil war prior to the final defeat of the Japanese. What was not prevented, however, was a war of words,

⁴On the Communists' appreciation of the significance of the Battle of Stalingrad, see the special editorial written for Liberation Daily by Mao Tse-tung, entitled "The Turning Point in World War II," JFRB (12 October 1942). Translated in Mao, SW III, pp. 103-107.

or a battle for ideological supremacy throughout the nation, and it was to this task that the two adversaries turned. The final struggle for the allegiance of the Chinese people was initiated on the ideological front in the spring of 1943, extended to the military sphere in 1946, and finally resolved with the sweeping Communist victory of 1949.

Like Mao himself, Chiang Kai-shek was not one to underestimate the importance of ideological struggle, although he was much less adept than his adversary in employing it to effect. Nonetheless, Chiang got the jump on the Communists by publishing, on 10 March 1943, his celebrated book, China's Destiny, at the same time inaugurating a massive ideological campaign throughout the country with his book as the movement's intellectual core. In all likelihood the volume was largely written by T'ao Hsi-sheng, a long-time Nationalist advisor, but Chiang presented the book to the public as his own.⁵ The work was written during the very months of the fierce Battle of Stalingrad, and it clearly reflects the optimism to which the Russian triumph had given rise. With renewed confidence, Chiang declared that the "opportunity for the recovery of the nation and the hope of the rebirth of the state are now presented to the citizens

⁵The suggestion that T'ao Hsi-sheng drafted China's Destiny was widely accepted at the time, and was noted by Philip Jaffe in his introduction to Chiang Kai-shek, China's Destiny (and Chinese Economic Theory), London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd. 1947, p. 21. This volume, with notes and commentary by Philip Jaffe, is a translation of the original Chinese text of China's Destiny, and is used here as the standard reference to Chiang's book. An authorized translation of the later revised version of the book is Chiang Kai-shek, China's Destiny, translated by Wang Chung-hui, New York: Macmillan Co., 1947.

of the entire country."⁶ Chiang's book was obviously issued to assist the people of China to make the best possible use of this rare opportunity. Claimed at the time to be the "most important book written since the Three People's Principles of Sun Yat-sen," Chiang's treatise was often difficult in style and obscure in meaning; accordingly, a catechism, synopsis, and book of notes were also published as reference aides for the book's potential readers. That they were to be numerous was determined by the fact that China's Destiny became required reading for all civil servants, military officers, members of the Nationalist Youth Corps, and students at the Party's Central Political Training Institute. Further, the book was designated as the "most important extra-curricular reading matter" in Chinese schools, colleges and universities, and the subject of formal examinations at all levels of the educational system. In light of this, one must agree with Philip Jaffe, a critical reviewer of Chiang's text, that it was the "political bible" of the Chinese Nationalists, and the centerpiece of their nation-wide ideological campaign.⁷

Throughout China's Destiny, Chiang Kai-shek hammers home the importance of correct ideology as the foundation of all revolutionary endeavour and national reconstruction. "Sun Yat-sen," claims Chiang, "saw that the basis of the success of the revolution lay in the psychological reconstruction of the people."⁸ This is of course a

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸Ibid., p. 185.

proposition with which even Mao Tse-tung would have agreed (his Marxism notwithstanding), but it leaves open the question of the specific content of such reconstruction at the psychological level. Chiang quickly dismisses both "Liberalism and Communism" as unsuitable to the tasks ahead, claiming that these foreign ideologies are inherently "opposed to the spirit of China's own civilization," and even instrumental in causing the "decay and ruin of Chinese civilization."⁹ Rather, says Chiang:

The psychological reconstruction of the people should be based on the development of an independent ideology, in which the greatest emphasis must be placed on a revival of the nation's ancient culture and the cultivation of genuinely scientific knowledge....The teachings of Sun Yat-sen were based on China's ancient culture, and combined with this the most advanced theories of the world in order to formulate China's superior principles of national reconstruction.¹⁰

With the substitution of Mao Tse-tung's name for that of Sun Yat-sen, this passage could well have appeared on the editorial page of Liberation Daily. Certainly, it illustrates most clearly the degree to which both the Nationalists and the Communists had converged on the importance of constructing an official ideology that was at once distinctly Chinese and undeniably modern. What remained at issue between the two camps was the question of which political movement -- Communist or Nationalist -- best represents the "correct" path for the Chinese people to follow. On this critical question Chiang Kai-shek is quite unequivocal, stressing that the "highest guiding prin-

⁹Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 163.

ciple in the War of Resistance is the Three People's Principles, and the highest directing organization is the Kuomintang."¹¹ Sun Yat-sen was of course long dead and buried, but Chiang shows no hesitation in putting himself forward as the new father of the nation, and the instructor of the masses:

I, Chiang Kai-shek, have been identified from the beginning with restarting the Republic of China on the road to independence and freedom....I wish all my countrymen to examine thoroughly what I have written, and carry these precepts into practice.¹²

In the opinion of one experienced student of modern Chinese history, it is no coincidence that Chiang became head of the National Central University at Chungking at the same time that he published China's Destiny as a textbook. True to an "ancient pattern" in Chinese political leadership, Chiang Kai-shek was inevitably seeking to "progress from the status of Hero to that of Sage."¹³

In the months following the publication of Chiang's treatise on China's future, the Nationalist Party's accompanying propaganda campaign unfolded throughout the country. The Communists were of course aware of the implications of the campaign; as we know from later events, leading CCP polemicists such as Ch'en Po-ta were commissioned to prepare an official critique of Chiang's major theses. The Communists were caught somewhat off guard, however, by the surprise announcement of the dissolution of the Communist International.

¹¹Ibid., p.222.

¹²Ibid., p. 43.

¹³John K. Fairbank, The United States and China, 3rd ed., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 404.

Having come into the war against Germany as a full ally of the Western democracies, the Soviet Union was increasingly obsessed with the struggle in Europe to the relative neglect of the war zones further to the East. Naturally enough, Stalin became ever more aware of the Comintern's rather incongruous position, dedicated as it was to the promotion of proletarian revolution in the very nations with which Russia was allied in the desperate struggle against fascism. Finally, in response to Allied prompting and as a gesture of good will to the United States in particular, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Comintern adopted a resolution on 15 May 1943 recommending the dissolution of the world organization.¹⁴ In a sense, the Comintern had been put on ice as early as 1935, when its Seventh World Congress emphasized the importance of strengthening the national Communist parties and encouraging their participation in the anti-fascist united fronts being promoted everywhere by the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the CCP did have to make a formal response to the Comintern's dissolution, and so on 26 May the Party's Secretariat convened a meeting in Yanan to deal with the issue. Mao Tse-tung elaborated on the Party resolution adopted at the meeting, and like it expressed his complete agreement with the Comintern's decision to disband. While noting the invaluable assistance of the Comintern in the early years of the CCP, Mao went on to stress that the CCP was the creation of historic forces within China, and would

¹⁴For the text of this important resolution recommending the dissolution of the Comintern, see Jane Degras, ed., The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents, III, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 476-479.

have appeared and prospered even if the help from the Comintern had not been forthcoming.¹⁵ In fact, now that the Comintern was departing from the scene, there was every reason to believe that the Chinese Party would develop even more rapidly. As the Central Committee resolution phrased it, the new situation would "further strengthen" the self-confidence and creativity of all CCP members, "further consolidate" relations between the Party and the Chinese people, and "further heighten" the Party's fighting strength for the arduous tasks ahead.¹⁶

The enthusiastic response the CCP gave to the Comintern's demise was by no means merely a function of their desire to put a brave face on a fait accompli on the part of their Russian comrades. Rather, it reflected the Maoists' genuine doubt as to the Comintern's ultimate value, and their relief at witnessing the nemesis of this once powerful organization that had consistently discounted the Maoist group in the Chinese Party. Indeed, the Maoists did little to conceal their almost improper delight over the Comintern's fate; they applauded the Comintern's non-intervention in the CCP's "organizational affairs" since 1935, and boasted that the Chinese Party had matured politically in the course of struggles "even more complex than the Russian revolution." As a result, the CCP had nurtured "its own outstanding and well-tested cadres," "had done its

¹⁵Mao, Ji IX, p. 16, 22. Stuart Schram first drew attention to this important speech by Mao in 1963, when he included extracts from it in the first edition of his Political Thought. For this extract, see the second edition (1969) of Schram's study cited previously, pp. 421-423.

¹⁶Mao, Ji IX, p. 23.

work very well" in the struggle for national liberation, and, with regard to the Comintern, had "no longer any need of this international leading centre." On the contrary, argued Mao, the pressing task at the moment was to strengthen the Communist parties of the various countries, and to render them "even more nationalized" (geng jia min-zu-hua) and hence more suited to the needs of national liberation and reconstruction.¹⁷ These ringing declarations by Mao and his colleagues obviously smacked of "petty-bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism" (as defined in the Marxist lexicon), and one is prompted to inquire as to the Soviet attitude toward these manifestations of independence on the part of the Chinese. Turning once again to the study of Charles McLane, we are reminded that by 1938 Moscow had come to accept Mao Tse-tung's leadership of the CCP, and was "content to let Mao pursue his own course within certain broad limits already well defined and accepted in Yen-an."¹⁸ Questions of ideological rectitude were placed well behind war-time needs in Moscow's scale of priorities, and the Soviet leaders' specific interest in the CCP hit an all-time low following Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941. A striking example of indifference amounting to neglect is the fact that the Comintern's major journal (Communist International), which had given extensive and continuing coverage of events in China up to 1940, did not carry a single article on China or the Sino-Japanese war between June 1941 and its final issue in June 1943.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-19.

¹⁸ McLane, op. cit., p. 155.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 157. Even if McLane has inadvertently overlooked

Nonetheless, despite the dissolution of the Comintern, Moscow did begin to pay more attention to events in China during the course of 1943. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad, the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in Sinkiang, and the renewal of tensions between the Nationalists and the Communists all tended to encourage a renewal of Soviet interest in China in the summer of 1943. Yet in spite of this the Soviet leaders held back from open commentary on the CCP and its role in China until after the war, for fear of damaging relations with the Nationalist Party and its increasingly enthusiastic benefactors in Washington. This fact is clearly illustrated by the "omission of any reference whatsoever in the Soviet press" of the CCP's important Seventh National Congress in the spring of 1945.²⁰

Considering that this was the first national congress held since the Sixth in 1928, and that it was hailed by the CCP press as a "Congress of Victory," the Soviet omission was more than fortuitous. If the Soviet leaders were adopting an attitude of studied indifference to the CCP, the same cannot be said of Chiang Kai-shek and his advisors. On 6 July 1943, the Nationalists' Central News Agency issued a news release claiming that (as Liberation Daily reported it) certain cultural organizations in Sian had held a meeting and resolved to cable Mao Tse-tung, calling upon him to "dissolve" the CCP in light of the Comintern's earlier dissolution, and to "abolish the separatist border region regime." In a direct rebuttal of the news

a certain amount of peripheral coverage of China in this journal during the period in question, his general point regarding Comintern indifference is still valid.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 174-176.

release, however, Mao declared that the whole affair was the handiwork of the Nationalist secret service.²¹ Naturally enough, Mao declined the advice to disband the CCP, but the incident was indicative of an important negative influence that had emerged in the wake of the Comintern's disbandment. From the point of view of the Nationalists, the demise of the Comintern could not have come at a better time, dovetailing neatly with the major ideological campaign sparked off by the recent publication of Chiang's volume, China's Destiny.

That the Communists did not treat the matter lightly is evidenced in the concern expressed in a speech of 1 August by Chou En-lai, who had recently returned to Yen-an after a lengthy sojourn in Chungking. Chou dwelt at some length on the problems resulting from the Comintern's disappearance from the international scene, and spoke harshly of those

...anti-Communist elements inside the country who dare to shout shamelessly for the dissolution of the Chinese Communist Party....They did not raise the outcry before, but at a time after the dissolution of the Communist International. They claim that after the dissolution of the Comintern, Communism is no longer fit for China, the Chinese Communist Party has lost its backing, the Chinese Communist Party will split from within.²²

"Will there be anyone," cried Chou, "to believe their slanders?" He apparently thought so, for he continued on to rebut these "slanders" individually and in some detail. Regarding Marxism's fitness for China, Chou claimed that "owing to the achievements of our party

²¹Mao, Ji IX, p. 44.

²²Chou En-lai, "Address to a Reception Party at Yen-an," (1 August 1943), as translated in Stuart Gelder, ed., The Chinese Communists, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946, pp. 173-180. The passage cited is on pp. 177-178.

leader Comrade Mao Tse-tung," Marxism has already "closely united" with the needs of the Chinese nation and people, and has "become rooted in Chinese soil." On the question of the CCP's popular support, Chou acknowledged the early help from the Comintern, but added that it is more important to realize that the CCP is a "party of the masses," one that "grows and develops among the toiling masses of China." On the embarrassing charge of internal Party splits, Chou claimed that the CCP is "united under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung," and that in the previous three years (1940-1943) it had "reached the highest degree of consolidation" in its entire history. To underline this point, Chou referred approvingly to Mao's leadership of the Party at least seven times in the course of his address, concluding that after the Comintern's demise the CCP will be "more responsible and independent to solve the problems of the Chinese revolution."²³ Chou's formal acknowledgement of Mao's supremacy in the CCP is an interesting illustration of the linkage existing between the dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943 and the pronounced cult of Mao that erupted within the Party the following July. Yet, we have seen that other factors were at work too, in particular the dramatic turn in the global military situation after Stalingrad, and the intense Nationalist ideological campaign designed to boost Chiang Kai-shek as China's true national leader. These developments heavily reinforced the already noticeable tendencies toward a Maoist cult that had gradually emerged simultaneously with Mao's personal dominance in the Party's top leadership, and they provided the necessary

²³Ibid., p. 179.

catalyst for the blossoming of the cult in the course of 1943-45.

(ii) The Birth of "Mao Tse-tung's Thought"

In the spring of 1943 Yen-an was most certainly alive with speculation as everyone -- Party member or not -- awaited the leadership's reaction to the momentous developments detailed above. The initial response, as we know from later revelations, came unannounced to the general public, and probably to many ordinary Party members as well. Most authorities agree that sometime during the spring Mao Tse-tung was formally elected chairman of the CCP's Central Committee, and thus of the Political Bureau as well. It is most likely that Mao was elevated to these top Party posts in late May, when the Central Committee met to discuss its reaction to the dissolution of the Comintern. At or about the same time, Liu Shao-ch'i replaced Chang Wen-t'ien on the Party's five-man Central Committee Secretariat, simultaneously taking over his key position as secretary-general of the Party.²⁴ While there is no evidence of an "explicit bargain" between Mao and Liu, the latter's elevation to the number two spot in the Party was soon followed by his open praise of Mao's leadership. This suggests that Liu was promoted to these high posts as part of a deal, in return for his acknowledgement of Mao's supreme position and his concurrence in Mao's election to the Party's top posts.²⁵ Accordingly,

²⁴ See, for example, the biographical dictionaries of Boorman and Howard, II, p. 408, III, p. 15; and Klein and Clark, II, pp. 621, 683.

²⁵ For this interpretation of Liu's motivations, see Stuart R. Schram, "Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-ch'i, 1939-1969," Asian Survey, XII:4, (April 1972), pp. 280-281.

Mao was able to announce on 1 July 1943, the CCP's twenty-second anniversary, that the cheng-feng campaign of the previous year had "guaranteed ideological and political unanimity in the Party, and purity in its organizational composition."²⁶ Mao's announcement was the green light for the rapid development of the Maoist cult that was to dominate Yen-an for the next couple of years. Every person high or low, Party member or not, was called upon to express his unbridled enthusiasm for and limitless confidence in Mao Tse-tung's leadership. The atmosphere in Yen-an at this time was very much one of the "gathering of the clans" around the mighty chieftain, for on 28 June, just three days prior to Mao's keynote speech, the CCP's top-flight delegation to Chungking returned home to Yen-an in time for the Party's anniversary. The mission, headed by personages no less than Chou En-lai and Lin Piao, claimed to have been unable to discuss a "single concrete problem" with Chiang Kai-shek during their lengthy stay at the Nationalist capital.²⁷ No doubt, the timely return of Chou, Lin and "other comrades" from such fruitless negotiations with the CCP's leading adversary contributed to the general feeling that the Party had to go it alone in the decisive years ahead. In any event, soon after the delegation's return to Yen-an, all eyes unhesitatingly turned to Mao, the one true helmsman who would safely chart the course of the Party through the stormy seas that lay beyond.

²⁶Mao, Ji IX, p. 39.

²⁷Mao, Ji IX, p. 64.

Considering Liu Shao-ch'i's previous refusal to endorse Mao's leadership claims, especially in the realm of theory, it is somewhat ironic (or perhaps inevitable?) that he should set the tone for the new campaign to glorify Mao and all his works. As his contribution to the commemoration of the CCP's twenty-second anniversary, Liu wrote a long essay in which he declared that the CCP had finally found its "own leader in Comrade Mao Tse-tung." Mao, said Liu, is a truly great proletarian leader who

...has stood the test as a strong and great revolutionary, is completely versed in Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics, and possesses unlimited loyalty to the Chinese working class and the cause of the Chinese people's liberation.²⁸

Furthermore, suggested Liu, the history of the CCP has developed "with Comrade Mao Tse-tung as the centre"; Mao had triumphed over "all groups of opportunists" such as those who formerly espoused "dogmatism," and "'left' opportunism of the civil war period." Having vindicated Mao's line over that of the Returned Students, whom he described indirectly as the representatives of "Chinese Menshivism," Liu characterized the CCP as having "richer experience in revolutionary struggle" than any other communist party in the world. Yet in spite of this, Liu returned to his long-standing criticism of the CCP on the theoretical front. He admitted that the Chinese Party's "preparation in scientific Marxist-Leninist thought has been

²⁸Liu Shao-ch'i, "Qing-suan dang-nei de Meng-sai-wei-zhu-yi si-xiang" (Liquidate Menshevik Ideology in the Party), JFRB (6 July 1943). The text used here is in Zheng-feng wen-jian (Reform Documents), 4th ed., n.pl: Ji-lu-yu shu-dian, 1944, II, Appendix, pp. 53-64. The passage cited is on p. 54.

very inadequate," and that the "theoretical level of many Party members and cadres is low."²⁹ We will recall that in 1941, when Liu voiced similar complaints about the Party's theoretical level; he had failed to come up with any positive solutions. He simply concluded that the Sinification of Marxism was "exceedingly difficult," and decried the lack of any "great works" from the pen of a Chinese Communist thinker. Now the situation was entirely different. "All cadres and Party members," advised Liu,

...should diligently study and master Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theories of the Chinese revolution and other subjects. They should arm themselves with Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought, and use Comrade Mao Tse-tung's system of thought to liquidate Menshevik thought in the Party.³⁰

Liu's essay of 6 July was the signal for the other top Party leaders to rally around Mao Tse-tung as the undisputed head of the CCP. There followed a veritable flood of hagiographic literature from the pens of representatives of the Party's most powerful circles. Among those appearing in print were (in addition to Liu Shao-ch'i) Chou En-lai, K'ang Sheng and Teng Hsiao-p'ing as spokesmen for the political wing of the Party; Chu Teh, P'eng Teh-huai and Ch'en Yi representing the military; and people as diverse as Hsu T'ie-li, Hsiao San, and the Japanese Communist Okano Susumu (Nosaka Sanzō) on behalf of cultural circles within the movement.³¹ The Returned Students were represented also, but in a most fragmented manner which clearly revealed the state of disarray into which this once cohesive group had

²⁹Ibid., pp. 56, 60.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 63-64.

³¹Tokuda, op. cit., pp. 54-57

fallen by 1943. Wang Chia-hsiang published a key article praising Mao Tse-tung's thought on 8 July, just two days after Liu Shao-ch'i's essay had appeared. Po Ku procrastinated a little, but he finally issued an enthusiastic essay on 13 July. Neither Chang Wen-t'ien nor, more importantly, Wang Ming, could be persuaded to pay obeisance to their former subordinate. Their absence from the pages of Liberation Daily, though conspicuous, did not dampen the enthusiasm of those leaders who did take pen in hand. The general tone is well illustrated by Po Ku, who took note of the adverse implications the dissolution of the Comintern had for the unity of the CCP, and responded by calling upon the whole Party to strengthen its already unprecedented degree of unity by rallying "under the banner of Mao Tse-tung." Taking stock of the many strengths of the CCP which had ensured its steady growth through all adversities, Po reminded the reader that:

Finally, and very importantly, we have our Party leader, the helmsman of the Chinese revolution -- Comrade Mao Tse-tung. His direction is the direction of our entire Party, and of the people of the whole nation.³²

Liu Shao-chi's essay of 6 July 1943 has rightly been regarded as setting the tone of the Maoist cult that was to blossom in later months. In addition, it has been pointed out that it was in this article that the term "Mao Tse-tung's thought" first appeared in Chinese Communist literature. This appears to be true, but it would

³²Po Ku, "Zai Mao Ze-dong de qi-zhi xia, wei bao-wei Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang er zhan!" (Fight to Defend the Chinese Communist Party Under the Banner of Mao Tse-tung!), JFRB (13 July 1943), p. 1.

be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that Liu was the actual creator of the term that was to occupy such a prominent place in modern Chinese intellectual history. It is more likely that the official use of the new slogan was the result of a formal, collective decision among the top Party leadership.³³ In his essay of 6 July, Liu referred to "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought" (Mao Ze-dong tong-zhi de si-xiang); yet in an article written on 5 July (though not published until the 8th), Wang Chia-hsiang used the more precise form which later became the *terme fixée*, "Mao Tse-tung's thought" (Mao Ze-dong si-xiang). In addition, other Party leaders and theorists (e.g., Ch'en Po-ta, of whom more later) began to use the term in their writings at this time, indicating that there had probably been a prior decision on its use coming from high authority. Regardless of who actually thought up the slogan in the first place and lobbied for its acceptance by the Politburo, it was Wang Chia-hsiang who composed the most interesting and important interpretation of what the term really meant. This he did in a lengthy essay, "The Chinese Communist Party and the Road to China's National Liberation," a text of considerable importance in the intellectual history of the CCP. The basic ideas in Wang's essay are not original. Rather they reflect the arguments of Ch'en Po-ta and other "Sinificationists" in

³³Tokuda, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56, refers to "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as "Liu's new term." It should be noted however, that in an entry in his diary dated 26 January 1943, the Comintern representative Peter Vladimirov referred specifically (within quotation marks) to the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung." It is probable then, that the term had been in circulation among the Party leadership in Yenan for some time before it was officially adopted in July 1943. See Vladimirov, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

the theoretical debates which had been going on within the CCP from at least 1935. Wang had personally contributed to these debates from time to time; in 1939, for example, he published an article ("The Three People's Principles and Communism") which reflected his concern with the need to adapt Marxism-Leninism to the concrete reality of the Chinese revolution.³⁴ The importance of the essay lies in the fact that it represents the first time that the arguments of the "Sinificationists" were applied to the explicit interpretation of Mao's personal theoretical contributions. Wang claimed that the essential union of Marxist theory and Chinese reality, which the CCP had been pursuing throughout the twenty-two years of its existence, was to be found in Mao Tse-tung's thought. The Chinese Communist Party, in Wang's opinion, had at long last come of age; it had recognized that:

The correct path in the entire course of China's national liberation -- past, present and future -- is Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought, the path pointed out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in his writings and practice.³⁵

³⁴See Wang's essay of 25 September 1939, "Guan-yu san-min-zhu-yi yu gong-chan-zhu-yi" (The Three People's Principles and Communism), JF, 86 (10 October 1939), pp. 14-18. Reprinted in Lo Fu, et al., San-min-zhu-yi yu gong-chan-zhu-yi (The Three People's Principles and Communism), Hong Kong: Xian-shi chu-ban she, 1947, pp. 11-21.

³⁵Wang Chia-hsiang, "Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang yu Zhong-guo min-zu jie-fang de dao-lu" (The Chinese Communist Party and the Road to China's National Liberation), JFRB, (8 July 1943), pp. 1-2. (The text is dated 5 July 1943.) Reprinted in Zheng-feng wen-jian, 4th ed., Appendix, pp. 40-52. The passage cited is on pp. 43-44.

How does Wang justify this claim in terms of theory? Before going into his argumentation, we should note the sense of national pride that informs the entire discussion. China, says Wang, is a "great country," and deduces from this that the CCP should therefore be a "great party" possessing its own "Chinese Communist theory."³⁶ The scientific validity of this proposition can be seriously questioned, but Wang does offer a more sophisticated rationale for the appearance of Mao Tse-tung's thought in China. To provide the Chinese reader with a comparative historical context, Wang refers him to the development of Leninism in Russia. Citing the authority of Lenin himself, Wang points to the gradual formation of Bolshevism in the context of European intellectual trends (especially Marxism) and the practical revolutionary movement in Tsarist Russia. "This was the process," Wang concludes,

...which gave rise to Russian Bolshevism. It was the union of Western European Marxist theory and Russian revolutionary experience which produced Bolshevism, Leninism.³⁷

Is the situation any different in the Chinese case? Wang does not think so, apart from indicating that the intellectual and political milieu in which the CCP has developed is perhaps even more complicated than in the case of pre-revolutionary Russia. With this exception, the process is essentially the same:

Chinese communism -- Mao Tse-tung's thought -- is the product of the combination of Marxism-Leninism and the practical experience of the Chinese revolutionary movement.³⁸

³⁶Ibid., p. 52

³⁷Ibid., pp. 47-48

³⁸Ibid., pp. 49-50.

This interpretation of the origins of Mao Tse-tung's thought, continues Wang, completely undermines the allegations of those "anti-Communist elements" in China who maintain that the "theory of the Chinese Communist Party is the theory of the German Marx and the Russian Lenin, and hence is not suitable to the national situation."³⁹ Quite to the contrary, concludes Wang, these critics of the CCP have failed to grasp the fundamental truth that "Mao Tse-tung's thought is Chinese Marxism-Leninism, Chinese Bolshevism, Chinese communism."⁴⁰ Lest any ambiguity remain, Wang reiterates that Mao Tse-tung's thought is "creative Marxism-Leninism, the development of Marxism-Leninism in China; it is Chinese communism, Chinese Bolshevism."⁴¹

It is clear that Wang is advancing "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as a substantive replacement for "Marxism-Leninism" as such. This is not because he believes that Mao's thought -- as pure theory -- is in any way superior to Marxism-Leninism, but rather because, in the Chinese context, Mao's thought is Marxism-Leninism. This interpretation is derived from the oft-repeated (cf., Ch'en Po-ta) Chinese Communist assertion that there is no such thing as abstract truth or theory; they can only exist in specific, concrete, and, in the case of political truths and theories, national forms. Marxism, then, is the appropriate form of proletarian theory for the Germans (and the West Europeans in general), Leninism (and Stalinism) for the Russians, and Mao Tse-tung's thought for the Chinese. In light of

³⁹Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 43-44.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 46.

this, Wang sees no need to distinguish explicitly between Mao's political doctrines in terms of whether or not they represent only "si-xiang" (thought) or, more broadly, only "zhu-yi" (-ism, i.e., principle, tenet). Clearly, these two terms are completely interchangeable -- Mao Tse-tung's thought is Marxism-Leninism, and vice-versa; si-xiang is zhu-yi, and conversely zhu-yi is si-xiang. Hence, it would appear that later academic attempts to divide Chinese Communist ideology into two distinct components, namely, "pure ideology" (Marxism-Leninism) and "practical ideology" (Mao Tse-tung's thought) are faulty, at least for the period under consideration. Even if these terms are retained for purposes of analysis, we can readily see that for Wang Chia-hsiang and his colleagues, Mao Tse-tung's thought is the embodiment of both the "pure" and the "practical" aspects of proletarian ideology in China. In any event, such a division of their ideology would probably be seen by most Chinese Communist theoreticians as mechanistic, and not reflecting the integrated unity inherent in Mao's thought.⁴²

Yet, we are still left with the puzzle as to why the term "Mao Tse-tung's thought" was used in the first place, especially as it was equated with Marxism-Leninism as such. Have we not seen that in 1942 Chang Ju-hsin referred to Mao's body of doctrines as "Mao Tse-tungism"? Why was Chang's perfectly logical term dropped in favour of the new formulation? We have already discounted the possibility

⁴²For a well-known attempt to analyze Chinese Communist ideology into separate "pure" and "practical" elements, see Franz Schurmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

that the Chinese were trying to distinguish between "pure" and "practical" ideology (zhu-yi and si-xiang), for they clearly believed that Mao's thought represented both. Nor does it appear likely, as some have suggested, that the term zhu-yi carries with it undesirable connotations associated with such "evil winds" as individualism, commandism, tailism, Trotskyism, etc. After all, the Chinese Communists have consistently used zhu-yi in their translation of such highly respectable ideological currents as Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism and even Sun Yat-senism, to name but a few.⁴³ Rather, it would seem that the use of si-xiang was a distinct attempt to get away from the essential foreignness of zhu-yi, and the sense of abstractness associated with it. As James Chieh Hsiung has pointed out, the term zhu-yi was imported into China, possibly via Japanese (shugi), in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴ In their intense desire to Sinify Marxism-Leninism, it was only natural that the Maoists would want to replace the foreign term with one that was unmistakably Chinese. Hence their use of si-xiang. Nonetheless, it should not be concluded that it was merely for reasons of linguistic nicety that the term zhu-yi was abandoned. The fact is that while the actual term, Marxism-Leninism, had long been foreign in form, the new formulation of Mao's thought had rendered Marxism-Leninism abstract in content as well. By defining Marxism and Leninism as solely the European and Russian forms respectively of proletarian ideology, the Maoists denied their concrete existence in China, and hence demonstrated their need to be

⁴³On the alleged idiosyncratic quality of zhu-yi, see James Chieh Hsiung, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 129.

replaced. Thus, in choosing a new term to represent the concrete nature of Mao's reformulation of the classical doctrines, there was a need to avoid close identification with the old terms. All this does not tell us, however, why the Maoists specifically choose *si-xiang* to illustrate the unmistakable Chineseness and concreteness of the new orthodoxy. Regarding form, *si-xiang*, a common word in the Chinese vernacular, met the need for a term that was distinctly Chinese, one that would not grate on the Chinese ear, nor appear strange when written. As to the question of content, *si-xiang* lacks the sense of abstract rigidity which had come to be associated with *zhu-yi*. An anthropomorphic term, *si-xiang* fully reflects its vital link with a real, live human being, a specific flesh-and-blood individual -- in this case Mao Tse-tung -- who is engaged in the continuing process of thought. This in turn suggests a certain dynamism, a feeling that the *si-xiang* in question is engaged in a process of interaction with reality, creatively responding to the changing circumstances with which it is confronted. Nor does *si-xiang* give an impression of dogma, a body of doctrine frozen in time. Rather, it conveys the feeling of open-endedness, the possibility of flexible response, and the promise of a continuing dialogue with reality. It is this dynamic fusion of the human mind and external reality that best characterizes the distinctive quality of *si-xiang* and, interestingly, of Mao Tse-tung's personality as well. As James Hsiung has suggested most convincingly:

The szu-hsiang perspective conceives of man (the subjective world) and his environment (the objective world) as forming an integral whole....Any analysis that separates ideology in its 'pure' form from ideology in practice fails to capture the true spirit of szu-hsiang.⁴⁵

In a sense, the formal appearance of "Mao Tse-tung's thought" in July 1943 brought to an end a lengthy process of fermentation within the Chinese Communist Party. The demands of Chinese nationalism for the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism had been met, and the fusion of power and ideology that had for so long eluded Mao Tse-tung had at last taken place. While the Russians maintained their wartime silence on this momentous development within the CCP, Mao's ideological claims received the approval of other sections of the international Communist movement. In his introduction to the American publication of Mao's "New Democracy," for example, Earl Browder, the leader of the United States Communist Party, wrote on 11 November 1944 that Mao's famous essay was "thoroughly Chinese and at the same time thoroughly Marxian, and proceeds from many assumptions and conceptions of Chinese and Marxian origin."⁴⁶ For people like Ch'en Po-ta, who was both an ardent nationalist and a fervent supporter of Mao's claim to Party leadership, the Party's twenty-second anniversary must have been a most gratifying occasion. Interestingly enough, though, Ch'en does not appear to have participated in the wave of official adulation of Mao that swept over Liberation Daily and other Party publications in the summer of 1943. At first glance, this appears

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁴⁶See Earl Browder's introduction to Mao Tse-tung, China's New Democracy, New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1944, p. 48.

surprising, for Ch'en had long been an active promoter of Mao's claims to ideological leadership, and one would have thought that he might have contributed to the eulogies that were appearing daily in the press. Ch'en was probably one of the unspecified "other comrades" who accompanied Chou En-lai and Lin Piao on their return from Chungking to Yen-an in late June. Having been involved in editorial work in the Party media in the Nationalist capital since the fall of the previous year, we can assume that Ch'en returned to his former editorial desk at Liberation Daily. Barring more specific evidence, we will have to question the claim in one Soviet source that upon his return to Yen-an Ch'en assumed the post of editor-in-chief of the Party's leading newspaper.⁴⁷ Yet, whatever his exact position at the time, Ch'en was well placed to contribute his name to the Maoist cult that was fast taking shape. That he did not can of course be explained by one obvious fact, namely, that a simple hagiographic essay from Ch'en Po-ta would gain little prestige for Mao, for the former was a well-known supporter of Mao's claims and carried little authority in his own name. At this stage, the Maoists were more eager to encourage appreciative essays from the Party's most prominent political, military and factional leaders, whose eulogies were to be valued more for their symbolic than substantive importance. With Ch'en Po-ta it was exactly the opposite; he was to be called upon to provide intellectual substance to the incipient cult of Mao Tse-tung, and, equally important, to the fresh concept of "Mao Tse-tung's thought."

⁴⁷ Moscow Radio, "Mao Tse-tung's Trustful Bodies," a talk broadcast in Mandarin, 19 May 1969, as cited in IS, VI:7, pp. 89, 93.

Indeed, upon his return to Yen-an, Ch'en entered upon yet another intense period of intellectual endeavour, to some extent comparable to the period 1938-39. There was much to do in the wake of the Party leadership's decision to promote the cult of Mao and his thought in response to the new challenge posed by the Nationalists' recent ideological offensive. In the field of ideology, Ch'en's specialty, five major tasks presented themselves: (1) propagation of Mao's cult and thought both within and without the Party; (2) formulation and propagation of a major critique of Nationalist ideology; (3) provision of historio-philosophical content to the concept of "Mao Tse-tung's thought"; (4) construction of an official Maoist interpretation of CCP history; and (5) preparation for the long-delayed Seventh Party Congress to formally ratify the Maoist ascendancy. It is an indication of Ch'en Po-ta's importance in the Maoist camp that he was to assume unquestioned leadership in fulfilling tasks two, three, and four above, and he most likely played a key role in tasks one and five as well. In so doing, Ch'en provided the major intellectual input into the cult of Mao and his thought, and thereby reinforced his unique relationship with Mao Tse-tung himself.

(iii) The Cult of Mao and His Thought

Having put their own house in order following the Nationalists' ideological offensive and the dissolution of the Comintern, the Maoists moved quickly to the offensive. The chorus of praise that greeted the birth of Mao Tse-tung's thought was much more than a transitory phenomenon; rather, it heralded a massive, two-pronged ideological campaign on the part of the CCP. The months after July

1943 witnessed, on the one hand, the unfolding of a well-planned movement to establish Mao Tse-tung's personal image as the brilliant leader of the CCP, and the heroic defender of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, another campaign was launched for the undisguised purpose of destroying Chiang Kai-shek's stature as China's sole legitimate spokesman both at home and abroad. In a very real sense, the Chinese civil war had begun; it was only after three full years of ideological battle that the both sides were to take to the field of armed conflict. Having been approved at the meeting of the enlarged Politburo the previous May, the popular cult of Mao was sparked off in July 1943 when the Party's leading cadres published their glowing tributes to Mao. The spectacle of such mature, seasoned Communist leaders bidding to outdo each other in the degree of enthusiasm with which they hailed Mao is somewhat puzzling to the outside observer. Yet, whatever the precise mix of genuine admiration and political expediency in their motivations, these senior figures in the Party helped to set the frenzied tone that was increasingly to characterize the "Mao Tse-tung mania" that swept over Yenan during 1943-45.

Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, two American correspondents who visited the Communist capital in June 1944, were plainly taken aback by the peculiar relationship that seemed to exist between Mao and his senior colleagues. Recognizing that this relationship was attributable "in part to a solid affection," the Americans observed that:

At public meetings it was not unusual for other members of the Political Bureau, men of great rank themselves, to make ostentatious notes on Mao's free-running speeches as if drinking from the fountain of knowledge. Nor were panegyrics of the most high-flown, almost nauseatingly slavish eloquence unusual.⁴⁸

With the Party's leading personalities setting the pace in such a flamboyant style, the common people in the Soviet areas could hardly be less exuberant. One is struck by the rapidity with which the campaign to exalt Mao and his thought filtered down to the grass-roots level of Party and society alike. In turn, the mass organizations among the people (and individuals as well) responded by echoing back to the Party leadership their belief in the greatness of Mao, and the absolute correctness of the revolutionary path which he trod.

In their efforts to stimulate the Maoist cult, the Party elite were by no means alone; Liberation Daily and other sectors of the Yenan mass media functioned as powerful amplifiers to get the message across. Increasingly, items of an overtly hagiographic nature began to appear in the Communist press: tales of Mao's early life and struggles; articles in praise of his personality and thought; wood-block portraits of the leader; approving resolutions from various mass organizations; letters from appreciative individuals, etc. Many songs appeared in praise of Mao, the most famous of which is "The East is Red," said to be based on a poem written by a young peasant (Li Tseng-cheng), and set to the melody of a traditional country tune.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, Thunder out of China, New York: William Sloan Associates, Inc., 1946, p. 230.

⁴⁹For further details on these popular manifestations of the cult of Mao, see Tokuda, op. cit., pp. 55-57, 70. According to a study

These outward signs of the campaign are well known and often referred to, and they are not our major concern here. A rather clear indication of the highly expressionistic character of the literature, and the unambiguous linkage between elite and popular levels in the campaign, can be given by referring to the large conference of "labour heroes" which was held in Yen-an in mid-November 1943. Kao Kang, the Party official directly responsible for the administration of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region, spoke to the assembled workers and peasants. In the course of his address, Kao posed a most serious question, if only rhetorically:

Who is the leader of the Chinese Communist Party? Its leader is Chairman Mao...Chairman Mao is the saviour of the Chinese people, the shining light of the workers and peasants, the banner of the broad labouring masses.⁵⁰

Having had this decisive question posed and answered in the same breath, the assembled masses were left in no doubt as to the proper response. In the collective message to Chairman Mao that the conference delegates published in Liberation Daily on 21 November, they too praised their leader as the "saviour of the Chinese people."⁵¹

published in China, by 1951 over 500 poems in praise of Mao Tse-tung had already been collected, most of them written by peasants in the 1940's. On this point, see Ting Yi, A Short History of Modern Chinese Literature, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959, pp. 274-276.

⁵⁰This passage from Kao Kang's speech is cited in Selden, Yenan Way, p. 204.

⁵¹See the relevant news item, "Mao Ze-dong tong-zhi shi Zhong-guo ren-min de jiu-xing" (Comrade Mao Tse-tung is the Saviour of the Chinese People), JFRB (17 July 1943), p. 2.

Regardless of the genuine feelings that many people may have had toward Mao (and no doubt their number was legion), the cult clearly had behind it the active backing of the Party organization. Although paper was constantly in short supply in Yen-an, a Chinese journalist who visited in 1946 observed that the Yen-an bookshops were doing a brisk trade in portraits of Mao: "At any place of convention with a crowd of more than three, there is a portrait of 'Chairman Mao'."⁵² Returning to 1944, we are reminded by White and Jacoby that "Mao Tse-tung's personality dominated Yen-an...[and he]...was set on a pinnacle of adoration." They also noted of Mao that "his leadership was theoretical", and, finally, that his treatise "On New Democracy" (though published in 1940) "is still the Bible of the movement."⁵³

This mention of "On New Democracy" is most interesting, for it indicates that, in spite of the burgeoning cult, the Party had not yet systematized its approach to the huge and scattered corpus of Mao's writings. Rather, it appeared to be adopting a rather ad hoc attitude, simply selecting and reprinting individual important writings that were judged most relevant at the time. According to one account, for example, in January 1944 the Shansi-Suiyuan branch office of the Politburo printed and distributed 5000 copies of three of Mao's most famous treatises, namely, "On Protracted War," "On the New Stage," and "On New Democracy."⁵⁴ Nonetheless, a more systematic approach

⁵²Chao Ch'ao-kou, Ye-nan yi yue (A Month in Yen-an), Nanking: n. pub., 1946, p. 64. As cited in Jerome Ch'en, Mao, p. 21.

⁵³White and Jacoby, op. cit., pp. 229-230, 234.

⁵⁴Jerome Ch'en, Mao, p. 52.

to the publishing of Mao's major writings had been evident as early as 1937, when a small selection of his essays had been issued as an anthology in Shanghai. Probably guided by this precedent, the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region published the first edition of Mao's Selected Works (Mao Ze-dong xuan-ji) in December 1944. Noting that none of Mao's Selected Works were actually published in the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region, the seat of Mao's power, Jerome Ch'en has concluded that this probably indicates Mao's greater support from the military than from the Party. For example, it was Nieh Jung-chen's headquarters in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi region that issued the original edition of Mao's Selected Works in 1944, and this lead was later followed by Lin Piao in Harbin, in the Manchurian sector.⁵⁵ While Mao's position was definitely stronger in the eyes of the military than in those of the Party, by late 1944 even once-reluctant Party leaders were outdoing themselves in their praise of Mao. The publication of the Selected Works outside Yen-an can probably be ascribed to technical and administrative rather than political factors, considering the heavy burden the Yen-an press had to shoulder in the CCP's overall publication responsibilities. This interesting question aside, however, there can be no gainsaying the remarkable flowering of Mao's cult in the months after July 1943, and its formal confirmation at the Party's Seventh Congress in April 1945. Nor can it be doubted that this cult was the conscious product of the Maoist propaganda machine, whose campaign to glorify Mao and his thought was part of

⁵⁵ Jerome Ch'en, "Tsunyi Resolutions," pp. 37-38; also Jerome Ch'en, Mao, pp. 22, 53.

the CCP's two-pronged counter-attack on the ideological campaign launched by the Nationalists in the spring of 1943.

(iv) Ch'en's Critique of "China's Destiny"

For reasons previously cited, Ch'en Po-ta does not seem to have participated in the overt campaign to elevate Mao. He was, however, the single most important contributor to the accompanying campaigns to discredit Nationalist ideology, provide Mao's thought with historio-philosophical content, and reconstruct an official Maoist interpretation of CCP history, an interpretation that largely received the blessing of the Central Committee in the spring of 1945. Turning first to the problem of Nationalist ideology, we note that in an unsigned editorial of 12 July 1943, Mao himself set the general tone for the bitter debate that was to be launched by Ch'en. The "gentlemen" of the Nationalist Party, charged Mao, have much in common with the various "enemy parties" and "traitor parties" that are selling out the country to the Japanese. Of these "common features," warned Mao with reference to the KMT leaders, the "most fundamental is your common ideology, which is anti-communist and anti-people." Indeed, argued Mao, "you and the enemy and the traitors are exactly alike, in fact, identical and indistinguishable both in your words and in your deeds."⁵⁶ Mao's essay was nothing less than a declaration of war against Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party, and it left very little possibility for the continuation of the faltering united front. Having sounded the call to arms, Mao then stepped aside to allow Ch'en Po-ta to lead his small band of warriors onto the field

⁵⁶Mao, Ji IX, pp. 46-47.

of ideological battle. Ch'en took up the struggle eagerly; on 21 July 1943 he published his major attack in Liberation Daily under the title of "A Critique of China's Destiny." Such was the importance of Ch'en's critique that it was allocated the entire issue of the newspaper for that day; it was reprinted many times in pamphlet form in later years, and was included in several official compilations of Party documents relating to the period in question.⁵⁷ To assist people in studying China's Destiny, Ch'en issued yet another work (not to be confused with the first) entitled An Introduction to China's Destiny. Unlike Ch'en's Critique, which is a substantive study, his Introduction is simply a compilation of lengthy extracts from Chiang's original text, interspersed with brief notes and commentary written by Ch'en. Party members and other interested persons were thus provided with a comprehensive guide to the study of Chiang's treatise, and one wonders how many got beyond Ch'en's guide to read the original work. Be that as it may, Ch'en's two texts were carefully designed to complement each other, and in the following discussion reference will be made to both, albeit the Critique is by far the more important work.

⁵⁷Ch'en Po-ta, "Ping 'Zhong-guo zhi ming-yun'" (A Critique of "China's Destiny"), JFRB (21 July 1943), pp. 1-4 (entire issue). A later reprint of the original text is Ch'en Po-ta, Ping "Zhong-guo zhi ming-yun," Hong Kong: Xin Zhong-guo wen-xian chu-ban-she, 1946. This text will be cited here. An at times faulty English translation of the entire text is in Gelder, op. cit., pp. 256-290.

⁵⁸Ch'en Po-ta, Jie-xiao "Zhong-guo zhi ming-yun" (An Introduction to "China's Destiny"), Yenan: Jie-fang she, 1943 (preface dated 19 July 1943).

Ch'en first reminds the reader that the Chinese Communists have been very forbearing in the face of constant Nationalist provocation. For example, says Ch'en, "countless Nationalist Party publications" have criticized Mao Tse-tung's "On New Democracy" since its publication in January 1940, but to date the CCP has not made any reply in the interests of preserving the united front against Japan. But now, with Chiang Kai-shek's China's Destiny as a point of departure, he (Ch'en Po-ta) intends to express the CCP's opinions on the topics raised by Chiang. It is crucial to answer the charges brought by Chiang, argues Ch'en, for much more is at stake than a mere academic debate; indeed, Chiang's treatise represents "nothing more than the preparation of anti-communist, anti-people, counter-revolutionary ideology." No wonder, continues Ch'en, that soon after its publication in March 1943, the rumour began to spread that it was a "declaration of war against the Chinese people, and the preparation of ideology and public opinion for the launching of civil war."⁵⁹ In light of this, Ch'en urges the Chinese people to study Chiang's new book attentively, paying particular attention to its central message, namely, the call for internal unity if China's destiny is to be assured, and the need to bring about this internal unity within a two-year period. This is most worrying to Ch'en, for Chiang's desire for internal unity amounts to little more than the Nationalist Party's need to "seize everything and consolidate its one-party dictatorship." And the desire to accomplish this during the next two years suggests that the attempt will be made not after the Japanese

⁵⁹Ch'en, Ping, p. 26.

have been defeated and expelled from China, but actually during the war, when all patriotic Chinese are united to resist the common enemy.⁶⁰ In light of all this, asks Ch'en rhetorically, can anyone really believe anything other than that Chiang's treatise was "not written to serve the war of resistance, but rather for the purpose of opposing communism, democracy, the masses, and progress?"⁶¹

Yet, cries Ch'en, if Chiang Kai-shek wishes to launch a debate about China's destiny, the CCP is only too happy to respond. In typical fashion, Ch'en interlards his critique of the ideas expressed in China's Destiny with a constant stream of innuendoes regarding the personal and political integrity of the author. In particular, he suggests that the book was not really written by Chiang at all, but by the "traitor" T'ao Hsi-sheng, a notorious fascist whose views Chiang was only too happy to accept as his own. Also, the "Chung-shan Incident" of 20 March 1926 was deliberately fabricated by Chiang to serve as a pretext to suppress the Communist Party, just as Hitler later concocted the infamous Reichstag fire in 1933 for the same purpose. Further, Chiang had stooped to co-operate with the infamous Chinese traitor Wang Ching-wei long after the Communists had broken with him (sic) in 1927. And finally, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, Chiang has repeatedly betrayed Sun Yat-sen and his principles on many important questions regarding the Chinese revolution.⁶² Lest the reader be bewildered by this host of charges,

⁶⁰Ch'en, Jie-xiao, pp. 1-2.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 25.

⁶²For these various charges, see Ch'en, Ping, pp. 1, 3, 18, 20.

Ch'en simplifies the argument somewhat by referring time and again to the ultimate choice the Chinese people must make between two fundamentally conflicting visions of China's destiny. The first vision is, of course, that of "New Democracy," the ideological system of the CCP which was put forward by Mao Tse-tung, and which combines the most progressive thought of both the Chinese and foreign intellectual traditions. The second is that of "New Absolutism" (xin zhuan-zhi-zhu-yi), Chiang Kai-shek's and the Nationalist Party's system of "compradore-feudal fascism" that inherits all that is reactionary both in China and abroad.⁶³ Ch'en's astute paralleling of his freshly-coined "New Absolutism" with the well-known "New Democracy" established an effective contrast between the two competing ideologies, and conditioned the reader throughout the text to accept, if only unconsciously, the need to take a final, irrevocable stand on one side or the other. There was clearly no third way in the pursuit of China's destiny, or so Ch'en suggested.

Ch'en rationalized this need to make a clear choice between the two competing "isms" by raising the question of ideological evolution and synthesis in modern China. To start the reader thinking, Ch'en begins with a firm proposition:

It is obvious that from the beginning there have been two kinds of traditional thought in Chinese culture. One kind belongs to the people, and is revolutionary and bright; the other is against the people, and is counter-revolutionary and dark.⁶⁴

⁶³Ibid., p. 1.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 15.

To illustrate this basic thesis, Ch'en refers to modern Chinese history, singling out the Taiping rebels and later Sun Yat-sen as archetypical representatives of the "revolutionary" tradition in Chinese history, with such infamous personalities as Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang representing the "counter-revolutionary" side of the coin. For Ch'en, it is not sufficient merely to take pride in traditional Chinese history and culture; one has to go beyond this and inquire into the diverse strands in this complex legacy, carefully sifting the wheat from the chaff. Needless to say, it is the Chinese Communists who have emerged as the true inheritors of the progressive strand in Chinese tradition, while the Nationalists have fallen heir to its reactionary aspects. Applying this same basic analysis to the question of foreign ideologies, Ch'en points out that:

The various countries of the world not only have progressive and revolutionary ideologies, but also have reactionary and counter-revolutionary tides of thought, and both kinds of foreign thought are naturally reflected in China.⁶⁵

As for the "progressive" side, Sun Yat-sen enthusiastically accepted the liberal "democracy of [Abraham] Lincoln and others," and later on also absorbed the "experience of the Russian revolution." The Chinese Communists, however, went even further and assimilated the more advanced ideology of "scientific communism -- Marxism-Leninism." As for the "reactionary" side, relates Ch'en, Chiang Kai-shek has openly denounced both Western liberalism and Soviet communism in his recent book, while the Chinese Nationalist Party is busily "propagating on a large scale the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini, and

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 13.

describing Hitler and Mussolini as two of the 'six great leaders' of the world."⁶⁶ Surely, concludes Ch'en, will not the publication of Chiang's book greatly please people like Wang Ching-wei, Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo, and equally disappoint Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and all other anti-fascist people?

According to Ch'en, it is not important whether a particular ideology is Chinese or foreign in origin; the question is whether or not it is progressive or reactionary, beneficial or harmful to the Chinese people and nation. For example, although there was a certain amount of foreign thought (viz, Christian theology) in the ideology of the Taipings, their slogan of "liberty, equality, [and] fraternity" genuinely represented the aspirations of the Chinese people. On the other hand, although people like Tseng Kuo-fan spoke constantly of traditional China's "benevolence, righteousness, [and] morality," in practice he was no more than a "two-fold slave, a slave to both the Manchus and the foreigners."⁶⁷ Having dispensed with these illustrations from history, Ch'en takes up a more contemporary theme, one much closer to his heart:

The ideology of the Chinese Communist Party is Mao Tse-tung's thought -- Sinified Marxism-Leninism. As a Marxist-Leninist ideology, [Mao Tse-tung's thought] is not only identical [xiang-tong] to the ideology of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but it is also identical to the ideology of the Communist parties of the various countries throughout the world. However, scientific Marxism-Leninism demands that the Communists in each country put forward political programs and decide upon policies in accordance with their own national conditions,

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 15.

rely on the people, and educate themselves. In its work in China, the Chinese Communist Party does exactly this .../and/ is truly a one hundred per cent revolutionary political party of the Chinese people themselves, 'learning for China and applying its learning for China.' It no longer finds comparison in China!⁶⁸

As for Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party, scoffs Ch'en derisively, they are simply "ru zhu chu nu," "proud before one's countrymen but submissive before foreigners." Arrogant and dictatorial at home, they have successively placed themselves in dependence first on the Russians, then the Japanese and Germans, and finally the Americans.⁶⁹ Of course, concludes Ch'en, Chiang Kai-shek's China's Destiny tries to cover up this ugly truth, and to do so it resorts to the age-old practice of "fabricating facts, and confusing truth and falsity." All is in vain, however, because Chiang's book, "between the lines, reveals its hatred of the revolutionary people" of China, and they are not deceived.⁷⁰

Ch'en Po-ta's critique of China's Destiny is of considerable importance in the evolution of Chinese Communist ideology, and in the history of Communist-Nationalist relations as well. It presented in sharp contrast the conflicting visions of Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek regarding China's immediate and long-range future, and provided a powerful ideological rationale for the breakdown in the war-time united front. After the publication of Ch'en's treatise, little possibility remained of genuine co-operation between

⁶⁸Loc. cit.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁰Ch'en, Jie-xiao, preface page.

the two warring parties. Certainly, this was the opinion of United States Ambassador C.E. Gauss, who, in a dispatch to Washington on 6 October 1943, concurred in the prevalent opinion that (with regard to the polemic over China's Destiny):

Possibilities of any agreement between the two parties [viz, Nationalists and Communists] are expected to be lessened by the increasing bitterness likely to result from this propaganda war.⁷¹

Interestingly, Ambassador Gauss included with his memorandum a copy of Ch'en's review of Chiang's book, which Gauss described as "bitterly critical" of the Nationalists, and representative of the CCP's counter-attack against the Nationalists' recent propaganda offensive.⁷² It was not long before the new, harsh attitude toward the Nationalists expressed in Ch'en's Critique and other CCP writings began to filter down to the grass-roots level. Clare and William Band, two British teachers who had been living for some time in Yen-an, noticed the change in the Communists' public attitude as early as 10 September 1943. Attending a mass meeting at Paoteh on that day, they were surprised to see Chiang Kai-shek's portrait missing from the usual "gallery of honour." Not only that, the local guerilla leader opened the meeting by violently denouncing Chiang and the Nationalist Party, and the agitated crowd responded by calling: "Down with Chiang Kai-shek! Long live Mao Tse-tung!" According to the Bands, it was obvious that the Communists were finally dispensing

⁷¹See the brief summary of Chiang's book in Dispatch No. 1651 (6 October 1943) from Ambassador Gauss to the Secretary of State, in Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China, Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1957, pp. 347-348.

⁷²Loc. cit.

with the limitations of the united front, and were "thoroughly enjoying themselves for a change."⁷³

Certainly, this was the case with Ch'en Po-ta. Being chosen to spearhead the ideological attack on the Nationalists was in itself a distinct honour in the Chinese Communist camp, and he must have found Chiang's book eminently susceptible to criticism and satire. Ch'en was by no means alone in his hostility to China's Destiny; even the U.S. Embassy in Chungking noted in a confidential dispatch the role of the "reactionary T'ao Hsi-sheng" in writing the volume, the "narrowness of the views" expressed therein, the "widespread and strong resentment against the book among Chinese intellectuals," and the "unfavourable foreign reaction" anticipated even by the Nationalists themselves. With some dismay, the Embassy concluded by pointing out that the Chinese Communists regard the book as the "best possible source of propaganda for their cause."⁷⁴ Certainly, the cause of Ch'en Po-ta's career was well served by the polemic over China's Destiny, for his Critique was widely disseminated not only by the CCP in China, but abroad by several foreign agencies as well. In the United States, for example, the English version was transmitted via cable by the United Press International for use in the American press. In addition, it was reprinted and distributed by the State Department, and appeared in at least one journal of the American

⁷³Claire Band and William Band, Two Years With the Chinese Communists, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948, pp. 210-211.

⁷⁴See Dispatch No. 1220 (31 May 1943) from George Atcheson, Jr., the Chargé in China, to the Secretary of State, in Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China, pp. 244-248.

Communist Party.⁷⁵ Long regarded as a theoretician of considerable significance within the Chinese Communist movement, Ch'en Po-ta was now achieving international prominence as a Chinese Communist spokesman of national stature. Yet, no sooner had Ch'en achieved this unprecedented prominence than he retreated once again within the confines of the CCP. His tasks between 1943 and 1945 were interlinked, and of the utmost importance to the Maoist cause. He was to prepare a formal historio-philosophical exposition of "Mao Tse-tung's thought," and simultaneously draft an official Maoist reconstruction of the Party's history from its founding in 1921 to date. While the propagation of the Maoist cult -- and the denunciation of Chiang's philosophy -- dominated the Communist press during these two momentous years, Ch'en patiently laboured on the twin tasks he had been set. For the time being, the products of Ch'en's new researches were strictly "inner-Party documents"; it was only in the early 1950's, long after their conclusions had been largely ratified by the Seventh Plenum in 1945, that they were made available to the public, Chinese and foreign alike.

⁷⁵For example, Ch'en's critique of China's Destiny was published in the January 1944 issue of The Communist, the leading theoretical journal of the American Communist Party. It was also issued in 1944 by the People's Publishing House, Bombay, India. Incidentally, in his remarks on the CCP's own theoretical journal (also The Communist), Jerome Ch'en has confused the two separate publications. Ch'en Po-ta's scathing review of Chiang Kai-shek's book was reprinted in the American journal, but not (as far as we know) in the Chinese publication of the same name. On this point, see Jerome Ch'en, Mao, p. 18.

CHAPTER IX

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF PARTY HISTORY, 1943-45

(i) The Movement to Study Party History

By the autumn of 1943 the Maoists were in firm control of the Chinese Communist Party, and the twin campaigns to praise Mao Tse-tung and damn Chiang Kai-shek were making good progress. Yet, if Mao's commanding position in the Party were to be consolidated, and his leadership to weather the many storms ahead following the Japanese defeat, more was required than the mere glorification of Mao and his thought in slogan and song. What was needed was an intellectual rationale which would justify the dual cult the Party was promoting, i.e., the cult of Mao the correct leader of the Chinese Communist movement, and the cult of Mao's thought as the ideological manifestation of this correct leadership. In their quest for this rationale, it was only natural that the Maoists should turn to history, particularly the history of the CCP. Indeed, Chinese tradition and Marxist theory combined in the CCP to elevate history to a position of major concern. For most Chinese, history was much more than mere chronology; behind every event there lay a truth which transcended it, and gave it meaning. In this perspective, the study of history was no less than the study of the universal laws which governed the rise and fall of civilization, and the destiny of man himself. For a Marxist, history is the laboratory of the social scientist, the fundamental source to which one turns in the search for basic truths

of individual and social behaviour. Certainly, Chinese Marxists in the CCP did not need to be reminded of the alleged hollowness of "abstract" truth divorced from its historical context; if, as they were now claiming, Mao's thought represented revolutionary truth in China, its ultimate validity would be demonstrated in the "concrete" historical process which nurtured and tested the Chinese Communist Party. A thorough review of the CCP's twenty-two year history, then, would surely reveal the intricate relationship between Mao's correct leadership of the practical movement, and the correct thought which guided and, paradoxically, which was created by this leadership. For Karl Marx and his Chinese disciples alike, history was the great arbiter of human destiny -- reactionaries and their ilk would surely be cast into oblivion, but the true proletarian revolutionary would win an honourable place in posterity.

If the experience of Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union was anything to go by, the Maoists' expectations along these lines were likely to be fulfilled. Stalin, it will be recalled, had emerged supreme in the CPSU after a fearsome struggle with Leon Trotsky and nearly all the "Old Bolsheviks" who had engineered the revolution in 1917. Stalin's official History of the CPSU was published in 1938, and thereafter it became the only orthodox version of the Party's turbulent past, and was assigned for study at all levels of Soviet society. Needless to say, Stalin emerged as the only true successor to the revolutionary legacy of Marx and Lenin, and this orthodox account remained unchallenged until after Stalin's death in

1953.¹ Mao and his colleagues in Yen-an were well aware of these endeavors on the part of Stalin, and initial signs of this interest began to appear in late 1938. Lengthy extracts from Stalin's History accompanied by commentary appeared regularly in Liberation in Yen-an, and the entire book was eventually translated into Chinese and assigned as required reading during the cadre education movement of that year.² By the time of the cheng-feng campaign in 1942, there were probably very few literate cadres in the CCP who were not familiar at least with the main outline of Stalin's interpretation of CPSU history. In all likelihood the Maoists were influenced by the Soviet model in reconstructing Party history. We already know, for example, that in 1938, the very year that Stalin's History appeared in Russia, Ch'en Po-ta published a preliminary Maoist version of CCP history. At the same time, the CCP launched an intensive search for the raw materials (documents, polemics, reminiscences, etc.) from which to compile a more definitive version of the Party's struggles since 1921. Given his earlier efforts in this direction, it is not surprising that Ch'en reappeared as the leading Party historian in the spring of 1944, when he completed the study he first took up in 1938.

The imperatives of Chinese tradition, Marxist theory, and Soviet example, then, combined to urge upon the Maoists the necessity of

¹For Stalin's official history of the Soviet Party, see Central Committee of the CPSU (B), ed., History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939.

²For further information on this point, see Tokuda, op. cit., pp. 61, 86.

rewriting the history of the CCP in the wake of their final victory over all inner-Party opposition. The initiative to review the Party's history came in the fall of 1942, immediately after the height of cheng-feng. The anti-Maoist factions in the Party had been routed, and they would have to suffer the ignominy of having their names -- and their errors -- enshrined as "negative examples" in the proposed Maoist chronicle. Surprisingly, the impetus for this historiographical review came not from the Politburo, but from a lengthy Party conference called to deal with local problems peculiar to the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region, with its capital at Yen-an. Held from 19 October 1942 to 14 January 1943, this meeting tackled and solved three major problems facing the local Party organization: the quest for unified leadership, the definition of the Party's present tasks in the area, and, finally, the revision of Party history in the Border Region.³ Representing the Politburo and the Northwest Bureau of the CCP respectively, Mao Tse-tung and Kao Kang emerged as the two dominant figures at the convention. Mao in particular gained new stature by delivering his lengthy report on economic and financial problems of the Border Region. As we have already discussed the significance of this speech in Mao's rise to power, we will now turn to Kao Kang's role at the conference. Kao, a native of north Shensi and an experienced guerrilla fighter in the Yen-an area, had much to gain from a review of the history of the Party in the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region. Like Mao himself, Kao had suffered

³For details of this Senior Cadres Conference, see Selden, Yen-an Way, pp. 200-207.

persecution as a "rightist" during the era of the Returned Student leadership and shortly thereafter, and he had been rehabilitated only after Mao and Chu Teh had arrived in the Yen-an area at the end of the Long March. Even so, Kao felt that the individuals responsible for the "leftist" line in the Border Region had not been adequately exposed and censured; nor had the official history of the local Party organization been revised to include the exoneration of Kao and his comrades, and the formal condemnation of those who had been in error. The Conference of Senior Cadres provided an excellent opportunity for Kao to raise these questions. Thus, in a lengthy speech to the assembled cadres (which was said to reflect their collective opinion), Kao vindicated the so-called border area "loyalists" centered around Liu Chih-tan (and Kao himself) during the guerrilla struggles prior to 1935. On the other hand, the Central Committee representatives who had suppressed the "loyalists" amongst the local partisans were formally censured, in particular Kuo Hung-t'ao and Chu Li-chih.⁴ It must have given Kao a good deal of satisfaction to see his former opponents reproached at such an important Party meeting, and he no doubt looked forward to an appropriate entry in the Party history then being compiled.

Kao was not alone in his condemnation of the "leftist" leadership in the north Shensi area, for Jen Pi-shih elaborated on Kao's strictures. He referred to these local errors as the consequences of the incorrect line prevailing in the highest echelons of the Party

⁴Ibid., pp. 202-205.

from the September 18th Incident (1931) to the Tsunyi Conference in 1935.⁵ Jen's comments are most interesting, for they sharply focus on the precise parallelism between Mao Tse-tung and Kao Kang that emerged in the course of the debate on local Party history. The newly emergent orthodoxy claimed that Kuo's and Chu's leadership in the north Shensi area had been characterized by "left opportunism" prior to 1935, and "right opportunism" after the policy of the united front had been decided upon. It was not until May 1938, when Kao Kang replaced Kuo Hung-t'ao as Party secretary of the Yen-an region, that the local Party group began to follow a "political and organizational line which was entirely correct."⁶ This interpretation of events is, of course, identical with the critique of the Returned Student leadership which Mao and his colleagues had gradually constructed since Mao's victory at Tsunyi. An obvious parallelism had thus been established between Kao, the regional leader, and Mao, the leader at the national level. Both men, it was said, had pursued correct policies during the early 1930's, both had been censured by the Returned Student leadership or their representatives, both were removed from their positions of authority, and both had been subjected to some form of detention. Finally, both men had been completely vindicated after the Party had belatedly awakened to the erroneous line of the Returned Students, removed them from their

⁵This opinion is attributed to Jen Pi-shih by Tokuda, op. cit., p. 59. Tokuda does not cite any source, although Jen's comments are presumably from a speech he made at the Senior Cadres Conference.

⁶Selden, Yenan Way, p. 204.

positions of authority, and placed the destiny of the Party in the hands (at their respective levels) of the two former victims. This unambiguous parallelism between Kao and Mao certainly did much to strengthen Kao's position as the undisputed leader of the Party organization in the border region, but it played another, more important role as well. Since an intensive campaign to study Party history was inaugurated at the highest levels immediately after the conclusion of the Conference of Senior Cadres, it would appear that the revision of local Party history initiated by Kao Kang served as a concrete model for the new campaign then being planned.

Mao probably used Kao's examination of local Party history to test the atmosphere among the Party elite before launching his own campaign at the national level. Certainly, the fact that it took two and a half years (autumn 1942 to spring 1945) to arrive at some degree of consensus on the question of Party history to present to the Seventh Plenum does suggest that time was required to bring everyone round to the new point of view. Nonetheless, whatever serious opposition Mao encountered in the initial stages of the campaign to examine Party history, all doubts evaporated after the Central Committee's decision in the spring of 1943 to launch a full-blown cult of Mao and his thought. From that time on, Mao's former enemies in the Party became somewhat resigned to their fate, although their individual reactions were different. While Po Ku called upon the Party to rally "under the banner of Mao Tse-tung," Wang Ming simply

dropped out of active political life in the upper echelons of the Party.⁷ If Wang's later recollections are to be believed, both he and Mao were fully aware of the importance of controlling the Party's history. Mao, claimed Wang, wanted to revise Party history to ensure the "especially high and unshakable place of Mao Tse-tung in the CCP." On the relationship of Mao's ideological claims to the revision of Party history, Wang was also explicit, paraphrasing Mao to the effect that "if the services of other persons in the history of the CCP and the Chinese revolution were recognized then 'there would be no Maoism'."⁸ Ironically, the services of Wang and his fellow Returned Students were not to go unrecognized in the new Maoist history, albeit their main role was to serve as negative examples whose experience was to be carefully studied, and avoided.

Official sources have revealed that the discussion of Party history at the higher levels was initiated by the Politburo sometime in 1942.⁹ No specific date is given, but these discussions probably followed soon after Kao Kang's key report at the Senior Cadres Conference in the autumn of that year. As for Kao's report, it received official approval from the Party's Northwest Bureau (which Kao headed)

⁷It seems that Wang was seriously ill during much of 1942-44; in any case, he was deliberately isolated from normal intercourse with other Party leaders, and was often out of touch with what was going on in Yen-an. On this point, see Vladimirov, op. cit., pp. 110-113 and numerous other references.

⁸Wang Ming, Cultural Revolution or Counter-Revolutionary Coup? p. 49.

⁹For further details, see the editorial note in Mao, XJ III, pp. 891-892.

in June 1943, and was designated a formal study material in the cheng-feng campaign under the Bureau's jurisdiction.¹⁰ The movement to study Party history received a sharp stimulus in July 1943, when the cult of Mao and his thought burst upon the scene. In his well-known eulogy to Mao, Liu Shao-ch'i referred once or twice to the pressing tasks on the historical front, demanding that "all cadres and Party members should study the twenty-two year historical experience of the Chinese Party diligently." The intensive study of the Party's rich store of historical experience, argued Liu, is "one of the most important tasks" facing the Party, because a "Marxist-Leninist summary of these experiences is the most important condition for the consolidation, education, and elevation of the entire Party for the attainment of victory in the Chinese revolution."¹¹ In calling for the study of the Party's past experience, Liu was by no means breaking new ground. Of more significance was the set of guidelines Liu proposed to assist the cadres in their perusal of the Party's arduous years of struggle. In their study of the CCP's past, cautioned Liu, the cadres should always bear in mind that:

The history of the Chinese Party should be the history of the development of Marxism-Leninism in China; it should also be the history of the struggle of Marxist-Leninists with all groups of opportunists. Objectively, this history has developed with Comrade Mao Tse-tung as the centre. The history of the various opportunist factions in the Party certainly cannot become the history of the

¹⁰Tokuda, op. cit., p. 60.

¹¹Liu Shao-ch'i, "Qing-suan dang-nei de Meng-sai-wei-zhu-yi si-xiang," p. 54.

Party, and the system and tradition of Party Menshevism can certainly not become the system and tradition of Party thought.¹²

If, even in the wake of Cheng-feng and Kao Kang's revision of local Party history, the Returned Students still clung to one last hope that they would be given an honourable (if secondary) place in the new Party history that was being compiled, this hope was finally dashed. Mao Tse-tung was to be the central figure in the forthcoming history of the CCP, the two main themes of which were to be the evolution of his own interpretation of Marxism-Leninism ("Mao Tse-tung's thought"), and his constant and unrelenting struggles against erroneous factions such as the Returned Students. This is clearly seen in the anthology which the Central Committee issued in the autumn of 1943. Entitled The Two Lines in an obvious allusion to Wang Ming's historical treatise of 1931, this new collection of documents covered CCP history to date, and was designated for study by high and middle-ranking cadres. According to Peter Vladimirov, who apparently acquired a copy of it, The Two Lines' main purpose was to "laud Mao Tse-tung's policy and fiercely denounce Wang Ming's 'sedition'." From what we know of other texts in the movement to study Party history, there is no reason to question Vladimirov's characterization of the book.¹³

It was on the basis of Liu's guidelines, which likely reflected the Politburo's collective opinion, that the next stage of the "Party

¹²Ibid., p. 63.

¹³Vladimirov, op. cit., pp. 180, 182.

History Study Movement" got underway. Having held several special sessions of their own on the question of Party history, and having reached the general conclusions represented in Liu Shao-ch'i's speech, the members of the Politburo then led the senior cadres of the entire Party in holding similar discussions in the fall of 1943 and the spring of 1944. These sessions apparently went well for the Maoists, for official sources later characterized them as "important preparation for the Seventh National Congress of the Party in 1945, enabling it to attain an ideological and political unity without precedent in the Communist Party of China."¹⁴ Nonetheless, given the harshness of the guidelines laid down by Liu, it is not surprising that certain problems emerged in the course of the sessions. On 12 April 1944, in an important address summing up the discussions to date, Mao acknowledged the need to defuse some of the excessive hostility that the cadres were venting on the Returned Students and other members of the losing factions. After applauding the success of the discussions so far, Mao reminded the senior cadres present that they were to avoid excessive negativity in assessing the errors of the past. They were to place less emphasis on the individual responsibility of the cadres who committed mistakes, and were to adopt a sincere attitude of "curing the sickness to save the patient," rather than one of vindictiveness and exclusionism.¹⁵ Finally, in an attempt to weaken the excessive factionalism that was causing problems in inter-cadre relations, Mao brought to an end a whole era

¹⁴See the editorial note in Mao, XJ III, pp. 891-892.

¹⁵Mao, XJ III, p. 892.

in Party history be declaring quite unequivocally that:

It should be stated that as a result of the series of changes since the Tsunyi Meeting, the factions which formerly existed and played an unwholesome role in the history of our Party no longer exist....The old factions are gone.¹⁶

Presumably, such leaders of the "old factions" as Li Li-san, Wang Ming and Po Ku could derive some satisfaction from their new status as individual Party members, and not living negative examples who would continue to bear the brunt of daily criticism and self-criticism. They would, of course, continue to play this unhappy role in the new Party history being undertaken, but this was something with which they would have to live. In a last attempt to lay the past to rest, and to turn the Party's mind to the new tasks ahead, Mao revealed that the long-awaited Seventh National Congress "will probably be held soon." As for the main items on the agenda, added Mao, they would certainly include the "problems of strengthening our work in the cities and winning nation-wide victory."¹⁷

(ii) Ch'en Po-ta and the Maoist Myth

Mao delivered his speech on Party history at the last of the special sessions organized by the Central Committee for the instruction of the senior cadres in the Party. Surprisingly, he made no attempt to give a comprehensive summary of the conclusions that had emerged in the course of the year-long discussions on Party history. Even with regard to the controversial 1931-34 period, when the Returned Students were in the ascendancy, Mao was content to refer briefly to the Political Bureau's previous conclusion that

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 893-894.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 900.

the "provisional central leadership that was formed in Shanghai in 1931 and the Fifth Plenary Session which it subsequently convened... [were]...legal," but that the "procedures for the election were inadequate and that this case should be taken as a historical lesson."¹⁸

Considering that the campaign to study Party history had focused specifically on the 1931-34 period, one would have thought that the Politburo would have come up with a more comprehensive and devastating indictment of the Returned Students than the one announced by Mao. Surely, Liu Shao-ch'i's essay of 6 July 1943 had suggested a much harsher verdict than mere admonishment for "inadequate procedures" on the part of the errant Party leaders. This puzzle is quickly solved, however, when it is realized that the debate on Party history was by no means closed by Mao's brief remarks. On the contrary, the discussion was to continue from the late spring of 1944 to the convening of the Seventh Congress in April 1945, but only within the Politburo and the Central Committee, whose task it was to make the final judgements on the interpretation of the Party's history. Nonetheless, Mao's remarks about the "legality" of the Returned Students' tenure in the top leadership posts during 1931-34 did much to clear the air in Yenan. However mistaken they may have been in political and military policy, their leadership was legally established and not at gross variance with established Party procedures. Although the Returned Students were to be castigated for their errors in policy, there would be no question of criminal prosecution and physical punishment, a fate that most of the "Old Bolsheviks" in the Soviet Union had not so luckily escaped at the hands of Stalin.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 893.

In the course of the above speech, Mao revealed that the Politburo was chiefly concerned with drawing conclusions only with regard to the Party's history prior to Tsunyi. According to the emerging Maoist consensus, the CCP's development since January 1935 did not present any fundamental problems regarding interpretation. The Maoists claimed that the Party took the "correct" path after Tsunyi, and that in the course of 1935-37 the earlier "leftist" policies of the Party leadership had been replaced by those of Mao and his supporters. As for the period following the Japanese invasion in July 1937, Mao believed there were no real problems in its proper periodization and characterization: 1937-40, the overcoming of the "right deviation"; 1941-42, the suppression of the "ultra-left deviation"; and, finally, 1943 to the present (April 1944), when "no basic deviations" were held to have occurred.¹⁹ Even in April 1945, when the Central Committee adopted its formal resolution on Party history, no attempt was made to confirm, reject, or amend this tentative periodization suggested by Mao. Noting simply that it was "appropriate to postpone to a future date" the drawing of conclusions regarding the Party's history after Tsunyi, the Central Committee turned its undivided attention to the pre-1935 period, especially the Returned Students' tenure of office.²⁰ Apart from this apparent consensus regarding the Party's history after 1935, there would appear to be another important reason for the decision to focus exclusively on the years prior to 1935, namely the lingering doubts

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 895-897.

²⁰Ibid., p. 922.

within the CCP leadership regarding Mao's personal stature as a Marxist-Leninist theoretician. This sensitive problem is confronted directly by Ch'en Po-ta, who was to emerge shortly after Mao's speech as the chief architect of the new interpretation of Party history, and the foremost creator of the Maoist myth. In a revealing passage that was later deleted in the revised version of the text in question, Ch'en complained that:

Without any doubt, it is completely contrary to historical fact to recognize Comrade Mao Tse-tung only as a practical activist of the revolution [ge-ming de shi-ji xing-dong-jia], or to maintain that Comrade Mao Tse-tung became a theorist only during the period of the war of resistance, and was not a theorist previously, and in this way to hold that Comrade Mao Tse-tung's practice and theory took shape and emerged only then [i.e., during the anti Japanese war].²¹

It comes as no secret, of course, that there were many within the Party elite who seriously questioned Mao's claim to theoretical leadership. Certainly, the Returned Students had done little to conceal their disdain for Mao's abilities as a theorist, and even such relatively ardent supporters of Mao as Chu Teh paid tribute to Mao's importance in the ideological sphere only under the pressure of the cheng-feng campaign. Yet, by the spring of 1944, when Ch'en made his complaint, the Party leadership had come around (however

²¹Ch'en Po-ta, Nei-zhan shi-qi de fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming (Counter-revolution and Revolution in the Civil War Period), Inner-Party Cadre Reading Material, Yenan: n.pub., 1944, p. 65. This study was later revised and published as Ch'en Po-ta, Guan-yu shi-nian nei-zhan (On the Ten-Year Civil War), Peking: Ren-min chu-ban-she, 1st ed., 1953. The corresponding English version is Ch'en Po-ta, Notes on Ten Years of Civil War (1927-1936), Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1st ed., 1954. For a detailed discussion of this important text, see part (iv) of this chapter.

reluctantly) to Mao's position, and most of them had thrown themselves with some abandon into the campaign to glorify Mao and his thought. One must assume, therefore, that at the time Ch'en voiced his concern, Mao's position as the CCP's premier ideologist was not seriously in question within the Party's most influential circles. Rather, the main point of contention appears to have been the difficult problem of periodizing Mao's intellectual and theoretical development as a revolutionary leader. Indeed, Ch'en's comments strongly suggest that there were those within the Party who accepted Mao's ideological claims, but only with reference to the post-Tsunyi period when the problem of the anti-Japanese resistance assumed first place on the Party's agenda. Ch'en's concern seems to be well founded, for Mao's reputation as a theorist was largely based on his voluminous literary output dating only from 1936, when he wrote his famous military treatise, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War." The Essays of Mao Tse-tung, published in Shanghai in late 1937, was the first known anthology of Mao's writings, but it did not include anything written prior to Tsunyi. Even during the cheng-feng campaign and after, when Mao's theoretical stature came to be recognized within the Party, reference was nearly always made to such post-Tsunyi writings as "On Protracted War" (1938), "On the New Stage" (1938), and his influential essay, "On New Democracy," first issued in 1940. Chang Ju-hsin, who had published the first systematic study of Mao's "theory and strategy" in early 1942, failed to mention a single writing of Mao prior to 1935. When excerpts from one of these early works ("Kut'ien Resolutions") were actually assigned for study during

cheng-feng, no indication whatsoever was given that they had come from Mao's pen. There would appear to be considerable basis, then, for Ch'en's lament that Mao's theoretical contributions prior to 1935 were being largely ignored by the Party.

Still, why all the worry? Surely, the Maoists would be well content to see Mao's theoretical correctness established for the post-1935 period, when he attained a commanding position in the Party's leadership? Was it necessary also to stake a claim for his correctness in the years prior to Tsunyi, when the Party's fortunes wavered erratically between success and failure? Ch'en (and Mao) apparently thought so. Soon after Mao's speech of 12 April 1944, in which he confined the continuing discussions on Party history to the Central Committee alone, Ch'en issued a series of three integrated treatises designed to establish Mao's reputation as a theoretician prior to 1935. There were many reasons for this, not the least of which was the probable realization that continued silence regarding Mao's early activities in the revolution suggested either of two unwelcome interpretations, if not both. In the first place, continued silence on the early period implied that in the first fifteen years of his revolutionary career, Mao had not made any significant contributions to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory in the context of Chinese reality. In other words, he had not effectively combined the foreign theory with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, and had thus failed to develop a correct theoretical understanding of the inner dynamics of the revolutionary movement. This proposition would have serious connotations to anyone with even a

rudimentary grasp of Marxism-Leninism, especially its insistence that correct revolutionary practice inevitably gives rise to correct revolutionary theory, which in turn guides new practice towards new theory in an endless chain of dialectical interaction. To put it bluntly, the slightest suspicion that Mao's theoretical abilities prior to 1935 were open to question immediately suggests that his concurrent leadership of the practical movement was equally suspect. To a Marxist, theory and practice must be combined; either Mao Tse-tung was correct in both theory and practice prior to 1935, or he was mistaken in both. He could not under any circumstances be right in one and wrong in the other, and this conclusion was unlikely to be passed over by Mao and his colleagues.

This lingering ambiguity concerning Mao's historical role prior to Tsunyi would have proven intolerable to the Maoists, who had only recently launched their massive campaign to elevate Mao as both leader and thinker. Certainly, the realization that Mao was only a "half right-half wrong" leader would have undermined his new image as the undisputed helmsman of both the Party and the nation. More directly, this ambiguity would also have opened up a Pandora's box regarding a host of unsettling questions relating to the many bitter struggles that had tormented the CCP in the first fifteen years of its existence. Doubtless, people like Wang Ming and Po Ku (not to mention Li Li-san) would have taken great satisfaction in an interpretation of Party history that, while proving them wrong, did not prove Mao right. This in turn would severely weaken the strength of the Maoist critique of the Returned Students, and would plunge the Party

into yet another round of acrimonious debate over the past. Further, if the suggestion were to remain that neither the Returned Students nor Mao himself were completely right or wrong, this would encourage unwelcome speculation concerning the "real" locus of correct theory and practice in early Party history. This "real" locus had to be somewhere, since there was common agreement that, in spite of numerous setbacks since its founding in 1921, the CCP's record had ultimately been one of genuine growth and success. However, if the mantle of correct leadership were to be equally denied to Mao Tse-tung and to his many opponents in the 1921-35 period, one would be compelled to search for this correct leadership outside the ranks of the CCP. Inevitably, the search would have shifted to the Comintern, and hence to the Kremlin in Moscow, the accepted center of the world revolution during the period in question. For a host of reasons with which we are familiar, this would have been totally unacceptable to Mao and his supporters, who had spent the years since Tsunyi in establishing the CCP's virtual independence from the CPSU in matters of both theory and practice. To admit at this stage that in all the years prior to 1935 the CCP was too incompetent to nurture its own indigenous leaders, and was forced to rely on foreign guidance on both theoretical and practical matters, was simply unthinkable. Such a suggestion was undoubtedly repugnant to the Maoists from either a Marxist or a nationalist point of view. The decision to rewrite the early history of the CCP, therefore, was not simply an exercise in the glorification of Mao (although an element of this was certainly present); rather, it was a final task of considerable

importance in the Sinification of Marxism, the pursuit of which had long occupied a prominent position in the intellectual concerns of Mao and his like-minded colleagues such as Ch'en Po-ta.

In many ways, Ch'en was the obvious person to be assigned the task of reconstructing the early history of the Party. As a former Moscow-returned student who was fluent in Russian, Ch'en was well versed in the history of the Russian revolution, and the CPSU in particular. In addition, his intimate contact with the Returned Students during his years at Sun Yat-sen University gave him a degree of personal knowledge (and hostility) vis-à-vis Mao's key opponents that was probably unsurpassed in the Party. As early as 1937, when Ch'en first came to Yen-an, he participated in research and teaching on Party history, and in 1938 he published an initial draft of the Maoist version of the CCP's history. During cheng-feng, Ch'en emerged as one of the leading polemicists in the Maoist camp and, in his celebrated critique of Chiang Kai-shek's China's Destiny, he achieved a prominent reputation both in China and abroad as a leading CCP theoretician. Most important, in the years since 1937 Ch'en had established a close intellectual link with Mao, had influenced his thinking in many specific ways, and was perhaps more privy to the nuances of Mao's mind and personality than any other member of the Party (other than Chiang Ch'ing?). Ch'en's historical task was twofold: First, he was to demonstrate that in the fifteen years from the founding of the CCP in 1921 to the Tsunyi Conference in 1935, it was essentially Mao Tse-tung alone who developed a correct theoretical, strategic and tactical understanding of the proletarian revolu-

tion in China. Second, in accordance with the first proposition, Ch'en was to present the Party's history prior to 1935 basically as the history of the gradual evolution of Mao's correct line, and its struggle for supremacy against all the incorrect lines that rose to challenge it. To Ch'en, the history of the CCP was above all an intellectual history; it was a chronicle of one man's mind writ large, the drama of which was to be found not in the detailing of military campaigns, but in the unfolding of a greater (Hegelian?) Idea which subsumed the entire revolutionary process within it. How else are we to interpret Ch'en's remarkable statement regarding the theoretical import of Mao's "Report of an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (1927)? "Without doubt," claims Ch'en, "this historical document is the equal in brilliance and glory of the tumultuous revolution of 1924-27 created by all the comrades in our Party."²² Implied in this sweeping comparison, of course, is the proposition that the essential historical significance of the entire revolution of 1924-27 lies in the fact that it provided the historical context which gave rise to the political theories of a single individual, Mao Tse-tung. To Ch'en, history was above all the incubator of ideas, and it was the task of the historian to extract them from the raw, experiential matter in which they were embedded.

²²Ch'en Po-ta, Du "Hu-nan nong-min yun-dong kao-cha bao-gao" (A Study of "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan"), Peking: Ren-min chu-ban-she, 1st ed., 1951, p. 42. The corresponding English text is Ch'en Po-ta, Notes on Mao Tse-tung's "Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan," Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1st ed., 1954. For a detailed discussion of this text, see part (iii) of this chapter.

Before turning to a detailed examination of Ch'en's reconstruction of Party history, we should devote a few lines to textual considerations. Ch'en wrote three substantial pamphlets totalling some 175 pages for the consideration of the higher Party cadres. That they were of a controversial nature is suggested by their classification as "dang nei gan-bu du.wu" (inner-Party reading material for cadres), and by the fact that they were not issued publicly (and only then in their revised form) until the early 1950's. Two date from the spring of 1944 and were issued under Ch'en's own name; the third dates from the spring of 1945, and was issued in the name of the Central Committee. The first of the trilogy is On Reading 'Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,' which was later published with the same title in 1951. The second, entitled Counter-Revolution and Revolution in the Civil War Period, was belatedly published in 1953 with a new title, On the Ten Year Civil War. The year 1953 also saw the appearance of the well-known "Resolution on Certain Historical Problems [In our Party]," adopted by the Seventh Plenum of the CCP Central Committee on 20 April 1945, just prior to the Party's Seventh National Congress.²³ Assigning this important resolution to Ch'en Po-ta's authorship is a somewhat controversial step, but for a variety of reasons it would appear to be a reasonable one. We shall,

²³Ch'en Po-ta (?), "Guan-yu ruo-gan li-shi wen-ti de jue-yi" (Resolution Concerning Certain Historical Questions), adopted on 20 April 1945 by the Enlarged Seventh Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CCP. The full text is in Mao, XJ III, pp. 904-953. The corresponding English text is in Mao, SW III, pp. 177-225. For a fuller discussion of this text, and of Ch'en Po-ta's probable authorship of it, see Chapter X, part (i).

however, delay our discussion of the evidence for Ch'en's authorship of the resolution until we are in a position to discuss its substantive content. A problem we will pose now concerns the use of textual materials which exist in both original and revised versions. Regarding Ch'en's study of Mao's "Hunan Report," and the resolution he drafted for the Central Committee, we have little choice but to use the revised versions dating from 1951 and 1953 respectively, for the original texts do not appear to be available outside the CCP's official files. Fortunately, however, we do have access to the original text of Counter-Revolution and Revolution, and with this as a point of comparison we are able to draw a few general conclusions concerning all three treatises.²⁴ Without going into too much detail, it would seem that there are few significant differences in either factual material or interpretation between the original and the revised texts. The revised version shows evidence of a certain amount of up-dating, some deletion of inessential material, and a general attempt at tidying up the presentation. The most significant difference in the revised text of Counter-Revolution and Revolution is the tendency to weaken the strength of the claims made on behalf of Mao's theoretical originality, and at the same time to give

²⁴The original text of Counter-Revolution and Revolution in the Civil War Period can be found in You-guan Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang cai-liao (Materials on the Chinese Communist Party), Tokyo: Yushodo Bookstore Microfilms, 1970, Reel 12 of 20. The preface to this text is dated 1 May 1943, but this is obviously a misprint for 1944. In his concluding comments (p. 66), for example, Ch'en refers to Wang Chia-hsiang's article on Mao Tse-tung's thought which was published only on 8 July 1943, i.e., two months after the date given in the preface. For this and other reasons, we can safely assume that Ch'en's text was first issued on 1 May 1944.

increased prominence to the omnipresent ideological influence of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and especially Stalin. Such attempts to "sanitize" early CCP documents in the interests of Sino-Soviet harmony after 1949 are well known, especially with regard to Mao's own works, and the details need not concern us here.²⁵ Thus, Ch'en's claims regarding Mao's ability or originality as a theorist in the revised texts of either his study of the "Hunan Report" or his "Resolution" on Party history are likewise certain to be weaker in tone than in their original versions, and the deference shown to the foreign masters of Marxism, and Stalin in particular, somewhat enhanced. This is illustrated most clearly in the following example. In the conclusion to his Counter-Revolution and Revolution (original text of 1944), Ch'en states quite categorically that, in the years following the CCP's Sixth Congress in 1928:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung solved the fundamental problems of the revolution in both theory and practice, in a more comprehensive way, and in their entirety.²⁶

This is quite a forthright and sweeping statement, and fully reflects the general tone of Ch'en's claims regarding Mao's theoretical and practical leadership of the Chinese revolution. Yet, in Ch'en's Ten Year Civil War (revised text of 1953), this particular sentence has been altered to read:

²⁵For numerous examples of later alterations to Mao's original writings, see Schram, Political Thought, pp. 150-151, 174, 252, 276, etc.

²⁶Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, p. 63.

Applying the methods and theories of Marxism-Leninism and following and developing Stalin's teachings regarding the Chinese revolution, Comrade Mao Tse-tung then solved, in a more comprehensive way, the fundamental problems raised by the revolution at that time.²⁷

The addition of the first two clauses regarding Marxism-Leninism and "Stalin's teachings" tends to weaken Mao's theoretical significance, as does the substitution of "at that time" for "in their entirety" on the nature of his solutions to the basic problems of the revolution. Nonetheless, these significant revisions to Ch'en's text did not come about until 1953, nine years after Ch'en wrote his original treatise. In the meantime, it was the original and more forthright text that was being avidly studied and assimilated by the CCP membership during the current movement to study Party history. In 1944, Mao's singular importance was at the center of their concerns, with Stalin and the classical Marxist-Leninist heritage very much in the background.

(iii) Mao's Early "Bolshevism"

As Noriyuki Tokuda has pointed out, it was in his important treatises in the spring of 1944 that Ch'en Po-ta attempted to "re-construct Mao's thought systematically for the first time within the Party."²⁸ At the same time, Ch'en had to familiarize the Party members with Mao's long-neglected writings prior to 1936; consequently, Ch'en's texts are interlarded with copious citations from the most important (in Ch'en's view) of Mao's early writings, especially those dating from 1927-30. This device does not do justice to Ch'en's

²⁷Ch'en Po-ta, Guan-yu shi-nian nei-zhan, p. 66.

²⁸Tokuda, op. cit., p. 62.

fluent prose style, but the lengthy quotations no doubt served as a surrogate until these early writings could be published in a more complete form. Considering his On Reading 'Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan' in the first instance, we are quick to note the influence of Ch'en the historian. He immediately places Mao within the context of Chinese revolutionary history, pointing out specifically that the province of Hunan has been one of the "focal points" in the struggle between "progressive and revolutionary" and "conservative and counter-revolutionary" forces in modern China. Indeed, Hunan has witnessed "typical struggles" between these contending forces in the past century. Further, Ch'en argues, Hunan has also witnessed the "emergence of various personalities typical of both the revolution and the counter-revolution." Ch'en declines to name Mao specifically as one such "typical" personality on the "revolutionary" side, but the point is made perfectly clear when he refers to Mao's "Hunan Report" as "one of those works in which is crystallized the best thinking of the finest people in China's history." In any event, Mao's Hunan origins were well known, as was the prominent place of Hunan in China's modern history, a fact often noted by both Chinese and Western writers alike.²⁹ Ch'en does not dwell upon the issue, but his mere allusion to Hunan's pivotal place in Chinese

²⁹Ch'en Po-ta, Du Hu-nan bao-gao, pp. 43-44. For a highly suggestive discussion of certain distinctive characteristics of Hunan province in modern Chinese history, and their possible effect on Mao Tse-tung, see Jerome Ch'en, Mao, pp. 1-7. For a paean to the stirring qualities of the Hunanese, see the essay by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "Salute to the Spirit of the Hunanese" (May 1920), in d'Encausse and Schram, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

history is quite enough to make the point, and to establish in the reader's mind (or perhaps his subconscious) an almost mystical link between Mao Tse-tung and China's romantic and glorious past.

But however romantic in even revolutionary terms, the past is after all the past. What relationship exists between Mao and the present era of proletarian revolution? Does not Ch'en's earlier allusion, however colourful, contain within it the merest hint that Mao is nothing more than a traditional Chinese rebel, perhaps in the style of the nineteenth-century Taipings? Ch'en is quick to dismiss this suggestion by drawing a neat parallel between Mao and the Chinese Communist Party itself. From its founding in 1921, argues Ch'en, the CCP has developed through three distinctive stages: (1) the urban working-class movement; (2) the Nationalist-Communist united front; and (3) the peasant movement in the countryside. This periodization of the Party's history is quite orthodox; Ch'en's novel addition to this standard account, however, is his suggestion that:

From the founding of the Party up to the 1924-27 revolution, the revolutionary activities of Comrade Mao Tse-tung also went through these three main phases. First, he participated in the working-class movement; next, in united front work; and then in the peasant movement.³⁰

Interestingly, Mao's early career did in fact follow this general pattern, and Ch'en's attempt at establishing this parallel is not without considerable justification. Yet, this comparison of Mao's and the CCP's development does contain within it the suggestion that there exists, however nebulously, an almost organic relationship between Mao and the Party, the individual and the collective. If this

³⁰Ch'en Po-ta, Du Hu-nan bao-gao, p. 43.

relationship does exist, is it symbiotic as well as organic; that is, is the development of Mao and the Party based on a mutuality of need? Does Mao depend on the existence of the Party as a necessary condition of his own existence, or conversely, does the Party depend on the existence of Mao as a necessary condition of its own existence? Ch'en comes close to claiming the latter, not by explicitly denying the collective nature of the Party and the integral, yet subordinate, role of its constituent members, but by singling out the decisive role of one individual. In each of the three phases in the CCP's history between 1921 and 1927, claims Ch'en, Mao Tse-tung consistently "stood at the foremost and most important post...came into the closest contact with reality...and pondered most profoundly over problems of the revolution."³¹

Yet, one might ask, what specific evidence is there to support Ch'en's extravagant claims regarding Mao's superiority? In particular, what decisive advances has Mao made in Marxist theory which might reflect his alleged commanding position in the early stages of the Chinese revolution? Interestingly, Ch'en completely ignores all of Mao's writings during the period under discussion up to March 1927. One can only assume that these texts are either immature, undistinguished, erroneous, or a combination thereof, at least in Ch'en's opinion (and possibly that of Mao as well).³² This omission

³¹Loc. cit.

³²This negative appraisal of Mao's early texts appears to have remained constant in later years, for only one of Mao's texts dating from prior to March 1927 has been included in the official Selected Works published after 1949. Even then, this essay, "Analysis of all

is of no consequence, however, for the deficiency is more than made up by a single writing of Mao, namely, his "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," dating from March 1927. To Ch'en, Mao's "Hunan Report" is of considerably more importance than its title would suggest, for it goes much further than merely chronicling the experience of the peasant movement in the single province of Hunan. Indeed, Ch'en claims that Mao's study "sums up" the experience of the "mass struggle throughout the country during the period of the 1924-27 revolution." Hence, it "represents the essence of that whole epoch, that entire historical period."³⁴ One might ask, of course, how it is possible that a report on the peasant movement (as opposed to the urban working-class movement) can, in the eyes of a seasoned Marxist, be regarded as representing the "essence" of even the early stages of a potential proletarian revolution in China. Further, is it possible for Mao Tse-tung, a petty-bourgeois intellectual with unmistakable rural origins, actually to write such an important work? Yet, no sooner are these troublesome questions posed than Ch'en responds to them, claiming that:

It was as the representative of the Chinese proletariat that Comrade Mao Tse-tung in this report presented a complete solution to this central problem [viz, the peasant question] of the revolution (which was also the most pressing problem of the day).³⁴

the Classes in Chinese Society" (February 1926), was published in a highly revised and abbreviated form. For further information on this text, see Schram, Political Thought, pp. 210-214, and Mao, SW I, pp. 13-21.

³³Ch'en Po-ta, Du Hu-nan bao-gao, p. 44.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Hence, since Mao is the "representative" of the Chinese proletariat, and since the peasant problem is the "central problem" of the proletarian revolution in China, it is logical to conclude that Mao's "complete solution" of this particular problem is also the complete solution to the entire revolution. It is for this reason, concludes Ch'en, that Mao's "Hunan Report" can be accurately described as a "generalization of the Bolshevik strategy and tactics of the Chinese Communist Party," and a "summary of our Party's Bolshevism" in the period of the 1924-27 revolution."³⁵

These are heady claims Ch'en is making on Mao's behalf, and one is naturally interested in how he backs them up. The verification, argues Ch'en, is to be found in three distinctive elements in Mao's thinking in the 1924-27 period: (1) his possession of a revolutionary methodology; (2) his recognition of the pivotal importance of the peasants; and (3) his advocacy of a dictatorship of the revolutionary people. Let us consider these three elements in turn. According to Ch'en, Mao's "revolutionary methodology" is none other than the mass line: "Be students of the masses, concentrate the experience of their struggles and their views, and in turn become their teachers." Such a methodology is essential to the success of the revolution, argues Ch'en, for it prevents genuine revolutionaries from falling into the "bookish dogma" of those, like Ch'en Tu-hsiu, who are ardent practitioners of their own distinctive "Menshevik methodology."³⁶ As for Mao's emphasis on the peasantry, continues Ch'en,

³⁵Ibid., p. 42.

³⁶Ibid., p. 7.

this is due to his recognition that in a vast agricultural nation like China, "if the Chinese proletariat proves unable to lead the peasant revolution, it will certainly be unable to consummate the cause of the nation and the proletariat [itself]." This proposition is based on Mao's observation of the need to depend on the "rising of the peasants" to destroy feudalism and imperialism in China, says Ch'en, and it is at complete variance with Ch'en Tu-hsiu's persistent underestimation of the key role of the peasants in the Chinese revolution.³⁷ Finally, Ch'en points to Mao's constant espousal of Lenin's theory of the "dictatorship of the revolutionary people," which, in the context of the peasant movement in China, amounts in actuality to the "dictatorship of the revolutionary peasantry." Lest there be any doubt as to this equivalence, Ch'en quickly reminds the reader that the "dictatorship of the revolutionary people described by Lenin is the very dictatorship of the revolutionary people lauded by Comrade Mao Tse-tung."³⁸ This theory is of course vastly different from that of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, for he was violently opposed to the peasants' interfering in administrative affairs in the course of establishing their revolutionary power.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 19-20.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 21-24, 29-30. As Stuart Schram has pointed out in a private communication, Lenin never talked about the "dictatorship of the revolutionary people," nor did Mao ever mention the "dictatorship of the revolutionary peasantry." These "heresies" on the part of Ch'en simply highlight his pronounced populist attitudes towards the peasantry, and the "people" in general. In later years, such populist sentiments were expressed in Ch'en's espousal of the Paris Commune model during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's, and in other ways as well. On this point, see the reference to Ch'en in John Bryan Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune Through Chinese Eyes," CQ, 49 (January - March, 1972), pp. 116-117.

Throughout his discussion, Ch'en at no time claims that Mao has actually created new revolutionary theory. Nor is the "Sinification" of Marxism mentioned; by 1944 this particular terminology had been largely dropped from the CCP's lexicon, probably in recognition of its excessively parochial connotation. Yet, Ch'en is at constant pains to demonstrate the compatibility of Mao's own ideological reformulations with the classic theories of Marxism-Leninism, as well as with the policies of Stalin and the Comintern during the period in question. Despite this fundamental unity of theory and strategy between the Comintern and Mao's "Bolshevik" line, this does not preclude considerable diversity in the specific tactics adopted in light of the concrete demands of time and place. For example, says Ch'en, the tactics used by the Chinese proletariat in dealing with the bourgeoisie are by necessity "vastly different" from the tactics adopted by the Russian proletariat in dealing with their own bourgeoisie.³⁹ How is it, then, that although the tactics of the international communist movement and those of the Chinese Party can at times be "vastly different," a basic underlying harmony in theory and strategy can be maintained? In answering this important question, Ch'en gives the reader a fruitful insight into his conception of the nature of Mao's thought. With particular reference to the "question of power," a central problem in all political theory and practice, Ch'en declares that:

³⁹Ibid., p. 18.

The characteristic of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought, like that of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and all other most outstanding communists, is that it is capable of drawing conclusions by generalizing direct, vital and concrete reality, thus further concretely developing the general line laid down by the Communist International regarding the question of power [in the Chinese revolution].⁴⁰

A moment ago it was pointed out that at no time does Ch'en claim that Mao had created any new theories as of 1927, but the above passage clearly indicates that such a possibility existed. In Ch'en's mind, by 1927 Mao had emerged as the outstanding scientist of the proletarian revolution in China. His mental constitution was identical to that of Marx and the other classical masters of proletarian theory, and he had the ability to "generalize" from reality (i.e., to create theory). Further, his distinctive generalizations had the power actually to "develop" the existing body of proletarian theory regarding, for example, the decisive question of political power. Hence, continues Ch'en, one is inevitably led to the conclusion that:

With the birth of the Party, [Mao Tse-tung] emerged as the most outstanding Bolshevik representative in the Party, and by the time of the period of the 1924-27 revolution he had already emerged as the major theorist [ji-da-cheng-zhe] of Bolshevik ideology in our Party.⁴¹

Ch'en's use of the rather unusual term "ji-da-cheng-zhe" to describe Mao is most interesting to our discussion, and deserves additional comment. A somewhat archaic phrase, "ji-da-cheng-zhe" can be translated as "one who gathers many proposals and formulates theories

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 31

⁴¹Ibid., p. 43.

from them."⁴² This immediately suggests one of the characteristic features of traditional Chinese philosophy, namely, its emphasis on the syncretization of highly eclectic elements into a single, comprehensive world view, whether it be that of Tung Chung-shu of the Han dynasty, or K'ang Yu-wei of the late Ch'ing. In using this distinctive term, is Ch'en suggesting, if only unconsciously, that Mao Tse-tung's qualities as a theorist have much in common with the theorists of China's past? Is the fundamental cast of Mao's mind substantially different from that of Tung and K'ang, or is it, despite the new Marxist content, largely in the same tradition? That Ch'en perceives a basic similarity between Mao and the philosophers of the past is dramatically suggested in a revealing passage in Ch'en's essay of April 1939, "The Philosophic Thought of Confucius." In this essay, Ch'en claims that it was during the Spring and Autumn period in ancient Chinese history that "feudal ideology developed to the [stage of] 'theory' [ji da cheng de fa-zhan]." During this period, Chou, the feudal state in which Confucius was educated, can be regarded as a "typical" state in the prevailing system on the East Asian mainland. Hence, it was possible for Confucius, the product of a "typical" feudal state in a period of ideological development, to become the "representative" of this feudal ideology precisely at the moment when it was developing to the stage of theory. In this way,

⁴²This is the relevant translation of the term suggested by R. H. Mathews in his well-known Chinese-English Dictionary, rev. ed., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 66. A more literal translation of the verb would be "to crystallize," "to be a concentrated expression of," etc. See, for example, Han-Ying shi-shi yong-yu ci-hui (A Chinese-English Dictionary of Current Events Terminology), Hong Kong: Shang-wu yin-shu-guan, 1972, p. 175.

Ch'en demonstrates that Confucius became the "theorist Zi da cheng zhe of the ruling feudal ideology" by synthesizing diverse elements from the Shang dynasty, which first gave rise to the "feudal cultural system," and from the Chou dynasty, during which this feudal cultural system reached its full development.⁴³ Just as Ch'en had previously described Confucius as the "theorist" of the Chou feudal system, he now singles out Mao Tse-tung as the "major theorist" of the contemporary era of the proletarian revolution in China. Nowhere does Ch'en suggest (even indirectly) that the ideological content of Mao's thought bears any similarity to that of Confucius. Mao is not a Confucian, nor was Confucius a Marxist. The sole point of comparison between the two individuals, Ch'en suggests, is the similarity in their roles, within their specific historical contexts, as the outstanding ideological spokesmen of their own ages. It is in this light that Ch'en can claim that Mao's political thought, as represented in his "Hunan Report," can be seen as embodying the "essence" of the "entire historical period" which gave birth to the Chinese Communist Party, and which witnessed its early years of trial and growing maturity.

Thus does Ch'en establish Mao Tse-tung's ideological supremacy within the CCP from its founding in 1921 to its virtual destruction by the Nationalists in 1927. But this catastrophe is in no way attributable to Mao, cautions Ch'en, for the CCP was "still young,"

⁴³Ch'en Po-ta, "Kong Zi de zhe-xue si-xiang" (The Philosophic Thought of Confucius), JF, 69 (April 1939), as extracted in Wu-si yi-lai fan-dong-pai, di-zhu zi-chan jie-ji xue-zhe zun-Kong fu-gu yan-lun ji-lu (A Compilation of Sayings on Honouring Confucius and Restoring Tradition by Reactionaries and Landlord and Bourgeois Scholars Since the May Fourth Movement), Peking: Ren-min chu-ban-she, 1974, pp. 28-29.

and "history had not reached a stage where the conscious Bolshevik political line of Comrade Mao Tse-tung could assume organized, concentrated rule over the entire Party."⁴⁴ On the contrary, it was the "Menshevik line" (which was at one and the same time also a "Trotskyist line") of Ch'en Tu-hsiu that dominated the Party leadership during the period in question, and which was fully responsible for leading the Party to disaster in 1927. Nonetheless, these years of trial and error were not without positive result, for they alerted the Party's true Bolshevik members to the erroneous policies of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and his fellow "Mensheviks," and hence prepared the way for the reconstruction of the Party along correct lines. Therein lies the decisive importance of Mao's historic "Hunan Report," concludes Ch'en, for it is a document which manifested the "open ideological split" between these two contending forces within the Party, and prepared the soil for the ultimate victory of "Bolshevik truth as represented in China by Comrade Mao Tse-tung."⁴⁵ The "Hunan Report" is thus to be regarded as a watershed document in the history of the CCP and, more importantly, in the intellectual evolution of Mao Tse-tung as the pre-eminent theoretician of the Chinese revolution.

(iv) Mao's "Revolutionary Wisdom"

Mao Tse-tung's "Hunan Report" of March 1927 is of the utmost importance, claims Ch'en, for it marks the emergence of Mao as the CCP's leading theoretician, and it set the Party firmly on the road to revolutionary success. Yet at no time does Ch'en suggest that

⁴⁴Ch'en Po-ta, Du Hu-nan bao-gao, p. 45.

⁴⁵Loc. cit.

Mao's thought had developed fully as of 1927; rather, it was only during the following period, 1927-30, that Mao's thought reached a relatively mature stage. Indeed, Ch'en wrote his second treatise on Mao, Counter-Revolution and Revolution in the Civil War Period, precisely for the purpose of demonstrating that it was during 1927-30 that Mao's thought "took a big stride forward in the course of actual struggles" compared to when he wrote his "Hunan Report."⁴⁶ It was during these few years, claims Ch'en, that Mao was able to solve, "in their entirety, and in a more comprehensive way, the fundamental problems of the revolution in both theory and practice."⁴⁷ Hence, although some fifteen years have lapsed since this decisive period in Mao's intellectual development, the series of articles he wrote between 1927 and 1930 contain "many fundamental principles" of the Chinese revolution. Even though these intervening years have been ones of "many changes" in the course of the revolution, Mao's articles from this earlier period have not by any means been reduced to the level of mere historical documents. Rather, their intrinsic significance transcends the limitations of time, and they are as important today (1944) as they were when they were first composed. Lest there be any comrades within the Party who might wish to slight these early writings of the chairman, preferring to focus attention on his well-known treatises of the late 1930's and early 1940's, Ch'en sets the record straight:

⁴⁶Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, p. 33.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 63.

The theoretical work in which Mao Tse-tung engaged during the early stage of the Soviet movement was in actual fact the total theoretical and strategic basis of the ten-year internal revolutionary war....If one does not clearly understand Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory and strategy of the early period of the Soviet movement and the Red Army's wars, then one cannot comprehend fully the creation of the forces of the Chinese revolution, or the reasons for the gigantic scale of the present-day revolution in China. Nor can one clearly understand Chinese Bolshevism in its entirety, nor the goal of Bolshevization which our whole Party is pursuing at the present time under the direction of Comrade Mao Tse-tung.⁴⁸

In Ch'en's eyes, then, Mao's writings of the 1927-30 period assume a position of utmost significance in the ideological history of the CCP. Not only did they solve the "fundamental problems" of the Chinese revolution, but they even epitomize the essence of the CCP's history during its two great revolutionary periods (1921-27 and 1927-37). Further, these same few writings provide all Party members with a "clear understanding" of the Party's tasks in the current (post-1937) stage of its development, and of the future goals it is trying to achieve on behalf of the Chinese people.

So far we have been talking in generalities, and the questions naturally arise: What are these highly significant writings of the 1927-30 period, and why does Ch'en place so much importance on them? In addition to Mao's pivotal "Hunan Report," there were five other writings that Ch'en singled out as providing the basis of Mao's revolutionary thought: (1) a resolution drafted for the Second Party Congress of the Hunan-Kiangsi Border Area (5 October 1928); (2) a report submitted to the CCP Central Committee on behalf of the Ching-~~ling~~shan Front Committee (25 November 1928); (3) an ordinance of the

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 64-65.

Red Army's Fourth Army Headquarters (January 1929); (4) a resolution drafted for the Ninth Party Congress of the Fourth Army of the Red Army (December 1929); and (5) a letter written by Mao to Lin Piao, at that time a young Red Army commander (5 January 1930). With the exception of item three -- the Red Army ordinance -- all of the above writings have been included in Mao's official Selected Works, and they form the core of Mao's officially-endorsed writings for the period in question. It would appear, then, that the importance Ch'en assigned to these few writings has since been accepted by Mao and the Party elite, a fact which has probably done much to enhance Ch'en's reputation as the CCP's leading interpreter of Mao's thought.⁴⁹ Yet, why is it that Ch'en (and presumably Mao also) holds these early writings in such high regard? A careful study of Ch'en's Counter-Revolution and Revolution reveals his belief that it is in these writings that Mao arrived at a series of decisive decisions regarding the character of the Chinese revolution, and the appropriate role of the CCP in the difficult years after its near-destruction in 1927. In brief, Ch'en argues that Mao's correct estimate of the character of the new Nationalist "dictatorship" in turn led him to a correspondingly accurate appraisal of the overall revolutionary situation prevailing at the time. Basing himself on this correct understanding of

⁴⁹The only article written by Mao prior to the "Human Report" to be included in the official Selected Works is his "Analysis of All the Classes in Chinese Society," first published in February 1926. Even so, the official version of this early essay has been so extensively revised that it "bears little resemblance to the original." On this point, see Schram, Political Thought, pp. 210-214.

the revolutionary situation, Mao was able to work out a suitable long-range strategy for the revolution, and to devise a set of appropriate tactical principles to guide short-term policies. Finally, and very importantly, Mao succeeded in formulating a correct "methodological key" which would unlock the door to the eventual triumph of the true revolutionary forces in China. With this key in hand, the proletarian revolutionaries were able to build up a dynamic Communist Party, consolidate and expand a powerful people's army, and achieve unprecedented success in carrying out mass work in China's countryside. Hence, concludes Ch'en, the entire later history of the Chinese revolution, and the CCP in particular, is clearly mirrored in these early writings of Mao Tse-tung, immortal works whose lustre has in no way diminished with the passage of time, and which still possess "great practical significance" for the revolutionary cause.⁵⁰

Let us look at Ch'en's argument a little more closely. After the failure of the revolution of 1924-27, says Ch'en, it was necessary for the CCP to answer a series of critical questions concerning the precise class nature of the new Nationalist leadership that emerged victorious. "Our Party had to answer these questions," he continues, "because this would determine the basis of our Party's overall policies." It was Mao Tse-tung who correctly answered these fundamental questions by concluding that the Nationalist regime was one of the "new warlords," a "new counter-revolutionary military dictatorship of the big compradores and the big landlords."⁵¹

⁵⁰Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, pp. 64-65.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 2-4.

Following the recitation of a good many statistics to prove that these "new warlords" had systematically stepped up their oppression and exploitation of the Chinese people after achieving power in 1927, Ch'en reasserts the validity of Mao's conclusion at the time that China still needed a genuine "bourgeois democratic revolution" under the leadership of the proletariat. While acknowledging correctly that after 1927 the revolution had "temporarily entered a low tide," Mao nonetheless demonstrated that the foundations of the new Nationalist regime were inherently "weak and unstable," and could be undermined by correct revolutionary strategy. Hence, Mao was able to refute in a decisive manner the joint Trotskyist claims that the victory of the Nationalists in 1927 represented a "victory for the bourgeoisie," and that the "proletarian revolution is already dead."⁵² Having arrived at this correct appraisal of the nature of the revolution in China, continues Ch'en, Mao could not stop half-way; it was now his task to work out an appropriate strategy which would guide the CCP through the revolutionary labyrinth and on to final victory. From the point of view of strategy, argues Ch'en, the "most fundamental problem" of any revolution is the problem of power. In the context of China in the late 1920's, the key question was whether or not "Red political power could exist for a long time and develop despite its encirclement by White political power."⁵³ Basing himself on his earlier proposition (in the "Hunan Report") that the Chinese revolution was essentially an agrarian revolution led by the

⁵²Ibid., pp. 15-18.

⁵³Ibid., p. 30.

proletariat, Mao put forward the concepts of the "agrarian revolution of the peasants, the arming of the revolution, and the [establishment of] revolutionary base areas as the trinity [san-wei-yi-ti de 'dong-xi] by which to establish the political power of the masses."⁵⁴ In this way, continues Ch'en, Mao established the central strategic concept of an "armed independent regime of the workers and peasants," and planted the CCP firmly on the path to the practical realization of this strategic goal.⁵⁵ Mao worked out this correct strategy in the face of repeated challenges from a myriad of mistaken opponents: Chinese Narodniks, who underestimated the role of the proletariat; Chinese Trotskyists, who slighted the importance of the peasantry; Li Li-san, who denied the possibility of an independent Red regime; and, finally, the "third 'left' opportunist line," which failed to grasp the protracted, zig-zag nature of the revolution in China.⁵⁶ Yet Mao's task was not over; he had still to fashion a correct set of practical tactics by which to implement the strategy which he had derived from his earlier appraisal of the nature of the revolution. At this point, Ch'en becomes a little vague in contrast to his previous disputation, claiming only that Mao espoused a "flexible policy" (ling-huo de zheng-ce) toward the inherent contradictions within the enemy camp. Such a flexible policy, argues Ch'en, allowed Mao to analyze and utilize effectively the contradictions within and between the Nationalists and their allies, thus enabling the CCP to

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 26, 36-37.

maintain and even expand "Red political power." This policy of Mao is in complete contrast to the "rigid policy" (zhi-xian de zheng-ce) of the left opportunists, who consistently allowed their ignorance of Chinese society and the Chinese revolution to lead them to underestimate the opportunities presented by the contradictions not only within the ruling classes, but within the broad fabric of Chinese society as a whole. Consequently, these left opportunists rejected the flexible -- and correct -- tactics of Mao Tse-tung at various times during the civil war period (1927-37).⁵⁷

However correct they may be, Mao's analysis of the Chinese revolution, and the strategic and tactical principles he devised accordingly, are above all intellectual concepts. Ch'en is quick to realize this, and to point out that mental abstractions must be realized through concrete organizations and behavioural modes. Indeed, says Ch'en, if the revolution is to be realized in practice, "it is necessary to build up a very good party, establish an excellent revolutionary army, and carry out effective work among the masses."⁵⁸ Of these three concerns, it is Ch'en's opinion that party-building is the "most basic keypoint" in guiding the revolution to victory; further, because the CCP is being built up in a rural environment, proper ideological education of all Party members assumes a position of the utmost importance. Indeed, so concerned is Mao with this point that as early as December 1929 (the Kut'ien Conference), he "elevated theory and ideology to the first position in the problem of building

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 52.

up the Party and the army."⁵⁹ By placing primary emphasis on ideological training, Mao led the entire Party in combatting left and right "subjectivism" on the one hand, and left and right "sectarianism" on the other. Thus, concludes Ch'en, the party which Mao Tse-tung has built up in the rural base areas is a "revolutionary party guided by Marxism-Leninism and possessing strict, centralized proletarian discipline." As for the Red Army, protracted struggles also proved necessary against two particular deviations within its ranks, namely, "war-lordism" and "roving rebel ideology." Interestingly, Ch'en gives a certain modicum of credit to Chu Teh in building up the army, but he waters it down considerably by making Chu share the honours with Mao, the CCP, and the "entire body of officers and men in the Red Army."⁶⁰ Yet, concludes Ch'en, whether one is speaking of success in building up the Party and the army, or in carrying out revolutionary tasks in other fields of concern, there is simply no substitute for effective work among the masses. The Chinese revolution is above all a mass movement for national and social liberation, and its organizational forms -- the CCP and the Red Army -- depend on the masses for their existence and growth. Just as the

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 65. Ch'en is probably exaggerating Mao's emphasis on ideology here, for the original Kut'ien resolutions were as much concerned with organization as with ideology in the building up of the Party. Still, in his later use of these resolutions (as during the cheng-feng campaign), Mao chose to emphasize their ideological aspects, especially regarding the indoctrination of cadres, rather than their concern with organization. Indeed, in the official Selected Works, only the ideological section of the resolutions has been retained, under the title of "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party." See Mao, SW I, pp. 105-116.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 59-60.

key to revolutionary success is effective mass work, says Ch'en, so then is Mao Tse-tung's "mass line" the key to good work among the masses. "There is no other way," he concludes, because:

The mass line is the key to activating work of all types; it is also the key to Comrade Mao Tse-tung's correct leadership of the Chinese revolution. Having grasped this key, we can have a good Party, a good army, and can do good work among the masses.⁶¹

How, one might ask, was Mao able to acquire such a penetrating understanding of the inner laws of the Chinese revolution? How can it be, as Ch'en claims, that "almost the entire history" of the period of the civil war (1927-37) was foretold in the short letter Mao wrote to Lin Piao in January 1930?⁶² The answer, it would appear, is to be found in Mao's singular development of "revolutionary wisdom" (ge-ming de zhi-hui) in the course of his long years of arduous struggle. To illustrate this important point, Ch'en compares and contrasts Mao with Sun Wu-kung, the fabulous "Monkey King" from the well-known Chinese novel, Pilgrimage to the West (Xi you ji). Like Mao, Sun Wu-kung was a revolutionary, for he launched a "revolution against the Emperor of Heaven"; again like Mao, he was possessed of a certain wisdom to help guide his struggle, only his was "supernatural wisdom" (shen tong). This is as far as the comparison between Mao and Sun goes, however, for Sun eventually met with failure in his revolt against the Emperor of Heaven, while Mao is guiding the down-to-earth Chinese revolution to certain victory. The reasons for Sun's defeat and Mao's success are to be found in the

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 62-63.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 19.

qualitative difference between the "supernatural" wisdom of the one, and the "revolutionary" wisdom of the other. Unlike the case of Sun, Mao's wisdom is not based on the supernatural, but rather on a "grasp of the totality of historical and actual existence"; consequently, such revolutionary wisdom is "omnipotent and without equal." "With this wisdom," says Ch'en,

...one may lead the revolutionary forces from weakness to strength, and change defeat into victory. Without such wisdom, the revolutionary forces can be led from strength to weakness, and victory can be changed into defeat.⁶³

Lest the reader mistakenly conclude that he is coming dangerously close to claiming quasi-supernatural powers for Mao, Ch'en immediately registers a qualification. There is no unfathomable mystery to Mao's wisdom, for it is based squarely on the scientific principles of dialectical materialism, and on their practical application in real life. To illustrate his point, Ch'en draws attention to Mao's "theory and policy" on utilizing the fissures within and between the forces of reaction to develop the forces of revolution. Mao's effective use of contradictions in this case, argues Ch'en,

...is an example of the greatest Marxist-Leninist wisdom, and at the same time, it has further concretely strengthened the application of Marxism-Leninism in China. All revolutionaries and Communist Party members very much need to understand this point.⁶⁴

As might have been expected, Ch'en believes that the Party's former top leaders have proven incapable of developing this "revolutionary wisdom" based on true Marxist-Leninist principles. Ch'en is

⁶³Ibid., pp. 43-44

⁶⁴Loc. cit.

by no means completely ungenerous towards all of the Party's former leading personalities, for he presents the reader with a list of prominent martyrs such as "outstanding statesmen" like Li Ta-chao, "brilliant mass leaders" like P'eng P'ai, and "numerous theorists and propagandists" like Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai.⁶⁵ Nor are the CCP's only worthwhile leaders all dead and in their graves, for both Chu Teh and Liu Shao-ch'i are given passing praise for their correct policies in the military and urban spheres respectively. In acknowledgement of his rather belated alignment with the Maoist camp, Liu in particular is given credit for having developed a proper urban strategy within the broad context of Mao's theoretical analysis of the revolution as a whole. No doubt, this limited praise was part of the price Mao had to pay for Liu's eulogy to Mao's "genius" at the Party's Seventh Congress in 1945.⁶⁶ Still, in spite of these few limited concessions, Ch'en's appraisal of the Party's former top leaders is uniformly negative. Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Li Li-san had both failed to nurture within themselves the "revolutionary wisdom" personified in Mao, and this was true also of "some comrades" in leadership positions during the civil war period.⁶⁷ There is no question that these anonymous comrades were none other than the Returned Students, Wang Ming and Po

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 65-66. In the revised text (1953) of this study, Ch'en referred to Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai only as an outstanding "propagandist," but not as a "theorist" as well. By this time, the only eminent "theorist"-- living or dead -- in the CCP was Mao Tse-tung. See Ch'en, Guan-yu shi -nian nei-zhan, p. 69.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 44-45.

Ku in particular, but apparently the Maoists were not yet ready to censure them by name. In an indirect acknowledgement that he is writing with the benefit of hindsight, Ch'en does admit that popular understanding of Mao's "revolutionary principles" (ge-ming zhu-yi) was perhaps not so profound in the early years as at the present time. Although Mao's general line as it emerged in the 1927-30 period was based on a correct Marxist-Leninist analysis of China's unique "national situation," this was not immediately appreciated by many members of the Party. In fact, confesses Ch'en, it was "simply very difficult" at the time to estimate the impact that Mao's line would have on "transforming the entire [course] of Chinese history," or to evaluate its potential "role and influence in the past, present, and future" of China.⁶⁸ Yet, if a certain degree of uncertainty in the past over the correctness of Mao's line is at least understandable, if not excusable, the same is not true today. This is because all members of the Party, regardless of whatever errors they might have committed in the past, are now able to emulate the "revolutionary wisdom" that they now perceive in Mao. How can they do this? Very simply, says Ch'en:

If one wishes to acquire wisdom, one must study Comrade Mao Tse-tung. One must study his method of thinking, his theories [Li-lun], his policies, and finally, one must study his working style. Making mistakes is undesirable, but if we regard these errors as experience and learn from them, and hence grow in wisdom and improve ourselves, then we can transform the undesirable into the desirable.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 45.

Ch'en's call for all CCP members to take Mao Tse-tung as their model for emulation raises the question of the position of Stalin and the classical masters of Marxism-Leninism in the new scale of values amongst the Chinese Communists. Clearly, for Ch'en, there is no fundamental conflict of loyalties; Mao is the undisputed leader of the Chinese Communist movement, but he himself is the self-acknowledged disciple of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. Yet, although Ch'en refers frequently to this foreign triumvirate, and Stalin in particular, their writings do not constitute an integral part of Ch'en's general line of reasoning. They are merely introduced from time to time to underscore the claim that in spite of his own "revolutionary wisdom," Mao remains firmly within the international Marxist tradition. For example, Ch'en places considerable importance on Mao's military strategy and its intimate relationship with his broader political thought, but he does acknowledge a direct link on this issue between Mao and Stalin. Mao's entire military thinking on the Chinese revolution, says Ch'en, is the product of the "concrete, practical application and development" of Stalin's general observation in 1927 that the essential character of the Chinese revolution is that of an armed struggle between the forces of progress and reaction.⁷⁰ Yet, with this example as with others, Ch'en is content

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 30. It is true that Stalin's observation was made in the context of the revolution of 1924-27, when the Nationalist Party represented the progressive side and the various warlords the side of reaction. Nonetheless, Stalin's characterization of the Chinese revolution as an armed struggle remains valid, and this is the context in which one must view Ch'en's remarks. For Stalin's original comments on this issue, see J.V. Stalin, "The Prospects of the Revolution in China," Works, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, VIII, p. 379.

simply to make a perfunctory statement about the relationship between Stalin's thought and that of Mao, without attempting to substantiate the linkage to any degree of sophistication. In any case, Ch'en would probably be irritated by overly zealous attempts to document the precise relationship between Mao's thought and the writings of the foreign masters, for this would suggest, however indirectly, that substantial differences did in fact exist. Also, such a "pedantic" approach to the study of Mao's thought would no doubt be considered excessively mechanistic by Ch'en, for it would tend to negate the innate spark of creative genius which Mao had brought to his handling of Marxist-Leninist theory.⁷¹ Rather, Ch'en expresses his agreement with Wang Chia-hsiang's earlier evaluation of Mao's thought, quoting Wang's essay of 8 July 1943 to the effect that "Mao Tse-tung's thought is Chinese Marxism-Leninism, Chinese Bolshevism, Chinese communism."⁷² In other words, whatever the exact relationship between Mao's thought and that of the foreign masters, the fact remains that Mao's thought is Chinese Marxism, and not simply Marxism in China. Therein lies the decisive difference between Mao's handling of Marxism-Leninism and that of the Returned

⁷¹In an important essay of 1949, Ch'en underscored Mao's intellectual creativity and independence by claiming that Mao had not been able to make a "systematic study" of Stalin's writings on the Chinese revolution until the time of the cheng-feng campaign in the mid-1940's. "But despite this situation," continues Ch'en, "Comrade Mao Tse-tung has been able to reach the same conclusions as Stalin on many fundamental problems." See Ch'en Po-ta, "Stalin and the Chinese Revolution" (15 December 1949), in Ch'en Po-ta, Stalin and the Chinese Revolution, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1953, pp. 24-25, 27.

⁷²Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, p. 66.

Students and other unsuccessful leaders of the CCP; they had perhaps been more faithful to the letter of Marxism, but Mao had proven more loyal to the spirit. It is primarily at this level of mental abstraction, concludes Ch'en, that one discovers the essential unity between Mao and his illustrious predecessors:

The most outstanding characteristic of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought -- precisely the same as the most outstanding feature of the thought of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin -- is the total unity of theory and practice.⁷³

This alleged unity of theory and practice in Mao's thought brings us to Ch'en's concluding summation of Mao's stature within the CCP. It must be realized, he says, that Mao Tse-tung is both the "practical, political leader" of the Party, and its undisputed "theoretical leader" as well. Mao's dual claim to leadership is not lightly made, but is based on the now common knowledge that:

Since the founding of our Party, it is Comrade Mao Tse-tung who has proven able to solve the problems of Chinese society and the Chinese revolution at the theoretical level in a comprehensive, integrated and philosophical way. Consequently, it is he who has been able consistently to lead forward and advance China's revolutionary cause.⁷⁴

Ch'en's two treatises in the spring of 1944 constitute the first major attempt to provide historio-theoretical content to the concept of "Mao Tse-tung's thought." At the same time, they represent a substantial up-dating of Ch'en's earlier draft Maoist history of the CCP, and their specific conclusions were to be very much a part of

⁷³Ibid., p. 65.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 66.

the Seventh Plenum's resolution on Party history adopted in April 1945. In concluding this chapter, mention should be made of the pioneering study of the origins of Mao Tse-tung's theory and practice published by Benjamin I. Schwartz in 1951. Schwartz placed heavy emphasis on the years 1927-30 as the creative period in the evolution of the "essential features of Maoism." Indeed, Schwartz claims that the "basic elements" of the Maoist strategy were in evidence well before Mao actually assumed the leadership of the Party following the Tsunyi Conference in 1935. Precisely, the essential features of Mao's thinking can be traced to the report he wrote for the Central Committee on behalf of the Ching kangshan Front Committee (5 October 1928).⁷⁵ All this is very reminiscent of Ch'en Po-ta's conclusions of 1944, and were it not known that Ch'en's two studies were not made public until the early 1950's (after Schwartz's study), one would have suspected Schwartz's reliance on the earlier findings of his Chinese counterpart. (There is no mention of either Ch'en Po-ta or his two studies of Mao in Schwartz's text of 1951, nor in the second edition in 1958, by which time Ch'en's earlier works were well known to scholars outside China.) Allowing for the substantial differences in intellectual orientation between Ch'en and Schwartz, one is as impressed with the similarities in their conclusions about the origins of Mao's thought as with the undeniable differences in their interpretations. In any case, while Schwartz's study must still be regarded as a pioneering work in the context of Western scholarship,

⁷⁵ Benjamin I. Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2nd ed., 1958 (1951), pp. 189 ff.

due acknowledgement must equally be made of Ch'en Po-ta's intellectual labours some years earlier within the Chinese Communist movement itself.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION: A CONGRESS OF VICTORY

(i) Ch'en Po-ta and the "Resolution on Party History"

Ch'en Po-ta's treatises on Mao Tse-tung's role in the early years of the CCP were more than simple studies of a single individual; they were, in addition, advanced drafts of the new Maoist version of Party history that was to become the official orthodoxy. With Ch'en's essays before them, Party members could view CCP history as one seamless web -- the emergence and struggles of Mao's correct line prior to 1935, and its initial triumph and gradual, victorious development since Tsunyi. In this light, it is easy to appreciate the later Maoist claim that the movement to study Party history, of which Ch'en's studies were the major intellectual products, played an "important role" in preparing the stage for the long-awaited Seventh Congress of the CCP. Yet, other powerful forces were also at work in prompting the Maoists to give the green light for the congress, a meeting they had seen fit to delay since 1938, when it was first mooted and then cancelled due to "war-time pressures." Indeed, it was the rapid lifting of these pressures that made the further postponement of the congress both unnecessary and undesirable. Despite the widespread impact of the final Japanese offensive in China in the spring and summer of 1944 (Operation Ichi-gō), it was obvious to all that Japan had exhausted her military potential.

The disasters she had been suffering in the Pacific were gradually taking their toll, and the defence of the home islands was fast becoming Japan's first priority. Likewise, the war in Europe was rapidly coming to a head; Italy had been knocked out of the conflict in the summer of 1944, and the once-invincible Germans were being pushed back towards their own borders. It was only a matter of time before Germany would be defeated by the combined strength of the Allies; this would isolate Japan and bring upon her the joint American-Soviet offensive she had persistently tried to ward off.

With victory over the enemy so close at hand, it was not surprising that the Chinese Communists chose the spring of 1945 as the moment to renew their claim to be a truly national force in China's political destiny. The holding of the CCP's Seventh Congress, the first since the Sixth in 1928, would provide the Party with an unequalled opportunity to display its internal unity and sense of purpose, and to appeal for popular support in the post-war realignment of forces within China. It was perhaps merely coincidental that in mid-May 1945, when the Seventh Congress was getting into stride, Marshal Zhukov was leading his Soviet troops into the suburbs of Berlin. It was not fortuitous, however, that at the very same moment Chiang Kai-shek was exhorting delegates to the KMT's Sixth National Congress to "redouble efforts for the early achievement of final victory" on all fronts.¹ Held simultaneously with the

¹"Political Program and Policies," as proposed by Chiang Kai-shek, and adopted on 18 May 1945 by the Sixth National Congress of the Chinese Nationalist Party, in Hollington K. Tong, ed., China Handbook, 1937-1945, rev.ed., New York: Macmillan Company, 1947, p. 41.

Communists' meeting in Yen-an, Chiang's assembly served notice that its major tasks on the eve of final victory over Japan included "seeking a political solution of the Chinese Communist problem with renewed vigor."² It is in this context of intensifying competition for national (and international) attention between China's two major political movements that we should view the CCP's Seventh Congress, and the strident claims its main speakers made on behalf of their leader and his thought.

Plans for the congress had been underway for some months prior to its convocation in April 1945, and there was little doubt that Mao could expect a strong display of support from most of the Party. What little overt opposition remained was expressed not by the defeated Returned Students, but by P'eng Teh-huai, long a leading figure in the Maoist military establishment. However, P'eng apparently withdrew his opposition at a forty-day North China Work Conference held in Yen-an just prior to the Seventh Congress.³ With P'eng back in the fold (if only reluctantly), the Maoists convened the Seventh (and final) Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee, which had not met in full assembly since the Sixth Plenum in 1938. The major task of

²"Resolution on the Communist Problem," adopted on 17 May 1945 by the Sixth National Congress of the Chinese Nationalist Party, in *ibid.*, p. 53.

³A good deal of material on P'eng's alleged conflicts with Mao over the years has been compiled by students at Tsinghua University, and translated in *CB*, 851. For these and other documents on P'eng, see *P'eng Teh-huai*, especially pp. 190-194. For Mao's rather off-colour comments on his forty-day conflict with P'eng, see Schram, *Chairman Mao Talks*, p. 194.

this plenum was to prepare for the convening of the Seventh Congress, where the Party would chart its new course for the post-war years ahead. The key document of this plenum is, of course, the well known "Resolution on Certain Historical Questions," adopted on 20 April 1945. From the point of view of the Maoists, it was vitally important that such a resolution be passed, for it would bestow the formal approval of the Central Committee on the Maoist version of Party history that had been in the making since Ch'en Po-ta's first draft in 1938. Such approval would render final judgement on the various issues of contention between the Maoists and their erstwhile opponents within the Party, and would terminate once and for all the endless debate over who was right and who was wrong. With this debilitating debate behind them, all members of the Party, regardless of their previous factional affiliations, could unite as one to meet the pressing challenges of the future.

The "Resolution on Certain Historical Questions" is an important and much quoted document, and it represents one of the Central Committee's rare departures into the historiography of the CCP. Yet, little effort has been made to trace the author of the document; coming as it does as an appendix to one of Mao's speeches in the Selected Works, it has been widely assumed to reflect the opinions of Mao himself, if not actually to have issued from his hand. A closer study of the treatise, however, reveals that the author is in all likelihood Ch'en Po-ta, and that its arguments reflect Mao's opinions only in part. According to Peter Vladimirov, the "Resolution" was based on a draft report presented to the Seventh Plenum

by Jen Pi-shih, under the title "On the Political Line of the Party Between 1931 and 1935." (Although this report was probably drafted by Ch'en Po-ta, he was not a member of the Central Committee at the time, and hence he did not have sufficient rank to present his report in person to the Seventh Plenum. Jen, on the other hand, was both a close associate of Mao and a member of the Politburo, so he was in a position to address the Central Committee with considerable authority.) The report sparked off a vigorous debate, and it was in anticipation of this that Mao had previously arranged for the debate on Party history to be moved to the Seventh Plenum from its original place on the agenda of the forthcoming congress. In the much smaller plenum, Mao was in a better position to control the discussion, and with his personal intervention the heated debate was finally wound up, with the plenum endorsing the main conclusions of the draft report. There was apparently sufficient disagreement on the original draft to dissuade the plenum from endorsing it entirely; instead, the members adopted their own "Resolution" based on the original draft report, but differing from it to a significant extent.⁴

Let us now consider the reasons for believing that the "Resolution" was most likely drafted by Ch'en Po-ta, or at least under his

⁴Vladimirov, op. cit., pp. 374, 389-395. For some detailed comments on the "Resolution on Certain Historical Questions" (20 April 1945) (Mao, XJ III, pp. 904-953), see Rue, Mao in Opposition, pp. 8-11 and elsewhere in the book. A Red Guard claim that Hu Ch'iao-mu drafted the "Resolution" is probably a guess based on Hu's later study of Party history in 1951, and can be dismissed as such. For the Red Guard reference, see Harrison, op. cit., p. 591, n. 85.

personal influence, but that the final text was somewhat modified by the Central Committee. To begin with, the "Resolution" clearly dovetails with Ch'en's two major studies discussed in the previous chapter. As the "Resolution" points out, it is only Party history prior to Mao's ascendancy at Tsunyi in 1935 that is the subject of review. The Party's development after 1935 is characterized by the "entirely correct" line of Mao Tse-tung, and it is not to be reviewed by the Central Committee until a "future date."⁵ Taking the years from the Party's founding in 1921 to Mao's rise to power in early 1935 as the focus of the study, it becomes clear at once that this entire period is covered by Ch'en's two studies and the "Resolution." Ch'en's study of Mao's "Hunan Report" attempts to sum up the period 1921-27 (with particular emphasis on 1924-27), and his commentary on the civil war period is focused almost exclusively on the years 1927-30. As for the "Resolution," it declares its interest in dwelling particularly on the period "from the Fourth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee to the time of the Tsunyi Meeting," i.e., from 1931 to 1935.⁶ Thus, Ch'en's two studies interlock neatly with the "Resolution" to provide total coverage of the 1921-35 period of the CCP's history, when Mao's leadership was not universally accepted as being correct at all times. That Ch'en did intend to supplement his two earlier studies with one on the 1931-35 period is strongly

⁵Mao, XJ III, pp. 921-922. According to Vladimirov, prior to the Seventh Plenum certain "discrepancies" arose in connection with the evaluation of the Party's history since Tsunyi, and this may have inhibited the Central Committee from dealing with this period in detail. See Vladimirov, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

⁶Mao, XJ III, p. 907.

suggested in the closing comments to his Counter-Revolution and Revolution. Declaring this study an attempt to discuss some "fundamental political questions" in early Party history, he concludes by suggesting rather cryptically that, "as for certain [other] questions, it is best to await another time to subject them to scrutiny."⁷ This surely was a reference to the problem of the Returned Students, whose dominance of the Party's line during 1931-34 Ch'en felt constrained to ignore in his first two studies except for random, indirect comments. As many of these former leaders still occupied high positions of authority in the Party, a detailed study by Ch'en would have to await the sanction (if only nominal) of the Central Committee, the Party's highest authority.

Further credence is given to Ch'en's authorship of the "Resolution" by certain distinct affinities between his earlier studies and the Central Committee document. We will recall, for example, that in Counter-Revolution and Revolution, Ch'en claimed that Mao's resolutions at the Kut'ien Conference in 1929 "elevated theory and ideology to the first position in the problem of building up the Party and the army." In the "Resolution," Mao's Kut'ien resolutions are claimed to have "raised Party-building to the plane of ideological and political principle, and firmly upheld the leading role of proletarian ideology."⁸ Again, with regard to the Party's work in the urban centers after the failure of the revolution in 1927, Ch'en

⁷Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, p. 66.

⁸Ibid., p. 65. (This passage was deleted in the revised text of Ch'en's study published in 1953.); Mao, XJ III, p. 937.

argued that "history has proved that...Comrade Liu Shao-ch'i was right, and the Li Li-san line and the new Li Li-san line were wrong." In the "Resolution," the opinion is expressed that, with regard to urban work at this time, the "principal policies should have been those advocated by Comrade Liu Shao-ch'i," and not those of the "various 'Left' lines."⁹ These are only two examples of rather specific judgements which originally appeared in Ch'en's essay of 1944, and which were repeated in the "Resolution" of the following year. Indeed, it would seem that the "Resolution" added nothing new to Ch'en's previous analysis of Party history between 1921 and 1930; since the two earlier studies fully dealt with this nine-year period, the "Resolution" was apparently directed toward a similar consideration of the 1930-34 period. As Ch'en had already demonstrated the essential correctness of Mao's strategy prior to the ascendancy of the Returned Students, all that remained was to illustrate the erroneous nature of their particular lines. Indeed, the bulk of the "Resolution" is devoted to a detailed discussion of the "main content of these lines where they were contrary to the correct line politically, militarily, organizationally, and ideologically."¹⁰ As is to be expected, the Central Committee gave its formal approval to the critique of the Returned Students that had been gradually developed by the Maoists. The Party's Fourth Plenum in January 1931, for example, which ratified the Returned Students' ascendancy, is deemed to have played "no positive or constructive role" in the development

⁹Ch'en Po-ta, Fan-ge-ming yu ge-ming, p. 12; Mao, XJ III, p. 927.

¹⁰Mao, XJ III, p. 922.

of the revolution. On the contrary, this ill-fated plenum only reinforced the dominance of the third (and most serious) "left" line of the "two dogmatists, Comrades Ch'en Shao-yu and Ch'in Pang-hsien." It is largely because these two individuals have "completely distorted the history of the Party" in their efforts to legitimize their erroneous line between 1931 and 1934, that the Central Committee has decided to set forth "formal conclusions" regarding their tenure in the Party's top posts. The mention of Ch'en Shao-yu and Ch'in Pang-hsien immediately brings us to the "Resolution's" main contribution to the debate on Party history. For the first time in a decade of argument and innuendo, the two principal leaders of the so-called "third 'left' line" were formally named in an official Central Committee document. Mao must have taken great pleasure in this official disposition of his case against his two leading opponents in the Party, and in the Central Committee's confirmation that the political line of the Party under the leadership of Mao has been "entirely correct."¹¹

Yet, the "Resolution" lacks equal decisiveness in evaluating Mao's contributions to the revolution in the years 1921-30, the period which provides the focus of Ch'en Po-ta's two known studies

¹¹Ibid., pp. 920-922. According to Vladimirov, Kang Sheng told him that Wang Ming had asked Mao "not to accentuate...or, at least, to mollify" the discussion of his past mistakes and errors at the Seventh Congress. Mao appears to have kept his promise to "take every precaution to prevent an anti-Wang Ming conflict" at the congress, but not to the extent of withholding Wang's (and Po Ku's) name from the official record. On this point, see Vladimirov, op. cit., pp. 197-198.

of Party history. To be sure, Mao is credited with "concretely summing up" the essence of the revolution in the early years -- 1924-27 in particular -- and with registering "brilliant achievements" in establishing his correct line in the years after 1927. Nonetheless, very little space is devoted to Mao's achievements during the nine years between 1921 and 1930, and none of Mao's writings prior to his "Hunan Report" is even mentioned. Indeed, it is claimed that in the years 1921-27, and especially 1924-27, the Chinese revolution was "correctly guided by the Communist International and influenced, impelled forward and organized by the correct leadership of the Chinese Communist Party." Further, it was only during the final six months of this period that the Party leadership developed a "capitulationist" line, and refused to carry out the "many wise directives of the Communist International and Comrade Stalin, and refused to accept the correct views of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and other comrades."¹² The lumping together of no less than three sources of "wise directives" and "correct views" in addition to Mao himself naturally tends to water down the singular importance of Mao's role at the time, and this reflects the Central Committee's rather indecisive attitude toward Mao during these early years. This observation still rings true even if one considers the possibility that this particular passage was a product of the document's probable revision prior to publication in the early 1950's. The fact remains that the "Resolution" does not evince a noted interest in Mao's early activities, nor does it attach to them the importance evident in Ch'en Po-ta's two earlier studies.

¹²Mao, XJ III, p. 939.

This conclusion would appear to invalidate our earlier contention that the "Resolution" is probably based on a report drafted by Ch'en himself, or under his direct guidance. This objection is met, however, by recalling Ch'en's earlier complaint that there was a persistent tendency within the Party to date Mao's theoretical achievements from after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Clearly, if Ch'en's two studies of Mao's thought in the earlier period were intended to offset this tendency (as they most likely were), it would seem that they were not completely successful in achieving this goal. Ch'en's relatively systematic studies of Mao's thought probably did much to encourage the publication, in December 1944, of the first edition of Mao's Selected Works. Yet in spite of this, the tendency to downplay Mao's early years was apparently still prevalent within the Party. In the first edition of the Selected Works, for example, only the "Hunan Report" and the "Kut'ien Resolutions" were included from amongst the early texts. This was of course a step in the right direction from the point of view of the Maoists, but nonetheless it continued the neglect of the other early texts to which Ch'en Po-ta had attributed so much importance in the formulation of Mao's thought.¹³

Indeed, one might question the motivations of the Seventh Plenum in issuing a formal resolution not on the entire span of Party history prior to 1935, but only on the narrower 1931-34 period. It is clear, for example, that considered as a trilogy, Ch'en's two treatises and the "Resolution" represented an integrated study of Party history (and Mao's role therein) for the entire period from 1921 to

¹³Tokuda, op. cit., p. 72.

1935. It is not unreasonable to assume that they were to be regarded as the definitive Maoist version of Party history during this controversial period. Surely, the Central Committee's decision to downgrade Ch'en's studies of the early period provides a clue as to why neither the Seventh Plenum nor the Seventh Congress following it produced a Party history as comprehensive and definitive as Stalin's History of the CPSU. Is it just possible that certain powerful figures in the CCP, while quite prepared to accept the Maoist critique of the Returned Students, and willing to agree with Mao's claims to correct leadership since Tsunyi, revolted at the idea of extending the claim of Mao's infallibility right to the founding of the Party itself? That this is probably the case is suggested by the speeches of Liu Shao-ch'i and Chu Teh (especially the latter), who qualified their overt praise of Mao with reservations as to the extent to which such praise was to be taken (more below). In any event, the truncated nature of the "Resolution" adopted by the Seventh Plenum clearly indicates the Central Committee's reluctance to hand Mao the entire history of the CCP on a platter, as had been the case with Stalin and the CPSU in 1938. While substantial enough, Mao's triumph over the Party and its history was a good deal less absolute than that of his senior counterpart in Moscow. Given the importance of the revision of Party history, however, it is not surprising that Mao wished to come up with a document more comprehensive and decisive than the Seventh Plenum's abbreviated "Resolution." According to Vladimirov, Mao later told him personally that he (Mao) hoped to write a book "on all the phases of the Chinese Revolution," presumably along the lines

of Stalin's well-known history of the CPSU. This wish does not appear to have been realized, however, and to this day the CCP has not issued an official history of the scope and importance of the Soviet Party's account of its own historical development.¹⁴

(ii) The Leader Becomes the Sage

We do not wish to give the impression that Mao was treated badly by the Seventh Plenum, but only that their appraisal of his contributions to the revolution prior to 1930 was perhaps less positive than he and Ch'en Po-ta had hoped for. Nonetheless, the plenum did set the tone for the congress that was to follow, declaring in no uncertain terms that:

Today, with unprecedented unanimity the whole Party recognizes the correctness of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's line, and with unprecedented consciousness rallies under the banner of Mao Tse-tung.¹⁵

The Seventh Congress, described by the New China News Agency (NCNA) as "one of the most important events in the history of modern China," met for a full fifty days from 23 April to 11 June 1945. The four main items on the agenda of the congress were Mao Tse-tung's political report, Chu Teh's report on military affairs, Liu Shao-chi's commentary on the revision of the Party constitution, and, finally, the election of the new Central Committee. Besides the three main

¹⁴The most comprehensive study of the history of the CCP to have appeared in China is Ho Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959. While Ho adheres closely to the Maoist interpretation of Party history, his study is "unofficial" in that it was published in his own name, and not that of the CCP Central Committee. Likewise, Hu Ch'iao-mu's much shorter study, to which we have already referred, lacks the authority of the CCP's highest body. For Vladimirov's comments, see his Diaries, p. 517.

¹⁵Mao, XJ III, p. 950.

speakers, many other delegates also addressed the assembly, some of whom "engaged in criticism and self-criticism in regard to past mistakes of the Party. Even those unable to attend because of illness presented their opinions in writing." Individual self-criticisms were delivered by such former Returned Students as Po Ku and Lo Fu, while others including Wang Chia-hsiang and, most importantly, Wang Ming, wrote letters of repentance to Mao and the congress. Despite the plethora of individual speeches, there was no doubt as to whose was the most important; Mao's report, it was claimed, was the "central item of this Congress," whose assembled delegates declared themselves "entirely satisfied" with its content, and insisted that the "tasks pointed out in the report be carried out in the practical work of the Party."¹⁶ Indeed, in his lengthy report Mao did place emphasis on the host of concrete tasks that lay before the CCP in the political, military, economic, social and international spheres. In particular, he declared that the establishment of a "democratic coalition government" in China had become a "matter of deep concern for the Chinese people and for public opinion in the allied countries."¹⁷ Nonetheless, having surveyed the entire range of tasks facing the Party in the immediate post-war years, Mao returned in his concluding remarks to one of his favourite themes, reminding his audience that:

¹⁶See the dispatches of the New China News Agency concerning the Seventh Congress, as translated in Brandt, Documentary History, pp. 287-295. For the references to individual Returned Student leaders, see Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 467 and various other references.

¹⁷Mao, Ji IX, p. 184.

Ideological education is the key link to be grasped in uniting the whole Party for carrying out its great political struggles. If this task is not solved, the Party cannot accomplish any of its political tasks.¹⁸

Mao's concluding remarks on the importance of ideology and ideological education provided Chu Teh with an appropriate point of departure for his own speech on the military situation. Speaking to the assembly on 25 April, immediately after Mao's address, Chu declared that his military report was based on the "spirit and policy of the political report by Comrade Mao Tse-tung."¹⁹ Accordingly, Chu scattered his long speech with numerous flattering references to Mao's important theoretical contributions not only in the sphere of politics, but in "military science" as well. The "new" military theory of the Chinese Communists, said Chu, is not based on "unchanging dogmas" from foreign countries; rather, it is one which has "absorbed experiences in all fields and which best suits the needs of the Chinese people." Modestly declining any credit for himself in the creation of this new military science, Chu declared that its "representative works" are to be found in the "many books on warfare written by Comrade Mao Tse-tung." Accordingly, concluded Chu:

All army units, all military schools and all military training classes must regard the military teachings of Comrade Mao Tse-tung as a basic textbook and the soul of education, so that we may equip ourselves ideologically for the defeat of the enemy.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 269-271.

¹⁹ Chu Teh, On the Battlefronts of the Liberated Areas, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1952, p. 34.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 63-64, 90-91.

In light of this blanket endorsement of Mao's claims as the Party's pre-eminent military theorist, it would be rash to detect in Chu's report any clear-cut signs of dissatisfaction with the chairman. Yet in the course of his address Chu did refer briefly to a problem connected with Mao's continual emphasis on ideological education within the army. In the past," complained Chu,

...there was a tendency in the army to make light of the need for a strong physique and technique. It seemed quite enough for the army to possess political consciousness. This is very wrong.²¹

Of course, Chu was quick to point out that this incorrect attitude had been overcome in "recent years"; nonetheless, he had made his point, and it is unlikely that it passed unnoticed by the delegates to the congress, and certainly not by Mao himself. Chu's distaste for Mao's ideological claims is also evident in his careful avoidance throughout his report of the term, "Mao Tse-tung's thought." Given the increasing use of this term within the Party since July 1943, it is unlikely that this omission was a mere oversight on Chu's part; more probably, it represented a protest against elevating Mao's individual policies -- however correct in themselves -- into a formal, ideological slogan with universal pretensions. Such a fusion of Mao's various theories and policies into a single, holistic concept would be more ritualistic than scientific, and would contribute substantially to the already powerful cult that was enveloping Mao. Nor was Chu the only military leader hostile to the whole idea of raising the status of Mao's thought to the status of "Truth." Take for example the case of P'eng Teh-huai, who had fallen out with Mao on

²¹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

several important issues over the years, and had only recently emerged from a lengthy process of self-criticism. P'eng is said to have made his self-criticism "reluctantly and resentfully," and he did not emerge from the experience suitably chastened. Indeed, at the Seventh Congress he "maliciously attacked the thought of Mao Tse-tung. He nonsensically said: "99.9 percent of Mao Tse-tung's thought is correct, but 0.1 percent of it is not."²² This alleged remark certainly rings true in light of what we know of P'eng and his attitudes, and it can be regarded as essentially factual.

Whatever the reservations of Chu and P'eng about the use of the term, "Mao Tse-tung's thought," Liu Shao-ch'i does not appear to have shared them. In his major report to the Seventh Congress on 14 May ("On the Party"), Liu used the term liberally, as did the new Party constitution whose interpretation provided the major focus of Liu's speech. Let us consider the new constitution first, for it contains a troublesome sentence which Liu hailed as a "most important historical characteristic of our present revision of the Party constitution."²³ This of course refers to the now-famous stipulation in the preamble to the constitution that formally designates "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as the single ideological guide to the CCP in all

²²For this and other material on P'eng Teh-huai at the time of the Seventh Congress, see CB, 851, p. 7; and P'eng Teh-huai, pp. 193-194.

²³Liu Shao-ch'i, Lun Dang (On the Party), Peking: Xin-hua shu-dian, 1950, p. 31. This text contains both Liu's report to the Seventh Party Congress (14 May 1945), and the new Party constitution adopted by the congress on 11 June 1945.

its work. The particular sentence containing this provision has been troublesome because it has been frequently mistranslated into English, and this faulty translation has been used erroneously in Western scholarship. This is best illustrated in the work of Franz Schurmann, who has translated the sentence in question as:

The Chinese Communist party takes the theories of Marxism-Leninism and the unified thought of the practice of the Chinese Revolution, the thought of Mao Tse-tung, as the guideline for all of its actions.²⁴

The reader will immediately note the dualism that exists in this translation; the CCP appears to take not one, but two ideological systems (viz, Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung) as its theoretical guides. Basing his analysis on this reading of the Chinese text, Schurmann concludes that "the Chinese Communists, in their official labeling of doctrine, have always regarded the total structure of their ideology as consisting of two major components."²⁵ On the basis of this seeming dualism in CCP ideology, Schurmann proceeds to elaborate a sophisticated interpretation of Chinese Communist ideology which gives considerable emphasis to its distinct "pure" and "practical" aspects. Regardless of its applicability to later phases in the evolution of the CCP's ideology, we have previously rejected Schurmann's dualism in analyzing the Party's ideology as of 1945. As we have endeavoured to show, "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as it evolved within the Party during the years 1935-45 was regarded by its exponents as the sum total of Party ideology. In China, Mao Tse-tung's

²⁴ Schurmann, op. cit., p. 21. Schurmann's translation of this sentence has omitted the final clause in the original, but this has no bearing on our present discussion.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

thought was Marxism-Leninism; it did not simply co-exist with Marxism-Leninism as one of two official ideologies guiding the CCP. Indeed, a closer reading of the Chinese text reveals that no such dualism actually exists where Schurmann perceives it to be. A more exact rendering of the key sentence in question would be something like this:

The Communist Party of China takes Mao Tse-tung's thought -- the thought which unites Marxist-Leninist theory and the practice of the Chinese revolution -- as the guide for all its work, and opposes all dogmatic or empiricist deviations.²⁶

In this reading of the Chinese, we note immediately that Schurmann's dualism disappears, and that the integral unity which Mao Tse-tung's thought is claimed to represent is restored. With this reading in mind, we are in a position to understand the significance of the constitution's injunction that the very first duty of every Party member is to "vigorously raise the level of his own consciousness, and to master the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought" (not, it should be noted, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thought). In this perspective, we can readily appreciate that the new CCP constitution of 1945 was truly a Maoist, as opposed to a Marxist-Leninist document.²⁷

In later years, a certain degree of confusion and/or disagreement within the CCP has been evident regarding the status of Mao's

²⁶ Zhong-guo gong-chan-dang dang-zhang (Statutes of the Chinese Communist Party), in Liu, Lun dang, pp. 145-176. The passage cited is from the preamble, p. 147.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

thought. For example, some official translations of the term "Mao Tse-tung's thought" have been rendered consistently as "Mao Tse-tung's theory" or even more limiting, "Mao Tse-tung's theory of the Chinese revolution."²⁸ In this and other ways, the full equivalence of "Mao Tse-tung's thought" with "Marxism-Leninism" has been seriously attenuated, with Mao's thought representing merely the parochial Chinese variant of the classical theories coming from the West (including Russia). This attenuation of Mao's thought probably reflects the fears of non-Maoist factions within the CCP that the Party was setting up "Mao Tse-tung's thought" as the substantive equivalent -- and near total replacement -- of Marxism-Leninism in China. As our study has made clear, this is precisely what the Maoists were doing, but not with the enthusiastic support of all factions in the Party, nor, of course, of the CPSU in Moscow. Mao's thought suffered its most severe setback in 1956, when, apparently with the urging of Liu Shao-ch'i, P'eng Teh-huai and other leaders, it was removed completely from the revised Party constitution.²⁹ It was not until the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960's that the term was restored to its original meaning and significance. At this time, in fact, the Maoists went even further in their claims, suggesting that Mao Tse-tung's thought was more than merely the embodiment of Marxism-Leninism

²⁸A good example of this attenuation of Mao's thought is the English translation of Liu Shao-ch'i's report to the Seventh Congress ("On the Party"). See Liu, Collected Works, II, pp. 26-31 and throughout the text.

²⁹For comments and references on this deletion of Mao's thought from the 1956 Party constitution, see Hsiung, Ideology and Practice, pp. 133-134. For an important Red Guard document accusing P'eng Teh-huai, Liu Shao-ch'i and Teng Hsiao-p'ing of coordinating the attack on Mao's thought at the Party's Eighth Congress in September 1956, see P'eng Teh-huai, p. 201.

in China. Rather, Mao's thought was now defined as "Marxism-Leninism of the era in which imperialism is heading for total collapse and socialism is advancing to worldwide victory." More directly, Mao's thought was said to represent the development of Marxism-Leninism to a "higher and completely new stage." Hence, it was the most advanced form of scientific socialism and proletarian revolutionary theory in the contemporary era.³⁰ This basic interpretation of Mao's thought was adopted by the CCP's Tenth Congress in August 1973, for the new Party constitution approved at that time stipulates that the CCP "takes Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought as the theoretical basis guiding its thinking."³¹ This particular terminology (carried over from the 1969 constitution) is ingenious, for it gives due recognition to the status of both Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thought, yet at the same time it suggests the superiority of the latter. Just as "Marxism" was hyphenated when it was enriched by the theory and practice of Lenin and the Russian revolution, so too is "Marxism-Leninism" hyphenated in recognition of the fresh contributions of Mao Tse-tung's theory and practice of the Chinese revolution. Thus, Mao takes his place as the outstanding exponent of scientific socialism in the second half of the twentieth century.

³⁰For this definition of Mao's thought, see the Party's short-lived "Lin Piao" constitution adopted at the CCP's Ninth Congress in April 1969, as reprinted in Winberg Chai, ed., Essential Works of Chinese Communism, rev. ed., New York: Bantam Books, 1972, p. 431.

³¹See the most recent CCP constitution (adopted by the Tenth Party Congress in August 1973), in The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Documents), Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1973, pp. 61, 65.

Returning to 1945, we will recall that Lui Shao-ch'i was a tardy convert to the Maoist side; yet, whatever his inner reservations about the swelling cult of Mao and his thought, he was careful to disguise them. Indeed, Liu's report to the Seventh Congress has all the earmarks of a prodigal son restoring himself to his father's grace. Whether, as Han Suyin has suggested, Liu was cynically praising Mao in order to ingratiate himself is a moot point, but the sheer extravagance of his praise of the chairman is not to be disputed.³² "Our Comrade Mao Tse-tung," he intones, "is not only the greatest revolutionary and statesman in Chinese history, but also the greatest theoretician and scientist in Chinese history."³³ Indeed, Liu's speech is important in Party history not because of anything original he says, for he simply repeats the arguments regarding Mao and his thought that the pro-Maoists had gradually built up over the previous decade. Rather, his report is significant because in it these same arguments now came from the lips of the Party's number two leader, and were unanimously approved and accepted by an official Party congress. The key to Mao's greatness, says Liu, lies in his brilliant synthesis of Marxist-Leninist theory and the actual practice of the Chinese revolution. The glittering product of this synthesis is, of course, "Mao Tse-tung's thought, Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theories and policies regarding Chinese history, [Chinese] society, and the Chinese revolution." Mao's thought, continues Liu, is an "outstanding example" of the "nationalization" and the

³²Han Suyin, The Morning Deluge (Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Revolution), London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, p. 489.

³³Liu, Lun dang, p. 37.

"Sinification" of Marxism. "It is as Chinese as it is thoroughly Marxist."³⁴ Getting down to specifics, Liu declares that Mao's thought has two major facets: It is both diagnostic and prescriptive, being composed of Mao's "analysis of the present world situation and China's national situation," and his "complete theory of revolution and national reconstruction for the Chinese people."

Liu then lists the key elements in Mao's prescription for the Chinese people's revolutionary cause, which include the

...theory and policy regarding new democracy, the emancipation of the peasantry, the revolutionary united front, revolutionary wars, revolutionary bases, the establishment of a new democratic republic, Party-building, and culture.³⁵

It will be immediately noted that this list of Mao's contributions to "revolutionary science" contains no reference to any achievements in the field of dialectical materialist philosophy. Apart from the perfunctory reference to "culture," Liu's list is very specific and practical, and reflects his high evaluation of Mao's strength as a leader of the practical revolutionary movement, and his equally adverse judgement of Mao's ability as an abstract thinker and theoretician. Similarly, Liu's catalogue of Mao's achievements is essentially domestic in scope, and seems to lack an appreciation of the applicability of Mao's theories and policies beyond the confines of China. Yet this is not the case. Liu notes that "Chinese communism -- Mao Tse-tung's thought" arose in China from the union of Marxist-Leninist theory and Chinese revolutionary practice, just as

³⁴Ibid., pp. 33, 37.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 35-36.

"Russian Bolshevism -- Leninism-Stalinism" was born of the union of Marxist theory and the practice of the Russian revolution. But the similarities between Russian Bolshevism and Chinese communism do not end here, suggests Liu; just as Leninism-Stalinism has played a guiding role in the emancipation of both the Russian and the world's people, so too Mao Tse-tung's thought will make "great and useful contributions to the cause of emancipation of the peoples of all countries, and especially the cause of liberation of the various nations of the East."³⁶ In his concluding remarks on the question of ideology, Liu notes that Mao is a loyal "disciple" of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, but he nonetheless stipulates in no uncertain terms that it is the writings of the disciple, and not of the four masters, which are to be the CCP's future intellectual regimen. The key task now, concludes Liu, is to "mobilize the entire Party to study and disseminate Mao Tse-tung's thought." In order to expedite the performance of this duty, Liu issued a specific set of instructions for the immediate years ahead: (1) all Party cadres are to study Mao's writings "systematically"; (2) all Party schools and training classes must adopt Mao's writings as "basic teaching material"; (3) all sections of the Party press are to propagate Mao's thought "in a systematic manner"; and (4) in order to facilitate all the above tasks, the Party's propaganda organs are to edit Mao's important works "in the form of popular reading matter adapted to the level of the average Party member."³⁷ Whatever neglect Mao's writings

³⁶Ibid., p. 35.

³⁷Ibid., p. 38.

might have suffered in the past, it was now perfectly clear that such was not going to be true of the future. Mao's thought was here to stay.

Liu Shao-ch'i's panegyrics to Mao set the tone of his lengthy report to the Seventh Congress, but on at least one occasion during his speech he sounds a note of caution. Uncomfortably aware that his unrestrained praise of Mao will do much to fuel the cult that is already enveloping the leader, Liu tries to set definite limits to the cult. Choosing his words carefully, Liu declares that:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung is the leader of our Party, but he is also an ordinary member of our Party. He is under the direction of the Party [zai dang de zhi-pei zhi-xia], and adopts a most scrupulous attitude in observing Party discipline in every respect.³⁸

Liu's words of warning to Mao on the dangers of setting himself up above the Party have often been commented upon, and there is little doubt that they reflect the genuine concern of Liu and other top Party leaders lest Mao over-step the limits of his authority in the future. Yet, in the very same report Liu largely negates the impact of the warning he had just issued. This he does in his comments on the nature of the CCP's organizational unity, a subject on which he has long been regarded as the Party's outstanding spokesman. Speaking of the duties and rights of Party members, Liu states that:

The Party's organizational unity is above all based on the premise of the ideological unity of Party members as laid down by Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought, without which the Party's unity in organization and action has no founding.³⁹

³⁸Ibid., p. 13.

³⁹Ibid., p. 79.

As Liu knew only too well, organizational unity in a Communist party is guaranteed by the practice of democratic centralism. This provides that all party members are encouraged (at least in theory) to participate actively in all decision-making processes within the party. However, democratic centralism also stipulates that once a final decision has been made by the Central Committee (in practice, the Political Bureau, or the individual leader), all Party members must respect this decision. In case of any doubt, the standard practice is that the individual obeys the collective, the minority obeys the majority, lower organs obey higher organs, and the whole party obeys the Central Committee (or its leading figures).⁴⁰ A serious contradiction had thus crept into Liu's reasoning: In the interests of organizational unity, even the CCP's top leader was to submit himself to the discipline of democratic centralism, but at the same time the "thought" of the top leader was to provide the basis of this organizational unity. The next question is, of course, obvious: What would happen if the top leader were to disrupt the existing organizational unity of the Party, and at the same time justify this breach of democratic centralism by declaring that this existing organizational unity was not genuine or desirable, i.e., it did not correspond to his "thought" at that given moment in time? The implication of this line of reasoning is all too clear; under such circumstances, the top leader could in effect set himself against the discipline of the Party, and at the same time justify his actions

⁴⁰For Mao's own discussion of democratic centralism very much along these lines, see Mao, SW III, p. 44.

by appealing to the authority of his own "thought." This fundamental contradiction in Liu's argument might have been overlooked in 1945, but exactly twenty-one years later it was to contribute to the temporary destruction of the CCP at the hands of Mao Tse-tung, and the abrupt termination of Liu's own career.⁴¹ Amidst the euphoria of the Seventh Congress, however, the possible dangers of the swelling cult of Mao and his thought were for the most part cast aside.

After many weeks of discussion, the Seventh Congress fulfilled its final duty by electing a new Central Committee of forty-four regular and thirty-three alternate members. It is not surprising that of the regular members, Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, and Liu Shao-ch'i ranked first, second, and third respectively, nor that Ch'en Shao-yu and Ch'in Pang-hsien were allocated the forty-third and forty-fourth slots in turn.⁴² As for the alternates, the top three were listed as Liao Ch'eng-chih, Wang Chia-hsiang, and Ch'en Po-ta, in that order. After eight years of intensive work on behalf of Mao and his

⁴¹For a good analysis of the changing relationships between Party and leader in the history of the CCP, see Stuart R. Schram, "The Party in Chinese Communist Ideology," in Lewis, op. cit., pp. 170-202.

⁴²What is surprising, however, is that while Li Li-san was ranked high at the fifteenth position, Chou En-lai only managed the twenty-third spot, while P'eng Teh-huai had to settle for the thirty-third rank. For statistics on the new Central Committee elected by the Seventh Congress, see the NCNA dispatch of 13 June 1945, in Brandt, Documentary History, p. 292.

claims to ideological supremacy within the CCP, Ch'en was given a formal status in keeping with the importance of the largely informal roles he had been playing during these eight years. As luck would have it, Ch'en did not have to wait for full membership in the Central Committee, for upon the death of Wang Jo-fei in 1946, Ch'en was immediately elected a full member of the Party's highest body.⁴³ For the shy and stammering scholar-revolutionary from Fukien, the decade from 1935 to 1945 had been a period of almost feverish work, and few would have guessed that he would have risen so high. Ch'en's close personal relationship to Mao was surely unique within the Party, and as Mao's star rose even higher Ch'en's rose with it. At the first plenary meeting of the new Central Committee, which met shortly after the conclusion of the Seventh Congress, Mao was confirmed in the highest offices the Party could bestow. One by one, he was named chairman of the Central Committee, of the Political Bureau, of the Central Secretariat, and, finally, of the Revolutionary Military Committee.⁴⁴ Yet, Mao probably (and Ch'en Po-ta most certainly) took greatest satisfaction from the singular honour the Seventh Congress had conferred upon him by ratifying the insertion of "Mao Tse-tung's thought" into the new CCP constitution. Mao had become more than a

⁴³Loc. cit. It is a remarkable coincidence that Yeh Ch'ing, Ch'en's long-time rival in Marxist polemics, was elected an alternate member of the new Central Executive Committee elected by the Sixth Congress of the Nationalist Party, which was held in Chungking in May 1945. On this point, see Boorman and Howard, op. cit., II, p. 219.

⁴⁴On Mao's formal assumption of these key positions within the CCP, see Boorman and Howard, op. cit., III, p. 15; and Klein and Clark, op. cit., II, p. 683.

mere mortal within his own lifetime, more even than simply the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. True to the ancient Chinese impulse that had fired the dreams of his rival Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Tse-tung had achieved the ultimate transformation: the Leader had become the Sage.

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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS*

ai-guo zhe-xue	愛國哲學
bai-hua	白話
ben-ti-lun	本體論
bu-duan de	不斷的
Ch'en Chih-mei (you-ming)	陳志梅 (又名)
Ch'en Po-ta (bi-ming)	陳伯達 (筆名)
Ch'en Shang-yu (yuan-ming)	陳尚友 (原名)
chun li-lun	純理論
da-tong	大同
dang-nei gan-bu du-wu	黨內幹部讀物
di-fang-hua	地方化
dong de luo-ji	動的邏輯
E-guo-hua	俄國化
ge-duan li-shi	割斷歷史
ge-ming de shi-ji xing-dong-jia	革命的實際行動家
ge-ming de zhi-hui	革命的智慧
ge-ming zhu-yi	革命主義
geng-jia min-zu-hua	更加民族化
Guan Gong Lian	關公臉
guo-cui	國粹
hao de da-fu	好的大夫
huo-sheng-sheng de	活生生的
ji-da-cheng de fa-zhan	集大成的發展

* Calligraphy by Cheng Yan Kee, a former student of the author.

ji-da-cheng-zhe 集大成者
 jie-he 結合
 Lao Zi tian-xia di-liu 老子天下第六
 li 禮
 li-lun 理論
 lian-he zhe-xue 聯合哲學
 ling-huo de zheng-ce 靈活的政策
 Ma-ke-si-zhu-yi de Zhong-guo-hua 馬克思主義的中國化
 Mao Ze-dong-shi de 毛澤東式的
 Mao Ze-dong si-xiang 毛澤東思想
 Mao Ze-dong tong-zhi de si-xiang 毛澤東同志的思想
 Mao Ze-dong-zhu-yi 毛澤東主義
 min gui jun qing 民貴君輕
 min-zu de jing-hua 民族的精華
 min-zu-hua 民族化
 min-zu xing-shi 民族形式
 ming-shi wen-ti 名實問題
 mo-ri shen-pan 末日審判
 Ou-zhou-hua 歐洲化
 ping-kong diao-xia-lai 平空掉下來
 pu-tong-hua 普通話
 qiang bi ling ruo, fu bi bao gua 強必凌弱 富必暴寡
 ren-shi-lun 認識論
 ru zhu chu nu 入主出奴
 san-wei-yi-ti de dong-xi 三為一體的東西
 Shang-di 上帝

shen-tong	神通
si-xiang	思想
te-chan	特產
Tian-ming	天命
wei-da de zhu-zuo	偉大的著作
wu-chang	無常
xiang-tong	相同
xin qi-meng yun-dong	新啟蒙運動
xin zhuan-zhi-zhu-yi	新專制主義
yan-yi	演義
yi-ge gong-chan-zhu-yi de rong-lu	一個共產主義的熔爐
yi-nian	意念
yi xia zhi fang	夷夏之防
ying-gu-tou	硬骨頭
ying-tou gan-shang	仰頭趕上
za-wen	雜文
zai dang de zhi-pei zhi-xia	在黨的支配之下
zheng-feng	整風
zheng-zhi mi-shu	政治秘書
zhi-xian de zheng-ce	直綫的政策
zhi-xing wen-ti	知行問題
Zhong-guo-hua	中國化
Zhong-guo qi	中國氣
Zhong-guo-shi de	中國式的
Zhong-guo wen-ti	中國問題
Zhong-guo wen-ti yan-jiu shi	中國問題研究室

zhu-xi

主席

zhu-yi

主義

zi-mu

字目

zong-he

綜合