



7-1970

Nature of Leadership: The Chinese Communists, 1930 - 1945

Henry G. Schwarz

Western Washington University, schwarz@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs



Part of the [Asian History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schwarz, Henry G., "Nature of Leadership: The Chinese Communists, 1930 - 1945" (1970). *History Faculty and Staff Publications*. 40.

https://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs/40

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.



Trustees of Princeton University

The Nature of Leadership: The Chinese Communists, 1930–1945

Author(s): Henry G. Schwarz

Source: *World Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Jul., 1970), pp. 541–581

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009650>

Accessed: 30/10/2014 13:02

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and Trustees of Princeton University are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *World Politics*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP*

The Chinese Communists, 1930-1945

By HENRY G. SCHWARZ*

INTRODUCTION

THE twentieth anniversary of the assumption of state power by the Chinese Communists is a convenient occasion to take stock of the many dramatic events that have taken place since that first day in October of 1949, when Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the new People's Republic of China. The anniversary, however, is more than a fortuitous product of the Western calendar. It lies close to one of those convulsive periods that have jolted China from time to time and have caused major changes in the Chinese state and society. The creation of the People's Republic twenty years ago was one such period. The Great Leap Forward of the late fifties was another, and the recent Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution may have been a third. Each of these events has substantially reshaped the state or society or both. From a historical point of view, the next major event that may well come shortly after the twentieth anniversary is the death of Mao Tse-tung and other co-founders of the Communist state. This anniversary, therefore, offers an opportunity to reassess the record of the Chinese Communists since 1949 with a view toward understanding the setting and the problems that the post-Mao leadership will soon inherit.

Such a task cannot be complete, however, without a reassessment of the nature of leadership. Indeed, without studying the nature of leadership, we cannot understand much else of a totalitarian system where in theory and practice the Party leadership is both the originator and executor of changes in all major aspects of the world's most populous country.

Perhaps the most important among the leadership's many facets is the relations among the handful of men who until at least the cultural revolution have governed Communist China. Specifically, before we can understand China we must understand the relative influence of each of these men in the governing process. As to the identity of China's leadership, an almost limitless choice is open to the researcher, from the entire membership of the Communist Party to one man. This study designates the Political Bureau as the leadership although a

* This paper was first presented at the Seventh International Conference on World Politics, Noordwijk, The Netherlands, August 31-September 6, 1969.

study of the nature of leadership even of a highly structured political system such as Communist China may at times have to include leaders who are not members of the Political Bureau. Such methodological flexibility is even more necessary in any study of the Communist leadership before 1949, when it was less structured and more in flux.

Strange as it certainly is, after twenty years of state power and almost fifty years of existence of the Chinese Communist Party, not a single monograph has been written on this vitally important subject. The only book whose title promises to study the nature of leadership is John W. Lewis' *Leadership in Communist China*.¹ But the title is misleading because, instead of analyzing the actual nature of leadership, it ably and comprehensively presents certain *ideals* of leadership as expounded in the Party's guidelines. This is not to say that China specialists have ignored the nature of leadership. Quite on the contrary, virtually every study of the Party and many studies on other subjects manifest their authors' conceptions of the leadership. In most cases, however, these conceptions are not treated in their own right. They are but images applied to the treatment of some other subject. As Isaacs and others have shown, images are acquired subconsciously and are seldom reliable. They are formed out of a variety of haphazardly acquired experiences, such as personal recollections of life in China, bits and pieces of information acquired from scholarly and other works, seemingly relevant observations in other countries that are either Communist or Asian or economically underdeveloped or any combination thereof, and many others.

No two China specialists have an identical image, but while there are many minor differences, most China specialists share one general image. I call this image quasi-collective. It shows policy issues as being threshed out in a frank and no-holds-barred manner among the seven men in the Standing Committee, if not quite so freely in the larger Political Bureau. Such leadership is collective, but the prevailing image adds one important difference, in its depiction of Mao Tse-tung's influence as considerably greater than that of his co-leaders. Mao is envisaged as being more than first among equals in that his decision-making powers have presumably been relatively unencumbered by the actions and opinions of other leaders. By virtue of explicitly superior prerogatives and of his own persuasive powers, Mao is seen as being able to influence the outcome of policy deliberations. Moreover, he and only he can implement policies in ways somewhat divergent from the letter and the spirit

¹ Ithaca 1963.

of these policies. In sum, the image projects a crossbreed between a collective and a fully hierarchical leadership.

One basic shortcoming of this image is that it handles the concept of power in an undifferentiating manner. An excellent major work of recent years opens with the flat assertion that "Mao Tse-tung's rise to power is a well-known fact."² By failing to dissect "power" and to subject its myriad interacting facets to analysis, many scholars have been led to believe, erroneously in my opinion, that "power" will inevitably and in all political systems gravitate to one person. An analysis of leadership, based on "power," helps to bring about an image that comes at times perilously close to an all-or-nothing view. I suspect that the concept of "power," taken as a whole, is too imposing to encourage dissection.

Professor Rue provides clear illustrations of this effect in relation to two cardinal aspects of leadership. On the problem of relations within the leadership, the focus of this study, Rue says that "the Seventh Congress [of April of 1945] was Mao's Congress of Victors. He had overcome all his enemies in the Chinese party."³ Categorical concepts breed more categorical concepts; "power" begets "enemies" and "victors." Of the almost infinite variety of internal relationships, that of "enemy" is only one but, admittedly, the most sharply delineated of all relationships. "Victors," which in the context of the sentence refers not to national victors over the Japanese, whose defeat was certain in April of 1945, but to intra-Party victors, is equally categorical. It leaves no room for anything but its antithesis, the "vanquished."

The concept of undifferentiated "power" embedded in the quasi-collective image also affects the analysis of leadership control over the Party hierarchy. Rue states that "after the Seventh Congress, Mao's power rested on two closely related factors. One was control of the party apparatus; the other was the belief of other leaders of the Chinese party that his political line was correct and that his thought was the best representative of Marxist-Leninist ideology in China."⁴ I shall elaborate later on the merits of this statement. For the time being, it will suffice to point out that Mao is portrayed, as in the description of intra-leadership relations, as being much more than first among equals. He, and only he, had "control of the party apparatus."

Another fundamental shortcoming of the quasi-collective image is its reliance on documentary evidence that is either skimpy or altogether

² John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung In Opposition, 1927-1935* (Stanford 1966), I.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

lacking. A representative sample of this shortcoming is supplied by Professor Lindbeck, who asserts that "for thirty years, Mao Tse-tung has firmly presided over the party and is its undisputed leader. Its key figures clearly are his men." This sweeping statement is supported by only one piece of "evidence," namely, the assertion that "almost all of the senior men and the majority of the Central Committee members shared the Long March of 1934-35 with him."⁵ This view is untenable for two elementary reasons. First, the idea of a causal link between participation in the Long March and the nature of leadership in the mid-sixties is questionable. It places upon the Long March an importance Lindbeck fails to demonstrate. Second, the content of the quoted sentence is false. If we assume that "senior men" refers to the Political Bureau elected at the first and second sessions of the Eighth Party Congress, the record shows that only fifteen of the twenty-six members and alternate members shared the Long March with Mao. They could hardly be said to constitute "almost all" of the Political Bureau. Moreover, a look at any biographical dictionary such as *Who's Who in Communist China*⁶ will inform the reader that only about forty-three of the ninety-seven members of the Eighth Central Committee marched with Mao in 1934-35.

Professor Lindbeck elevates Mao's position even further when he maintains, without offering any documentary evidence, that "it has been his authority, his statement of values and doctrines, and his men that have permeated the party and built it from a regional band of 40,000 members in 1937 to 17 million in 1962 and perhaps 20 million by 1965. Factionalism, regionalism, and competing loyalties have not been allowed to emerge or have been quickly suppressed by the determined and powerful group that runs the party."⁷

The image of a quasi-collective leadership has survived the onslaught of events that should at least have elicited its reassessment. During the height of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 and 1967, the Mao group hurled countless accusations against virtually every member of the Party leadership. The most important implication common to almost all the accusations was that at no time during the last thirty years were the Party leaders united in their aims and motivations and that during most of those years Mao Tse-tung did not occupy the superior position assumed by many China specialists.

⁵ J. M. H. Lindbeck, "Transformations in the Chinese Communist Party," in Donald W. Treadgold, ed., *Soviet and Chinese Communism: Similarities and Differences* (Seattle 1967), 78.

⁶ Hong Kong 1966.

⁷ Treadgold, 79.

These revelations have so far failed to cause most China specialists to call into question their image of a quasi-collective leadership. While acknowledging acute disunity within the Party leadership since the outbreak of the cultural revolution, most scholars still seem to adhere to this image. Some explicitly reaffirm their view that since at least his assumption of state power in 1949, Mao Tse-tung has been the supreme decision-maker. Others dismiss recent charges of anti-Mao actions made by the Mao group against Liu Shao-ch'i and many other leaders as *ex post facto*. In essence, their argument runs as follows: the actions Liu Shao-ch'i is today accused of having perpetrated at various times of his career are, in so far as they had occurred at all, crimes by the current standards of the Mao group but were in line with Party policies at the time they are said to have been made. It does not seem to occur to many that while this argument is quite true as far as it goes, it begs the question of who had been chiefly responsible for formulating those policies.

Still others maintain that Mao Tse-tung is possibly understating his influence in the years prior to 1966 in order to strengthen his case against Liu Shao-ch'i and other leaders. Such argument, however, is both questionable and wholly incapable of verification at present. If Mao were actually planning to undercut his opponents in this manner, he must rationally have expected to gain support from the political, economic, and military professionals without whom state and society could not function. Yet, if this had indeed been Mao's motive, his very tactic would tend to support exactly the opposite of what has been assumed. Put differently, it would give credibility to his present claim that he had not been the undisputed leader and, therefore, would undermine the validity of the image of a quasi-collective leadership.

Finally, some argue that Mao Tse-tung is underplaying his allegedly superior decision-making powers in previous years in order to draw strength from his supposedly great esteem among the nonprofessional majority of the population. Leaving aside Mao's popularity, which is open to doubt, we are led to the conclusion that an appeal for mass support, *as in fact Mao made during the cultural revolution*, forces the proponents of this particular thesis into an untenable position. If Mao had indeed been the unchallengeable leader of the Party, he would not have had to rely on the overthrow of Party leaders through mob violence.

The image of a quasi-collective leadership has also successfully withstood contrary evidence for the period before 1949. Professor Lindbeck

fairly represents the opinion of many China specialists that Mao has held the supreme position in the Party since the mid-thirties—since the Tsunyi Conference in January of 1935. Professor Lindbeck, as quoted earlier, said in 1965 that Mao had been the “undisputed leader” of the Party for thirty years. General Griffith, to cite a second representative sample, averred in 1967—that is, after the outbreak of the cultural revolution—that “at [the Tsunyi] conference, Mao mustered enough support to gain the unchallengeable position which is still his.”⁸

There can, of course, be no doubt that the insurrectionary period was of unusual significance in the history of the Chinese Communist movement. Almost thirty years intervened between the founding of the Party in 1921 and its rise to supreme state power in Mainland China in 1949. This period was longer than the insurrectionary periods of all the other Communist parties that now rule states. The Chinese Party also distinguishes itself from all the others by its long experience in the techniques of government in its many base areas between 1928 and 1949.

It is clear, therefore, that the nature of leadership during the past twenty years was profoundly influenced by events during a period of roughly equal length before 1949. As the title of this study suggests, I shall reassess the relationships within the Party's leadership during that period. The study is actually limited to the period between 1930 and 1945 because the two dates are convenient bench-marks. In 1930, an important element, the Bolsheviks, was inserted into the Party and soon greatly altered the nature of leadership. In 1945, the Seventh Party Congress ratified the changes in the leadership that had taken place during the war against Japan, and it elected a new leadership that remained basically unchanged until long after its assumption of state power in 1949. At certain key points, I shall compare representative samples of statements by China specialists with the known facts and offer an alternative interpretation.

In the space available, it is impossible, of course, to present a full chronological treatment of all relevant events between 1930 and 1945. I restrict this study, therefore, to what I consider the *most* relevant events.

THE KIANGSI PERIOD

The Kiangsi period (1928-1934) marked the abandonment of the Party's almost decade-long attempt to start a revolution in the cities. The Central Soviet Area in Southern Kiangsi, which was built prin-

⁸ Samuel B. Griffith II, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army* (New York 1967), 51.

cipally by Chu Te and Mao Tse-tung, was the first major testing-ground for Communist land policies under the aegis of a fully developed government controlling several counties.

For this study's purposes, the Kiangsi period's chief importance was the acute struggle for supremacy in the Party between the group around Mao Tse-tung, Chu Te, and other leaders in the Central Soviet Area and the Central Committee in Shanghai, which became dominated by the so-called Twenty-eight Bolsheviks.⁹ They had been students at the Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow in the mid-twenties, and most of them returned to China in May of 1930, accompanied by Pavel Mif, who had been the rector of Sun Yat-sen University. Li Li-san, the then general secretary of the Party, was removed from his position at the Third Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee in September of 1930. His post was given to Hsiang Chung-fa, who was re-elected at the Fourth Plenum in January of 1931.¹⁰ Reputedly a weak leader, he became surrounded by Bolsheviks and those who sided with them. Besides electing sixteen members and alternate members of the Political Bureau, this plenum also elected Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, Hsiang Chung-fa, and K'ang Sheng to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, the highest organization in the Party.¹¹ Ch'en and Ch'in were Bolsheviks, and the ever-adaptable Chou En-lai firmly supported them. The Bolsheviks' influence grew still stronger in September of 1931 after Hsiang Chung-fa was arrested and executed by the central government and Ch'en Shao-yü was recalled to Moscow to become the Chinese Communists' representative in the Comintern. Two Bolsheviks filled their positions, Chang Wen-t'ien and Wang Yün-ch'eng, and a third Bolshevik, Ch'in Pang-hsien, became the new general secretary of the Party.¹² Besides, Bolsheviks

⁹ Wang Chien-min lists them as follows: Chang Ch'in-ch'iu, Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Ch'ang-hao, Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'en Yüan-tao, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chu A-ken, Chu Tzu-hsün, Ho Tzu-shu, Hsia Hsi, Kuo Miao-ken, Li Chu-sheng, Meng Ch'ing-shu, Shen Tse-min, Sheng Ch'ung-liang, Sun Chi-min, Tu Tso-hsiang, Tu Yen, Wang Chia-hsiang, Wang Hsiu, Wang Pao-li, Wang Sheng-jung, Wang Sheng-ti, Wang Yün-ch'eng, Yang Shang-k'un, Yin Chien, Yüan Chia-yung, and Yün Yü-jung. Wang Chien-min, *Chungkuo kungch'antang shih-kao* [A History of the Chinese Communist Party] (Taipei 1965), II, 100.

¹⁰ Hsiao Tso-liang, *Power Relationships Within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930-34: A Study of Documents* (Seattle 1961), I, 115; see also Wang, II, 99.

¹¹ According to Ch'en Shao-yü, as quoted by Kuo Hua-lun (Warren Kuo), in *Feich'ing Yüehpao* (hereafter called *FCYP*), April 1967, 95, and in *Issues and Studies* (hereafter called *IS*), July 1967, 41. See also Hsiao, I, 115.

¹² Kuomintang, Investigation Section, *Fenpeng lihsi chih kungch'antang* [The Disintegration of the Communist Party] (1931), as quoted by Kuo in *FCYP*, July 1966, 111-12, and in *IS*, October 1966, 46.

took over the Central Committee's two most important departments, organization and propaganda.¹³

Mao ranked rather low in the Party leadership at that time. In 1927, he had been expelled from his position as an alternate member of the Provisional Political Bureau for having contravened the Party's strategic plans while serving on the Hunan Provincial Committee.¹⁴ He may also have been removed from the Central Committee.¹⁵ In the following year, however, when he was already ensconced in the mountains of Southern Kiangsi, the Sixth Party Congress, which met in Moscow, elected him (or re-elected, if he had in fact been removed in 1927) to the Central Committee but not to the Political Bureau. Mao had become sufficiently prominent in the rapidly expanding stronghold in Southern Kiangsi that in April of 1930, Li Li-san, still the general secretary of the Party, appointed him as secretary of the newly established General Front Committee (*tsung ch'ien wei*). The officially stated function of this committee was to prepare and execute uprisings in Hunan, Hupei, and Kiangsi.

The specific reason why Mao, and not someone else, was appointed as secretary of the General Front Committee was that he had attained a major position in the military. When in April of 1928 he merged the forces who had gone with him to Chingkangshan from central Hunan with those of Chu Te, the two men formed the Fourth Red Army, a force of about 10,000 men. Chu became its commander and Mao its political commissar. In November of 1928, a much smaller force, estimated at about 1,000 troops and called the Fifth Red Army, was formed by P'eng Te-huai near Chu's and Mao's Fourth Red Army in Southern Kiangsi. A reorganization at the end of 1929 saw the Fourth Red Army changed to the First Red Army Corps with Chu and Mao retaining their positions as commander and political commissar.¹⁶ The last major military reorganization during the Kiangsi period took place in February of 1930, when all forces operating in Southern Kiangsi and Southern Hunan were combined into the First Front Army. Once again, Chu Te was the commander and Mao Tse-tung the political commissar.

Li Li-san ordered a general attack on the cities, but when the first

¹³ Wang, II, 99.

¹⁴ "Resolution of the Political Bureau on political discipline" (November 14, 1927), *Kuo-wen choupao*, v, 3 (January 15, 1928), 5-7, translated by Karl A. Wittfogel in his "The Legend of 'Maoism'," *China Quarterly*, II (April-June 1960), 32-33.

¹⁵ Rue, 81.

¹⁶ The Fifth Red Army was redesignated the Third Red Army Corps, with P'eng Te-huai remaining as commander.

attack on Ch'angsha turned into a fiasco, Mao refused to obey Li's order for a second attack. Despite this blatant disobedience, Mao did not lose rank nor was he, as far as we know, punished in any other way.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret these events as proof that Mao had attained a position in the Party that was close to being unchallengeable. As we have seen, Li Li-san was facing, in the Bolsheviks, far more powerful and far more immediate opposition than Mao could have hoped to muster. That Li did not discipline Mao was probably due to his attempt to ward off the Bolsheviks and to the great distance between the Central Committee in Shanghai and the mountain fastness of Kiangsi which would have made any censure ineffectual.

Moreover, Mao's struggle for supreme leadership within the Central Soviet Area was far from over. Toward the end of 1930, his position was threatened by some leaders of the newly established Southwestern Kiangsi Soviet Government, which was placed under the jurisdiction of the Central Soviet Area.¹⁷ In late November or early December, Mao arrested several leaders who were suspected of being agents of the A-B (Anti-Bolshevik) League, including Tuan Liang-pi, Li Po-fang, and Chin Wang-pang.¹⁸

As soon as Mao had removed this challenge, a more serious challenge arose in Tungku in Southwestern Kiangsi, where on December 8, 1930, Liu Ti, the political commissar of the Twentieth Army, started the well-known Fut'ien Rebellion. He overthrew the Southwest Kiangsi Soviet government and arrested many of its leaders whom he suspected of being Mao's supporters. He also released Tuan Liang-pi and the others whom Mao had arrested a short time earlier. The rebels declared their support for Chu Te, P'eng Te-huai, and Huang Kung-lüeh but they opposed Mao. Fortunately for Mao, the three leaders issued a joint statement supporting Mao and censuring the rebels. Finally, the rebellion was crushed by P'eng's Third Red Army.¹⁹

The Third Plenum of the Central Committee of September of 1930, which ousted Li Li-san from his position as general secretary of the Party, also ordered the replacement of the General Front Committee

¹⁷ It was established on February 7, 1930. "Chianghsi ti chungyang Su-ch'ü" [The Central Soviet Area in Kiangsi], *Hung-ch'i chou-pao*, xxiv (November 27, 1931), as quoted in Hsiao, I, 170.

¹⁸ Hsiao, I, 98. The A-B League apparently was an underground organization of the Kuomintang in the Communist areas. It was not directed against the Communists who had returned from the Soviet Union and who are referred to in this study as the Bolsheviks. Rather, the A-B League was aimed against all Communists.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, I, 98-113 and II, 259-83 for the text of and commentary on several documents concerning the Fut'ien Rebellion.

by a Central Bureau for the Soviet Areas (*Su-ch'ü chungyang chü*). Its nine members were: Chou En-lai, Chu Te, Hsiang Ying, Jen Pi-shih, Mao Tse-tung, Yü Fei, Tseng Shang, and two others. Although it appears at first sight that the leadership of this new organization was diluted compared to the one position, held by Mao, in the General Front Committee, his relative power was probably not greatly weakened by the reorganization. Hsiang Ying reportedly was a man with few organizational abilities. Moreover, he, Chou, Yü, and Jen might have been not even present in the Kiangsi Soviet Area but in Shanghai.²⁰ Thus, perhaps only Tseng Shan, Chu Te, and the two unidentified men actually shared power with Mao in Kiangsi. Indirect evidence of Mao's continued predominance in Kiangsi, if not in the Party as a whole, comes from an order issued on the day after the Central Bureau was established, which expelled from the Party the leaders of the Fut'ien rebellion.²¹ By the beginning of 1931, therefore, Mao Tse-tung had attained positions in the Party, the government, and the military in the Central Soviet Area that, while not unchallengeable, were among the highest.

But he had yet to face his greatest challenge. Just as he was strengthening his influence in Kiangsi, the Bolsheviks had been consolidating their influence in the Central Committee in Shanghai. Now they were ready to turn their attention to the Central Soviet Area in Kiangsi. Because of increasing pressure by Chiang Kai-shek's central government on their activities in Shanghai, the Bolsheviks decided to transfer the Political Bureau to Kiangsi. Dominating the Central Committee and having the support of the Comintern, they appeared to have the ability to seize the reins of leadership in Kiangsi.

In September of 1931, either shortly before or shortly after the Political Bureau transferred from Shanghai to Kiangsi, the Party Center issued a lengthy "directive letter." Apparently dictated by Ch'in Pang-hsien, who had assumed the general secretaryship of the Party when Hsiang Chung-fa was executed by the central government in June of 1931, the letter seemed to attack the leadership of the Kiangsi Soviet area by listing several "grievous errors" allegedly committed by Mao and other leaders in Kiangsi.²²

The letter also ordered the establishment of a so-called Chinese

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 150.

²¹ See *ibid.*, I, 108, and II, 269-73 for "Chungyang chü t'ungkao ti-er-hao: tui Fut'ien shihpien ti chüehi" [Central Bureau Circular Note No. 2: Resolution on the Fut'ien incident].

²² "Chungyang tui Su-ch'ü chihshih hsin" [Directive letter of the Party Central to the Soviet areas], in Hsiao, I, 159-62, and II, 382-89.

Soviet Government (*Chunghua suweiai chengfu*) during a congress scheduled for November of 1931.²³ This congress, the First All-China Soviet Congress, opened at Juichin on November 7, 1931. Toward its close in December, the congress elected sixty-three persons to the Central Executive Committee. Mao became its chairman, and Hsiang Ying and Chang Kuo-t'ao its vice-chairmen. Directly under the Central Executive Committee was a Council of People's Commissars (*jenmin weiyüanhui*), also headed by Mao, charged with the day-to-day administration of the Central Soviet Area, i.e., the main base area in Kiangsi.²⁴

Mao's appointment to the chairmanship of the Central Executive Committee and to its Council of People's Commissars marked the high point of his influence during the Kiangsi period. He now held leading positions in all three hierarchies. He was the head of the government, he was the general political commissar of the armed forces, and he was a member of the Party's Central Committee. Very shortly thereafter, however, the recently arrived Bolsheviks began systematically to curtail his influence, directing first attack against his military position. With the onset in December of 1930 of the first concerted attempts by the central government to dislodge the Communists from their bases in Kiangsi, the Communist leaders' military posts grew more important than their government and even their Party posts.

In 1932, during the fifteen-month pause between the third and fourth encirclement campaigns against the Central Soviet Area, a dispute broke out between Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-Lai over the proper defensive strategy. Mao favored mobile guerrilla warfare by which he would lure the enemy deep into the Communist territory, where numerically vastly superior Communist troops could isolate and attack small contingents of government troops. This strategy had been used against the first three encirclement campaigns, but Chou En-lai, speaking as a secretary of the Bolshevik-dominated Political Bureau, had ordered it discontinued, possibly because of the growing disaffection among the civilian population in the Central Soviet Area. Mobile guerrilla warfare exposed the civilians not only to destruction of property but also to retaliation by government troops, and their sense

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Hsiao, I, 173. There were nine commissariats, as follows:

Foreign Affairs: Wang Chia-hsiang
Labor: Hsiang Ying
Land: Chang T'ing-ch'eng
Internal Affairs: Chou I-li

Military: Chu Te
Finance: Teng Tse-hui
Education: Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai
Judicial: Chang Kuo-t'ao

Worker-Peasant Investigation: Ho Shu-heng. See Wang, II, 286.

of insecurity, as well as dissatisfaction with other Communist policies, resulted in diminished cooperation and increased difficulty in recruiting. Possibly to restore the civilians' morale, Chou En-lai advocated positional warfare ("to keep the enemy beyond the gates") and a strategy of carrying the fight into enemy territory. In his view, guerrilla warfare still had its usefulness but it was to be waged only behind enemy lines.

The clash between these two strategies was brought to a head in August of 1932 when the Party Central called the Ningtu Conference, which was an enlarged meeting of the Central Bureau for the Soviet Areas. Chou En-lai's strategy, which the Bolsheviks advocated, won out, and Mao was removed from the Military Affairs Committee. After the conference, his influence began to wane rapidly. Both Hsiao and Ch'en cite sources saying that Mao became inactive due to actual or political illness and that Chou En-lai became the *de facto* political leader in the armed forces.²⁵ Chou's new position was confirmed on May 8, 1933, when he was formally appointed to Mao's two posts as general political commissar of all armed forces and as political commissar of the First Front Army.²⁶ Mao's guerrilla strategy and, by implication, Mao himself, were further attacked in February of 1933 when Lo Ming, the acting secretary of the Party's Provincial Committee in Fukien, was severely criticized by Ch'in Pang-hsien, the Party's new general secretary, for applying Mao's strategy. Closer to home, Mao was indirectly attacked when the campaign against the so-called Lo Ming line was waged against his brother, Mao Tse-t'an and Teng Hsiao-p'ing, the secretary of the Party's Kiangsi committee.²⁷

When the central government's Nineteenth Route Army, under Ch'en Ming-shu, prepared to rebel in Fukien, the Communists in

²⁵ *Ch'ihfei fantung wenchien huipien* [Collection of Communist Reactionary Documents], II, 449-50, in Hsiao, I, 210-11; and Ku Kuan-chiao, *Sanshih-nien lai ti Chung-kung* [Thirty Years of the Chinese Communists], 76, in Jerome Ch'en, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* (New York 1967), 176. Ch'en also cites pages 220-21 in Hsiao, but this is incorrect. He may have meant pages 210-11, in which case it would have been more helpful to cite, as Hsiao does, the original source. It should be noted, however, that during the fifth encirclement campaign in 1934, the leadership had second thoughts about the strategy of positional warfare, but it was too late for any change because the initiative had already shifted to the central government troops.

²⁶ Hsiao, I, 220; Hatano Ken'ichi, *Chūgoku kyōsantō shi* [History of the Chinese Communist Party] (Tokyo 1961), IV, 271 and chart at end of volume.

²⁷ "Mao Tse-t'an t'ungchih ti *San-kuo* chihje" [Comrade Mao Tse-t'an's enthusiasm for the *Romance of Three Kingdoms*], *Hung-se Chunghua*, xcii (July 8, 1933) and Ch'en Shou-ch'ang, "Wei chiach'iang tang tui koming chancheng ti lingtao erh toucheng" [Fight for strengthening the Party's leadership in the revolutionary war], *Toucheng*, xvi (July 15, 1933), cited by Kuo in *FCYP*, April 1967, 98-99, and *IS*, July 1967, 48-49.

Kiangsi concluded an agreement with Ch'en on October 26, 1933. On December 5, however, the Party's Central Committee, under the domination of the Bolsheviks, denounced the rebels in Fukien.²⁸ Although Mao Tse-tung and Chu Te allegedly wanted to maintain relations with the rebels, Mao's influence in the Party had already reached such a low level that his pleas went unheeded.²⁹

Mao Tse-tung's influence also waned in the Party after the Ningtu Conference. Until November of 1927 an alternate member of the Political Bureau, and later appointed as secretary of the General Front Committee, Mao was unable to find a place on the nine-man Secretariat that was elected at the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee at Juichin in January of 1934. The Bolsheviks continued to dominate the Secretariat, whose members were Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, Hsiang Ying, Liang Pai-t'ai, Liu Shao-ch'i, Wang Chia-hsiang, and Wu Liang-p'ing. Ch'in Pang-hsien remained the general secretary of the Party.³⁰

Even more important, Mao was excluded from the Political Bureau and hence from the leadership of the Party as defined in this study. The Political Bureau, as elected at the Fifth Plenum, is reported to have consisted of these fourteen members and alternate members: Chang Kuo-t'ao, Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'en Yün, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, Chu Te, Ho K'o-ch'üan, Hsiang Ying, Jen Pi-shih, K'ang Sheng, Ku Tso-lin, Kuan Hsiang-ying, and Wang Chia-hsiang.³¹

²⁸ "Chungkuo kungch'antang chungyang weiyüanhui wei Fuchien shihpien kao ch'üan-kuo minchung" [Statement of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to the people of the entire country on the Fukien incident], cited in Hsiao, I, 249 and II, 676. A photocopy of the eleven-point agreement, entitled "Fan-Jih fan-Chiang ti ch'upu hsiehting" [Preliminary Agreement Against Japan and Chiang] is in Hsiao, II, 676. In a recent article, Jerome Ch'en erroneously lists *November 26* as the date of the agreement. See Jerome Ch'en, "Resolutions of the Tsunyi Conference," *The China Quarterly*, XL (October-December 1969), 28. I received this article two days before submitting my manuscript for publication and, therefore, did not have sufficient time to comment more fully on Ch'en's article. A few remarks here and in other footnotes must suffice.

²⁹ Many years later, Mao blamed the Bolsheviks for breaking off relations with the rebels in Fukien. He explicitly blamed the action for the collapse of the Central Soviet Area in an interview with Edgar Snow in 1936. See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York 1938), 186. He implied the same in "Kuanyü jokan lishih went'i ti chüehi" [Resolution on some historical problems] in *Mao Tse-tung hsiianchi* (Peking 1964), III, 955-1002, and in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking 1965), III, 177-225.

³⁰ Wang, II, 520. Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank (p. 38), and Robert North (p. 164) quoting Chang Kuo-t'ao, say that Chang Wen-t'ien replaced Ch'in Pang-hsien at this plenum. See Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1952) and Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* (Stanford, 2nd ed. 1963). The evidence available to me convinces me that this did not occur until the Tsunyi Conference a year later.

³¹ Kuo, in *FCYP*, July 1967, 106, and *IS*, October 1967, 38. The Standing Committee

Mao lost influence even in the government, the least important of the three hierarchies. On February 3, 1934, during the Second All-China Soviet Congress, held in Juichin, he was re-elected as chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Soviet Republic, but he was replaced by Chang Wen-t'ien, a Bolshevik, as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.³² Moreover, when Mao had been elected as chairman of the Central Executive Committee at the First All-China Soviet Congress, he had had to share his governmental powers only with his two vice-chairmen, Chang Kuo-t'ao and Hsiang Ying. Now, in addition to the same two men, fourteen other men, composing a so-called Presidium (*chuhsi-t'uan*), were elected as "the supreme organ of political power."³³

During the fateful months of summer and early fall of 1934, when the central government's fifth encirclement campaign inexorably tightened the noose around the Central Soviet Area, Mao Tse-tung appeared to be removed from positions where the decision had to be made to try to escape the closing trap. According to Kung Ch'ü, the chief of staff of the Central Military District, and Chang Kuo-t'ao, in consequence of Mao's alleged opposition to the Party's denunciation of the rebellion in Fukien, he was put on probation as a Party member by an order from Moscow. Kung says that Mao was denied access to all Party meetings and that he did not take part in the decision on October 2 to abandon the Central Soviet Area and to begin what became known as the Long March. Chang believes that Mao had been deprived of virtually all authority on the eve of the Long March.³⁴

We do not have conclusive proof that Kung's and Chang's assertions are correct, but there is indirect evidence that they might be. It is known that for some time during that summer, Mao was not even in Juichin, where all important organizations were located and where all top decisions were made. Ch'uan Lien-chang says in his article "Mao chuhsi tsai Yütu" [Chairman Mao in Yütu] that Mao suffered from malaria and spent some time in September in Yütu, a town some fifty miles west of Juichin.³⁵ Another Communist source says that Mao was in Yütu during the summer of 1934, that he left for Kaopinao

of the Political Bureau consisted of Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Yün, ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, and Hsiang Ying. Kuo, *ibid.*

³² "Chung-hua suweiai kunghokuo chungyang chihhsing weiyüanhui pukao, ti-i-hao" [Proclamation of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Soviet Republic, No. 1], cited in Hsiao, I, 280-81 and II, 762.

³³ *Hung-se Chunghua*, No. 148 (February 12, 1934), cited by Kuo in *FCYP*, July 1967, 114 and 15, October 1967, 52.

³⁴ Hsiao, I, 296-97.

³⁵ *Hung-ch'i p'iao-p'iao* [The Red Flag Flutters] (Peking 1959), x, 3.

near Juichin, "where he was very busy, calling meetings of the responsible cadres in the localities he visited or making investigations in the villages," that he returned to Yütu at the end of September, and that he then departed from there on the Long March on October 10.³⁶

A different version was told to Nym Wales in 1937 by Hsü Meng-ch'iu, who said that Mao went briefly, presumably in late September, to Juichin, where he participated in the decision to evacuate the Central Soviet Area. According to Hsü, the decision was reached by some military council composed of Chou En-lai, Chu Te, Liu Po-ch'eng, Mao Tse-tung, Wang Chia-hsiang, and the Comintern military adviser Li Te.³⁷ This council, probably constituted *ad hoc*, was not the same as the Party's Revolutionary Military Committee, sometimes translated as Council.

In the light of the failure of two publications that unreservedly praise Mao to mention his alleged role in the decision of October 2, 1934, I find Hsü's assertion unconvincing.³⁸ At any rate, even if we assume that Mao had attended that meeting, his influence within the leadership would have been small. Had Mao actually been permitted to attend the meeting, it would have been solely by virtue of his titular chairmanship of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Soviet Republic. On the eve of the Long March, all decisive political military positions were occupied by other leaders. They were:

Chairman of the Party's Military Affairs

Committee:

Chou En-lai

Director of the National Political Protection

Office:

Teng Fa

First Front Army:

Commander

Chu Te

Political Commissar

Chou En-lai

Chief of Staff

Liu Po-ch'eng (formerly
Yeh Chien-ying)

Director of Political Department

Wang Chia-hsiang

Central Military District:

Commander

Hsiang Ying

³⁶ Ch'en Chang-feng, *On The Long March With Chairman Mao* (Peking 1959), 19.

³⁷ Nym Wales, *Red Dust: Autobiographies of Chinese Communists* (Stanford 1952), 67.

³⁸ Hsü Meng-ch'iu was one of the Bolsheviks who by 1937 had lost much of their former influence. By telling an unsuspecting interviewer that Mao took part in the decision, he may have been trying to ingratiate himself with Mao.

Political Commissar	Hsiang Ying
Chief of Staff	Kung Ch'ü
Director of Political Department	Ch'en I
Director of Branch Office of the National Political Protection Office	T'an Chen-lin ³⁹

In sum, Mao was not a member of the political leadership, which was in the hands of the Bolsheviks, nor of the military leadership. Moreover, although he nominally retained the chairmanship of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Soviet Republic, that post actually ceased to exist when the Communists abandoned the Central Soviet Area. As far as we know, no change in the political and military leadership took place until the Tsunyi Conference in January of 1935.

THE LONG MARCHES

After the First Front Army occupied Tsunyi on January 5, 1935, the Central Committee convened an enlarged conference of the Political Bureau on January 6 through 8. The standard post-1949 Communist interpretation of the Tsunyi Conference, as expressed by Ho Kan-chih, has been that "the 'Left' opportunists were removed from their leading positions and a new Party leadership headed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung was established." Like many China specialists, the Communists see the Tsunyi Conference as the turning point in the history of the Communist Party, or, as Ho put it, "the beginning of a new leadership in the Central Committee headed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung was a change of paramount historical importance in the Party."⁴⁰

The known facts do not support such a sweeping assertion. Two cardinal points must be considered: the participants and the decisions of the conference. Perhaps twenty leaders participated, of whom seventeen have been identified by Kuo Hua-lun. They are said to be Chang Wen-t'ien (Lo Fu), Ch'en Yün, general secretary Ch'in Pang-hsien (Po Ku), Chou En-lai, Chu Te, Ho K'o-ch'üan (K'ai Feng) Li Fu-ch'un, Li Wei-han (Lo Mai), Lin Piao, Liu Po-ch'eng, Liu Shao-ch'i, Mao Tse-tung, Nieh Jung-chen, P'eng Te-huai, Teng Fa, Wang Shou-tao, and Yang Shang-k'un.⁴¹ Although this is the most extensive avail-

³⁹ Wang, II, 622; Hsüeh Yüeh, *Chiao-fei chishih* [Record of Encircling the Communists] (Taipei 1962), table between pages 14 and 15; Kung Ch'ü, *Wo yü Hung-chün* [The Red Army and I] (Hong Kong 1954), 405-6.

⁴⁰ Ho Kan-chih, *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution* (Peking 1959), 265.

⁴¹ Kuo, in *FCYP*, September 1967, 99, and in *IS*, January 1968, 44. Also present at the conference was the Comintern adviser Li Te (Otto Braun, alias Albert and Wagner)

able list of the participants at the Tsunyi Conference, it is admittedly not complete, and possibly not free from error. A second difficulty is created by the absence of any complete roster of members of the Political Bureau.⁴² To the best of my knowledge, there were about thirteen members.

Of those whom Kuo identified as participants at Tsunyi, seven were probably Political Bureau members: Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Yün, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, Li Wei-han, Liu Shao-ch'i, and Li Fu-ch'un.⁴³ Nine of the other ten identified men were important leaders in the Party and the military, and the only participant who held no leading posts in the Party or the military was Mao Tse-tung.⁴⁴ It may be speculated, therefore, that his inclusion in the deliberations at Tsunyi was based on his by then purely nominal chairmanship of the defunct Chinese Soviet Republic and, possibly, on an invitation by one or more Political Bureau members.

What is of equal significance, however, is that fourteen other leaders, equal in importance to those cited above and including five probable members of the Political Bureau, did not participate in that conference, whose purpose was to discuss strategy and other military subjects.⁴⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that the general political line was placed on the agenda. Ch'in Pang-hsien presided over the conference,

and Wu Hsiu-ch'üan, his interpreter. See "Irrefutable evidence of crime of Wu Hsiu-ch'üan's betrayal of the Party and the country," *Hung-wei Chan-pao*, April 13, 1967; translated in U.S. Consulate-General, Hong Kong, *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 4007 (August 23, 1967), 4.

⁴² Although Hatano lists eleven members in one of his charts, I am inclined to think that membership in the Political Bureau at that time is not precisely known. See Hatano, v, chart at end of volume.

⁴³ Kuo may be in error when he lists the last three men as either members or alternate members of the Central Committee. Kuo, *ibid.* Ch'en, in "Resolutions of the Tsunyi Conference," 19, says that "Liu Shao-ch'i by all accounts did not take part in the Long March." (Italics added.) I can think offhand of one source that states that Liu did take part: Ching kangshan Fighting Corps of the Fourth Hospital, Peking, "A Chronicle of Events in the Life of Liu Shao-ch'i" (May 1967), translated in U.S. Consulate-General, Hong Kong, *Current Background*, No. 834 (August 17, 1967), 3. In the absence of incontrovertible evidence, we must assume that this source is as reliable or unreliable as other sources. The crux of my argument rests with the highly unstable situation at Tsunyi. Leaders came and went throughout their stay in the Tsunyi area; hence it is probable that different lists of participants may all be partly right, depending on when the various eyewitnesses were at or near the conference site.

⁴⁴ They were: Chu Te, Liu Po-ch'eng, Ho K'o-ch'üan, P'eng Te-huai, Yank Shang-k'un, Lin Piao, Nieh Jung-chen, Wang Shou-t'ao, Li Wei-han, and Teng Fa.

⁴⁵ The Political Bureau members were Ch'en Shao-yü (Wang Ming), Chang Kuo-t'ao, Jen Pi-shih, Hsiang Ying, and Wang Chia-hsiang. Three important leaders who were with the First Front Army but are not known to have attended the conference were Yeh Chien-ying, Tung Chen-t'ang, and Lo P'ing-hui; and six who unquestionably did not participate were Ho Lung, Hsü Hsiang-ch'ien, Hsiao K'o, Wang Chen, Ch'en I, and Kung Ch'u.

and Chou En-lai, P'eng Te-huai, Mao Tse-tung, and Liu Shao-ch'i and perhaps other leaders presented reports. Chou, in his capacity as chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, read the military report and three other speakers criticized various aspects of past military strategy. P'eng, commander of the Third Army Corps, denounced wholesale evacuation, desertion, and slow movement, which he blamed for the heavy casualties suffered by the Communists since their exodus from the Central Soviet Area in October of 1934. Mao criticized the defensive strategy during the fifth encirclement campaign against the Central Soviet Area. Liu, the director of the Party's trade union department, complained about "Left adventurism," which he said emerged after the fourth plenum of the Political Bureau in January of 1931 and caused the virtual disintegration of Party organizations in the "White" areas, i.e., anywhere except in the few Communist base areas.⁴⁶ It is important to note that Liu Shao-ch'i did not support Mao's argument but rather seemed to speak his mind as an individual leader about what he considered had been serious errors in the Party's policies.

In the ensuing debate, the Party's political line apparently also came under attack. It was, however, ably defended by general secretary Ch'in Pang-hsien and its resolutions were reaffirmed by the conference. There is insufficient evidence for a well-defined and cohesive faction commanded by Mao, and it is therefore misleading to speak, as Professor Rue does, of a Maoist group. Individual leaders seemed to be attempting to induce their co-equal comrades to support them in the formal vote at the end of the conference. They did not succeed, as is evidenced by the compromise offered by Chang Wen-t'ien. He supported general secretary Ch'in by approving of the Party's general political line, but he blamed him, Chou En-lai, and Li Te for the defensive strategy during the fifth encirclement campaign and thus implicitly agreed with the criticisms raised by P'eng and Mao.

Chang Wen-t'ien's middle position won out. The conference adopted a document entitled "Chungyang chengchih chü k'uangta huiyi chüehyi: chient'ao Po Ku, Chou En-lai, Li Te t'ungchih chünshih luhsien ti ts'owu" ["Resolutions of the Enlarged Conference of the Central Political Bureau: A review of the errors in the military line of Comrades Po Ku, Chou En-lai, and Li Te"]. I summarize the major resolutions, as recollected by one of the conferees.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Wei K'o-wei (Carl Wei), "Tsunyi huiyi lishih chenhxiang (hsia)," [The truth about the Tsunyi Conference (Part II)], in *FCYP*, November 1968, 113, and *IS*, February 1969, 24.

⁴⁷ Kuo, in *FCYP*, September 1967, 100-01, and *IS*, January 1968, 45-47. Kuo's inform-

The danger of China's becoming a Japanese colony was increasing because the Kuomintang prevented the Communists from moving northward to fight the Japanese. Proof of this was the fifth encirclement campaign against the Communists and their ouster from the Central Soviet Area. Since the Fourth Plenum of the Political Bureau in January of 1931, the Party had, with Comintern help, steered a correct path and had avoided factional splits within its ranks. On the other hand, the military line during the fifth encirclement campaign contained serious errors. The principle of not yielding territory placed the Communist troops in a conservative and passive attitude. This attitude expressed itself in unwillingness to abandon certain Soviet pockets, to lure the central government troops deep into Soviet territories, and to launch counterattacks into territories held by the central government. The Communists suffered heavy casualties because of this erroneous military strategy. During the evacuation of the Central Soviet Area, political mobilization was given up under the pretext of preserving military secrets and this lowered the morale of the troops. Moreover, the transport of heavy equipment, printing presses, and the like, slowed down the troops and led to further heavy losses at the hands of the pursuing central government troops. After reviewing and correcting the erroneous military line of "simple defense and desertionism," the Party should be able to display its fine tradition in mobile warfare in order to fight for achieving tasks currently confronting it.

The conference decided to continue the northward march across the Yangtze River for the purpose of joining with the Fourth Front Army commanded by Chang Kuo-t'ao. Divisions were abolished, and officers were sent down to regiments and companies to strengthen their combat efficiency.

The conference also decided to reorganize the Party's Central Committee and Military Affairs Committee. Chang Wen-t'ien, who had induced the conferees to adopt his compromise resolutions, emerged as the leader of the Party by replacing Ch'in Pang-hsien as the general secretary. Ch'in was appointed as director of the General Political Department of the Red Army, with Li Wei-han (Lo Mai) as director of its organization section and Ho K'o-ch'üan as director of its propaganda section. Ch'en Yün, the director of the White Areas work committee who had defended Li Te, was ordered to go to Moscow to inform the Com-

ant, Ch'en Jan, was the director of the central personnel corps for local work in P'eng Te-huai's Third Corps during the Tsunyi Conference. He went under the pseudonym of Kuo Chien.

intern of the Tsunyi Conference and to obtain its approval of the resolutions. His place was taken by P'an Han-nien, who was instructed to establish liaison centers in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Most important for this study's objective, Mao Tse-tung replaced Chou En-lai as chairman of the Party's Military Affairs Committee. Mao also became a member of the Political Bureau and of its Standing Committee, where he replaced Hsiang Ying, who had been left behind in the abandoned Central Soviet Area.⁴⁸ These two appointments were major gains for Mao, but they were the only gains that we can safely say he had actually won at Tsunyi. The information is based on recollections by Ch'en Jan, one of the participants of the conference and, in my judgment, is more reliable than the interpretations given by many China specialists because, as shown below, they are based either on no sources at all or on exceedingly vague sources. It is possible, of course, that Ch'en's recollections are faulty or that the information given by him and presented by Kuo Hua-lun is wrong in any number of respects. But only total fabrication, which in my opinion is improbable, would make Ch'en's information less useful and reliable than the sources relied upon by some China specialists.

A few representative samples of interpretations of the Tsunyi Conference must suffice. John Rue and Stuart Schram assert, without offering any evidence, that Mao became the chairman of the Political Bureau. Schram adds that this post was newly created at the Tsunyi Conference.⁴⁹ Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank go still farther and say that "Mao formally assumes Party leadership as Chairman of [Central Committee] and Politburo."⁵⁰ Like Rue and Schram, they offer no evidence to back up their interpretation. Hsiao, Lewis, and Swarup make only some vague and uncorroborated remarks, such as "Mao got the upper hand of Ch'in [Pang-hsien] and achieved control of the Party" (Hsiao), "Mao became party leader" (Lewis), and "the decision of the Tsunyi Conference [elevated] Mao to top leadership" (Swarup).⁵¹ As noted earlier, John Lindbeck says that Mao became the "undisputed leader" and Samuel Griffith says that he attained an "unchallengeable position."⁵² Griffith also demonstrates conclusively that the image of a quasi-collective leadership is not weakened by the absence of supporting evidence, for he remarks in the very next sen-

⁴⁸ Kuo, in *FCYP*, September 1967, 101, and *IS*, January 1968, 47-48.

⁴⁹ Rue, 270; Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Baltimore 1966), 182.

⁵⁰ Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank, 38.

⁵¹ Hsiao, 159; Shanti Swarup, *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement, 1927-1934* (Oxford 1966), 257; Lewis, 22.

⁵² Treadgold, 78; Griffith, 51.

tence that "to this day, no one outside the tight circle at the top of the Party knows precisely what went on behind closed doors at Tsunyi."⁵³

The only China specialist who makes an effort to back up his statement that Mao became the chairman of the Political Bureau is Jerome Ch'en,⁵⁴ who cites five sources for supporting evidence. Unfortunately, one of his sources is not available to me at present, but the other four do not support his assertion. One is Mrs. Helen Foster Snow, who remarks *en passant* that "Mao achieved power."⁵⁵ A second source Ch'en relies heavily on in his work is Ku Kuan-chiao's polemic against the Chinese Communists, in which Ku remarks that Mao made Chang Wen-t'ien his "puppet" (*k'uei lei*).⁵⁶ These two sources require no further consideration. A third, Ho Kan-chih, merely says that the conference "established Comrade Mao Tse-tung's position as leader of the whole Party."⁵⁷ The fourth source, Liu Po-ch'eng, declares that "this conference . . . began a new leadership with Comrade Mao Tse-tung as the head of the [Party] Central."⁵⁸ As in the case of the decision to evacuate the Central Soviet Area, the available sources lend no credibility to the opinion, presented as a statement of fact, that Mao Tse-tung became the chairman of the Political Bureau. Ho Kan-chih's book and Liu Po-ch'eng's reminiscences fully reflect the intense exaltation of Mao that characterized the period during which they were published. They could therefore be expected to mention Mao's promotion to the chairmanship of the Political Bureau, had he indeed been promoted at Tsunyi. But they do not; instead they indulge in what appears to be deliberately vague language such as "leader of the whole Party" and "head of the Central," neither of which terms, needless to say, refers to an actual position in the Party.

In sum, two men clearly gained strength during the Tsunyi Conference: Chang Wen-t'ien and Mao Tse-tung. Both men had their views adopted by their peers and both men were promoted in their Party positions. For Chang, it was to the highest post in the Party; for Mao,

⁵³ Griffith, 51.

⁵⁴ Ch'en, 189.

⁵⁵ Nym Wales, 14.

⁵⁶ Ku Kuan-chiao, *San-shih nien lai ti Chungkung* [Thirty Years of the Chinese Communists] (Hong Kong 1955), 77-78. In his "Resolutions of the Tsunyi Conference," 20, Ch'en repudiates Ku's remark but does not mention his earlier heavy reliance on Ku. But if Ch'en drops Ku as supporting evidence, he is not inclined to reconsider his basic claim, for on p. 36 he refers matter-of-factly to "the election of Mao to the chairmanship of the Politburo" at Tsunyi.

⁵⁷ Ho Kan-chih, *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution* (Peking 1960), 265. Ch'en incorrectly cites pages 260-70.

⁵⁸ Liu Po-ch'eng, "Huiku ch'ang-cheng" [Reminiscing about the Long March], *Hsing-huo liao-yüan* [A Single Spark Starts a Prairie Fire] (Peking 1960), 5.

a return to the Political Bureau from which he had been removed in 1927. Of the two positions to which Mao was elected, the chairmanship of the Military Affairs Committee was probably the more important for the duration of the Long March. It gave him a vantage point from which he could decisively influence the strategic and tactical decisions of at least one body of Communist troops, the First Front Army.

In the broadest sense, the principal outcome of the Tsunyi Conference does not seem to have been the personal victory of Mao over his rivals. Rather, the chief significance of that conference was the ascendancy of a military frame of mind within the Party leadership. The great hardships of the Long March demanded of the Chinese Communists a degree of attention to military matters to which the old leadership, ensconced in the cities of China until 1931, had never been obligated. Mao had always had a penchant for military matters. The man whose lifelong motto has been "Power grows out of the barrel of a gun" was in many respects the most appropriate agent for the victory of the military frame of mind at Tsunyi. This view does not imply, of course, that Mao was somehow the passive tool of impersonal historical forces: he had, after all, made patient and persistent preparations for his comeback to the higher levels of Party leadership. This view, however, does stress the conjunction at the time of the Tsunyi Conference of Mao's own efforts and of the environmental forces that impinged upon a party fighting for survival.

If the military exigencies of the Long March enabled Mao Tse-tung to rise once again to the higher levels of the Party leadership, they also placed sharp limitations on his ability to attain an undisputed and unchallengeable position in the entire Party. Latter-day statements to this effect seem to overlook Chang Wen-t'ien, the new general secretary of the Party, who was with the First Front Army. Even if Mao had been able, thanks to his position of chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and to the military nature of the Long March, to assert his authority on military matters, Chang's influence in political matters was not likely to have vanished overnight.⁵⁹

Moreover, Mao could not have acquired supreme political power over the entire Party for the basic reason that many wielders of politico-military power in the Party were not with the First Front Army but elsewhere. The Central Soviet Area, which the central government

⁵⁹ In their efforts to discount Chang Wen-t'ien's importance, some China specialists resort to imprecise language. Stuart Schram, for example, says that although Chang became the new general secretary of the Party, "henceforth *the real power* belonged to Mao." Schram, 182. (*Italics added*).

had forced the First Front Army under Chu, Mao, Chou, and others to abandon, was one of about fifteen Communist base areas. Two of them, the Western Hunan-Hupei (Hsiang-O-Hsi) and Hupei-Honan-Anhui (O-Yü-Wan), were especially important. Their large military forces were second only to those in the Central Soviet Area.

The Western Hunan-Hupei base area was controlled by the Second Front Army under the command of Ho Lung. It started its own Long March on November 19, 1935, more than a year later than the First Front Army, which it never met until most Communist troops concentrated in Northern Shensi in early 1937. Composed of five divisions, the Second Front Army consisted of some 20,000 troops in November of 1935. After much hard fighting, the Second Front Army met with the Fourth Front Army near Kantze in Sikang in June of 1936.⁶⁰

The Fourth Front Army, under Chang Kuo-t'ao, was extremely important both for its much larger size and for its leader's opposition to Mao Tse-tung. Originally stationed in the Hupei-Honan-Anhui base area, where its troop strength was said to be around 20,000,⁶¹ it started out on its Long March in December of 1932 and moved to the border between Szechuan and Shensi, where it rested and greatly enlarged its troop strength. By early spring of 1934, Chang Kuo-t'ao's Fourth Front Army had firm control over a sufficiently large area, with an estimated population of nine million, to establish a "Szechuan-Shensi Soviet Area" with Chang Kuo-t'ao as Chairman. He also presided over a newly created Northwest Revolutionary Military Committee (*Hsipei k'oming chünshih weiyüanhui*). In order to facilitate the First Front Army's northward march from Tsunyi, the Fourth Front Army left its Szechuan-Shensi base in March of 1935 and moved westward. It is said to have had about 80,000 troops at that time.⁶²

Reduced to about 70,000 troops as a result of heavy fighting but again fully rested and well-armed, the Fourth Front Army met the First Front Army at Moukung in Northern Szechuan on June 16, 1935.⁶³ The First Front Army had lost much of its strength, its original

⁶⁰ *Chungkuo kung-nung hung-chün ti-i fangmien chün ch'ang-cheng chi* [A Record of the Long March of the First Front Army of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] (Peking 1958), 464-65 (hereafter cited as *Chungkuo kung-nung*). Ch'en's unsubstantiated claim that the two armies met in May is probably incorrect (p. 386).

⁶¹ "Ch'uan-Shen Su-ch'ü yü hung-ssu fangmien chün ti chingjen shengli" [The Szechuan-Shensi Soviet area and the Red Fourth Front Army's smashing victories], *Toucheng*, LXIV (February 21, 1934), cited by Kuo in *FCYP*, November 1967, 108, and in *IS*, March 1968, 38.

⁶² *Chungkuo kung-nung*, 461.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 435. Ch'en, quoting Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow, says that the Fourth Front Army had only 50,000 troops at the time of juncture (Ch'en, 193).

90,000 troops having been reduced to about 35,000 exhausted, starved, ill-clad, and poorly armed troops.

The leaders of the two front armies convened a Political Bureau conference at nearby Lianghok'ou on June 25. Mao and others argued for joining in a "Long March" northward to Northern Shensi, where Hsü Hai-tung and Kao Kang had established a base area, for the ostensible purpose of fighting against the Japanese. Chang Kuo-t'ao, on the other hand, thought that this strategy was unrealistic in view of the greatly weakened strength of the Communists. He suggested instead that the Communists should remain in Sikang and Szechuan and later establish contact, for possible aid, with the Soviet Union through Sinkiang. Chang may have felt that whatever influence Mao had achieved in the First Front Army as a result of the Tsunyi Conference must not spread to his own army. After all, Chang had been Mao's senior in the Party before the Tsunyi Conference, which he, Chang, had not attended; and, most important, his 70,000 troops were superior to Mao's in both numerical and physical strength. Neither Chang nor, in all probability, any of the participants except Mao thought that Mao was, in Jerome Ch'en's words, "the leader of the party whom Chang had to obey."⁶⁴

The conference ended in a stalemate and, upon the suggestion of Chu Te, who acted as mediator, the two armies decided to rest. They moved on to Maoerhkai and rested there from July 10 through 29.⁶⁵ During this time, the Party leadership held another conference to resolve the deadlock reached earlier at Lianghok'ou.

The conferees at Maoerhkai once again failed to agree on a common strategy but they did effect a compromise of sorts. The two front armies were divided so that two columns, east and west, might be formed out of elements of both armies. Mao Tse-tung was to command the eastern column, composed of his own First and Third Army Corps and of the Fourth Front Army's Fourth and Thirtieth Armies. Chang Kuo-t'ao was to command the western column composed of his own Thirty-first and Thirty-second Armies and of the First Front Army's Fifth and Ninth Corps. The two columns were roughly equal in numerical strength, but Chang had a clear edge over Mao. First, virtually the entire Red Army headquarters, including commander in chief Chu Te, was attached to his column. Second, soon after Mao's column resumed its northern march, one of its units, the Thirtieth Army, under Hsü Hsiang-ch'ien, lost its way and had to return to Maoerhkai where it added to the strength of Chang Kuo-t'ao's column. How deep the divi-

⁶⁴ Ch'en, 193.

⁶⁵ *Chungkuo kung-nung*, 436.

sion between Chang and Mao had become was shown by the creation by Chang of a rival Central Committee with himself as its head.⁶⁶

It is incontrovertible, therefore, that as long as he was on the Long March, Mao Tse-tung had not been able to assume the position of supreme leadership of the Party that latter-day Chinese and Western interpretations give him. It is also true, however, that Chang Kuo-t'ao, his most serious rival, was soon to see his military power decimated by central government troops. After moving southward from Maoerhkai, his column suffered heavy casualties in its attempt to establish a viable base in Sikang. After they joined at Kantze, the Second and Fourth Front Armies decided to move northward in the direction of Shensi, where Mao's First Front Army had arrived in November of 1935. But when they met with elements of that army at Huining in October of 1936, Chang Kuo-t'ao decided not to proceed to Northern Shensi but to move westward in the direction of the Kansu Corridor and Sinkiang.⁶⁷ For this purpose, he regrouped most of his troops into a so-called Western Route Army (*Hsi-lu chün*) comprising about 22,500 men.⁶⁸ Only 700 survivors actually reached Urumchi.⁶⁹ Along with a handful of them, he went to the Northern Shensi base area. His chief bargaining power thus lost, Chang was brought to trial in January of 1937 and ordered to "study" until he had purged himself of his "incorrect" ideas. In plain operational terms, the trial meant the end of Chang Kuo-t'ao as an active member of the Party leadership. A short time later, on April 4, 1938, he left Yen-an, and while in Wuhan he went over to the Kuomintang on April 17. He was then formally stripped of his Party positions and of his Party membership.⁷⁰ One small consequence of Chang's trial deserves mention. In early April of 1937, about one hundred of Chang's officers who had been attending K'ang Ta (*K'ang-jih chün-cheng tahsüeh*—Anti-Japanese Military-Political College) in Yen-an, were said to be attempting a revolt. They were arrested but released soon after the war against Japan broke out.⁷¹ Although difficult to verify, the report rings true because it is similar to other, verifiable incidents that demonstrate that personal loyalty to one's commander is sometimes stronger than loyalty to more distant superiors. As re-

⁶⁶ Liu Po-ch'eng, "Huiku ch'ang-cheng" [Reminiscing about the Long March], *Hsing-huo liao-yüan*, III, 12.

⁶⁷ *Chungkuo kung-nung*, 466.

⁶⁸ Kuo, in *FCYP*, March 1968, 115, and *IS*, July 1968, 46.

⁶⁹ See Li T'ien-huan, "Tsou-ch'u Ch'ilien shan" [Marching out of the Ch'ilien mountains], *Hsing-huo liao-yüan*, III, 442.

⁷⁰ *Hsin-Hua Jihpao*, April 20, 1938; cited by Kuo, in *FCYP*, November 1968, 101, and *IS*, February 1969, 32.

⁷¹ Kuo, in *FCYP*, April 1968, 108, and *IS*, August 1968, 46-47.

cently as 1967, during the cultural revolution, this characteristic feature of a traditional society could still be observed.

RESPIRE IN NORTHERN SHENSI

Soon after Mao eliminated Chang Kuo-t'ao, another potential rival returned to China on a Soviet plane from Moscow. Ch'en Shao-yü, one of the Bolsheviks, had been in Moscow since the early thirties as the representative of the Chinese Communist Party and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.⁷² Given his high positions and his obviously close relations with leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, Ch'en might have been able to wrest supreme leadership of the Party in the Northern Shensi area from Mao. But he did not.

The Political Bureau held a conference on December 9 through 13, 1937, said to have been the largest since the Fifth Plenum in January of 1934, for the purpose of working out a strategy against the Japanese and of making preparations for the Seventh Party Congress.⁷³ The conference also elected a new leadership. Mao's growing influence was evident. As the position of general secretary was abolished, Chang Wen-t'ien was reduced to being one of nine members of the newly formed Central Secretariat. The other eight members were Chang Kuo-t'ao, Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'en Yün, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chu Te, K'ang Sheng, and Mao Tse-tung.

In July of 1938, the central government sponsored a People's Political Council in Hankow to which the Communists were invited to send delegates. Ch'en Shao-yü was one of the seven leaders who went to Hankow.⁷⁴ The other six leaders were Ch'in Pang-hsien, Tung Pi-wu, Chou En-lai, Lin Po-ch'ü, Teng Ying-ch'ao (Mrs. Chou En-lai), and Wu Yü-chang. The six were concurrently the leaders of the Party's newly-established Yangtze Bureau.⁷⁵ Ch'en later returned to Yen-an when Hankow was abandoned to the Japanese.

Thus, during several crucial months, Mao's attempt to enhance his own influence within the Party leadership was aided by the temporary absence of Ch'en Shao-yü, potentially his most dangerous rival, and

⁷² Kuo, in *FCYP*, August 1968, 86, and *IS*, November 1968, 35. Ch'en arrived in Yen-an during the last days of October, 1937.

⁷³ The congress would not be held until more than seven years later.

⁷⁴ *Who's Who*, 79.

⁷⁵ *The China Weekly Review*, Vol. 75 (July 16, 1938), 238. This source was brought to my attention by Donald Klein. See also *Who's Who*, 139, 553-54, 587, and 653. Unlike the other six delegates, Chou En-lai was already in Hankow as the CCP representative with the central government. Kuo appears to be in error when, in *FCYP*, September 1968, 119, and *IS*, December 1968, 40-41, he lists Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Ho K'o-ch'üan, Chou En-lai, Yeh Chien-ying, Teng Ying-ch'ao, and Li K'o-nung.

two others, Chou En-lai, and Ch'in Pang-hsien, from the Central Secretariat. Of the five remaining members, Chang Wen-t'ien had just been reduced in standing, and Chang Kuo-t'ao had been reprimanded.

The historical accident by which Mao was the first of the Long Marchers to reach the Northern Shensi base area and Chang Kuo-t'ao's armies were decimated also helped bolster his prestige in Northern Shensi. He also had now the advantage of having the largest number of troops under him. Perhaps of most help to Mao was the fairly peaceful and compact nature of the Northern Shensi base area. Shortly after the Sian Incident in December of 1936, the central government ended its harassment campaigns against the Communists, and one of the consequences of this shift in policy was the lessening in importance of military matters, and hence of military officers, and the corresponding importance of primarily political matters. Put differently, within the Communist movement, the Party and Party affairs once again were of primary importance. This allowed Mao to apply his very considerable powers of persuasion to other members of the Party leadership without having to defer to the wishes of military commanders. The compactness of the Northern Shensi base area provided for frequent face-to-face contacts among the leaders, an opportunity that had not existed since at least the days of Kiangsi.

The record shows that through astute personal diplomacy and an acute sense of the politically feasible, Mao managed to have his ideas translated into policy. The most crucial question for the Communists in this relatively peaceful period was their relationship with the Kuomintang. Even before the Sian Incident, which gave the Communists the much-sought-after national attention and apparently a promise from the kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek of cooperation against the Japanese, Mao Tse-tung began to counsel a second United Front with the Kuomintang. Considering the harrowing ordeal the Long March veterans had just gone through, it was remarkable that Mao was able to enlist the support of most Party leaders for his policy suggestion. Those who did not agree, principally Ch'en Shao-yü, argued that the "bloc-within" policy of the first United Front should be adopted, on the grounds that the Kuomintang was incomparably stronger than the Communists and that it should, therefore, be given supreme command over all forces fighting the Japanese. Mao's proposed policy of a "bloc without" prevailed, and the majority of Party leadership agreed with Mao that the Communists should retain sole control over their troops while cooperating with the Kuomintang in a loose alliance. Ch'en Shao-yü was

reprimanded and apparently lost whatever hopes he may have had of dislodging Mao from the supreme position within the Northern Shensi base area.

A final factor in Mao's rise that needs to be mentioned was his growing reputation as a writer of policy papers. In the same month in which the Sian Incident broke out, Mao wrote his "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," which was the first extensive program for resisting Japanese encroachments in Northern China. When full-fledged hostilities broke out in July of 1937, Mao redoubled his literary efforts. Safely ensconced in his cave apartment in Yen-an, Mao devoted much of his time during the eight years of war to writing. Much of his published work provided the Communists with a broad perspective in which their efforts were convincingly related to the total setting of the war against Japan. This major contribution to the war effort was undoubtedly appreciated by many Communists and helped raise Mao's influence within the party leadership.

It may well be argued, therefore, that Mao's influence, which, as we have seen, had risen appreciably during the interlude between the Long March and the war against Japan, continued to rise during the war to a degree comparable to that enjoyed by Stalin within the Soviet Communist Party. The available evidence does not support this assumption; on the contrary, it encourages an opposite thesis.

THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

The renewed entente with the central government and the war against Japan helped the Party to regain national prominence and may also have averted, as some Chinese specialists contend, the destruction of the Northern Shensi base area by government troops. But the war also imposed tremendous strains on Party unity and, more important for this study, molded relationships within the leadership that remained basically intact until the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the late sixties.

Both conditions were brought about by the Communist leadership's decision to send most of its troops behind Japanese lines to establish base areas, to engage the people in the war, and to conduct guerrilla operations. Toward the end of the war, there were fourteen major base areas besides the Northern Shensi base area where Mao Tse-tung and the Party Central remained throughout the war. They were Shansi-Chahar-Hopei, Shansi-Suiyüan, Shansi-Hopei-Honan-Shantung, Shantung, North Kiangsi, Central Kiangsu, South Kiangsu, North Huai,

South Huai, Central Anhui, East Chekiang, Hupei-Honan-Anhui, Tung Chiang (the East River in Kwangtung), and Ch'ung Yai (the mountainous area on Hainan Island).⁷⁶

The rapid proliferation of these base areas, each having its own government and mass organizations, demanded an equally rapid increase in the size of Party membership, which had become wholly insufficient for the task of supervising the Party's vastly expanded activities. This need as well as the strong demand for membership by people of all walks of life in these base areas resulted in the relaxation of standards of admission. With a nod to Marxist class analysis, the Party decreed that the probation period for workers and hired farm hands be completely eliminated, that for poor peasants and handicraftsmen it be one month, for revolutionary students, intellectuals, minor civil servants and white-collar workers, middle peasants, revolutionary soldiers three months, and for all others six months.⁷⁷ As a result, the Party grew from about 40,000 at the beginning of the war to several hundreds of thousands in the first few years of the forties and continued to climb to 1,200,000 at the end of the war. Lacking sufficient discipline, many of the new Party members engaged in activities that threatened to tear the Party apart. Liu Shao-ch'i, in his essay *Lun tang-nei toucheng* [*On the Intra-Party Struggle*] of 1941, complained that Party members tended "to engage in the intra-Party struggle unscrupulously or without observing organizational procedures, to befriend or attack comrades in an unprincipled way, provoking dissension, betraying or secretly scheming against comrades, or not speaking to a man's face, but speaking wildly behind his back, irresponsibly criticizing the Party, spreading unfounded opinions, circulating rumors, telling lies, and calumniating others."⁷⁸ The problem was compounded by the increasing isolation of base areas from one another. Although individuals could and did come and go from base areas, the Japanese blockades became increasingly effective.

The danger of ill-disciplined members' undermining Party cohesiveness was viewed with alarm by all members of the leadership. During the two-year *cheng-feng* campaign, formally started in February of 1942, intensive training was introduced in all base areas, and unsuitable members were dismissed. In the headquarters base area in Northern Shensi, Mao Tse-tung and the Party Central established several schools

⁷⁶ Jenmin ch'upanshe, *K'ang-Jih chancheng shihch'i chiehfang ch'ü kai'uang* [A Sketch of Liberated Areas During the War Against Japan] (Peking 1953), Map 1.

⁷⁷ Ch'en Yün, "How to be a good Communist Party member" (May 30, 1939), in Boyd Compton, *Mao's China: Party Reform Documents, 1942-44* (Seattle 1952), 96-97.

⁷⁸ Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank, 367.

designed to inculcate a common outlook and discipline among Party members and other cadres.⁷⁹

The *cheng-feng* campaign, as carried out by Mao Tse-tung himself in the Party's headquarters base area in Northern Shensi, had a second purpose. Mao wanted, in Stuart Schram's words, "to give to the ideological consciousness of party members a special and characteristic quality directly inspired by Mao Tse-tung himself."⁸⁰ One result was the beginning of veneration for Mao in the North Shensi base area. I do not think that personal vanity played a role in it, as some specialists believe, but even if it did, it probably was secondary to Mao's concern with the problem of decentralization of decision-making within the Party leadership.

As the various base areas became increasingly isolated from one another, much decision-making power had to be exercised by their politico-military leaders. Although radio contact and, to a much lesser extent, courier contact were maintained with the Party Central in Northern Shensi, these regional Party leaders had necessarily assumed wide powers of discretion. One consequence was the shifting of the initiative from Northern Shensi to the outer base areas. Forced by a harsh situation that did not allow leaders of these base areas to wait for detailed instructions from the Party Central, the regional leaders continually experimented with new institutions and functions of political and social control in the outer base areas. These new programs determined general policy directives from the Party Central rather than the other way around. Time and again, the leaders of the outer base areas took the initiative, and Mao Tse-tung and the Party Central had little choice but to sanction the *faits accomplis*. For example, as early as March of 1938, Liu Shao-ch'i reported the formation in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei base area of a coalition leadership committee composed of army commanders, local government officials, heads of mass organizations, officials of the Communist Party and of other political parties and groupings. He also reported that occupational "national salvation associations" for businessmen, workers, farmers, and students had been formed several months earlier.⁸¹ Afterward, Mao Tse-tung and the Party Central approved such unified leadership committees, as did Chiang Kai-shek's Military Affairs Committee.

In that same month, the Political Bureau held a three-day confer-

⁷⁹ These schools were the Central Party School, Yenan University, K'ang Ta, the Lu Hsün Academy, the Natural Science Academy, and the Central Research Institute.

⁸⁰ Schram, 220.

⁸¹ In my *Liu Shao-ch'i and "People's War"* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1970).

ence in Yen-an that dealt with the war situation and possible measures to improve the Communists' chances of engaging the people in the war against Japan. One of the measures the Political Bureau "suggested" was the creation of precisely such occupational federations.⁸² The Kuomintang's "Program for the War of Resistance and National Development," adopted at its extraordinary national congress at Wuch'ang on March 29 through April 1, 1938, made virtually identical "suggestions."⁸³

The considerable degree of autonomous decision-making power of Party leaders in the outer base areas was, on the whole, strengthened by the rapid increase in Party membership. The rowdy and undisciplined nature of many novices, mentioned by Liu Shao-ch'i, was a threat to the interests of all leaders, whether in Yen-an or in the outer base areas. Thus, as we have seen, all leaders sought to instill discipline by means of the *cheng-feng* campaign. But the very process of *cheng-feng* had also the inevitable consequence of strengthening the authority of Party leaders in the outer base areas, much as it strengthened Mao's authority in the Northern Shensi base area. The rapid expansion and turnover during the war resulted in the Party's being composed mainly of new members. Most of them did not join until after the outbreak of the war. Thus their personal commitments of loyalty, friendship, and trust to other Party members, and, most important, to the Party leaders, were shaped entirely by their experiences in the outer base areas.

The predominant character of life in the outer base areas was military, and it was the principal shaper not only of the relations of Party members to their leaders, but also of the nature of leadership itself. Because most of the outer base areas were less secure than the Party's headquarters base area in Northern Shensi, and because they were constantly obliged to ward off the encircling Japanese and puppet troops, their leaders were preoccupied with military affairs. If this preoccupation could be interpreted as a danger to Party unity, such danger surely did not stem from any potential challenge to Party supremacy within the Communist movement by a united military command nor from a Communist version of warlordism. Throughout the war, the Communist forces were widely dispersed. In Eastern China, the New Fourth Army was led by Yeh T'ing and, after the

⁸² Ch'en Shao-yü, "San-yüeh chengchih chü huiyi ti tsungchieh" [Summary of the Political Bureau conference in March], cited by Kuo in *FCYP*, October 1968, 97, and *IS*, January 1969, 41.

⁸³ Kuo, in *FCYP*, October 1968, 100, and *IS*, January 1969, 45.

Southern Anhui Incident of January of 1941, by Ch'en I, who had been left behind in 1934 when the First Front Army evacuated the Central Soviet Area in Kiangsi. In Northern China, the Eighth Route Army was divided into three divisions, each having its separate theater of operations: the 115th under Lin Piao, the 120th under Ho Lung, and the 129th under Liu Po-ch'eng and Hsü Hsiang-ch'ien.⁸⁴

More important, as long-time Party members, the politico-military leaders of outer base areas were too firmly committed to the idea of Party supremacy. They also were not, with a few minor exceptions, the products of military academies and hence were not imbued with the *esprit de corps* characteristic of professional military officers. They were realistic enough to know that even if they had planned to carve out their personal warlord preserves after the war (a highly improbable contingency, in my opinion), their ultimate enemy, the central government, would have had little difficulty in defeating them one by one.

The potential obstacle in the path toward complete unity of the Party's leadership under Mao's unchallengeable control after the war was less dramatic and less tangible. During the war against Japan, the leaders of each base area formed small cohesive groups that changed little in membership during a long period (eight years) and shared extraordinary hardships. The cohesiveness and the length of time, if not the degree of hardship, were unprecedented in the history of Chinese Communism. They were the ingredients of clusters of friendship, trust, and loyalty that were to persist long after the war.

The effects of the war could be seen not only in the nature but also in the composition of the leadership. The Political Bureau had probably consisted of thirteen men in 1937. They were Chang Kuo-t'ao, Chang Wen-t'ien, Ch'en Shao-yü, Ch'en Yün, Ch'in Pang-hsien, Chou En-lai, Hsiang Ying, Jen Pi-shih, Li Fu-ch'un, Li Wei-han, Liu Shao-ch'i, Mao Tse-tung, and Wang Chia-hsiang. All but Hsiang Ying were assembled in the Northern Shensi base area at the end of 1937.⁸⁵ When the Communists convened their Seventh Party Congress in Yen'an between April 23 and June 11, 1945, and elected thirteen members to a new Political Bureau, eight of its former thirteen members failed to be reelected. Hsiang Ying had been killed in the South Anhui

⁸⁴ Lin Piao was not in actual command of the 115th Division during most of the war. Because he had been wounded early in the war, he spent some time in the Soviet Union for treatment and appeared to have resided with Mao in Yen'an until the end of the war.

⁸⁵ Hsiang Ying had been left behind in the former Central Soviet Area in Kiangsi (see above).

Incident in January of 1941 and Chang Kuo-t'ao was ousted from the Party in 1938. But six other members of the Political Bureau who were alive and Party members in good standing also failed to be included in the new Political Bureau, for one reason or another. Ch'en Shao-yü and Ch'in Pang-hsien had been Bolsheviks and general secretaries of the Party. As such, they had been Mao's rivals and, at times, opponents, as shown earlier in this study. They spent most of the war under Mao's domination in the North Shensi base area. At election time during the Seventh Party Congress, they not only failed to remain in the Political Bureau, they just barely managed to get into the Central Committee. They ranked forty-third and forty-fourth out of forty-four members. Another Bolshevik, Wang Chia-hsiang, fared even worse; he was elected merely as an alternate member of the Central Committee.⁸⁶ Jen Pi-shih and Li Fu-ch'un were elected as fifth and fourteenth members of the Central Committee. The last man in this group, Li Wei-han, failed to be elected as member or alternate member of the Central Committee.⁸⁷

The eight men who were added to the Political Bureau at the Seventh Party Congress were Chu Te, K'ang Sheng, Lin Po-ch'ü, Lin Piao, P'eng Chen, P'eng Te-huai, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, and Tung Pi-wu. If we look at their whereabouts during the war, we discover that the first four spent most of their time with Mao in the North Shensi base area, and the last four elsewhere. Almost all of them travelled for short periods away from their places of assignment, but this does not seriously detract from a remarkable balance between, as it were, Yen-an and non-Yen-an leaders. This balance cannot easily be dismissed as accidental, because the entire new Political Bureau was likewise evenly divided into Yen-an and non-Yen-an leaders as follows (numbers denote rankings):⁸⁸

<i>Yen-an</i>	<i>Non-Yen-an</i>
1. Mao Tse-tung	2. Liu Shao-ch'i
4. Chu Te	3. Chou En-lai
5. Ch'en Yün	9. Tung Pi-wu
6. Chang Wen-t'ien	11. P'eng Te-huai
7. K'ang Sheng	12. P'eng Chen
8. Lin Po-ch'ü	13. Teng Hsiao-p'ing
10. Lin Piao	

⁸⁶ He became a full member in March of 1949.

⁸⁷ I have no adequate explanation for Li's sensationally precipitous decline in ranking.

⁸⁸ *Who's Who*, 705. The inclusion of Lin Piao and Teng Hsiao-p'ing may be erroneous because it is generally believed that they were elected to the Political Bureau not until the Fifth Plenum in April of 1955. However, this possible error does not alter the balance between "Yen-an" and "non-Yen-an" leaders.

Moreover, a similar balance resulted in the five-man Central Secretariat, which was composed of the leaders with the top five rankings in the Political Bureau.

Liu's rise to his high ranking was exceptionally rapid and particularly significant. As we have seen, he had been a member of the Political Bureau since before the Long March, but his influence within the Party leadership on the eve of the war against Japan was undoubtedly less than that of Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, or even Chu Te. Liu had spent most of the war behind enemy lines in his capacity as leader of all Communists in "White" areas. He may, therefore, be looked upon as Mao's counterpart, with Mao in charge of the Party Central and Liu in charge of the Japanese-held areas. Inasmuch as most outer base areas were surrounded by the Japanese-held areas, they had close contact with Communist underground organizations there. It was Liu Shao-ch'i who supervised hundreds of such organizations and who appointed their leaders, many of whom would later rise to high positions in the Party. Because of the relations between outer base areas and Japanese-held areas and of Liu's work, he probably also had considerable influence in the outer base areas. Thus, by the time of the Seventh Party Congress, Liu had become the top spokesman for the outer base areas as well as for the Communist underground organizations in Japanese-held areas.

The composition of the new leadership, as expressed in the balance in the Political Bureau and the Central Secretariat, pointed to the paramount tasks of the Party in the postwar period, as these tasks were perceived by the leadership itself. The Party Constitution, adopted at the Seventh Party Congress, announced the beginning of an "anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, new-democratic revolution of the masses under the leadership of the proletariat" in which the Party's most urgent task was to "organize and unify the Chinese workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, and all anti-imperialist and anti-feudal elements and national minorities on its side." This was a tall order. Although the Party had grown strong during the War and had an estimated ninety million people under control in its many base areas, the ultimate enemy—the central government—seemed to be incomparably stronger. The Party Constitution warned that there was little hope of getting back to the cities soon and that "it will be preeminently important to consolidate the villages as revolutionary bases and it will also be necessary for the Party to undergo a long period of patient work among the popular masses."⁸⁹ In other words, the preparations for the ultimate

⁸⁹ Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank, 422-23.

struggle with the central government had to be made precisely in those areas and in those techniques of which the leaders of the outer base areas, and preeminently Liu Shao-ch'i, had accumulated an intimate knowledge. Liu Shao-ch'i and the other "non-Yenan" leaders also had the loyalty of thousands of Communist underground cadres in those areas. The Party needed these assets badly if it were to win out over the central government.

On the other hand, Mao Tse-tung possessed neither the knowledge of conditions in Northern and Eastern China nor the personal ties with the Communist cadres there. But he supplied another most important ingredient for victory, namely, himself as the symbol of a purposeful, united, and invincible party. By calling him a symbol, I do not wish to imply that Mao had no influence. He did not have his own military units, as the leaders of outer base areas had, but he did enjoy unrivaled prestige in the headquarters area of Northern Shensi. His contribution as symbol lay in the fact that in the relative tranquility of his cave apartment in Yenan, Mao had written several major essays, such as *Maotun lun* [*On Contradiction*] in 1937, *Chung-kuo koming ho Chungkuo kungch'antang* [*The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*] in 1939, and *Hsin minchu-chuyi lun* [*On The New Democracy*] in 1940.⁹⁰

These writings helped to support the claim made by the Party Constitution adopted by the Seventh Party Congress that "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."⁹¹ This bold statement putting Mao on a par with Marx and Lenin grew not from the leaders' acknowledgment of Mao as a great theoretician or as the unchallengeable leader of the Party, but from their belief that such elevation of Mao would help the Communist cause in the impending struggle with the central government. The primary purpose of exalting Mao at this critical juncture in the history of Chinese Communism was to convince the Chinese people that in the contest between the Communists and the nationalists, Mao was a more deserving leader than was Chiang Kai-shek. To the small but politically highly important urban intellectual, political, and commercial elites, Mao was presented as the shaper of a by now thoroughly Chinese ideology that promised

⁹⁰ Mao was a most prolific writer during the war. Two entire volumes of the four-volume *Mao Tse-tung hsüanchi* [Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung] (Peking 1964) contain sixty-six selections said to have been written between July of 1937 and the Seventh Party Congress in April of 1945.

⁹¹ Brandt, Schwartz, and Fairbank, 422.

both the comfort of a well-ordered society and the hope of a dynamic future. To the common people, especially to the more tradition-bound older people, Mao was presented as a man worthy of becoming the new "king" who had the ability to create harmony between heaven and earth.

In sum, the chief significance of the Seventh Party Congress was the coalition nature of the Party leadership. It was an alliance between Mao, the symbol of the "wave of the future," and the leaders of the outer base areas, and especially Liu Shao-ch'i, who with their military forces and their political and organizational know-how were to make this "wave" a reality.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to show that the principal characteristic of the Chinese Communist movement between 1930 and 1945 was the lack of centralized control in the Party and the military. Only from the end of 1936 to about September of 1937 was there indisputably unified control over these two organizations. Before 1936, Party leaders were commanding their own troops and their own base areas. The troops were subsumed under the so-called Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, and the base areas were theoretically commanded by the Central Bureau for the Soviet Areas. Both organizations, however, were largely illusory in the sense that they had no actual control over all troops and all base areas. As we have seen, the Central Bureau for the Soviet Areas had sufficient control over the Central Soviet Area in Southern Kiangsi to expel from the Party the leaders of the Fut'ien rebellion. There is no evidence, however, that this bureau influenced other base areas beyond the point the leaders of those base areas deemed appropriate. Likewise, the headquarters of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army had actual command over the First Front Army so long as it was attached to that army. This command derived wholly from the fact that the army's commander and political commissar were concurrently holding the same posts in the First Front Army. The sphere of the headquarters' actual authority did not extend to the two other front armies nor perhaps even to the smaller military units scattered throughout Southern China. When after the Maoerhkai Conference the headquarters was transferred to the Fourth Front Army, its influence probably ceased altogether, because Chang Kuo-t'ao, as the leader of the largest military unit, was unlikely to accept orders from anyone.

Two major immediate factors probably accounted for the lack of

centralized control in both the Party and the military. One was the geographical dispersal of leaders and the other was the lack of consensus among them on several political and military issues. A more fundamental factor strengthening the effects of geographical dispersal and sharpening the divisions of opinion was what I call the traditionalistic syndrome.

Its main components were a particularistic world-view, personalized organizational transactions, and ascriptive personnel criteria. As in many other traditional societies, in rural China of the thirties and forties a man's world-view was restricted to a fairly small geographical sphere where he came into frequent face-to-face contacts with those to whom he was bound by friendship, loyalty, responsibility, obligation, love, or some other relation. These relations were typically focused on organizations like the village, the local district, the family (conjugal and extended), the school, or some local peasant or handicraft association.

This particularistic world-view had been very much weakened in the cities but even there it always remained strong enough to influence organizational transactions. The more personalized an organization was, the more efficient its transactions were. To put it concretely, in national organizations such as the central government, political parties, trade unions, and the like, it was particularistic relations more than the impersonal codes of bureaucratic hierarchy or a common allegiance to some abstract principles that determined the degree of cohesion of these organizations.

The Kuomintang, its government, and its armed forces, like other national organizations, exemplified this phenomenon. Throughout the period under consideration, factions that were determined by particularistic factors operated within the larger, impersonal national organizations. The so-called C. C. clique, the Kwangsi generals, and the Whampoa graduates are three out of innumerable examples. Likewise, people were hired, fired, promoted, and demoted not so much according to the formal criteria of merit but on the basis of membership in one or several particularistic groups. The presence and influence of the traditionalistic syndrome in the thirties and forties are too well known to be seriously called into question.

The crucial question is whether the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, born, raised, and operating in this society, could have entirely escaped from the influences of the traditionalistic syndrome. The answer must be, I think, an emphatic no. The Chinese Communists could not have willed a total divorce from the societal influences that

had been continuously shaping their thoughts and actions. They also could not have wished to cut themselves off from these influences because the chances for their success and ultimate victory intimately depended on an almost symbiotic relation with the society at large. In other words, the "fish-in-water" guerrilla principle was not merely a military tactic but a sociopolitical stratagem.

Yet the image of a quasi-collective leadership, as espoused by many China specialists, in effect denies such a natural and necessary relation. It posits that while the traditionalistic syndrome continued to influence all other political organizations in the country, it played no significant part in the nature of the Party's leadership. On the contrary, the image portrays a leadership remarkably similar to those of highly bureaucratized countries. Here is the perfectly pyramidal hierarchy, so familiar to us in North America, Japan, and Europe, and the delight of every student of public administration, governing a party fighting for survival in the backwoods of China. We are told, without any hard evidence, that some time between 1930 and 1945, one man, Mao Tse-tung, was actually the sole and unchallengeable leader of the entire Communist Party. The word of this leader of the Party since Tsunyi allegedly was accepted by everyone. Hard evidence and possibly correct suggestions to the contrary have not altered this image. To cite only two examples, Mao's inability at Maoerhkai to prevail over Chang Kuo-t'ao and his ratifying rather than initiating of major policies during the war have had no remedial effect on the idea that Mao has been the leader since Tsunyi.

I hope that this brief study has demonstrated that the image of a quasi-collective leadership is seriously flawed. First, it rests heavily on an interpretation of the Tsunyi Conference that is not backed up by evidence. As I have shown, an examination of the sources used by Jerome Ch'en, the only person who has sought to support his interpretation of that conference, reveals nothing of substance. Second, it appears to be influenced by our knowledge of the nature of leaderships in societal contexts sharply different from those surrounding the Chinese Communists between 1930 and 1945. Third, it ignores the strong probability that the leaders were significantly influenced by the traditionalistic syndrome of the society in which they operated.

Of course, no one is apt to argue seriously that the Party's leaders were as strongly influenced by this syndrome as were the rustic denizens of Southern Kiangsi or Northern Shensi. The leaders professed hostility to tradition and saw themselves as the most modernized political elite in China. They may have been right, but this is not the same as say-

ing that they had in fact escaped completely from their traditional background and environment.

This study has viewed the Party leadership as genuinely collective in the sense that several of its members had roughly equal influence in the entire Party. This view of a collective leadership is based on the conviction that the traditionalistic syndrome had been an important determinant of the nature of the Party leadership between 1930 and 1945. I believe that a brief recapitulation of the material presented in this study will confirm this interpretation.

The Bolsheviks had formed close ties as schoolmates in Moscow. This particularistic bond was reinforced by their personal ties to Pavel Mif, their mentor in Moscow and guardian on their return trip to China, and sustained by the mandate placed upon them by the Comintern to seize control of the party. This exceedingly difficult task had to be undertaken in a piecemeal manner because the Party was geographically dispersed. The Bolsheviks, therefore, first concentrated on taking over the central organizations such as the Central Committee, the Political Bureau, and the Secretariat, all of which were located in Shanghai at the time. Essentially, they accomplished this task by 1931. The Bolsheviks could have captured the *de facto* control of the entire Party at the same time *if* the Party had been a modern organization, since leadership of a modern organization can generally expect to have its policies and orders accepted and carried out in a routine fashion by all members regardless of geographical dispersal. Because the Chinese Communist Party was not a modern organization, geographical dispersal did prevent the Bolsheviks from automatically extending their authority from the Party Central to the various base areas.

A second obstacle was the growth of particularistic relationships in the base area themselves. The leaders of the Central Soviet Area and of the Western Hunan-Hupei and Hupei-Honan-Anhui base areas had formed their own groups all of whom, Bolsheviks and base area leaders, shared an ideology and a commitment to their revolution. In other words, their world-view contained a commitment to abstractions that bridged geographical distances. But all of them were, to various degrees, still products of a traditional society. Their particularistic bonds of loyalty, trust, and friendship, forged under conditions of extreme danger and hardships in close groups of leaders in each base area, proved too strong to allow a common commitment to extend from abstractions to centralized control. As we have seen, the sphere of actual control of smaller organizations, such as the headquarters of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the Central Bureau

for the Soviet Areas, likewise did not extend beyond the groups to which they were attached.

If the traditionalistic syndrome was responsible, as I think it was, for the lack of centralized control during the Kiangsi period, it was even more so during the Long Marches because more than ever the several Communist groups were isolated from one another and each was facing on its own grave dangers and hardships. As the agenda of the Tsunyi Conference shows, the leaders of the First Front Army did not discuss abstract ideals nor Party-wide problems but only concrete political and military problems facing them alone.

The clearest manifestation of the power of the traditionalistic syndrome occurred at the Lianghok'ou and Maoerhkai Conferences. Had the Party been a modern organization in which, *inter alia*, one man had, by virtue of his formal rank, undisputed and unchallengeable control, the two front armies would have marched under Mao towards Northern Shensi. They did not because two groups faced each other whose particularistic bonds within each group proved stronger than the common commitment to abstract ideals.

The brief respite between the Long Marches and the war against Japan was the only time between 1930 and 1945 when most Party leaders were assembled in one place under relatively peaceful conditions. It was during this time that we can for the first time speak confidently of Mao's pre-eminence in the base area in Northern Shensi. Various contemporaneous journalistic accounts, of which Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* has been by far the most influential, projected an image of a quasi-collective leadership. I think that, on the whole, such a term is an accurate description of the leadership in 1936 and 1937.

With the onset of the war, however, the leadership became collective once again. As this study has shown, within the widely dispersed collective leadership, a rough division of labor slowly emerged. As the war wore on, this division of labor was more and more directed toward the postwar period and the ultimate struggle against the central government. In the Party's headquarters in Northern Shensi, Mao Tse-tung formulated a series of policy papers and theoretical essays that formed the basis for the statement, made by the entire Party leadership at the Seventh Party Congress in 1945, that the Communists were better qualified than the Nationalists to lead China toward internal unity and external sovereignty. This does not mean, however, that Mao had in fact become the single unchallengeable leader of the Party. The leaders of the outer base areas and Liu Shao-ch'i, who had been in charge of creating an underground Party infrastructure in

the "White" areas, had both the military power and the politico-organizational skill in Northern and Eastern China without which the Party could not hope to replace the central government as supreme ruler of China. It is unlikely that Mao had actually ascended to a pre-eminent position of influence in the Party during the war because of the essential interdependence of Mao, Liu, and the leaders of the outer bases. It is also unlikely because, as this study has suggested, Liu and the outer-base leaders had become the nuclei of strong particularistic bonds. The result was a fine balance, firmly grounded in a common ideology and directed against a common enemy, between Mao Tse-tung and his group in Yen-an, on one hand, and Liu Shao-ch'i and the leaders in outer base areas and elsewhere, on the other hand.

Some Western scholars, accustomed to dealing with perfectly pyramidal hierarchies, may find the indeterminate nature of a truly collective leadership unnatural or uncomfortable. But if this study has achieved its purpose, it has demonstrated that during the formative period from 1930 to 1945, the Party's leadership was in fact collective.