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"THOUGHT REFORM" IN CHINA: POLITICAL EDUCATION  
FOR POLITICAL CHANGE

By

Mary Herak

B.A. University of Montana, 1972


Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1979

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

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Szu-hsiang kai-tsao--"thought reform"--refers to the official Chinese Communist program of political education. It was an integral part of the overall attempt to transform China from a war-torn, poverty-stricken country incapable of coping with Western intervention to a politically aware, technologically modernized, self-sufficient nation. The goal of thought reform proponents, in particular Mao Tse-tung, was to develop a political consciousness in the Chinese people through non-hierarchical, humanistic education methods.

The purposes of this thesis are, first, to indicate to what extent the intent of the Chinese Communists corresponded to the actual practice of thought reform, that is, to what extent thought reform was a process of education rather than indoctrination and manipulation; and second, to indicate to what extent it achieved the desired class awareness and political consciousness. The procedure is to examine the historical context, the origins and development, and the methods of thought reform through 1959.

The conclusion of this study is that thought reform was a complex mixture of education and indoctrination processes. Insofar as thought reform corresponded to the ideals of education, as it frequently did among the peasants, it achieved the inner changes sought by its proponents. Insofar as thought reform became a tool of indoctrination and manipulation, as it frequently did among the intellectuals, it did not achieve the inner changes desired by its proponents.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Szu-hsiang kai-tso<sup>1</sup>--"thought reform"--refers to the official Chinese Communist program of political education. It was an integral part of the overall attempt to transform China from a war-torn, poverty-stricken country incapable of coping with Western intervention, to a politically aware, technologically modernized, self-sufficient nation. A blend of political instruction and psychological techniques, thought reform was aimed at a gradual and total transformation of the values, attitudes and actions of all of the Chinese people. The intent of thought reform was to develop a political consciousness in the Chinese people through non-hierarchical education processes. This commitment to education derived from the traditional Confucian views of human nature as basically good, of human beings as basically educable.<sup>2</sup>

To Westerners, the phrase "thought reform" evokes images of "brainwashing" and "mind control." One reason for this is that Western definitions of "political" have seldom involved psychological concerns. Whether they have to do with Easton's "authoritative allocation of values,"<sup>3</sup> Lasswell's "Who gets what, when, how?"<sup>4</sup> or Deutsch's "the making of decisions by public means,"<sup>5</sup> none approach the all-encompassing Chinese sense of the political. In China, the phrase for "political" is pronounced zheng zhi. Zheng means "to straighten or correct." Zhi means "to heal or cure."<sup>6</sup> Zheng zhi seems to relate not only to the usual governmental processes and institutions, but also to an

assumption of responsibility for the behavior and growth of individuals. It combines Western notions of politics, ethics, education, and self-transformation.

This broad perception of the political was not new to Mao Tse-tung nor to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It had been part of Chinese tradition for two thousand years prior to the Chinese Communist revolution of 1949. In Confucian tradition virtue was regarded as the foundation of political legitimacy. Moral behavior on the part of the ruler, it was believed, would elicit moral behavior on the part of those ruled:

The ancients [i.e., the ancient kings] who wished to cause their virtue to shine forth first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, their knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

--from The Great Learning<sup>7</sup>

In practice, this stress on the interconnectedness of personal change, virtue, education, and politics meant that only the wealthy classes could become involved in political processes, for only they had the leisure to pursue self-transformation through education. The great majority of the people, who were peasants, were considered capable of only narrow, selfish interests, and they were expected to "know their place" in the social hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> Filial piety--complete devotion to

parents--was for twenty centuries the central personal and social expectation for everyone. There were five important relationships in each person's life: sovereign-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend.<sup>9</sup> Confucius believed that if all people observed proper conduct on all of these levels, a harmonious social order would result.<sup>10</sup> Persons who rebelled against the rigid role expectations of Confucian culture met with severe suppression. Robert J. Lifton, a psychiatrist, believes that this suppression contributed to personal feelings of passivity and powerlessness and to political conservatism.<sup>11</sup> The depth of the hold of filial piety on the Chinese psyche was a constant source of frustration for reformers in China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lifton believes that part of the success of the Chinese Communists was that they were able to get people to transfer their deep filial feelings to the Communist Party.<sup>12</sup>

Victor Li, a professor of international law at Stanford University, suggests that a better term for what the Chinese called "thought reform" would be "socialization," for the processes involved deal with the formation and change of basic outlooks.

Stripped of emotionalism and of Cold War and other ideological rhetoric, the fundamental question is: what must be done to get people to act in a particular manner--that is, to have people avoid certain "undesirable" actions and undertake certain other "desirable" ones? Implicit in this question is a series of others. In what manner and on what bases are norms of behavior determined for a society or group? How are these norms communicated to the public? What means are used to get a group and its members to adhere to the norms? What happens when a person fails to adhere? And finally, what are the human and material costs in carrying out this course of action?<sup>13</sup>

Such questions are central to the area of political socialization, which I shall refer to as political education. Both terms refer to what Dawson,

Prewitt, and Dawson define as "the processes through which an individual acquires his particular political orientations--his knowledge, feelings, and evaluations regarding his political world." They stress the use of the word "acquire" in this definition, because it implies an interaction between the person being socialized and the agents of socialization.<sup>14</sup>

I could also use the term "political indoctrination" to describe thought reform processes. I do believe there is a difference between education and indoctrination, and it is clear that both processes occurred in China, as in the United States. Education implies a "drawing out," as the roots of the word suggest, a "development of latent faculties"<sup>15</sup> through the interaction between teacher and learner. Indoctrination implies a "putting in," a more one-sided approach to learning. Specifically political indoctrination is described by Dawson, Prewitt, and Dawson as "the learning of a specific political ideology intended to rationalize and justify a particular regime."<sup>16</sup> They note that too often what we call "political education" in the United States is what we call "political indoctrination" in other countries. In the interests of cross-cultural openness, I will use the term "political education" to describe thought reform in the body of this paper, leaving an assessment of its content and effect until the conclusion.

In writing this paper I have used the traditional approaches of historical narrative and description. To understand how thought reform evolved in China, it is necessary to know how the Communist Party evolved; to know how the Communist Party evolved, it is necessary to understand certain aspects of Chinese history. Chapter II is an overview of Chinese history between 1840 and 1927, the chaotic period which

gave rise to the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party. Chapters III through V are a history and description of thought reform processes from their tentative beginnings in the 1920's to their full formulation in the 1950's. In Chapter VI I have discussed some positive and negative reactions to thought reform and have attempted to assess whether or not thought reform processes did broaden the political consciousness of the Chinese people in the ways hoped for by the Chinese Communists, in particular Mao Tse-tung.

Researching information about thought reform in China has been an exciting project. Few people describing events in China are able to stay emotionally uninvolved. While such descriptions are never boring, they do make it difficult to know what to believe. I have tried as much as possible, given my own hopes and fears, to sift what facts were available from the hopes and fears of the writers.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert Jay Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (Norton Library ed.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 392-93.

<sup>3</sup>David Easton, The Political System (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 129.

<sup>4</sup>Harold Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How? (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1958).

<sup>5</sup>Karl W. Deutsch, Politics and Government (2d ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century (1st Modern Reader Paperback; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>John B. Noss, Man's Religions (3rd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 386-87.

<sup>8</sup>Boggs and Boggs, Revolution and Evolution, pp. 60-61.

<sup>9</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 361-62.

<sup>10</sup>Noss, Man's Religions, p. 380.

<sup>11</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 366.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 377-87.

<sup>13</sup>Victor Li, Introduction to Prisoners of Liberation, by Allyn Rickett and Adele Rickett (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1973), p. vii.

<sup>14</sup>Richard E. Dawson, Kenneth Prewitt, and Karen S. Dawson, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 33.

<sup>15</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary, College ed. (1960), s.v. "teach."

<sup>16</sup>Dawson, Prewitt, and Dawson, Political Socialization, p. 141.

## CHAPTER II

### TRANSITIONAL CHAOS AND THE CHINESE RESPONSE--1840-1927

The chaotic period between 1840 and 1949 is generally regarded as a transition period, signifying the end of a traditional Confucian culture and the beginnings of a modern nation-state. Proponents of three competing ideologies--nationalism, Western liberalism, and Communism--tried to establish order and unity in China during that period. This chapter will describe the character of the social and political chaos of the transition period and its effect on the Chinese people through 1927. At that time the Chinese Communist Party and its program of thought reform began to emerge as powerful forces for change in China.

#### Background

For several centuries prior to the nineteenth century, conditions in China had gradually changed in ways that contributed to large population growth. Introduction of hardier crops had enabled the Chinese to produce more crops in a greater variety of soils, which had contributed to a gradually improved standard of living for the Chinese people. In addition to this and other agricultural improvements,<sup>1</sup> the Ch'ing dynasty, established in 1644,<sup>2</sup> was able to achieve a century of peace within China. The population is believed to have quadrupled between 1750 and 1850, from one hundred million to four hundred million. With that growth, the agricultural developments began to prove inadequate to the population. One reason for this was a lagging technology. Confucian tradition had

promoted such a distance between intellectuals and peasants that no in-between class of technicians had evolved that might have developed technology useful to agricultural development. Confucian tradition also ruled that upon the death of a father, land was to be divided equally among all of his sons. Farms thus became smaller and less productive with each generation. China had no substantial urban industry to which surplus rural laborers might have been rechanneled, and growing rural unrest resulted. Officials throughout China found it safer to stand by and hope for change than to actively promote reforms. To act would have meant to risk failure, and by Confucian standards failure was sure proof of loss of political legitimacy, of "the Mandate of Heaven." This absence of active leadership led to bureaucratic corruption, which inevitably meant excessive taxation of the peasants.<sup>3</sup>

Corruption and often cruelty on the part of officials, landlords, and merchants; difficulties connected with increasing population and decreasing food supplies; and natural disasters such as floods, famine, and disease--all contributed to widespread banditry and rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

### Nineteen Century Rebellion

Corruption and rebellion against corruption were not new to nineteenth century China, of course. Secret societies had frequently developed around religious movements throughout Chinese history, and often these had become underground rebel organizations in opposition to bureaucratic corruption. Many of these continued to be active in the last half of the nineteenth century. A few led major rebellions.<sup>5</sup>

The Taiping Rebellion was the largest and bloodiest of the nineteenth century rebellions. Begun by a Chinese Christian visionary who



had organized a group called the "God Worshippers" Society, the group attracted the support of enormous numbers and varieties of people. The founder proposed a new dynasty, called the T'ai-p'ing, or "Great Peace," to replace the corrupt Ch'ing dynasty. Between 1850 and 1864 the Taiping forces took control of almost half of China. They won support by carrying their own food and supplies and by treating the peasants with respect wherever they went. They banned gambling, drugs, witchcraft, and prostitution, ended the footbinding of women, and encouraged women to fight and take leadership positions. They proposed a system of land reform but were unable to retain power long enough to put it into effect. The rebellion was crushed in 1864. It was estimated that twenty million lives were lost during the Taiping era. The Taiping Rebellion is of special interest because many of the reforms begun or attempted by its leadership were eventually put into effect even more successfully by the Chinese Communists.

A major reason for the Taiping defeat was Western intervention in support of the Ch'ing government. This was significant because it was the first break with neutrality by the English and the French, and even more so because it was the first time in history that the Chinese government had admitted the superiority of foreign powers.<sup>6</sup>

#### Western Intervention After 1840

Modern China's difficulties with the West had begun in 1840-1842, when Britain defeated China in the Opium War.<sup>7</sup> That war had resulted when a Chinese official had tried to prevent British attempts to take opium into major coastal cities.<sup>8</sup> The British had used a type of boat, armed with swivel cannons, previously unknown to the Chinese. Many

Chinese recognized at the time that they were dealing with a more powerful military technology. No official move was made to learn that technology until twenty years later, however, largely because of the widespread traditional attitudes of disdain for non-Chinese ideas.<sup>9</sup>

Defeat by the British cost the Chinese the city of Hong Kong, plus an agreement to open several port cities to British trade and residence. This marked the beginning of the unequal treaty system between China and various Western powers,<sup>10</sup> and the beginning of a drive to open China to direct Western intervention. Western ideas, institutions, and methods of industrialization gradually entered China, mainly in the coastal areas.<sup>11</sup> This served to add to the resentment felt by many of the Chinese people toward the West, especially in the court of the Ch'ing ruler, the dowager empress.<sup>12</sup>

Not a lot of attention was given to stopping the Western intrusion during the next fifty years, because the dynasty was absorbed with other internal and external problems. To crush two major rebellions the central government had encouraged the provincial leaders to form regional armies. This was done, but it had served to further weaken the central government, because the provincial leaders had continued to build up private armies from the huge numbers of unemployed.<sup>13</sup> Japan added to the central government's problems when it wrested control of Korea from China in 1894.<sup>14</sup> This defeat was used by Germany, France, Britain, and Russia as an opportunity to divide China into "spheres of influence." While theoretically leaving China independent of foreign control, it established de facto control by these countries over the political and economic decisions within their respective areas.<sup>15</sup>

In 1898, when the Ch'ing regime seemed to be losing all legitimacy, reform attempts were made by the new emperor, nephew of the empress.<sup>16</sup> Although the moderate reforms proposed still allowed the sovereign nearly unlimited powers, it was seen as a threat by the empress and other conservative officials.<sup>17</sup> Though supposedly in retirement, the empress still controlled the military. She had most of the reformers executed, and her nephew and the rest fled to Japan.<sup>18</sup>

What has come to be known in the West as the Boxer Rebellion<sup>19</sup> was the last attempt at political change in nineteenth century China. It was supported by the empress and the imperial court and was directed against Westerners in China. Its suppression by the Western powers resulted in the humiliating Boxer Protocol of 1901, which included payment of a huge indemnity and the granting of special privileges to eleven foreign nations. For political reasons, the foreign powers supported the empress as a figurehead ruler until her death in 1908.<sup>20</sup>

### The 1911 Revolution

The Ch'ing dynasty was finally overthrown in 1911 by a revolutionary movement led by a Chinese intellectual of peasant, Christian background, Dr. Sun Yat-sen.<sup>21</sup> Sun had organized anti-Ch'ing forces beginning in 1894. Considered an outlaw by the regime, much of his revolutionary activity had been done in disguise with the help of secret societies. He had personally organized the "Revive China" Society, which had grown rapidly, and he had been able to make allies of many officers of the imperial army. In 1905 he issued the Three Principles of the People--"Nationalism, Democracy, and People's Livelihood." He united his secret society with others, named the new organization the

"Together Sworn" Society, and called for land reform and for the establishment of a republic of China.<sup>22</sup>

While Sun organized, other movements for change were also having impact. One of these was led by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, one of the intellectuals who had escaped to Japan with the young emperor. He had continued his activism and published the New Citizen, a journal that called for liberal reforms. He asserted that the Confucian tradition of filial piety should be reinterpreted in light of historical changes, and that the state should replace the emperor as the object of filial devotion. He called for a benevolent monarchy that would introduce widespread education, a Western-style legal system, and provincial and national assemblies supportive of local self-government. He formed a political party in Yokohama that supported gradual change through reform.<sup>23</sup>

The empress did finally attempt a few reforms before her death, but these proved inadequate and only served to hasten the fall of the dynasty. One such reform was the abolition of the ancient Confucian examination system for officials, which was effected in 1905. New schools were established, and students were encouraged to study abroad. Thousands went to Japan for an education modeled on the Western system, and many returned with a new critical awareness to participate in the Chinese bureaucracy. The exposure to new ideas also resulted in a rapid expansion of Sun Yat-sen's secret society. Another such reform was the establishment of a constitutional commission. The commission proposed a constitutional system like that of Japan, and a cabinet system was begun in 1906. Consultative assemblies were established in each province in 1909. Rather than assist the dynasty, however, these assemblies became centers for radical agitation. The reorganization of

the army was another attempt at change that eventually backfired, for in the process of change the army became more loyal to the official in charge of the change than to the central government.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout this period, Sun Yat-sen's organization made eleven different attempts to overthrow the government. An uprising in 1911 finally triggered uprisings throughout the country, and control was taken of several provincial governments. Sun, who was in the United States at the time, returned to become the first President of the Chinese Republic.

The forces that brought Sun to power were not politically united. His organization, which supported a strong central government, had of necessity allied itself with another organization which strongly advocated provincial economic autonomy. This latter group had been willing to support a strong central government on a temporary basis because of desperate circumstances in the provinces. Sun's leadership was thus more in name than fact. China was in turmoil and needed leadership that could unify the country and establish order. Believing that he was not that type of leader, Sun stepped down soon after his inauguration, to be replaced by Yuan Shih-k'ai,<sup>26</sup> the military leader who had won the loyalty of the imperial army when it was reorganized.<sup>27</sup> Recognizing that Yuan's power rested on his military backing, Sun insisted that Yuan agree to work with and be responsible to a parliament and cabinet.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of Yuan's reluctant promise to Sun, the new regime was not so different from the regime it had replaced. It relied mainly on the army for support and utilized the existent and corrupt bureaucracy.<sup>29</sup> Several political parties did emerge during this period, however, some

supporting Yuan unconditionally and others only on condition of his willingness to work with the Parliament.<sup>30</sup>

Tension arose immediately between Yuan and the Parliament, which included many from Sun's organization.<sup>31</sup> Yuan, who had never really understood the new notions of parliament and political parties, soon resorted to what he did understand. He put his supporters in the cabinet, ignored the constitution, and dissolved the Parliament. He attempted to become emperor in 1915, but was successfully resisted. He died in 1916.<sup>32</sup> Three different, but equally unstable, military leaders held office in the next three years.<sup>33</sup> Sun, meanwhile, had decided it was futile to try to impose a Western parliamentary system on China. He went underground in 1914 and organized a revolutionary party, the Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalist Party.<sup>34</sup>

#### 1911-1919--Pressures for Change

John King Fairbank points out that during the years between 1911 and 1921, three important developments occurred in China that were relevant to the increasing demands for social and political change. First, the weakened central government continued to give rise to autonomous provincial governments. Second, World War I loosened the hold of foreign powers on China's economy. This "breathing space" permitted a rapid expansion of Chinese industry. Third, the Chinese people were roused to the beginnings of a nationalist consciousness through an aggression by Japan in 1915.<sup>35</sup> This section will briefly discuss how each of these developments intensified the struggles for political dominance in China.

The autonomous provincial governments that arose were controlled by "warlords," military leaders who had allied with the local landlords

to seize economic and military control of an area. While the warlords made much money from opium and gun smuggling and through direct negotiations with foreign banks,<sup>36</sup> most of their income was taken from the peasants through taxes. The landlords and warlords often demanded the peasants' animals, equipment, and labor power, in return for which the peasants received no compensation. The landlords raised rents, loaned money at high interest rates, and gradually squeezed the peasants off the land, forcing them to become tenant farmers or beggars. Banditry plagued the provinces as many displaced peasants devised their own methods of survival. Military mutinies by soldiers in the warlord armies were frequent. This instability added to the desperate situation of the peasants, who never knew what new tyranny awaited them. Tax collectors and soldiers were notorious for their abuse of the peasants.<sup>37</sup>

As the gentry class grew increasingly wealthy, much of their money was put into the development of industry in the coastal areas.<sup>38</sup> The loosening of foreign control over the Chinese economy caused by World War I permitted rapid industrial development, the growth of industrial cities,<sup>39</sup> and the accompanying growth of an industrial working class. Working conditions were hard, filthy, and unsafe. Wages permitted bare survival. Accidents were common. Women and children formed a large portion of the workers, and they routinely worked twelve or thirteen hours a day. The workers protested regularly through strikes,<sup>40</sup> Although industrial labor was not widespread in China, and although it brought with it many new problems, it did offer an alternative to the agricultural way of life. It weakened tradition by allowing men and women to work outside the Confucian family system. The concept of filial piety began to take a back seat to demands for rapid social change.<sup>41</sup>

As industrial towns and cities grew, so did a new merchant class. Known as compradores, this group first developed in the treaty ports in service to the foreign capitalists, and eventually developed wealth through speculation and trade.<sup>42</sup> They increasingly came to resent both the privileges granted the foreigners through the treaty system and the economic limitations caused by warlord control of the provinces. This new merchant class thus became a political force for strong central government and national independence. They hoped thereby to control the warlords and foreign capitalists, and, among other benefits, to increase their own wealth and power.<sup>43</sup>

Aggression by Japan added to the growing national consciousness. Japan had entered World War I with the Allies. In 1915 Japan invaded China under the pretext of seizing German possessions. In a secret agreement, Japan presented China with the brazen "Twenty-one Demands," which called for Japanese control of several areas, institutions, and industries in China. The Chinese intellectuals were outraged and humiliated when Yuan, still in power at that time, agreed to the demands.<sup>44</sup> Huge protest demonstrations occurred throughout China.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen had allied his revolutionary party with numerous members of Parliament, various southern warlords, and the Chinese navy. He established a military government in Canton in 1917, in opposition to the Peking government. He soon recognized that once again he was but a figurehead, with the real control held by conservative military leaders who had Western support. He resigned in 1918.<sup>46</sup>

### The New Tide Movement

All of these events served to accelerate intellectual ferment in China. As mentioned earlier, the educational reforms of the empress



had, over the years, given rise among the gentry to a new scholar class (students, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and others) educated in Western-style schools. The failure of the 1911 revolution to effect significant change had caused increasing numbers of these students and intellectuals to analyze the reasons for its failure, and to look for broader theories of change. Many were attracted to Marxism.<sup>47</sup>

A movement that had great influence in China in 1915-1920 was the "New Tide" or "Renaissance" Movement, which stressed self-expression and considered the tradition of filial piety to be the cause of China's troubles. Participants encouraged active political involvement. They published a magazine called The New Youth in 1915, in which they called for an end to traditional passivity and status-seeking and challenged young people--both men and women--to be strong, proud, independent, patriotic, and devoted to high ideals. The leaders of the New Tide identified democracy and science as the answer to China's problems,<sup>48</sup> and they called for a vernacular written language that would permit universal literacy in China.<sup>49</sup> The ideas that circulated during this period had a profound effect on the thinking of the young people who were to become leaders of the Chinese Communist Party in the near future. One of the many study groups that were formed during this period was the New People's Study Society, formed by the young Mao Tse-tung in 1918.<sup>50</sup>

This new intellectual radicalism in China, in spite of its intensity, affected only a small minority of the Chinese people.<sup>51</sup> The biggest influence of the Chinese youth movement was felt in the May Fourth Movement of 1919.<sup>52</sup>

1919--The May Fourth Movement

Early in May of 1919 word spread through China via telegraph that World War I had ended and that a treaty had been signed in Versailles. Instead of restoring control over Germany's "sphere of influence" to China, the Westerners had transferred those privileges to Japan, in the hopes of preventing the spread of Communism in Asia. News of the Versailles decision incensed the Chinese intellectuals. On May 4 thousands of students in Peking organized a massive protest demonstration against Japan and against pro-Japanese officials.<sup>53</sup>

The students marched through the streets of Peking, burned the house of one official and beat up another. The police attacked the students, which triggered a student strike.<sup>54</sup> The students organized the Peking Students' Union to coordinate the protest movement.<sup>55</sup> They sent telegrams to students in other parts of China,<sup>56</sup> and strikes and demonstrations and the formation of students' unions spread. The press in general, and most liberals in China, supported the demonstrations.

In June, the Peking government proclaimed martial law. Japanese marines entered the port cities to show support for the regime. Merchants in Shanghai responded immediately by closing their shops and calling for a general strike. Shanghai industrial workers also went on strike. Soon merchants and workers in many other towns joined in. The government finally responded, freeing jailed demonstrators and rejecting the Treaty of Versailles. This ended the strikes and demonstrations, but a boycott of Japanese goods continued through the summer, which seriously damaged Japan's market in China.

Many more radical student groups were formed as a result of the May Fourth Movement, and more radical periodicals were published. One

of the new periodicals was the Xiang River Review, published by the Hunan Students' Association, of which Mao Tse-tung was a leader. These publications were opposed to traditional values, especially the concept of filial piety, and supportive of women's rights. They continued the demand for a vernacular language. They proposed communal living. They encouraged intellectuals to go into the country to educate the peasants. They absorbed and promoted progressive ideas from around the world.

The May Fourth outbreak caught the people in power in China completely by surprise. A spontaneous outburst that was well-coordinated by ad hoc groups of students, merchants, and workers, the movement had none of the usual organizational backing. Even Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang was drawn into the protest after the fact. The May Fourth Movement was the first solid indication of a widespread, profound division in the political realm. Under the banner of "save the country," it attacked, for the first time in Chinese history, both the foreign presence in China and the traditional political structure. Although no immediate changes in the Chinese government resulted, the movement did signify a new political awareness in China.<sup>57</sup>

#### 1919-1921--Beginnings of the Chinese Communist Party

The unpopularity of the central government continued to grow after 1919, even though a new military clique took power in 1920. The new leadership made some attempts at reconciliation with the students and workers, but it had no program for genuine change. This inadequacy was made even more visible by the situation in the provinces.

The provincial warlords had deliberately ignored the declaration in 1917 that outlawed the growth and sale of opium. Many had demanded

that the peasants in their region grow opium instead of their much-needed rice crops. The warlords then had collected the opium for "taxes" and sold it at great profit. In addition, a famine in north China in 1920-1921 crushed millions of peasants. Hundreds of thousands starved. People were forced to eat their draft animals and sell their children to survive. The central government proved unable to assist in any way.

In 1920 Sun Yat-sen returned to Canton with his revolutionary party, the Kuomintang. He allied himself with a provincial general, and together they reclaimed the Canton government. Sun's goal was to support the popular federalist movement in various southern provinces, thus building up a base of support that would enable him to resume the national presidency.<sup>58</sup> In 1922, however, his warlord ally took over the southern government, and Sun was once again forced to step down.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, Marxism was increasingly becoming recognized as an exciting new ideology by many Chinese intellectuals. Communist literature had just become available in translation, and many study groups had formed to analyze it.<sup>60</sup> Some of these groups considered forming active political organizations; others wanted to use Marxism as a tool for more abstract educational purposes. The Chinese were extremely impressed when the new Soviet government renounced all privileges that the old treaty system had granted to Russia,<sup>61</sup> and they were even more impressed when the Russians offered to support China in attempts to remove the other foreign powers.<sup>62</sup>

The Comintern, the International Communist organization, sent a delegate to meet with Chinese intellectuals interested in forming a Communist Party in China.<sup>63</sup> A diverse group met with the delegate in Shanghai in the summer of 1920 and formed the first Chinese Communist

cell.<sup>64</sup> The Shanghai group published a periodical, started a Socialist Youth Corps, and began organizing industrial workers. Similar small Communist groups soon formed in other cities. One of these, in Changsha, included Mao Tse-tung.<sup>65</sup>

Chinese historians now list July 1921 as the official beginning of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), possibly because the earlier groups were not particularly unified in their understanding of Communist ideology. Twelve delegates attended the July meeting in Shanghai, representing seven of the previously formed groups. They set up a provincial party headquarters in Shanghai and assigned responsibility for other provincial offices to various members.<sup>66</sup>

In accordance with Marxist theory, the first project of the CCP was to support industrial workers' struggles and to organize labor unions. They set up evening classes for the laborers and began translating Communist literature.<sup>67</sup> The Chinese Communists modeled themselves after the Russian Communists. They studied Party documents, adopted democratic centralism as a method of organization, demanded discipline and obedience of their members, and utilized the techniques of propaganda and agitation in their organization efforts. The stress on criticism and personal confession that was to eventually become part of thought reform was first learned from the Russian Communists.<sup>68</sup>

### The First United Front

China in 1921 was deeply in debt to Western powers and to Japan, both from the Boxer indemnity and from numerous loans. Westerners controlled Chinese finances and deposited huge profits directly into foreign banks. Westerners who lived in China were not considered to be under

the jurisdiction of Chinese courts, nor did they pay nearly the taxes the Chinese had to pay. Christian missions had flourished in China under the watchful eyes of the Western powers, and missionaries generally partook of the privileges granted all foreigners. The subtle and not-so-subtle attitudes of superiority exhibited by Westerners toward Chinese were an ongoing source of resentment.<sup>69</sup>

For the Chinese peasants, the conditions described earlier only worsened. Many rebelled. They rebelled by leaving their villages to seek work in the cities; by joining the armies of opposition warlords; by becoming bandits. They rebelled by beating and killing tax collectors; by burning landlords' houses; by joining secret societies; by turning to superstitious beliefs and practices. For the most part, their rebellion was not against the traditional system, but against what they considered to be injustices within that system. Only with Communist participation in peasant rebellions did the great majority of peasants begin to understand the broader political context of their misery.<sup>70</sup> This was true for the rebelling industrial workers as well. The Communists helped organize trade unions and supported numerous strikes in 1921-1922. Violent suppression of those strikes, however, demonstrated to the Communists the need for broadening alliances as quickly as possible.<sup>71</sup>

The Nationalists (Sun's KMT) and the Communists were brought together by the Russian Communists in 1924.<sup>72</sup> Between 1919 and 1923 Sun had become totally disillusioned with Western liberalism and had begun to consider an alliance with Russia.<sup>73</sup> In 1923, troops in Canton overthrew the warlord leader and asked Sun to return. He did so, and sent a group of Nationalists, including Chiang Kai-shek, to Russia to

get political advice. The Soviet Communists, seeing the large size of the KMT and the possibilities for its continued growth, encouraged the CCP and the KMT to work together.<sup>74</sup>

In general, members of the CCP and the KMT did not trust one another. Though in agreement in their opposition to foreign imperialism, they were sharply divided on domestic objectives. The Communists, who supported a workers' revolution, seemed too radical to the Nationalists, who had strong ties to the wealthy classes and wanted modernization along Western lines under moderate Chinese leadership.<sup>75</sup> By 1924, however, both groups had come to see the useful possibilities of an alliance.<sup>76</sup> The Communists were interested in added strength; the Nationalists were interested in the energy and organizing skills of the Communists.<sup>77</sup>

A United Front was agreed upon in 1924. The Communists merged with the KMT, but maintained an independent Communist Party on the side. Their common bonds were national unity and anti-imperialism. The Communists were allowed to occupy some of the leadership positions, and one of these was filled by Mao Tse-tung.<sup>78</sup> The KMT armies were restructured under the direction of Chiang Kai-shek,<sup>79</sup> with the assistance of Russian advisers and weapons.<sup>80</sup> The new unity had a much broader appeal than either group had had independently.<sup>81</sup> It took control of the Canton area and roused the populace to an enthusiastic militancy.<sup>82</sup>

Mao soon went to Shanghai, where he developed a plan for the complete restructuring of the Nationalist Party. He criticized the separation of working people and bureaucrats, and of city and country.

He proposed a training program for cadres,\* which resulted in the formation of a Peasant Department within the KMT structure. The Communists were put in charge of a training institute for peasant cadres.<sup>83</sup>

Mao's close work with the KMT led to a general disillusionment with the condescending attitudes he observed in its members. He proposed to the Communist Party that it organize its own peasant training programs throughout China, especially in the provinces. The Communists were not, for the most part, enthusiastic about his concern with the peasants. They held to the Marxist teaching that industrial workers were the main revolutionary force. In January 1925, Mao returned to his home in Hunan province. He studied the situation there for seven months and organized the first peasant Party branch.<sup>84</sup> He began to realize that the Marxist concept of working class would have to be adapted to correspond to Chinese realities.<sup>85</sup> Until then, Chinese Communist organizing had revolved around urban workers in the industrialized cities on the eastern coast. The vast peasant majority had not been taken into account. The reason for this was that the Communists had rigidly interpreted Marx, who had believed that only industrial workers were in a position to develop the political consciousness necessary for revolution. Marx believed that the position of the workers in the labor process was so oppressed, that they had everything to gain by revolution, and he believed that the labor process itself had taught

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\*In Chinese, the word used for cadre is "kanpu" which means "backbone personnel." "Cadre" in China referred to individuals who accept the responsibility of ongoing political activity and organization, whether in the Party or the government. See William Hinton, Fanshen (New York, Random House, Vintage Books, 1966), p. 12n.



the industrial workers the discipline and methods of organization that were necessary to carrying out a revolution. Mao realized that the Marxist theory would have to be expanded to include peasants if it was to be applicable to China, a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country.<sup>86</sup>

The major question for Mao thus became one of education: how could the Communists recruit, discipline, and transform the peasants, the rebels, and the bandits of the rural provinces?<sup>87</sup> His answer to that question was formulated over the next twenty-five years, through much trial and error.

While Mao was in Hunan, two events occurred that greatly affected the future of Communism in China. One was that Sun Yat-sen died. The other was a massive demonstration on May 30, 1925, at the Kuangchow International Settlement protesting the killing of a Chinese worker by a Japanese foreman. British soldiers fired into the crowd of demonstrators, killing twelve. One month later the British fired into another crowd of demonstrators, killing fifty-six. Anti-imperialist protests, strikes, and battles swept through China. Membership in the Communist Party mushroomed, much to the alarm of right-wing KMT members.<sup>88</sup>

While Sun had lived, the anti-Communist elements within the KMT had been kept in control. They surfaced after his death, however, and actively agitated for expulsion of the Communists from the KMT.<sup>89</sup> Over the next two years, the KMT became increasingly militaristic and conservative. Chiang Kai-shek rose to power during that period. Although he mistrusted the Communists, he realized he needed their support to win peasants and workers to his struggle.<sup>90</sup>

Sun's goal had been to overcome warlord domination in northern China. To generate support for a northern expedition, the United Front

had organized mass meetings throughout China.<sup>91</sup> Mao had supported this by organizing among the peasants, whom he had come to see as an all-powerful force for change:

In a very short time . . . several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and powerful that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back. . . . There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them gesticulating and criticizing? Or to stand in their way and oppose them? Every Chinese is free to choose, but events will force you to make the decision quickly.<sup>92</sup>

In 1926 Mao finally succeeded in establishing the Peasant Department he had promoted earlier, this time within the Communist Party. It provided training for cadres willing to work with the peasants, offered support to peasants' unions throughout China, and generated support among the peasants for the KMT Northern Expedition which was to come.<sup>93</sup> The peasants' unions expanded to include millions of families.<sup>94</sup>

William Hinton mentions some of the reasons Mao viewed the political training of the peasants as a necessity. The situation of the peasants as small-scale landholders in a competitive economic system kept peasant families divided from other peasant families, which kept them from organizing in any long-term way against their class oppressors. The extreme isolation of the rural villages had contributed to a lack of a vision of new political alternatives, which contributed to much misdirected violence when the peasants did rebel. Mao was in complete sympathy with the desire of the peasants for change, but wanted their change attempts to be more effective than they had proven in the past. For this he saw political education as essential.<sup>95</sup>

The Northern Expedition of the Nationalist Army began in July 1926. Chiang was hailed as a national hero. He promised to overcome

the warlords, expel the imperialists, and unify China.<sup>96</sup> The troops received enormous support from the peasants and workers wherever they went. Many victories were won before the Army even arrived. This peasant/worker activity alarmed many in the KMT, both because it represented an uncontrollable force, and because the KMT members had financial and family ties to the landlord-gentry class.<sup>97</sup> Wherever the KMT won a victory, therefore, it did not arm the workers and initiate reforms. Instead, it asked the people to sacrifice, to work harder, and to postpone further unionization.<sup>98</sup> This caused tension between many of the Communists and the right wing of the KMT, who were in control at the time.<sup>99</sup>

The Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, decided by 1927 that the time had come to separate with the CCP. Warlords and imperialists were being driven out, and the militant peasants and workers had begun to appear more threatening than helpful.<sup>100</sup> The Communists and workers in Shanghai had taken control of that city and awaited the arrival of the KMT Army. The Nationalists, allied with wealthy merchants, bankers, and opium racketeers, attacked the city instead. The unarmed workers were massacred. Communists escaped or were killed. Thereafter, Communism and unionism were outlawed by the Nationalists,<sup>101</sup> and one hundred thousand people were killed in that province over the next year.<sup>102</sup>

By late 1928 Chiang's armies had taken control of the central government in Peking and resituated it in Nanking. Foreign nations recognized the Nationalist government as the official regime and turned over their control of tariffs and customs. They also gave up some of

their treaty privileges. In spite of this foreign support, the expulsion of the Communists had sapped the revolutionary energy of the KMT. Now composed mainly of conservatives who viewed maintenance of power their main task, the KMT proved incapable of making fundamental social and political changes.

Meanwhile, Mao and other Communists who had escaped the 1927 massacre had fled to the mountains of southeast China. Freed of the United Front, they began the long struggle that was to lead to their victory in 1949.<sup>103</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Stanley Karnow, Mao and China (Viking Compass ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1973), pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup>John King Fairbank, The United States and China (Compass Books ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1962), p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, pp. 12-14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-21.

<sup>7</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 142.

<sup>8</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 142.

<sup>10</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, pp. 142-144.

<sup>12</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, pp. 22-24.

<sup>13</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 143.

<sup>14</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup>R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (3rd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 616.

<sup>16</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup>Jean Daubier, A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), p. 178.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-27.

<sup>21</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, pp. 149-161.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-152.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 153-154.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 155-157.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 157-158.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-159.

<sup>27</sup>Franklin W. Houn, A Short History of Chinese Communism (A Spectrum Book; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup>Jean Chesneaux, Francoise Le Barbier, and Marie-Claire Bergere, China: From the 1911 Revolution to Liberation, trans. Paul Aster and Lydia Davis, chaps. 1-3 trans. Anne Destenay (New York: Random House, Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 9-10.

<sup>31</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, pp. 159-160.

<sup>33</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, pp. 159-160.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 163-164.

<sup>36</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 44-45.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49.                      <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>39</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 166.

<sup>40</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 52-53.

<sup>41</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, pp. 166-167.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>43</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 118.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 17.                              <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 47.                              <sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Jay Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (Norton Library ed.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 367-368.

<sup>49</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 168.

<sup>50</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 65.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.

<sup>52</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 371.

<sup>53</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 66-67.

- <sup>54</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 170.
- <sup>55</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 67.
- <sup>56</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 170.
- <sup>57</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 67-74.
- <sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 75-81.                      <sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.
- <sup>60</sup>James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 50.
- <sup>61</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 86-87.
- <sup>62</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 16.
- <sup>63</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 142.
- <sup>64</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 17.
- <sup>65</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 88.
- <sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.
- <sup>67</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>68</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 389-393.
- <sup>69</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 107-109.
- <sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 113-116.                      <sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.
- <sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 147.
- <sup>73</sup>Han Suyin, The Morning Deluge, vol. 1: 1893-1935; vol. 2: 1935-1953 (2 vols.; London: Granada, Panther Books, 1976), 1:142-143.
- <sup>74</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 147-148.
- <sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163.                      <sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 147.
- <sup>77</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 174.
- <sup>78</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:145-147.
- <sup>79</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 156.
- <sup>80</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 175.
- <sup>81</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:148.
- <sup>82</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 157.

- <sup>83</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:149-150.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., 1:154-156.                      <sup>85</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup>Boggs and Boggs, Revolution and Evolution, p. 129.
- <sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 59.
- <sup>88</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:162.
- <sup>89</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>90</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:180.
- <sup>91</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, pp. 157-158.
- <sup>92</sup>Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, abridged by Bruno Shaw (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1970), pp. 10-11.
- <sup>93</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:183.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., 1:189-193.
- <sup>95</sup>William Hinton, Fanshen (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 54-57.
- <sup>96</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:181.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., 1:185.                      <sup>98</sup>Ibid., 1:208.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., 1:201.
- <sup>100</sup>Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, China, p. 170.
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 174.
- <sup>102</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:210.
- <sup>103</sup>Palmer and Colton, History, pp. 773-775.



## CHAPTER III

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THOUGHT REFORM--1927-1936

Outlawed by the KMT in 1927, Mao and many other Communists escaped into the mountains and began to form an army.<sup>1</sup> Peasants, workers, and bandits joined their ranks. Mao's first movement in the direction of educating the recruits was to explain to them the broader historical perspective of their struggles and to project for them new possibilities for change. The second step toward education involved organization, a process of restructuring the Communist Party and building a Red Army.

According to Han Suyin:

[Mao] organized the Party cell at company level, and emphasized the building of the Red Army as a political force by inaugurating a Party group in each squad, a cell in each company, and a committee in each battalion. Each committee consisted of seven to nine men, ordinary soldiers. Among them one, two or three were Party members. Mao called the latter (most of them were trained by him) "instructor delegates," for they were to educate the soldiers, keep up their political consciousness and morale. They were to maintain discipline, train the Army in work among the people, in mass propaganda.<sup>2</sup>

Mao believed the Army should have two roles. The first was political education, the second was military struggle. To successfully assume these two roles, Mao believed, each soldier must be treated well first. He established committees of soldiers at each military level to give special attention to the welfare of the soldiers.

Through this reorganization the Army and the Party became inseparable. The Party's role was to oversee the Army's political behavior and direction, and one of the Army's roles was to train and discipline Party cadres.

Mao laid down basic rules for the Army--officers would receive the same pay as soldiers, officers could not beat the soldiers, and soldiers had the right to criticize the officers. Army accounts were to be available to inspection by civilians.

Mao also laid down rules of behavior toward the peasantry. The soldiers were to treat the peasants with respect. They were to enter no homes nor take anything from the peasants. Anything borrowed was to be returned, anything purchased was to be fairly priced.

Many recruits were angered by the rules, which were nearly unheard of in Chinese military experience. Mao's response was that they could stay or leave, but if they stayed the rules had to be obeyed. This mild response in itself was a surprise to the soldiers, who were used to authoritarian harshness.

The approach of the Red Army to a village often followed a familiar pattern. The villagers, expecting the worst, would flee into the mountains before the troops arrived. After a couple of days observers would spread the word that the soldiers were not robbing, burning, nor even using their houses. The peasants would hesitantly return to their homes. Meetings would be held to assure the people that the Army was at their service, and sometimes possessions confiscated from landlords were distributed. In response, the peasants often shared their rice with the soldiers, and many of them joined the Army.

Another rule was developed as the Army won military victories: the soldiers were told not to kill the captured enemy. No one, whether bandit, beggar, or enemy soldier, was to be denied the possibility of reeducation, which Mao called political training.<sup>3</sup> A system of education and land reform won further peasant support.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, among the Communists who had gone underground in the cities, a new leadership had evolved. Convinced that Mao was mistaken in his notions of organizing a base in the mountains, they had removed him from his official position of Party leadership.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Mao, they promoted continuous militancy and violence toward all landlords and rich and middle peasants.<sup>6</sup>

Mao did not hear word of this development until the following year. By that time he had found his own method of operation to be successful, so he continued it. While the Communists in the cities turned to robbing banks and assassinating enemies, the Communists in the mountains were evolving a radically different program of change.<sup>7</sup>

Life in the mountains that first winter of 1927-1928 was extremely difficult. Food and clothing were scarce. In spite of their difficulties, however, Mao's Red Army won six counties. During the first military action, landlords and some rich and middle peasants\* were killed.<sup>8</sup> Mao always regretted this action,<sup>9</sup> for he saw that it turned potential allies (the rich and middle peasants) into enemies.<sup>10</sup> He tried to teach the soldiers that destroying human lives was not the same as destroying a class. Destroying a class, he believed, involved property reforms and reeducation.<sup>11</sup> The Army was thereafter instructed to take only from the landlords. The hoarded grain and possessions taken from landlords were to be put in a central location and shared with the peasants.<sup>12</sup>

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\* In general, middle peasants owned some land, and rich peasants owned enough land to hire laborers. See Jean Chesneaux, Françoise Le Barbier, and Marie-Claire Bergere, China: From the 1911 Revolution to Liberation, trans. Paul Aster and Lydia Davis, chaps. 1-3 trans. Anne Destenay (New York: Random House, Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 113.

Mao believed that revolutionary action must involve active participation by the peasants in the processes that were changing their lives, both to give them a sense of their own strength and to provide the Army with necessary information and strength for its military actions.<sup>13</sup> In each county taken by the Communists, therefore, a program of land reform was begun, and local governments were established. The peasants were organized into peasants' organizations, and mass meetings were held to elect representatives to the local government. Communist Party committees (called soviets) were organized in each locale, each with its own council of workers, peasants, and soldiers. In spite of the popularity of the Army, the peasants feared retaliation by the KMT. In response to this fear, the Communists organized peasant militias for defense.

Political and military courses were held in the mountains to train cadres and soldiers. These included basic reading and writing lessons.<sup>14</sup> In February of 1928 the Army members were sent into the fields to help the peasants plant their crops. They also planted previously untilled land for themselves. These continued to be the policies of the Red Army--to be economically self-sufficient and to work with and teach the peasants. That first spring they built a small hospital and taught courses in health and sanitation. A doctor trained sixteen Army cadres in basic medicine.<sup>15</sup>

In 1928, basic rules for the Army were officially established. There were three rules:

- (1) Obey orders in all your actions.
- (2) Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.
- (3) Turn in everything you have captured.<sup>16</sup>

There were eight additional guidelines:

- (1) Speak politely to the people.
- (2) Pay fairly for what you buy.
- (3) Return everything you borrow.
- (4) Pay for anything you damage.
- (5) Replace all doors [used by the Army as beds] and return all straw you sleep on.
- (6) Dig latrines away from houses and fill them with earth when you leave.
- (7) Do not take liberties with women.
- (8) Do not ill-treat captives.<sup>17</sup>

These were memorized and sung by the Red Army as they marched.

In the spring of 1928, an Army-Party committee was established. Its purpose was to educate new troops and recruits as they arrived at the Chingkang mountain base. New soldiers' committees were set up as new people arrived. The education program included basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. The ground was used for their tablets, and sticks were used for pencils. Political education included an historical analysis of their struggle; discussions of ways of organizing people, of developing leadership, and of propagandizing enemy troops; public speaking; and singing. The educational process involved debate and discussion, with freedom to criticize any aspect of their situation, including each other and officers.<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 1928 the Communist Party Central Committee sent representatives to the mountain base with military directives. These were obeyed, but they led to disastrous defeats and to the demoralization of the troops. Mao analyzed the situation and called for a "rectification"--a complete shake-up of the Party organization. He insisted especially on the need for patient, ongoing political education programs among the people: "The evil feudal practice of arbitrary dictation is so deeply rooted in the minds of the people and even of the ordinary Party members that it cannot be swept away at once; when anything comes

up, they choose the easy way and have no liking for this bothersome democratic system. . . ."19 Mao insisted that one-third of the Army be Party members, hoping that a political awareness would thus permeate the troops. He also insisted that land redistribution only include land owned by the landlords. Property of rich and middle peasants and of local merchants was not to be touched, despite directives from the Central Committee.<sup>20</sup>

As the strength and prestige of the Central Base grew, the strength and prestige of the Communist headquarters in Shanghai diminished. Criticisms were fired at Mao from Shanghai, to which he soon responded, at the Party-Army Conference in Kutien in 1929. He presented a resolution, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party,"<sup>21</sup> which was passed despite strong opposition from several other leaders. In it he criticized the tendency toward a "purely military viewpoint" and reminded the Party members that the military tasks of the Red Army were secondary to its "political" tasks--that is, the education and organization of the peasants, the rebels, the prisoners, and the soldiers themselves. This stress on education derived from Mao's belief that unless the old notions of hierarchy could be given up, a military victory would result in a repetition of all the past rebellions in China: a mere change of regime, with the huge majority of the people no better off than before. At the Kutien Conference Mao also reiterated his belief in land reform as central to Party and Army policy, land reform based on a detailed investigation of the social situation in each area.<sup>22</sup>

By mid-1929 a new and more prosperous Central Base area was established by the Army. The basic organization of the area was the

same as before: peasants' organizations, local militia and Red Guards for local defense, the Red Army for broader defense, all working in cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

The period at the Central Base in southeastern China is generally divided into three parts. Between February 1929 and November 1930 the Central Base was established, responsible to the Shanghai Communist headquarters.<sup>24</sup> The Communists used as flexibly as possible all the previously established policies of organization: democratic centralism, propaganda and agitation, study of Party documents, and criticism and personal confession. Between November 1930 and November 1931, the Base was greatly expanded to cover nineteen thousand square miles including three million people. With peasant support the Communists set up a system of soviets and declared the southeast of China to be the Chinese Soviet Republic.<sup>25</sup> A congress was held to elect a Central Executive Committee, and Mao was elected chairman. He was by no means in full control, however, for two vice-chairmen were elected who sided with the policies of the Central Committee in Shanghai, most of whose ideas continued to differ radically from Mao's.<sup>26</sup> The Politburo, the action organ of the Central Committee, called for greater internal discipline. They opposed guerrilla warfare, which they considered unsophisticated, and promoted modern positional warfare.<sup>27</sup> The third period of the southeastern Central Base began in 1932, when Politburo supporters within the Base were able to take control of the Base government. They immediately cancelled Mao's many military and political reforms.<sup>28</sup> A rigid hierarchy was introduced into the Army, and educational programs for cadres were greatly reduced.<sup>29</sup> Cadres who did not support the government unconditionally were punished or killed. The policy of equal distribution of

land to all non-landlords was deemed incorrect. All landlords, rich peasants, and rich merchants were to be killed or expropriated.<sup>30</sup> The end result of these new policies was total disaster. The Central Base and all surrounding bases were lost to KMT troops by late 1934,<sup>31</sup> and millions were killed.<sup>32</sup>

### The Long March

In October 1934, a poorly-organized retreat from the Base was begun. No one but certain top officials knew what was happening. Over two hundred thousand people began the six-thousand-mile journey that came to be called the Long March. About half of these were peasants too frightened to stay behind.<sup>33</sup> It is estimated that less than thirty thousand people completed the journey. Brutal weather, difficult terrain, and near-daily battles caused thousands of deaths.<sup>34</sup>

During the Long March, Mao was returned to leadership of the Red Army by a majority decision at the historic Tsunyi Conference. It is believed eighteen leaders attended, including Politburo members and certain members of the Army and the Central Committee. Mao did not at that time attempt a criticism of the political attitudes and behavior of the Party leadership of the previous three years. This was to occur later, when a secure base was established. Because of the desperation of the situation he criticized only the incompetence of the military leadership. He condemned the policy of calling for military action without providing the cadres and officers with a thorough explanation of why such decisions had been made. He condemned the whole style of battle that had cost so many lives and the loss of so much territory.<sup>35</sup>

The Long March ended in late 1935 in the desolate and isolated northern areas of Shensi province, where a new base was established.<sup>36</sup>



Mao set about immediately rebuilding the Party and the Army.<sup>37</sup> His concern for education deepened, for few of the people who survived that expedition were literate. Teachers were desperately needed. Mao began writing basic texts, translating the Marxist-Leninist concept of dialectical materialism into a language that could be more easily understood by the Chinese peasants. He tried to illustrate the theory with examples from Chinese literature and history.<sup>38</sup>

The base was expanded over the next year, and in 1936 the central government was transferred to the Yen-an area of the base.<sup>39</sup> It was in Yen-an that the concept of thought reform became integral to Chinese Communist policy.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Han Suyin, The Morning Deluge, vol. 1: 1893-1935; vol. 2: 1935-1953 (2 vols.; London: Granada, Panther Books, 1976), 1:220-221.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:227-228.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1:227-231.

<sup>4</sup>R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (3rd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1965), pp. 774-775.

<sup>5</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:233.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1:241.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1:243.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 1:239.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1:238.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 1:258.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1:243.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1:238.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 1:243.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 1:238-239.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 1:240-241.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 1:255.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1:256-257.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 1:263-264.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1:265.

<sup>21</sup>Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, abridged by Bruno Shaw (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1970), pp. 35-41.

<sup>22</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:287-290.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 1:276-279.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1:310.

<sup>25</sup>Palmer and Colton, History, pp. 774-775.

<sup>26</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:311-312.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1:326.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 1:315.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1:326.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1:316-319.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1:339.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1:336.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 1:345.

<sup>34</sup>Franklin W. Houn, A Short History of Chinese Communism (A Spectrum Book; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 47-48.

<sup>35</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 1:357-363.

<sup>36</sup>John King Fairbank, The United States and China (Compass Books ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1962), p. 234.

<sup>37</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:19.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 2:91-93.

<sup>39</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 234.

## CHAPTER IV

### THOUGHT REFORM AT YENAN--1936-1949

In 1936 the Politburo directed Mao to set up Kangta, the "Resist Japan University." There, and in branch centers, one hundred thousand cadres were trained over the next seven years.<sup>1</sup> These training centers were modeled after Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow, which had been devised earlier by the Russian Communists for training Chinese intellectuals.

The extreme isolation of these training centers required improvisation when difficulties arose. They had few books or advisors to assist them. It is possible that the introspective aspects that became characteristic of thought reform procedures were a result of this early isolation, for the people and their often Confucian ideas were all that were available for resources. Russian advisers, in fact, were sometimes critical of what appeared to be excessive reference to Confucian ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Recruits to Kangta were drawn by posters and by word-of-mouth from throughout China. Many intellectuals made their way to the base, and many of them were accepted at Kangta. Veteran peasant cadres were automatically accepted.<sup>3</sup> Many graduates of Kangta became part of the government administration at Yen-an. The tensions inherent in their diverse backgrounds were to grow over the next years.<sup>4</sup>

The colleges taught Marxism-Leninism, methods of working with people, and military strategy and tactics.<sup>5</sup> It was at Kangta that Mao delivered his famous speeches, "On Practice" and "On Contradiction,"

which contained his early ideas on the necessity of ongoing education programs within the Party.<sup>6</sup> In "On Practice"<sup>7</sup> Mao spoke of the need for revolutionaries to test and change ideas through practice:

The struggle of the proletariat and revolutionary people to change the world comprises the fulfillment of the following tasks: to change the objective world and, at the same time, their own subjective world--to change their cognitive ability and change the relations between the subjective and objective world.

He voiced his commitment to the concept of self-transformation: "The epoch of world Communism will be reached when all mankind voluntarily and consciously changes itself and the world." In "On Contradiction"<sup>8</sup> Mao attacked what he considered to be inflexible interpretations of Marxism-Leninism.

In 1936 the Party decided to ease up on land reforms in the base areas and devote efforts to the formation of a second anti-Japanese United Front.<sup>9</sup> Although Chiang Kai-shek resisted the idea, popular opinion forced his participation in 1937, when Japan invaded China in force.<sup>10</sup> In spite of the slow-up on land reform, the CCP won broad peasant support through the moderate reforms it did effect, such as tax reforms and rent reductions. The success of CCP policies could be seen in the growth of Party membership and the rapid expansion of Communist-controlled territory.<sup>11</sup> In 1935 there had been forty thousand members; by 1938 there were two hundred thousand; and by late 1941 there were eight hundred thousand members.<sup>12</sup>

From Yanan the Communists called for a second United Front with the KMT, its goal to be the expulsion of Japanese invaders and the unification of the Chinese people around anti-imperialism. Chiang, under pressure from his subordinates, acquiesced. The alliance against Japan

began in 1937.<sup>13</sup> The Communists agreed to allow the Nationalists to command their army, but they retained de facto control.

Through the anti-Japanese struggles the Communists were able to win Chinese areas back from Japan and continue their programs of education and land reform. As the Communists gained power and popularity, the Nationalists weakened, from internal corruption and from Japanese takeover of Nationalist-controlled areas. The Nationalists responded to the pressure by becoming increasingly tyrannical and oppressive.<sup>14</sup>

The ways in which the CCP and the Army won the support of peasants wherever they went always involved political education. One example of this involved the Japanese armies. As Japanese armies approached a village, their officials would send word ahead to levy taxes and have grain and women waiting for the soldiers. The peasants, having endured identical plunder under the KMT armies, would often be resigned and apathetic. The Communists countered this by setting up a heated debate among a few people on how to levy taxes for the Japanese. Some would suggest that the rich should pay more than the poor, rather than a flat rate for everyone. The peasants, having a glimmer of a more fair apportionment of the taxes, often took the cadres' advice and fled from the villages with their possessions. Landlords had to follow, lest they be taxed for the rest. Many peasants were politicized in this way.

The Red Army had more long-term methods of educating as well. To reassure people that it had the numerical strength to support rebellion, a unit of the Army would pass through a village. One or two cadres would then return to the village to hold a meeting. At the meeting they would announce that they, as Communist Party members, supported women's

rights and divorce. They asked that women with grievances meet secretly with them. From this small beginning, a women's organization would grow.<sup>15</sup> Within such organizations, the development of political awareness would continue. The cadres would encourage the women to "speak bitterness," to share their personal experiences of pain and rage and grief. As the women listened to each other and listened to the Communist explanation of their situation, they became aware that their grievances were as much a political as a personal matter.<sup>16</sup>

The Red Theater was another powerful method the Army used to win people's trust. Organized as early as 1931, it was composed of numerous theatrical troupes. The troupes traveled throughout the Red areas, arousing anti-Japanese nationalism and providing much-appreciated diversion for the peasants.<sup>17</sup>

Other methods were used in areas controlled by the Japanese. In these areas there were always many peasants who were ready and willing to join any movement to expel the Japanese. To support these individuals, small detachments of troops would leave the Yen-an base and filter through Japanese lines. Behind the lines they would organize and train the peasants into a resistance force. Militia were established in each village. The peasants involved were trained by night, to avoid observance by the Japanese.

The military detachments who entered these villages would be accompanied by teams of civilians, who were specifically responsible for political organizing. They organized Peasants' Associations, Women's Associations, village councils, and consumer cooperatives. The most committed and active peasants were invited to form or join local Communist Party organizations. A huge underground network was thus built

up inside enemy lines.<sup>18</sup>

Inside the Red base areas, political study was part of daily routine. In the schools, in the military units, and in all organizations time was set aside to read or discuss the writings Mao had prepared.<sup>19</sup>

In 1939 Mao initiated a more intense, year-long, study program for four thousand students. Basic Communist texts were studied, as were the writings of Mao and Liu Shao-ch'i, the CCP leader who would become the major target of the Cultural Revolution twenty-five years later. Basic reading, writing, and arithmetic were also taught.

During the next three years, Mao continued to write and speak on the importance of ongoing education and intra-Party criticism and debate. He continued to stress his conviction that education, rather than punishment, was the solution to intra-Party conflicts.<sup>20</sup>

By 1940 the rapid expansion of CCP-controlled territory so threatened the KMT leadership that they unofficially ended United Front programs of cooperation with the Communists and blockaded the Yen-an border region. At about the same time, the Japanese attacked the Communist areas with even greater force. Mao's concern with political education within the base areas did not diminish, however, in spite of these increasing military and economic pressures.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Cheng-feng Campaign of 1942-1944

Thought reform as a movement solidified in the Yen-an area between 1942-1944. A rectification and training program, called the Cheng-feng ("spirit reform"),<sup>22</sup> or Party Consolidation Movement,<sup>23</sup> was launched by Mao to debate issues causing tension between the two divergent lines of thought that had continued within the Party leadership.<sup>24</sup>



One line was led by Mao, who viewed the peasants as the main revolutionary force and called for broad political participation by the peasantry. The other was led by Wang Ming, who viewed the urban industrial workers as the main revolutionary force and wanted a tightly-controlled, hierarchical Party organization that could direct peasant participation from above.

Supporters of the Wang Ming line were largely intellectuals, students, local landlords, and former officials. Although these groups had very diverse reasons for supporting Wang Ming, all were members of the educated classes who were familiar with and supportive of bureaucratic reform policies. Supporters of the Mao Tse-tung line were mostly peasant cadres, largely illiterate, who had been active in military struggles and whose chief loyalty was to their home communities. Both groups shared a commitment to a free China and to the expulsion of the Japanese invaders, but beyond that they had little in common. Few of either group had much knowledge of Communist theory.<sup>25</sup>

The Communist leadership as a whole recognized that somehow they had to make disciplined workers of the sympathetic, but inexperienced, intellectuals.<sup>26</sup> The leadership also recognized the need to teach the peasants a broader political perspective. The leadership hoped to transfer the primary loyalty of both groups to the Communist Party, but the two lines had different ideas about how to achieve this.<sup>27</sup>

The Cheng-feng had been a goal of Mao's since the Long March. He had long believed that both the Party organization and individuals within the organization needed to clarify some goals, ideas, and behavior.<sup>28</sup> The Cheng-feng expanded on these earlier ideas. It began in February 1942, when Mao delivered two speeches attacking abstract

studies of Marxism-Leninism that were not grounded in the Chinese experience: "It seems that right up to the present time quite a few have regarded Marxism-Leninism as a ready-made panacea: once you have it, you can cure all your ills with little effort. This is a type of blindness and we must start a movement to enlighten these people."<sup>29</sup>

Mao was extremely upset with intellectuals in the Party who set themselves up as teachers and taught a dogmatic Marxism which most of the peasants could not understand. Many elitist attitudes had been carried into the Party with the influx of intellectuals into Yen-an, and Mao was critical of the authoritarian behavior and the expanded bureaucracy that had resulted.<sup>30</sup> These attitudes had both angered and intimidated many of the uneducated peasant cadres, who had loyally worked and fought to build the Yen-an base.<sup>31</sup> Mao hoped that a rectification program would provide a way to vent hostilities, open up communication throughout the Party, and force a restructuring of the Party bureaucracy.

The motto of the Cheng-feng was "unity-criticism-unity." It was not intended to be a purge. Criticism and self-criticism were to replace expulsion, physical punishment, and death as methods of bringing about change.<sup>32</sup> The underlying assumption in criticism and self-criticism was that people needed support to change the victim and/or oppressor attitudes they inherited from the "old" China. Criticism and self-criticism were intended to pressure people to become aware of their old "bourgeois," individualist attitudes and behavior (greed, selfishness, laziness, hypocrisy, malice, etc.) and develop a "proletarian," class attitude (cooperation, commitment, responsibility, willingness to work hard, cleanliness, etc.). Each person would share information and

feelings about his or her life and ask for a response from the others, who were to offer constructive criticism.<sup>33</sup>

Mao laid down two basic guidelines for the Cheng-feng:

. . . two principles must be observed. The first is, "punish the past to warn the future," and the second, "save men by curing their ills." Past errors must be exposed with no thought of personal feelings or face. We must use a scientific attitude to analyze and criticize what has been undesirable in the past . . . this is the meaning of "punish the past to warn the future." But our object in exposing errors and criticizing shortcomings is like that of a doctor in curing a disease. The entire purpose is to save the person, not to cure him to death. If a man has appendicitis, a doctor performs an operation and the man is saved . . . we cannot adopt a brash attitude toward diseases in thought and politics, but [must have] an attitude of "saving men by curing their diseases."<sup>34</sup>

Mao's concept of "curing the patient" through reeducation included more than information-sharing and historical analysis. It also included application of various psychological techniques. He believed that old attitudes were deeply ingrained, and that psychological pressure must be brought to bear before a person could give them up:<sup>35</sup>

It is necessary to destroy these conditions and sweep them away, but it is not easy. The task must be performed properly, which means that a reasonable explanation must be given. If the explanation is very reasonable, if it is to the point, it can be effective. The first step in reasoning is to give the patient a powerful stimulus: yell at him, "You're sick!" so the patient will have a fright and break out in an overall sweat; then he can actually be started on the road to recovery.<sup>36</sup>

This notion of shocking individuals out of mental lethargy and forcing them to confront internal inconsistencies became a routine aspect of thought reform.

During the Cheng-feng all cadres engaged in intense study of Party documents, reading, writing, and discussing.<sup>37</sup> They examined their past in terms of class, behavior, and attitude, and they engaged in criticism and self-criticism.<sup>38</sup> The small groups in which they

regularly met became much like modern encounter groups. At its most intense level, the meeting would become a "struggle," in which the person being criticized would be vehemently insulted by the rest of the group in an attempt to force a change of old values and the adoption of group values.<sup>39</sup>

The justification for this psychological pressure was both ideological and pragmatic. It was ideological in that the Communists believed their perspective to be correct, i.e., they believed it conformed to actual conditions in the world. They believed that the "old society" was corrupt and evil, and that everyone who was a part of that society was partially corrupted, having internalized its values to some extent. The psychological pressure was intended to assist people in "thought reform," in finding a new, more "correct" perspective.<sup>40</sup> The justification for the psychological pressure was pragmatic in that the only way the revolutionary movement could continue to function successfully under the intense wartime conditions was through increased communications and shared values, goals, and actions.<sup>41</sup> While the Party leadership recognized that flexibility was a necessity under guerrilla conditions, they hoped to achieve as much control as possible by being sure that as many supporters as possible shared their political theory. The goal of the Cheng-feng, therefore, was to teach the cadres Marxist-Leninist theory insofar as it could be creatively applied to the Chinese situation.<sup>42</sup>

Of the eighteen documents selected for study during the Cheng-feng, at least seven were written by Mao, and only two had non-Chinese authors. In making the selection Mao was once again establishing the independence of the Chinese Communist struggle in the area of political theory.<sup>43</sup>

The Cheng-feng was to have lasted three months. All cadres throughout the region participated in study groups for two hours a day. The three-month program was found to be insufficient, however, and it was repeatedly extended. The Cheng-feng lasted for up to two years in some parts of the base.<sup>44</sup>

Tension between cultural workers and the Communists was as present at Yen-an as it was to be in the future. In 1942 the Party held a Forum of Writers and Artists. The cultural workers were asked to live and work among the people, to change their ways of thinking, and to draw their energy and inspiration from the peasants. They were asked to alter their styles to make their work comprehensible to the peasants. Many resisted, but many were able to do so. The stories and plays that resulted had a powerful effect on the Yen-an population. Artistic expression was also encouraged among the peasants, and woodcuts, prints, and paper cutouts reflected their creativity.

The Party leadership, including 267 cadres from various organizations, participated in the three-month Conference of Senior Cadres in 1942. Using criticism/self-criticism, study, and organizational analysis, they succeeded in establishing a new unity. They also developed the principles of "mass line" politics, a two-way process designed to raise the political consciousness of the peasants and to overcome elitist leadership practices within the Party organization.<sup>46</sup> Mao described it as:

. . . summing up (i.e., coordinating and systematizing after careful study) the views of the masses (i.e., views scattered and unsystematic), then taking the resulting ideas back to the masses, explaining and popularizing them until the masses embrace them as their own, stand up for them, and translate them into action by way of testing their correctness. Then it is necessary once more to sum up the views of the masses and once again take the resulting ideas back to the masses so that the masses give them their wholehearted support . . . and so on,

over and over again, so that each time these ideas emerge with greater correctness and become more vital and meaningful.<sup>47</sup>

The purpose was to ground the leadership in the realities of the peasants' lives, to learn from the peasants, and to slowly educate the peasants to the broader political implications of their situation.<sup>48</sup>

The Cheng-feng was the first large rectification campaign within the Communist Party.<sup>49</sup> It set a precedent for solving the intra-Party disputes that were to occur as the Party expanded.<sup>50</sup> Its success as a method of political education established rectification campaigns as a major instrument of thought reform.<sup>51</sup> At least ten such campaigns were initiated within the Party over the next twenty-five years.<sup>52</sup>

The Cheng-feng was only one part of a broader revolutionary program at Yen-an. Six other campaigns were initiated during the same period. These involved a transfer of government power to local communities and a concomitant reduction of the higher-level bureaucracy; a "back to the village" campaign, which sent intellectuals to the countryside to work among the peasants; a campaign for reduction of rent and interest; a campaign to generate cooperatives throughout the rural areas; a production campaign; and a mass literacy campaign.<sup>53</sup> Throughout this period, military victories continued. By the end of 1944 the Communists controlled one million square miles, which included nineteen base areas and one-fourth of China's population.<sup>54</sup>

Just before the end of World War II, Chiang offered the Communists representation in the Nationalist government in exchange for control of the Communist Army. Mao rejected the offer. He demanded a constitutional convention in which the people could decide the form the government would take. He also asked for weapons for the Communist Army for

its battles against the Japanese.

When the Japanese were defeated at the end of the War, the United States gave the Nationalists extensive aid to defeat the Communists. The Communists lost several eastern and northern cities. They retreated into the provinces in northern China and in Manchuria. Civil war was renewed in the autumn of 1945. A brief truce was mediated by General George Marshall, but when Russia withdrew from Manchuria in 1946, the truce ended in a battle for control of that province.<sup>55</sup>

#### The Rectification Campaign of 1947-1948

One other rectification campaign took place before the CCP victory of 1949. It occurred in 1947-1948. The war with the Japanese had ended, but the civil war continued. Party membership had swollen to 2.7 million members.<sup>56</sup> Many of these were KMT troops who had deserted the KMT army or were captured by the Communists. They had been given the choice of returning to their villages or joining the Red Army,<sup>57</sup> and hundreds of thousands joined up after being recruited at "speak bitterness" meetings.<sup>58</sup> Mao's concern with the new and undisciplined recruits was how to incorporate them into the army, known then as the People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>59</sup> In addition, Mao wanted to correct the abuses that were being wrongly inflicted upon middle peasants by both Party and Army members.<sup>60</sup>

In an effort to politically educate the new soldiers, Mao once again formed soldiers' committees at company level. These committees were to elect representatives to work with officers in the areas of food distribution and budgeting. Seasoned battle veterans were assigned to instruct new recruits in the ways of study and criticism.<sup>61</sup> All were

required to examine their background, their attitudes, and their performances. According to William Hinton, "Officers . . . taught soldiers, soldiers . . . taught officers, and soldiers . . . taught one another. The campaign . . . resulted in unprecedented unity throughout the Army, a high level of political consciousness, and surging morale."<sup>62</sup> Discussion on all levels was to take place before any military decision was put into effect.<sup>63</sup> Apparently the changes were effective, for Hinton, who was in China at that time, commented on what he considered the unique qualities of the soldiers in the PLA:

The soldiers were carefree yet dignified, fun-loving but not raucous, friendly but not condescending. These attitudes reflected something inside them, a confident and purposeful spirit. All this could never be imposed by restraint but was the result of revolutionary commitment strengthened by education.<sup>64</sup>

To rectify abuses by Party members, Mao asked the assistance of the peasants' associations. He asked them to criticize and weed out cadres who were behaving tyrannically or practicing terrorism.<sup>65</sup> In Fanshen, Hinton describes how this campaign occurred in the village of Long Bow, where Party rectification took place within the broader context of land reform and thought reform among the peasants. Because it magnifies the ways in which rural change occurred, it is worth a closer look.

Hinton believes the word fanshen ("to turn over") captured the spirit of the CCP programs:

To China's hundreds of millions of landless and land-poor peasants it meant to stand up, to throw off the landlord yoke, to gain land, stock, implements, and houses. But it meant much more than this. It meant to throw off superstition and study science, to abolish "word blindness" and learn to read, to cease considering women as chattels and establish equality between the sexes, to do away with appointed village magistrates and replace them with elected councils. It meant to enter a new world.<sup>66</sup>



This change of attitude was considered by the Chinese Communists to be a task of highest priority, and central to that task was the concept of thought reform. Thought reform was never viewed as an isolated process, but was integral to a larger process of reform, to an ongoing and total transformation of the peasants' ways of life.<sup>67</sup>

In Long Bow, as in many other areas, a Communist underground had been in operation long before the Japanese were finally expelled in 1945. These peasant cadres did not identify themselves as party members until the Rectification Campaign of 1948, for until that time there was the possibility of Japanese return, in which case those who had dominated the area might return and take vengeance on the cadres and their families.<sup>68</sup>

The cadres did take active leadership immediately after the Japanese departure, however, and along with other peasant leaders (also called cadres) they formed a "People's Government," called a village meeting, and set about taking charge of needed reforms.<sup>69</sup>

One of their first tasks was to call the landlords before the people, who were expected to voice their pent-up grievances. The reaction of the peasants, however, was only a stunned silence. Confused, the cadres met with several small groups of people that night to learn why, after years of abuse, the peasants were unwilling to speak up. The answer, of course, was fear. They feared the Japanese might return, and they had heard that the army of the Communists was not as well-equipped.<sup>70</sup>

The cadres talked with people in the small groups, encouraging them to tell their stories of the abuses they had suffered at the hands of the Japanese and the collaborators. As some people began to speak, others joined in. Many finally agreed to participate in the large

meeting the next day. They did so, accusing the landlords of past offenses. As the peasants spoke, the cadres attempted to provide a political analysis of the situation.<sup>71</sup>

The cadres got some aid and support from the Party hierarchy--from the district, to the county, to the border region committees, to the Central Committee headed by Mao. The main responsibility for the transformation of the villages, however, was left to the local cadres. Hinton's description of this effort in Long Bow makes clear that it was never a simple matter of ordering the peasants to change, as is sometimes believed. As mentioned earlier, Party cadres were not even identified as such until 1948. Party leadership in the villages was not direct, but stemmed from the active participation of some of its local members in the village militia, the Peasants' Association, and/or the Women's Association. Most tried hard to set a good example. They consulted each other and stuck together after they had studied an issue and come to a final decision. Even though some did eventually try to take advantage of leadership positions and order people around, for the most part they could only effect changes through example, education, and persuasion.<sup>72</sup>

Superstition was very much a part of peasant life, and the Communists worked hard to persuade people to rely on each other for sustenance, and not on spirits, astrology, or mud idols. The cadres, having been raised with the same superstitions as their neighbors, found that they first had to loosen their own ties to the old beliefs, which they attempted mainly through discussion. An event in a neighboring village had a profound effect on the whole area. Hinton describes it:

[In the village of Sand Bank] there stood a shrine to the god Ch'i-t'ien, a very powerful Buddhist deity who, when displeased, could curse one and all with dysentery. Since people only too often died of this disease, Ch'i-t'ien was greatly to be feared. Many a stick of incense was burned before his image and many an offering of food was left for his spirit to eat. The Party members of Sand Bank decided to attack Ch'i-t'ien just like any landlord. They figured out how much money they had spent humoring him over the years and discovered it was enough to have saved many lives in a famine year. When they took these calculations to their Peasants' Association, many young men and women got very angry. They went to the temple, pulled the god out of his shelter and carried him to the village office. Before a mass meeting they settled accounts with him by proving that he had squandered their wealth without giving any protection in return. Then they smashed his mud image with sticks and stones. Some of the older people tried to stop them. They prophesied that everyone involved would die of dysentery in a few days. But the young men and women went right ahead. When no one fell ill that night nor the whole of the next day, the hold of Ch'i-t'ien on the village collapsed.<sup>73</sup>

This so impressed the people of Long Bow that they went through the same process with one of their own gods.

Another factor that undercut superstition in China was the overthrow of the gentry class. The peasants believed that certain uncontrollable conditions at birth, as well as the positions of one's ancestors' graves, determined one's fate. They therefore believed that the gentry were wealthy because of mysterious and unpredictable spiritual occurrences. They believed that their own lives of suffering were also predetermined. The fact that the gentry had been overthrown served to greatly undercut these beliefs. Gradually their loyalty was transferred to their own Peasants' Association, and the Army and Party.<sup>74</sup>

Public meetings were the village cadres' main method of communicating with the people, and attendance at meetings was generally required. The CCP believed that only through ongoing political participation by the people could reforms be effected. The peasants, however, sometimes felt that their time could better be spent farming, and adjustments were

sometimes made. A saying circulated throughout the Communist-controlled areas: "Under the Nationalists too many taxes; under the Communists too many meetings."<sup>75</sup>

Peasants who for some reason felt a strong alliance to the gentry were sometimes sent to district-level classes by the village government. In these classes they would study the workings of the old semi-feudal system and begin to understand their position within that system. Each would tell his or her own story. Others would listen and sympathize, criticize, or ridicule in an attempt to motivate the person to change his or her behavior in the future.

Any affection for gentry individuals on the part of Party members or non-Party cadres was even more strongly attacked. Class lines were strictly drawn, and could be crossed only by gentry willing to give up their privileges.<sup>76</sup>

Hinton describes how over time some of the cadres began to abuse their positions in the village. Their abuses varied, ranging from authoritarian attitudes to neglect of duty to petty theft to rape and other violence. Some became quite tyrannical. This greatly alienated the peasants. To counter the abuses of leadership the government and Party organized a "Wash Your Face" Campaign in spring 1947. To achieve this government cleanup, all village cadres were told they must "pass the gate." The "gate" was a council of delegates who were to be elected by the villagers. Each village activist was to appear in public before the council and submit to criticism and self-criticism.

In Long Bow, the first attempt at the gate was cancelled by the district when it became clear that the delegates to the gate were out for revenge rather than rehabilitation. The district leaders became

frightened and unsure of how to deal with the peasants' anger. The villagers took this behavior to mean that the leadership was more interested in protecting local cadres than in helping the peasants, and were even more angered. Some of the cadres who had been behaving tyrannically also misinterpreted the cancellation of the gate and began behaving even more tyrannically than ever. It was obvious something needed to be done.

The Communist Party's Draft Agrarian Law of 1947 radically affected the political involvement of peasants throughout China. The law called upon the Peasants' Associations to take over the land and all property and possessions of the landlords and rich peasants. The land was to be divided among all the people, including the landlords, in a way that would leave everyone, regardless of sex, with roughly equal amounts of land and property.<sup>78</sup> Anna Louise Strong has described land reform as the first major step for women's liberation in China.<sup>79</sup> Hinton agreed:

On many other questions the women were divided. While the younger women were very concerned about free choice in marriage, older women saw this as a threat to their control over their daughters-in-law. While younger women opposed all family beatings, older women tended to countenance beatings just so long as mothers-in-law administered them. On one issue they all were agreed, however. Women should be able to get and keep a share in the land.<sup>80</sup>

Although the oppression of women in China by no means ended with the CCP victories, the women found they had a powerful ally when they did speak up. Many women became politically active, and many joined the Party.<sup>81</sup> The Women's Associations that were formed in the villages served as a place where women could share their stories. As they became articulate they organized literacy classes and political study groups and were active in the overall production and defense efforts in the

villages.<sup>82</sup> When the women were beaten by husbands, fathers- or mothers-in-law for attending meetings, they developed ways to change such behavior. Hinton describes how after one such beating the women of the village called a meeting and had the offending husband explain his actions. He said he had beaten his wife because "the only reason women go to meetings is to gain a free hand for flirtation and seduction."<sup>83</sup> The women vehemently protested his attitude. They finally became so enraged at his stubbornly arrogant behavior that they physically assaulted him and nearly beat him unconscious. Although this was not the method of reeducation promoted by the Communists, the men did learn to become more cautious about wife-beating, which was a common practice. The women found that thereafter they could usually reason with the men. They would remind a man that his wife could now divorce him, and that now he must treat her with respect if he wanted her to stay.<sup>84</sup>

Along with the Draft Law, the Party initiated the Rectification Campaign of 1948. Work teams were sent into certain villages in the spring of the year to explain the new law and to investigate the local Party organizations. The work teams included ten to twelve cadres drawn equally from university and peasant volunteers. All participants had been through extensive preparation for their task. Hinton describes the preparation of the university members, of whom he was one. Each intellectual who volunteered had had to write an autobiography stressing his or her class background. Small groups of fifteen to twenty people met daily to study Communist theory concerning class society. Those of gentry backgrounds had had to state a willingness to give up their loyalty to their past lives and to their families, and to express primary loyalty to the workers and peasants. This had proven very painful and

emotion-filled, for each knew that she might find herself in the position of having to watch her own family being tried and expropriated by the peasants. Although the Draft Law opposed physical violence, such violence did occur and could be expected to continue. Many of these people suffered loss of sleep and loss of appetite, and wept as they struggled to make the decision. Hinton observed that for the most part, the intellectuals who went through the thought reform process seemed to appreciate it: "The spartan life, the intellectual ferment, the group companionship, and the physical and mental well-being that developed as a result of remolding their ideology moved most of them deeply."<sup>85</sup>

The work teams set about to reform the Party organizations throughout the occupied areas. Their attitude was to be "kill the disease and save the patient." In Long Bow, all Communist meetings were declared open to the public. This required for the first time that the Communists identify themselves as such. The political environment was such at that time that the Central Committee had decided it was safe to admit Party membership.

Public meetings, meetings of organizations, and small group meetings were held as the peasants prepared to participate. Four questions were discussed: "What is the Communist Party?" "Is the Communist Party good or bad?" "If it is good, how can it contain its bad members?" "What should be done for the bad members?"<sup>86</sup>

The last question especially provoked much discussion. Many still felt the bad cadres should be beaten. Others took a more moderate stance. The work teams, who were to oversee the gate, had been instructed to be sure that the cadres were not physically nor emotionally destroyed, but they were also to make sure that the abuses of the cadres were

addressed. In addition, they were to make the situation safe enough for the peasants to speak up without fear that any errant cadres might retaliate.

Two successive gates were held to ensure the cadres a fair hearing. The first gate was quite successful. People attended eagerly as soon as they realized they would genuinely be heard. Because it was in the winter season, the meetings went on all day every day until all twenty-six Party cadres had been reviewed. All but four passed the gate.<sup>87</sup> These four appeared before the second gate, which was held later, along with non-Party cadres who had not yet faced the gate. All four Party members were passed when the villagers became convinced that they were genuinely sorry for their past behavior and committed to reform. Three extremely oppressive non-Party cadres did not pass, and they were to appear before the People's Congress as soon as that new legal body was formed. In the interim, two of them were sent to a special school that the Communists had established for persons who did not pass the gate in their home communities. The idea behind the school was to remove the cadres from their village environments and give them supportive teachers, and space and time to study and think.<sup>88</sup>

Hinton observed that the rectification campaign taught the peasants much confidence in their ability to articulate their grievances and reminded Party members of their accountability to the people. It had also offered a workable alternative to the traditional physical punishment of wrongdoers.

In 1948, in preparation for victory, the Communists initiated the political processes preparatory to the creation of People's Congresses. The new government was to be based on the election of local



People's Councils, which were to govern the villages and to elect delegates to the Regional Congresses. The Regional Congresses were then to join with the congresses elected in the cities to elect delegates to the National Congress.<sup>89</sup>

Before permitting the village-level elections to take place, however, work teams were to undertake more political education. For several days before the elections were to occur, the people met in groups to discuss the purpose of the Congress, the duties of the elected officers, and the responsibilities of people in a democracy. It was explained that the Communist Party members could be elected to the Congress, but that they would have no more authority than any other delegate. The Party members, like anyone else, were to influence public opinion only through persuasion, education, and participation.

The question of popular participation in government was also discussed. Some believed democracy to mean freedom to attend or not to attend meetings. Others felt attendance must be required. Others agreed that attendance was necessary for full democratic participation, but felt this was so only if people could voluntarily choose to participate. A general consensus was reached in Long Bow that there were common responsibilities, and among these was attendance at and participation in meetings. People who chose not to attend nor participate would be subject to public criticism.

When the elections took place, sixteen women and nineteen men were elected to the People's Council in Long Bow.<sup>90</sup>

Hinton was fascinated by the processes of thought reform and political education he observed while in China. He comments on the gradual but steady changes that occurred through the Communists'

willingness to do grass roots work:

. . . each successive mobilization had the power to advance the understanding of all. The backward soon reached the level of their teachers, and so understanding spiralled until the whole concept of what was backward had to be revised. When such a process was consciously and systematically unfolded year after year, decade after decade, in a countryside containing millions of people, the total effect was astonishing. The whole people became politicized, became conscious, became active, and finally did indeed become capable of transforming themselves.<sup>91</sup>

#### CCP Victory--1949

Between 1946 and 1949 the United States pumped almost two billion dollars into the Nationalist regime, but the Nationalists had lost popular support. They were unable to renew themselves. The Communists continued to capture Japanese weapons. They managed to take many U.S. weapons and supplies that had been given to the Nationalists. With peasant support, the Communists took control of the capitol at Nanking in the fall of 1949, at which time the Nationalists withdrew to the island of Taiwan. The Communists proclaimed the People's Republic of China and proceeded to establish a unified central government in China.<sup>92</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Han Suyin, The Morning Deluge, vol. 1: 1893-1935; vol. 2: 1935-1953 (2 vols.; London: Granada, Panther Books, 1976), 2:93.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Jay Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (Norton Library ed.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 395.

<sup>3</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:93-94.

<sup>4</sup>Mark Selden, The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China (Harvard East Asian Series, 62; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 146.

<sup>5</sup>See Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:93-94, and Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (1st rev. and enl. ed. An Evergreen Book; New York: Grove Press, 1973), chap. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:93-94.

<sup>7</sup>Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, abridged by Bruno Shaw (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1970), pp. 86-89.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>9</sup>Selden, Yen-an Way, p. 208..

<sup>10</sup>Snow, Red Star Over China, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup>Selden, Yen-an Way, p. 208.

<sup>12</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:109.

<sup>13</sup>R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (3rd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 775.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 854-56.

<sup>15</sup>James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 67-68.

<sup>16</sup>Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 181-186.

<sup>17</sup>Snow, Red Star Over China, chap. 5.

<sup>18</sup>William Hinton, Fanshen (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 84-85.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

- <sup>20</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, pp. 190-92.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 208-209.
- <sup>22</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 395-96.
- <sup>23</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 209.
- <sup>24</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 395-96.
- <sup>25</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, pp. 188-89.
- <sup>26</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 395.
- <sup>27</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 189.
- <sup>28</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:114.
- <sup>29</sup>Quoted in Selden, Yenan Way, p. 193.
- <sup>30</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:118-119.
- <sup>31</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 198.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 197.
- <sup>33</sup>William Hinton, Iron Oxen (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1971), pp. 70-71.
- <sup>34</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 13-14.
- <sup>35</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 194.
- <sup>36</sup>Quoted in Selden, Yenan Way, p. 194.
- <sup>37</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 195.
- <sup>38</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, p. 517.
- <sup>39</sup>"Struggles" are regularly referred to in literature relating to thought reform, e.g., see Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, pp. 264-265. Although I found no reference to "struggles" in the 1942 campaign in the literature listed in the Selected Bibliography, my sense is that this technique was in practice at that time.
- <sup>40</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 14.
- <sup>41</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, p. 195.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 190.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 200.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 199-200.

<sup>45</sup>Jean Chesneaux, Françoise Le Barbier, and Marie-Claire Bergere, China: From the 1911 Revolution to Liberation, trans. Paul Aster and Lydia Davis, chaps. 1-3 trans. Anne Destenay (New York: Random House, Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. 303-304.

<sup>46</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, pp. 200-207.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in Hinton, Fanshen, p. 608.

<sup>48</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, pp. 274-76.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>52</sup>Franklin W. Houn, A Short History of Chinese Communism (A Spectrum Book; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 114-17.

<sup>53</sup>Selden, Yenan Way, pp. 210-12.

<sup>54</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:125.

<sup>55</sup>Palmer and Colton, History, p. 856.

<sup>56</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 114.

<sup>57</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:214-15.

<sup>58</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, p. 480.

<sup>59</sup>Han Suyin, Morning Deluge, 2:189.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:210.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:215.

<sup>62</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, pp. 480-81.

<sup>63</sup>Joshua S. Horn, Away With All Pests (1st Modern Reader Paperback; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 31.

<sup>64</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, p. 480.

<sup>65</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 114.

<sup>66</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, p. vii.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>79</sup>Anna Louise Strong, The Rise of the People's Communes in China (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1960), pp. 55-56.

<sup>80</sup>Hinton, Fanshen, p. 396.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 398.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-59.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., chaps. 35-39.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 470-72.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 539-40.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 540-43.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 610.

<sup>92</sup>Palmer and Colton, History, p. 856.

## CHAPTER V

### THOUGHT REFORM AS A NATIONAL PROGRAM, 1949-1959

The Chinese Communists faced an enormous task when they took power in 1949. The years of internal and external warfare and recent national disasters--floods, famine, and drought--had left the economy and the transportation systems in chaos. The people were worn out and hungry.<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition and disease were rampant.<sup>2</sup> Assisted by the Soviet government, the new government went to work immediately to restore order and unity.<sup>3</sup>

The government established by the Communists was modeled after that of Russia: government and Party separate, but with Party members actively involved in government at all levels.<sup>4</sup> The new government declared itself to be a "people's democratic dictatorship." It was to be a coalition of Communists and non-Communists, with less stress on ideology and more on stabilizing the national economy. What exactly that meant and how long it was supposed to last before the next stage--socialism--was a source of friction within the Party leadership from the very start.

Two opposing lines within the Party leadership once again emerged, with Mao increasingly at odds with the other Party leaders. Among other things, they disagreed on the priority that should be given to political education. Mao believed economic progress for China had to be subordinated to the political education or "thought reform" of the Chinese people. He believed that unless people experienced a genuine change of

values and priorities first, then the new economy would reflect the greed and competition of the old system. His opponents, ultimately identified with Liu Shao-chi, believed that "thought reform" had to be subordinated to, and would be facilitated by, economic progress.<sup>5</sup>

However they ranked political education on their scale of priorities, both groups agreed that it was very important. The media, large posters (also known as "wall newspapers"), meetings, rallies, demonstrations, and various mobilization campaigns were used by the CCP to generate debate and discussion and to develop class consciousness throughout the Chinese population.

A national program of "study groups" was formally begun with one national campaign. All Chinese but the very young were required to participate in one or more of these small groups, which were composed of ten to twenty people who shared a common neighborhood, workplace, or social activity. Study group participation took up to ten hours a week for everyone.<sup>6</sup>

In the small groups, one person would read aloud Marxist and other Party documents, and then the entire group would apply those ideas to local, national, and international problems. Each person was expected to apply the "people's standpoint" to the issues discussed, using criticism and self-criticism as a method of arriving at that perspective. The "people's standpoint" was in effect the Communist Party's standpoint,<sup>7</sup> insofar as that could be understood given the conflicting directions that frequently resulted from the somewhat divided leadership.<sup>8</sup>

Study groups also spent time on "daily life" criticisms and self-criticisms, during which the participants examined their personal



thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Coercion was to have no place in study groups. Peer pressure, however, did prove a powerful factor. Marxist jargon became a regular feature of political discussion. According to Robert Lifton, if a person did not satisfactorily apply the "people's standpoint," he would be told to "examine himself" and look into the causes of these "reactionary tendencies . . . to search out the harmful 'bourgeois' and 'imperialistic' influences from his past for evaluation and self-criticism."<sup>9</sup> Study groups became (and remain) one of the most important ways in which all Chinese engaged in ongoing political discussion and debate. They served to communicate Communist norms and to correct deviancies from those norms.<sup>10</sup>

The Communist commitment to the liberation of women continued after 1949. The Marriage Law of 1950 ended traditional family relations in China. Sheila Rowbotham describes the legal implications of that law:

It ended the superior position of the man over the woman, it ended forced marriage, it secured monogamy and equal legal rights. "Bigamy, concubinage, child betrothal, interference with the remarriage of widows and the execution of money or gifts shall be prohibited." Husband and wife had the right of free choice of occupation and free participation in work and social activities, and equal rights in the possession and management of property. Divorce was to be granted when "husband and wife both desire." Responsibility for formulating and enforcing these new laws which related to women was with the All-China Democratic Women's Federation.<sup>11</sup>

Attempts to educate people to these new ways often met much resistance. Some women were even murdered as a result. Because of such incidents, the organizing of women was delayed in some areas until further education had been accomplished, but it resumed again in 1953. Where women could safely organize, many woman and child health centers and children's hospitals were established, as were many local health

centers. Although under-represented, women were active at all levels of the government and Party, and their influence was strongly felt.<sup>12</sup>

Almost immediately after the Communists took power, most brothels were closed down by the Chinese people. In 1951 the government declared prostitution illegal and closed down the remaining brothels. The prostitutes were treated as victims of the old order, and it was made known that their pasts were not to be held against them. The new government saw to it that the women were treated for venereal disease, which over 90 percent of them suffered. Those new to prostitution were sent home to find respectable jobs. Prostitutes who had been in the practice for a long time were asked to attend Rehabilitation Centers. There they studied government policy toward prostitutes and were offered the prospect of becoming equal partners in the creation of the new society. The women shared their pain-filled stories at "speak bitterness" meetings, and through such sharing developed a deeper understanding of their situation. Part of each day was spent learning and practicing a trade, for which they received regular pay. They were also taught to read and write. Families were allowed to visit them, and the women were allowed to leave when they wished. When they left they were either sent back to their villages or helped to find jobs in the city. When prostitution had been largely eliminated, the Rehabilitation Centers were closed down or used for other purposes.<sup>13</sup>

In 1951 two mass campaigns were initiated to isolate opponents of the new government and to generate nationalistic feelings. These were the "Resist America, Aid Korea" Campaign and the "Suppress Counter-revolutionaries" Campaign. Among the targets of the latter were many intellectuals.<sup>14</sup>

In general, the intellectuals had been impressed with the Communist victory over the corrupt KMT regime, and many had worked actively as or with the Communists.<sup>15</sup> The Communists desperately needed the services of the intellectuals after 1949. The intellectuals posed a problem for the Party members, however, who identified the intellectuals as part of the exploiting classes simply by virtue of the fact that they had been able to afford schooling, a luxury denied the vast majority of the Chinese people.<sup>16</sup>

The "thought reform" of intellectuals, therefore, was of major concern to the Party. Franklin Houn lists some of the behavior patterns with which the Communists charged the intellectuals:

1. political--distrust of the CCP, antagonism to the Soviet Union, subservience to the Kuomintang, worship of America, indifference to the people's revolutionary struggle, reformism, conservatism, and bureaucratism.
2. social--opportunism, lack of sense of duty, purely technical viewpoint, employee's viewpoint, contempt for labor, and desire to exploit fellow human beings.
3. academic--intellectual sectarianism, subjective dogmatism, formalism, liberalism, pragmatism, and pure professional interest.
4. personal--egotism, selfishness, arrogance, extravagance, and emotionalism.<sup>17</sup>

The Communists wanted to either change the attitudes of the intellectuals or at least to neutralize them, so that such patterns would not be passed on to younger Chinese.<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1950, the government sent many intellectuals to the country, where land reform programs continued to provide a context for the political education of the peasants.<sup>19</sup> In 1951 the CCP initiated the year-long Thought Reform Campaign, which was directed mainly at the intellectuals. Thousands attended "revolutionary universities,"

institutions which had been in operation since 1949. Most intellectuals who attended volunteered to go, one reason being that the universities were intended as training centers for government personnel, but also because it was considered a patriotic thing to do. The university programs lasted for up to a year, but usually less. The methods of thought reform used in these centers became commonly used in mass campaigns after 1951, so they deserve a closer look. Lifton describes a six-month program.<sup>20</sup>

Upon arrival at the universities, the intellectuals were assigned to a small group of about ten people. Each small group elected one of its members as a leader. Each small group was assigned to one of four large sections, each with about one thousand students.

Lifton divides the university procedures into three parts: a period of togetherness and unity, a period of conflict and struggle, and a period of final thought summary and new harmony.

The first two weeks of the university were completely informal. A sense of closeness and freedom and play predominated. At the end of two weeks, meetings were held to explain the program. The general message was that old unhealthy values had to be reformed into new healthy values, to enable the intellectuals to better serve the people. Several formal courses were then taught, ranging from basic Marxism to field study, which included visits to places like factories. Each course had only one very long lecture.

After each course lecture, students would gather in their small groups for discussion. All of each day was taken up with these study groups, until it was time for the next course lecture. If something important happened nationally, such as a speech by Mao, large gatherings

would be called to share it, and then the study groups would discuss the issues involved.

All of the small group leaders would meet with a cadre once or twice a day to report how each person in their groups was doing. In this early period the small group leaders were told to allow open discussion and to serve mainly as group coordinators, not taking stands on issues.

Over the next few weeks, the tone of the program gradually changed. The cadres wanted more detailed reports from the small group leaders concerning the students in their groups. The small group leaders were told to take a "progressive" stand on issues and to encourage the students to take that stand.

At the end of each course the students were told to prepare a "thought summary," telling how the course had changed their views. They were given two days to write their summaries. Each was then required to read her report to the others in the small group, who were to offer criticisms. It was at this point, Lifton feels, that togetherness changed to conflict. Shared stories from the more intimate earlier period were often brought up in a harshly critical way. Some of the students revealed themselves as Communist Youth Corps or Party members, and they let it be known that they had been closely observing all that had gone on. The students realized that there were two channels of information going to the school administration--the group leaders and the young Communists--each reporting on the other. To ensure that the tone of the small group did not remain uncritical nor unemotional, certain activist students were switched from group to group.<sup>21</sup>

During this "conflict" stage at the universities, confessions became the chief occupation. Large meetings, small meetings, conversations--all revolved around one's own or another's confession of past offenses against "the people." Tremendous pressure was generated within participants to clear themselves of identification with "old" China. Lifton describes the small groups at this stage as "a complicated blend of eager analysis, cautious orthodoxy, covert personal antagonism, and beleaguered cooperation."

At times a person with an extremely offensive history was asked to make a public confession before the entire student body. This was considered a sign of willingness to give up pride, and it also served to encourage others to confess for lesser offenses they had been concealing.

A less positive public meeting was the "struggle," during which a person considered almost beyond saving was put before the student body to be insultingly denounced. It was made clear that his or her future was not secure unless he or she changed quickly and radically.

When romances between the sexes occurred, the small groups would discuss these on the basis of whether they were furthering the thought reform of the two involved people. If it was felt the relationship was not helpful, the couple would be advised to end it. In general, sexual liaisons were seen as a distraction from the purpose of the university and discouraged.

During their stay at the universities, students were asked not to leave the grounds. Evenings were spent reading or in meetings. Sundays were unscheduled, but were generally used to finish assignments. Periodically there was entertainment--movies, plays, singing, and

dancing--which always had Communist ideological content. The schedule was full and exhausting, and the internal tension generated during this middle stage caused nervous disorders in many students, such as loss of appetite and inability to sleep.

After five months, students were told to write their final confessions. This began the third stage of the revolutionary university program. The confession was to include a history, beginning with the grandparents' generation. It was to describe their background and the development of their thoughts and actions. They were to denounce their fathers and their class origin, and to analyze the effect of the revolutionary university on their lives. The confession had to be approved before the students could graduate. It was rumored that those who did not cooperate might have to repeat the program, or possibly be sent to a labor prison.<sup>22</sup>

Lifton refers to the third stage as the "new harmony," because the process of final submission seemed to be followed by a sense of having been cleansed and accepted into the new order of things.

At the end of the final month students filled out cards as to job preference. Job assignments were a matter of great concern, for each individual could see how she was regarded by the Communists. Many were sent to the countryside to work with the peasants as a means of "furthering their re-education." Although intellectuals generally did not care to be uprooted and sent to the countryside, it looked bad on their records to refuse such assignments. When the students reached their new job assignments, they were often required to go through more programs similar to that in the revolutionary universities.<sup>23</sup>

The revolutionary universities were discontinued in 1952 and replaced by more conventional Marxist-Leninist cadre-training centers.<sup>24</sup>

During the time of the Thought Reform Campaign, several other campaigns were also occurring. Among these were an army enlistment campaign, a campaign against Japanese rearmament, a campaign against American imperialism, and a mass hygiene campaign.<sup>25</sup> Two bureaucratic rectification campaigns, the "Three-anti" and "Five-anti" movements, also occurred.

The "Three-anti" Campaign was against corruption, waste, and bureaucratism in the government administration that the Party had inherited from the KMT. The campaign encouraged the placement of as many cadres as possible in that administration, and the experts who were retained were required to publicly denounce their pasts and confess their failings.<sup>26</sup> The "Five-anti" Campaign was aimed at the middle-class business people, merchants, and manufacturers. The "five-antis" were bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state assets, and the leaking of state economic secrets.<sup>27</sup>

In 1952-1953 a massive educational reform program was also launched. Fifty million peasants attended literacy classes. Many new schools and universities were established in the cities,<sup>28</sup> and the study programs of existing schools and universities were greatly restructured.<sup>29</sup>

All of the campaigns generated huge public participation. Public confessions became a commonplace. Many people were sent to labor prisons.<sup>30</sup>

The Communists had four types of prisons, which they referred to



as "re-education centers." These were Detention Houses, for Western prisoners; Juvenile Delinquent Institutes; regular prisons; and Reform Through Labor camps.<sup>31</sup> The Detention Centers for Westerners involved an even more intense type of group participation and study than was found in the revolutionary universities.<sup>32</sup> The small groups participation lasted between ten and sixteen hours a day. Sometimes Westerners were sent to regular prisons, where thought reform and labor were combined.<sup>33</sup> The labor camps included two types of prisoner, those undergoing three-year terms of Education Through Labor and those undergoing life terms of Reform Through Labor. There are many different estimates of the number of people who were sent to labor camps; given China's enormous population, it is likely that there were many millions.<sup>34</sup> These camps were an extension of the traditional Chinese labor camps, and provided a huge labor pool for public works projects such as dams.<sup>35</sup> The camps mainly involved long days of exhausting physical labor.<sup>36</sup> Though conditions were harsh, there was much less demand for emotional involvement than in the other types of prisons.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to a major prison rectification in 1952-1953, physical coercion was common in the prisons. It was officially condemned at that time and largely ended.<sup>38</sup>

In the schools, thought reform was more a matter of political education and reeducation. Lifton provides an account of how the various campaigns affected one teenager who was attending a Protestant middle school. The student told Lifton that when the CCP took power some of his schoolmates were enthusiastic about the victory, and others were suspicious. Nearly all felt ambivalent about the KMT, for although

they had witnessed KMT abuses, they had also regarded that party as their government.

Thought reform was called "political study" in the school, and was introduced gradually. It took the form of regular political classes and small group sessions for criticism and self-criticism. Political instructors were chosen from the faculty. The small groups at first met two hours a day, though not every day. Political study consisted largely of reading and discussing CCP material, with related lectures. The tone of the classes was fairly emotional, with much appeal to the students' sense of "conscience."

The mass campaigns against Japanese rearmament, against U.S. imperialism, and for army enlistment aroused much interest in the school. The "Accuse Japan" campaign, especially, was deeply emotional, for the students could remember their own experiences of fear of the Japanese. A three-day meeting took place, denouncing Japanese aggression in China. Many students "spoke bitterness" against the Japanese, and anger was expressed toward the United States as well.

The "Enlist for the Army" Campaign, which lasted for one month, put a lot of pressure on students to be willing to sign up. Students who did enlist were praised, and students who held back were criticized. Many meetings and small groups were held to discuss the importance of enlisting.

This same student entered the University of Peking after middle school and found a similar, although more intense, environment. Criticism and self-criticism in the small groups was even more personal. The student told of the "Three-anti" Campaign of 1951-1952. The sequence of events was standard: an announcement by Mao, newspaper editorials

discussing the purposes and methods of the campaign, and meetings throughout China to prepare for it. At the University of Peking large posters were put up everywhere, and loudspeakers were heard throughout the campus. A two-month period was set aside for the campaign, and vacations and classes were cancelled. Administrators, faculty, and staff were detained and pressured to confess past activities. The "Three-anti" Campaign merged with the Thought Reform Campaign, and students openly criticized faculty.

An "Honesty and Frankness" movement occurred as part of the Thought Reform Campaign. Students were told to criticize themselves, though they were reassured that their bad behavior had been compelled by the old system. They were asked to denounce their families, which for the students, as for most intellectuals raised with the concept of filial piety, was extremely painful. A second campaign against the United States resulted when the U.S. was accused of using germ warfare. It was accompanied by a mass campaign for good hygiene, in which the students participated by working on the University sewage and drainage systems.<sup>39</sup>

According to the students Lifton interviewed, most young Chinese intellectuals accepted the CCP perspective willingly.<sup>40</sup> Many went, at Mao's urging, to work in the country among the peasants after 1953.<sup>41</sup>

As were all areas of life in China, the arts were greatly affected by the Communist regime. Ongoing national debate concerning the arts reflected the tensions between the "two lines" within the Party leadership. A film about the Boxer Rebellion was shown in 1950. The Propaganda Department and Liu Shao-chi praised the film. Mao and

his wife, Chiang Ching, criticized it for portraying the Chinese peasants as cruel barbarians and the Ch'ing emperor as a noble hero. Another film, Life of Wu Hsun, was shown in 1951. It portrayed a kindly beggar who devoted his life to helping others. Mao criticized it for being a confused and unhistorical promotion of Confucian principles.

The disagreements grew in intensity in 1954. A critical essay, Study of "Dream of the Red Chamber," was published by a famous historian. Two young writers wrote a criticism of it, which they attempted to have published in a national newspaper. When no major paper accepted it, they had it published in a university magazine. Mao happened to read it, liked it, and asked why it had not received national attention. The response was that "two nobodies" had written it. Mao was furious with this attitude, and he called upon all cultural workers to thoroughly examine their ideas. This resulted in much criticism and self-criticism among cultural workers, and in much criticism of contemporary literature.<sup>42</sup>

These tensions came to a head in 1954-1955. Hu Peng, a writer and a Communist Party member, presented the Central Committee with a report blaming bureaucratic authoritarianism for the lack of good writing in China. He then proceeded to attack Communism and Mao, asserting that writers and workers could never be integrated. He began organizing around his beliefs and became widely read in the universities. He was criticized for his actions, and in 1955 he made a public self-criticism. It had apparently been a result of external pressure, however, for immediately afterward he resumed traveling and organizing. This happened to coincide with an intra-Party power struggle between the regional and the central leadership, and the central leadership became very threatened. The Su Fan ("Liquidation of Hidden Counterrevolutionaries") Movement

resulted, which amounted to a purge of the entire Chinese bureaucracy. It was reported to have been severe, with much indiscriminate killing. Mao called for an end to the violence a few months later. The Su Fan Movement had caused the investigation of four hundred thousand intellectuals and had yielded forty-five thousand people identified as counterrevolutionaries.<sup>43</sup> The Su Fan Movement singled out one regional leader, Kao Kang, to be nationally denounced and expelled from the CCP.<sup>44</sup>

In general, the intellectuals came to resent the thought reform programs and campaigns. As heirs to the Confucian literati, they were used to being treated with great respect. Now they were frequently treated rudely, spied upon by students or co-workers, and required to attend long meetings the content of which invalidated their lives and their professions. They were frequently forced to make public and humiliating confessions of "crimes" they did not consider to be crimes.<sup>45</sup>

The increasing lack of enthusiasm on the part of the intellectuals was a cause of concern for the regime, which needed their active support. In 1955-1956 Premier Chou En-lai investigated the situation. Party conferences on the reform progress of intellectuals were held, and Chou reported that about 40 percent of the intellectuals actively supported the regime, 40 percent were non-active supporters, and over 10 percent were opposed to the regime. The remainder were apparently active counterrevolutionaries.<sup>46</sup> He stated that he believed the passive and negative attitudes had been caused by "crude" thought reform methods, and he asked that in future programs intellectuals be treated with greater patience and gentleness, as long as they did not actively oppose the Communists' goals.<sup>47</sup> He also announced that living and working conditions for the

intellectuals would be improved. He asked that in return the intellectuals devote eight hours of their forty-eight hour work weeks to political study and activities.<sup>48</sup>

The conditions of the intellectuals were improved, and within two years six hundred thousand had joined the Party. Han Suyin contends that this acceptance of so many intellectuals reflected a "capricious" attempt by Mao's opponents to strengthen their position within the Party leadership, for many of those admitted to the Party were not really committed to Party ideology.<sup>49</sup> Mao, in the meantime, continued to caution that the revolution had barely begun, and that class relations would continue in people's minds even though economic conditions were changing.<sup>50</sup>

In May of 1956, in an unpublished speech at a Party Congress, Mao called for a renewal of political discussion and debate throughout China. He encouraged that it be modeled after an ancient Chinese cultural renaissance, in which one hundred schools of philosophy had flourished: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend."<sup>51</sup> One idea behind this announcement was apparently to provide an outlet for non-Party intellectuals to express any stored-up grievances against the Party--hopefully to clear the air and permit better relationships<sup>52</sup>--thus consolidating the new system.<sup>53</sup> It was not, however, meant to encourage free speech in the liberal sense. It assumed loyalty to the regime and wanted constructive criticism.<sup>54</sup>

Confusion over what Mao meant, combined with the painful memory of the recent Su Fan Movement, caused many intellectuals to hesitate to speak up. Further complicating things was an event that aroused great disturbance in China: the speech by Khrushchev denouncing Stalin.<sup>55</sup>

Students learned of the repression of Stalin largely by accident, for the government was suppressing the information. An article was found in a library in a Communist newspaper from New York, the only U.S. newspaper available to Chinese students. Word spread rapidly. Stalin had been held up as a benevolent leader by the CCP leadership, and his writings were regularly included in political courses. That he was not "democratic" and had murdered so many people greatly shocked the Chinese.<sup>56</sup>

During the summer of 1956, student unrest and factory strikes concerned Party leadership. In addition, the agricultural cooperatives, which had greatly increased in number, were having problems. Mao blamed these various difficulties on an unresponsive bureaucracy and on inadequate political education programs for the people. He called for a Party rectification campaign and for a socialist education movement in the rural areas. Both suggestions met with resistance within the Party, and no significant changes occurred.<sup>57</sup>

Early in 1956 Mao made a speech, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," which again encouraged criticism of the Party. He reiterated his belief that people had the right to say whatever they felt about the government and the Party, as long as criticism was constructive, as befit close allies, and not destructive, as between class enemies.<sup>58</sup>

The Hungarian Uprising in late 1956 convinced Mao that another political education campaign was essential. He feared that conservatives in China might similarly try to take power. Many Party leaders still resisted, some feeling that such a campaign should occur, but only within the Party, closed to public participation. Mao disagreed,

saying that it would be a way to unify the people while cleaning up the Party.<sup>59</sup>

The Hundred Flowers Movement, which finally did occur in 1957, was apparently a genuine attempt at liberalization of expression in China. It was to be friendly, without "struggles" or mass meetings. Its format was to be mainly small discussion groups, where people would be able to say what they felt about the national and international Communist Party. This call for gentle criticism, however, unleashed a flood of bitterness and rage from the intellectual community. They criticized the Party, Party methods of governing, the Party's totalitarian uses of power, the growing privileges granted Party members. Even Mao was attacked. Some called for a multi-party system with free elections. Newspapers were criticized for being mouthpieces of the Party. Many intellectuals struck out at thought reform processes as well, saying they were exercises in humiliation rather than education. In universities, "democratic walls" were designated, areas set aside specifically for criticism of the regime and of the university bureaucracy. Students complained of Party control over course topics and job assignments. They called for free speech and new expression of freedom and democracy. The posting of Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech triggered riots in some cities, during which students attacked Party members and destroyed Party property.<sup>60</sup>

Apparently the outburst from the intellectual community caught the Party leadership completely off-guard and left them temporarily confused. The criticism continued for six weeks, during which the Party media nervously expressed approval for the enthusiasm of the response, but expressed concern over the tone of the criticisms.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile,



posters supportive of the Party were often torn down, and workers and students of peasant background who wanted to speak in praise of the Party were prevented from doing so and sometimes beaten up. Some Party cadres were murdered.<sup>62</sup>

After six weeks the Party leadership apparently recovered from their shock and retaliated angrily. They called for rectification of the critics and announced an "Anti-Rightist" Campaign. The Party leadership had concluded that the criticisms of thought reform indicated a need for more of it, and decided that refresher courses should be required at regular intervals. The brief attempt at liberalization was replaced with the old methods of thought reform of intellectuals. Critics of the regime began confessing their errors. The intellectuals were once again treated with scorn. They were ridiculed and insulted and some were sent to work in the countryside for further "reeducation."

The Party felt that students at Peking University were especially responsible for student agitation, and it was made known that graduates would be closely examined in terms of their activities and attitudes during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Records of this information would be kept on file and be used as a basis of future job assignments. Some students were placed under surveillance and a few were sent to prison.<sup>63</sup> Many older intellectuals were also sent to prison, and over sixty top government and Party officials were removed from office.<sup>64</sup>

Soon after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, Mao launched the "Great Leap Forward." Its purpose was to industrialize China and to further the political education of the Chinese people.<sup>65</sup> All of the Chinese population poured enthusiasm and energy into various new programs.

"People's communes" spread throughout the country. Mao asked that academic education be mixed with manual labor, and that schools and universities become as self-sufficient as possible. Millions of cadres and students and other intellectuals volunteered or were sent to work in the communes and factories and on large construction projects.<sup>66</sup> A massive health campaign was also launched.<sup>67</sup>

Women were strongly encouraged to participate in production, which motivated them to find new ways of living. Often they joined together to form production teams, working as a group in each others' homes. One would volunteer to do child-care as her share of the labor. Another would offer to do all the cooking. This sort of division of labor had already been established in the factories. Payment for work was now made directly to the women, which contributed greatly to their prestige within their families. Communal dining rooms, nurseries, kindergartens, and homes for elders flourished, freeing more and more women to actively participate in social and political life. The communes were never viewed as a substitute for the family, but the women did experience a new freedom from rigid roles.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of these contributions, however, the Great Leap Forward had many negative results. Many poorly advised agricultural and engineering experiments failed. Many officials grossly abused the enthusiasm of the workers and peasants and pushed them to the point of exhaustion.<sup>69</sup> A massive steel-making campaign was initiated, its purpose to teach the Chinese people to be self-sufficient,<sup>70</sup> which resulted in the construction of thousands of small, homemade steel-making furnaces. The people did receive an education in basic steel-making, but the drive was an economic disaster.<sup>71</sup>

Stanley Karnow refers to the Great Leap Forward as "an abortive experiment" that "plunged the Chinese people back into the kind of poverty they had begun to forget, making them increasingly cynical and apathetic."<sup>72</sup> Mao blamed the failure of the Great Leap Forward on "inexperience, waste and bad organization" in the lower levels of the CCP.<sup>73</sup> Other Party leaders would not accept this explanation, however, and held Mao largely responsible.

For various reasons, Mao resigned from his position as Chairman of the Republic in 1959, although he retained his positions as chairman of the Party and of the Military Affairs Committee.<sup>74</sup> He was replaced by Liu Shao-chi.

#### Afterword

Mao's influence continued to be strongly felt in China, of course. Increasingly concerned with what appeared to be the growth of a new privileged class in China, in 1965 Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. He urged the Chinese people to rebel against entrenched Party bureaucracies. The tumult that resulted shook China to its roots. Party members with different perceptions of the meaning of socialist revolution confronted each other, all "waving the flag" of Mao Tse-tung. All utilized at least some of the methods of thought reform developed in the preceding years. Rallies, meetings, posters, mass campaigns, small groups, special schools, public criticisms and confessions, and massive mobilization of young people--all became more familiar than ever to the Chinese people.

New to the Cultural Revolution was the extent to which young people were mobilized. Hundreds of thousands of Red Guards went from

city to country and back again, carrying quotations from Chairman Mao and challenging local Party administrators.

Reports vary and conflict over the facts of the Cultural Revolution,<sup>75</sup> but all seem to agree that it affected all the Chinese people deeply, and that political discussion and debate were generated to an unprecedented extent.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Stanley Karnow, Mao and China (Viking Compass ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Joshua S. Horn, Away With All Pests (1st Modern Reader Paperback; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 125-26.

<sup>3</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (3rd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 856.

<sup>5</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, pp. 77-79.

<sup>6</sup>Victor H. Li, Law Without Lawyers (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 42-43.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Jay Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (Norton Library ed.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 26-27.

<sup>8</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), p. 74.

<sup>9</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 26-27.

<sup>10</sup>Li, Law Without Lawyers, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), p. 185.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>13</sup>Horn, Away With All Pests, pp. 87-88.

<sup>14</sup>John King Fairbank, The United States and China (Compass Books ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1962), p. 288.

<sup>15</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 244-45.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>Franklin W. Houn, A Short History of Chinese Communism (A Spectrum Book; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 203-204.

<sup>18</sup>Theodore Hsi-en Chen, "The Thought Reform of Chinese Intellectuals," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 321 (1959):83.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-86.

- <sup>20</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 243-48.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 255-59.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 262-67.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 270-72.      <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 399.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 402.
- <sup>26</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 289.
- <sup>27</sup>Chen, "Thought Reform," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 321 (1959):84.
- <sup>28</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 69.
- <sup>29</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 246.
- <sup>30</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 290.
- <sup>31</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>32</sup>See Allyn Rickett and Adele Rickett, Prisoners of Liberation (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1973), for a description of life in the Detention Centers.
- <sup>33</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 15.
- <sup>34</sup>Bao Ruo-wang [Jean Pasqualini] and Rudolph Chelminski, Prisoner of Mao (New York: Coward McCann and Geoghegan, Penguin Books, 1973), p. 11n.
- <sup>35</sup>Fairbank, United States and China, p. 290.
- <sup>36</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 290. See Bao Ruo-wang and Chelminski, Prisoner of Mao, for description of life in the labor camps.
- <sup>37</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 84.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 53n.      <sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 318-25.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 346.
- <sup>41</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 88.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-76.      <sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78.
- <sup>44</sup>Jean Daubier, A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), p. 176n.
- <sup>45</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 68.
- <sup>46</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 402.

- <sup>47</sup>Houn, Chinese Communism, p. 204.
- <sup>48</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 403.
- <sup>49</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 81.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 84.                      <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>52</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 403.
- <sup>53</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 97.
- <sup>54</sup>Fairbank, U.S. and China, p. 297.
- <sup>55</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 97.
- <sup>56</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 408.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 98-100.
- <sup>58</sup>Li, Law Without Lawyers, p. 30.
- <sup>59</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 98-100.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 404-409.              <sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 406.
- <sup>62</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, pp. 101-102.
- <sup>63</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, pp. 404-10.
- <sup>64</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, p. 9.
- <sup>65</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 124.
- <sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-36.              <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 99.
- <sup>68</sup>Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, pp. 186-92.
- <sup>69</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, pp. 96-97.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 134.                      <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 102.
- <sup>72</sup>Karnow, Mao and China, pp. 102-103.
- <sup>73</sup>Han Suyin, Wind in the Tower, p. 110.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>75</sup>See, for example, Daubier, A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution; Stanley Karnow, Mao and China; Ken Ling, Revenge of Heaven (New York: Putnam, 1972); David Milton and Nancy Dall Milton, The Wind Will Not Subside (New York: Random House, Pantheon Books, 1976); and Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle, China: The Revolution Continued, trans. Paul Britten Austin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

## CHAPTER VI

### THOUGHT REFORM AND HUMAN CHANGE

Thought reform for everyone was painful, to some extent. It involved, after all, a deliberate and total shake-up of the traditions and values and norms that made up each person's world view. For the peasants and workers, however, it was part of a total process of change which nurtured their participation, validated them as human beings, and on the whole enormously improved their living conditions.

For the intellectuals and wealthy classes, thought reform was generally a negative experience that generated hostility and resentment, even among those who had at first celebrated Communist victories. In spite of the official position that the privileged status of these people was the enemy, and not the people themselves, in actual practice this proved too difficult a distinction for many. Mao admitted in 1957, for example, that in the first five years after the 1949 revolution, many excesses had occurred and over eight hundred thousand people had been executed.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Lifton, the psychoanalyst who interviewed many Chinese and Western intellectuals who had experienced and fled from thought reform, concluded that thought reform in itself was an excess. He describes it as an exercise in "ideological totalism," which he describes as "the coming together of immoderate ideology with equally immoderate character traits--an extremist meeting ground between people and ideas."<sup>2</sup>



Lifton admits that any ideology (i.e., "any set of emotionally-charged convictions about man and his relationship to the natural and supernatural world")--whether religious, political, scientific, or psychological--can be abused by those who practice it, but he feels that "messianic" ideologies, in which he includes Communism, are most susceptible.<sup>3</sup>

While Lifton closely examines the negative implications of thought reform for human change, Thomas Scheff, a sociologist concerned with mental health, examines some positive aspects.<sup>4</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Scheff has observed that the treatment of mental illness is largely ineffective when done in isolation; when the "patient" returns to the social environment that generated the distress, the distress reaccumulates. Scheff has also observed that emotional catharsis (through tears, laughter, shaking, talking, raging) seems to accompany and facilitate psychological healing.<sup>5</sup> Scheff has concluded that for social change attempts to be effective, there must be "communication that allows for emotional release, on the one hand, and for the creation of a group in which there is strong social solidarity and which will help sustain the changes, on the other."<sup>6</sup>

Scheff suggests that the Communists may have hit upon some psychological practices that did in fact contribute to long-term change. He mentions three: the "speak bitterness" meetings, the use of theater, and the treatment of mental illness in China.

In the "speak bitterness" meetings, individuals were allowed to pour out their rage and grief in a group setting, receiving recognition through being heard, through being reassured that their grief and rage were justifiable emotions, and through hearing that there were self-

affirming ways out of their sorrows. The others in the meetings were also affected, each drawing closer to others in the group as they became aware of their common anguish.

Theater also contributed to the release of repressed emotions in a social setting. William Hinton described the impact that theater could have on the peasants:

As the tragedy of [a] poor peasant's family unfolded, the women around me wept openly and unashamedly. On every side as I turned to look tears were coursing down their faces. No one sobbed, no one cried out but all wept together in silence. The agony on the stage seemed to have unlocked a thousand painful memories, a bottomless reservoir of suffering that no one could control . . . the women, huddled one against the other in their dark padded jackets, shuddered as if stirred by a gust of wind . . . abruptly the music stopped, the silence on the stage was broken only by the chirping of a cricket. At that moment I became aware of a new quality in the reaction of the audience. Men were weeping and I along with them.<sup>7</sup>

Edgar Snow also describes the importance of the Red Theater to the Chinese peasants, and the ways in which it provided emotional release.<sup>8</sup>

Scheff's third example is the current treatment of mental illness in China. Although this paper has not dealt with that topic,<sup>9</sup> that treatment contains elements of the "speak bitterness" meetings and the "small groups." Among other things, individuals tell what they have suffered and criticize their own role in that suffering, both of which often result in emotional catharsis. As the individuals in the groups learn to articulate their pain (in the common language of Communist ideology), they develop "transitional communities of support" that facilitate the maintenance of individual and group changes.<sup>10</sup>

The whole question of the usage of Marxist jargon in thought reform is highly controversial. It is apparently nearly mandatory for people to learn to phrase political opinions in what Victor Li calls

the "ritual language" of Communism. Li gives an example of how dissenting opinions need to be phrased:

[A person] would not say: "I think the government leaders are badly misinformed if they believe that present retirement programs are sufficiently developed that we do not have to depend on our children in our old age." He would say instead, "I, too, want to do what is best for my family and my country. I realize that my ideas may be erroneous, and hope that my comrades will help me think these questions through. But for the following reasons I do not think we should be carrying out a planned birth program--" and then express his views fully and vigorously.<sup>11</sup>

Li believes that in spite of the limitations of ritual language, it allows for a good measure of political discussion and debate.

Lifton is not so accommodating of the "all-encompassing" jargon, the "thought-terminating cliché."<sup>12</sup> While admitting that all groups have some sort of jargon which permits verbal shortcuts, he feels that the Communists carry the jargon to rigid extremes:<sup>13</sup>

The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed. These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis. In thought reform . . . the phrase "bourgeois mentality" is used to encompass and critically dismiss ordinarily troublesome concerns like the quest for individual expression, the exploration of alternative ideas, and the search for perspective and balance in political judgments.<sup>14</sup>

Simon Leys agrees, and ascribes malicious intent to the Communists: "The aim is to anesthetize critical intelligence, purge the brain, and inject the cement of official ideology into the emptied skull . . ."<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, feelings about what has occurred in China run very high.

Another area of Western debate concerning thought reform is the use of the small groups. Victor Li cautions against making Western assumptions about Chinese experiences: what may appear oppressively

group-dominated to a United States' citizen is not necessarily regarded as such by a Chinese citizen. While citizens from both countries consider individual and social concerns important, Li observes that historical developments have given individual concerns priority in the United States, and social concerns priority in China. Throughout Chinese history, people have been tied spiritually, economically, and culturally to their family villages. Group action and decision-making have been routine, and individual survival has often depended on group cooperation.<sup>16</sup> In regard to the small group system, Li sees both advantages and disadvantages. As a lawyer, he appreciates the public participation and the political awareness it affords all Chinese. He feels that the small groups, properly conducted, can provide an ongoing supportive environment. He admits, however, that the small group system offers little protection to the individual if it is improperly conducted, that is, if one's small group behaves in a way that is unfair.<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

Was thought reform a "drawing out" or a "putting in," education or indoctrination? The information researched for this paper indicates that it was both. Fanshen, in which Hinton tells of thought reform among the peasants, and Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism by Lifton provide good examples of what was and was not effective in terms of bringing about the kinds of internal change desired by the Communists. The anti-hierarchical restructuring of the Army; the fairly consistent commitment to discussion and debate; the respect for the peasants shown by the Army and by "mass line" politics; the

encouragement of women's liberation; the attempts at consensual decision-making; the making available of a vernacular written language--all seem to have had results desired by the Communists, all indicated a willingness by the Communists to listen and learn from, as well as teach, the Chinese people. On the other hand, the thought reform methods that played on guilt feelings; that demanded ritual language; that forced unthinking mouthing of Communist ideology; that humiliated instead of affirmed the human being, regardless of class origin--all of these resembled indoctrination, a one-sided "putting in" of information. These appear to have been imposed most heavily on the intellectuals.

Was thought reform successful? Did it bring about political consciousness and class awareness that thought reform proponents desired? The works cited in this study indicate that, at least through the years prior to the CCP victory and immediately thereafter, it often did, particularly among the younger intellectuals and the peasants and industrial workers. Among the older intellectuals it apparently did not bring about the changes in thinking hoped for by the Communists.

One can only speculate on the reason for the communication difficulties between the Communists and the intellectuals. An obvious reason was that many intellectuals had enjoyed their privileged status and resisted, actively and passively, Communist attempts to change the order of things. Another more subtle but perhaps more divisive reason was probably that feelings of inferiority on the part of cadres of peasant origin collided with feelings of superiority on the part of intellectuals, both within the Party and in the larger society, making it difficult for either group to think clearly about the other.

One way to gauge the success of thought reform objectives will be to observe China in the near future. The Communist leaders who succeeded Mao are apparently more concerned with economic development than with political education of the type Mao promoted. It is as yet unclear what changes will occur in China with the new openness in that country to Western corporate capitalism.

The strengths and weaknesses of thought reform will eventually be described by the Chinese people themselves. For the present, much remains to be understood, not only because thought reform has profoundly affected one-fourth of the world's people, but because it has grappled with some of the major political problems of modern times.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (3rd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 857.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Jay Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism (Norton Library ed.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas J. Scheff, "Labeling, Emotion, and Individual Change," in Labeling Madness, ed. Thomas J. Scheff (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 84-88.

<sup>5</sup>For a theory that describes this same phenomenon, see Harvey Jackins, Human Side of Human Beings (2nd ed.; Seattle: Rational Island Publishers, 1978). Further elaborated by Thomas J. Scheff, "Reevaluation Counseling: Social Implications," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 12 (Spring, 1972):58-71.

<sup>6</sup>Scheff, "Labeling, Emotion, and Individual Change," Labeling Madness, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup>William Hinton, Fanshen (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 314-15.

<sup>8</sup>Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (1st rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Grove Press, an Evergreen Book, 1973), chap. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Ruth Sidel, "Mental Diseases in China and Their Treatment," in Labeling Madness, ed. Thomas J. Scheff (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), chap. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Scheff, "Labeling, Emotion, and Individual Change," Labeling Madness, pp. 87-88.

<sup>11</sup>Victor H. Li, Law Without Lawyers (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Lifton, Thought Reform, p. 429.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 430.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 429.

<sup>15</sup>Pierre Rychmans [Simon Leys], Chinese Shadows, trans. of Ombres Chinoises (New York: Viking Press, Penguin Books, 1978), p. 167.

<sup>16</sup>Li, Law Without Lawyers, pp. 95-97. See also Ruth Sidel, Families of Fengsheng (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), chap. 7.

<sup>17</sup>Li, Law Without Lawyers, p. 97. See also Li, intro. to Allyn Rickett and Adele Rickett, Prisoners of Liberation (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1973), pp. xiii-xiv.

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