

The Failure of the Chinese Communist Party
1921-27

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ABSTRACT

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This paper deals with the failure of the Chinese Communist Party to attain a ruling leadership and effectively handle the social, economic and political problems facing China in the 1921-27 period. By examining both the background of the CCP members and their relationship with the Comintern and Moscow, the paper tries to explain the reasons behind some of the tactics taken by the CCP during this period; emphasis being put on the disastrous KMT/CCP alliance of 1923. The paper goes on to study the Party's dealings with the proletariat and peasantry, and its dilemma over the problems encountered in being a multi-class party. The conclusion brings together the problems encountered in this period and assesses the reasons for its near eradication in 1927.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last few years the Communist Party on the mainland of China has come to the attention of many people in North America, especially since its re-emergence into international circles. To many around the world China has appeared as a monolithic power structure, whose Communist Party has been endowed with independent and somewhat omnipotent decision making capabilities, not only during its ruling leadership, but throughout its long struggle to gain power. It is hard to realize at times, in the face of this, that there was a period during its infantile stage from 1921-27, in which the Chinese Communist Party failed in its attempts to gain the support of the people of China and was nearly eradicated by its enemies.

The topic of this thesis will be an assessment of the
¹CCP from 1921-27, exploring the reasons for its failure during this juncture in time. During the period under discussion there were a myriad of pressing social, economic and political problems that were waiting to be dealt with by some political group. China, in the early 20's was emerging from the last vestiges of feudalism, economically it was in the midst of both an agricultural and industrial crisis, social oppression

¹CCP will designate the Chinese Communist Party

was rampant and politically the country was cut into pieces by warlord rule. The time was ripe in China for a political group to emerge, unify the country and deal with the existing problems. The primary question to be asked in the paper is: As a group committed to social change, how did the CCP deal/or fail to deal with these problems? This thesis will try to answer those questions by examining certain historical conditions and events, as well as the background and organization of the actors involved in this epoch under discussion.

Since history has already been written, it would be a somewhat repetitious task to recall all the major events in chronological order, pointing out the failures and successes of the CCP along the way. What seems instead a more fruitful method would be to firstly examine the two main bodies from which emanated the CCP ideas and policy; delving into the CCP membership and organization and the Comintern and its involvement with Moscow and secondly the primary policy contributed by these groups during the 1921-27 period, primarily that of the KMT/CCP alliance. We shall then see how these groups and their policies intermingled with the existing historical realities of the 1921/27 period, to create certain methods and generate certain ideas on how to gain the support and promote the welfare of the mass of Chinese society. For the purpose of this paper we will divide Chinese society into four main divisions a.) rich landlords and merchants, b.) the bourgeoisie or middle class c.) the proletariat; urban workers

and small urban handicraftsman and d.) the rural peasantry. The largest section of the population was composed of our last category, the peasantry, while both the peasantry and the proletariat shared the extensive poverty of China.¹

It is with these two groups that we primarily concern ourselves in this paper since, 1.) compositely they composed a vast majority of the population of China and 2.) it was these two groups that were the oppressed of China. It was with these two groups that a political party, wishing to gain widespread support at institute radical social reform would have to appeal.

After examing the policies instituted by the CCP and CI in the context of the realities of Chinese society in the 1921-27 period, we can then assess the effect that these interactions had on three important factors necessary for the success of a political party:

- a.) the goals the CCP was espousing or trying to achieve
- b.) the group to which it was trying to appeal and
- c.) the extent and type of societal support the CCP received during this period.

It is important to realize that a party that desires to perform sweeping social, political and economic changes must have a certain degree of power given to it by the suport of society, either a mass based support, or the support of an elite segment of that society. A party gains this appeal by the espousal and/or accomplishment of certain goals that

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Isaacs, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 25-28.

appeal to or are in the interest of the whole of society, or the segment which is the basis of one's support. A party that desires to attain a ruling position in a nation must either have strong mass appeal (and support) gaining power through sheer numbers, or appeal to an elite segment of society whose power lay in its manipulation of certain economic, physical or political resources, e.g. vast amounts of capital or machinery, control of the army etc. One can then see how important these three previous factors of goal espousal and/or achievement, appeal groups, and societal support are to a political party that wishes to institute changes within a society.

To a Communist party trying to attain this ruling position, the avenues of approach would be somewhat limited. To remain a viable entity within the Communist system, the CCP would have to appeal to and gain the support of what Marx termed the " immense majority "³ of a society. To understand this concept of Marx's term " immense majority " it is necessary to backtrack momentarily.

According to Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto:

In every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization necessarily following from it form the basis upon which is built up and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently

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Sommerville, John & Ronald E. Santoni, Social and Political Philosophy, N.Y., Doubleday Publishers, 1963.

the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society; holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes.⁴

Marx and Engels believed that all history was a direct result of our economic condition and that history could be viewed as a series of economic evolutionary stages. From the ruins of feudalism, one of these economic stages, would arise the modern bourgeoisie society. Because the bourgeoisie would be a class of modern capitalists, who " owned the means of social production and were employers of wage labor "⁵ they would become the exploiters of the proletariat, or wage labor class. This exploitation would spread around the world, because of the bourgeois need for expanding markets, caused by larger and more efficient production modes. The exploitation of the laborer would not end when he received his wages from his employer, but he would be immediately set upon by " the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker etc."⁶ When the repression of the worker reached a crucial stage, he would rebel against his oppressors, first as individuals, then in groups. The proletarian movement according to the Manifesto is the " self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in

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Sommerville, John and Ronald E. Santoni, Social and Political Philosophy; pg. 312.

⁵

Ibid., pg. 344

⁶

Ibid., pg. 351

the interests of the immense majority".⁷ Therefore Marx and Engels were prophesizing a revolution of the proletariat, in which the goals were to be the elimination of classes and oppression of these classes, with power held in the hands of the proletariat. It is important to emphasize that Marx was referring to an "immense majority"-- in this case of urban workers, because these were the oppressed of society. This posed a bit of a problem for societites, such as China whose immense majority and oppressed were not workers, but peasants, peasants who were spoken of in negative terms as compoments of the reolution.⁸ Nonetheless, Marx had set a precedent for a mass welfare line, extablishing the interests of the Communist Party as the interests of the masses of the oppressed in society, whoever those oppressed were to be. Therefore, to follow with Marxist idea of the "immense majority" the CCPs goals could not be directed to an elitist segemnt of society, but would have to appeal to and gain the support of the workers and peasants, who composed more than 85% of the population and yet controlled only 19% of the land and a negligible part of industry.⁹

Though this primary idea of appealing to the interests of the masses was still to remain, it is interesting to note how through the desire to fit China into various molds, on the one hand of an orthodox urban Communist Party, and on the other of a bourgeois party (during the CCP/KMT alliance), this idea became somewhat distorted.

⁷ Sommerville, John and Ronald E. Santoni, Social and Political Philosophy; pg. 355.

In Marx's original writings, China and other Asiatic countries were not considered within the framework of his Western urban revolution. The proletarian revolution that Marx and Engels envisioned in the " Communist Manifesto " was to occur in industrialized western Europe, not in the eastern part of the world.¹⁰ In 1858 Marx wrote a set of papers entitled " Formen die der Kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehen" in which he attempted to cope with problems of countries he considered to be in the stages of pre-capitalist¹¹ historic evolution.

The original " Communist Manifest" mentioned only three types of class society; slave (of antiquity), feudalism and bourgeois society. The first two class societies were to be alternate routes out of the primitive communal society. Before the stages of these three societies, there existed four pre-societies; oriental, ancient, Germanic and a shadowy ill-defined Slavonic society. It is with the first of these,¹² the oriental, that we are concerned with here.

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See: Marx, Karl, " The Peasant Wars in Germany" and " Pre-Capitalistic Economic Formations" for examples of this.

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Isaacs, Harold R., The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1938, pp. 23-34.

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The eastern world, not only included Asia, but also Russia.

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The papers are available in English in a book entitled, Pre-Capitalistic Economic Formations, ed. by E.J. Hobsbawm, International Publishers, N.Y., 1964

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The oriental mode first appeared in the preface to " The Critique of Political Economy", by Karl Marx.

According to Marx in the " Formen " the basis of oriental culture was the " self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture within a village commune which contains all the conditions for reproduction and surplus production within itself,"¹³ and which therefore could resist disintegration and economic evolution more stubbornly than any other system.

The closed nature of the communal units meant that cities hardly belonged in the economy at all, arising only where the location was particularly favorable to external trade or where the ruler and his satraps exchange their revenue for labour, which they expend as a labour fund. The Asiatic system is therefore not yet a class society, or if it is a class society, then it is in its most primitive form.¹⁴

The oriental system, or " Oriental despotism " as it was later to be known, was resistant to disintegration and economic evolution because of its self-sustaining nature. The only catalyst that could bring about its decline was the external force of capitalism. We therefore can see that Marx's outlook for China was not very bright. China's only hope for any kind of socialist revolution was it if first " Europeanized " itself.¹⁵

After a European type industrialization China had a chance of developing a bourgeois class which would in turn over a long period of time promote a Marxian type socialist revolution. In 1875 Marx and Engels altered their views on China when they stated that China might skip the capitalist stage of

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Hobsbawm, E. J., "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations", pg. 83

¹⁴

Ibid., pg. 35, Hobsbawm also gives a good definitive explanation of Marx's complete pre-capitalist theories.

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Schram, Stuart R., " Mao Tse-tung and the Search for ' A Chinese Road ' to Socialism", Royal Central Asian Society Journal, 1969, Vol. 56.

development and move directly to the village commune stage if before this the Western nations had already undergone the socialist revolution and could aid China in her struggle.¹⁶

What then emerged was a Communist philosophy that relegated China and her prospects for a socialist revolution to the far distant future. According to Marx and Engels there would be no spontaneous indigenous revolution in China, because the economic preconditions were not present. At best China could wait like the sleeping giant for the Western world to extend to her the aid which she would need in order to free herself of the trappings of "oriental despotism."

In the early 20th century Lenin introduced into Marxist philosophy the concept of the "vanguard party"--a vanguard of the proletariat which would organize the working class and help them develop the "proletariat consciousness".

Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new order, of being the teacher, guide and leader of all the toiling and exploited in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie.¹⁷

In creating the vanguard, Lenin did two things, a.) he established an elite, a section of the proletariat masses more advanced than the rest of the workers and b.) he negated the Marxian prophesy that the revolution would occur out of an inevitable mass uprising of the workers. Though Marx spoke

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Schram, Stuart R., "Mao Tse-tung and the Search for 'A Chinese Road' to Socialism", Royal Central Asian Society Journal, 1969, Vol. 56.

¹⁷

Lenin, V.I., "State and Revolution", Selected Works, Vol. VII International Publishers, 1943.

of a vanguard of the party it was in a looser sense, referring primarily to those people already living in a highly urban industrialized area¹⁸, who could become the forerunners of the party and help lead the inevitable uprising of the proletariat. Lenin's idea lent itself to the more particular conditions existing in Russia where there was not an advanced industrialized society, but instead existed a majority of agriculturally oriented peasants. His ideas of a vanguard were to fit into a society where the Marxian "pre-conditions" of revolution and the "proletariat consciousness" were not always present. His vanguard would not just be the head of an existing revolution, but the organizers, advocates, educators and directors of the revolution in a society where a revolutionary consciousness was not fully realized. Lenin took the inevitability out of Marx's revolution and turned it into a man made creation.

For the yet unborn Chinese Communist Party this had a great significance, in fact it was the means by which a party could become legitimate. The creation of the vanguard in Leninist theory meant in practical application a Communist party could be established anywhere in the world. Taking the word literally, a vanguard means something that precedes; in this case it meant a group of men who would precede the revolution and educate and lead the toilers of the world

against their oppressors. In China, as in other non-industrialized countries, the vanguard could work with the small section of workers that did exist, and educate them and convince them of the upcoming revolution. One did not now have to wait helplessly for the right economic conditions to occur. A man could now become an active part in history, instead of waiting for the dynamics of history to move him along in the tide. Of course, the socialist revolution in China still had to wait for the proper economic conditions to arise, but now a vanguard party could intercede into the mechanics of society and transform it, instead of waiting helplessly and hoping for the right revolutionary pre-conditions to occur.

What emerged out of all this rhetoric, was a theoretical dilemma that would plague the CCP in realistic terms for the entire 1921-27 period. If the CCP was to exist in the interests of the "immense majority" of oppressed, it would have to appeal and gain the support of the peasantry as well as the proletariat, and yet to remain an orthodox Marxist party, the vanguard was to work primarily with the urban proletariat. Since the statistics available show that there were still only 14,000,000 (including handicraftsman) urban workers¹⁹ in China in 1927, this was clearly not an "immense majority" of the 400,000,000 oppressed people of China. It would be futile to believe that an industrial revolution, on the scale

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Isaacs, Harold R., Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution. pp. 23-34

of the one that occurred in the mid 18th century in England could occur overnight in China. It would take agricultural China of 1920 a hundred years, if ever to become a mass industrial country.

Before the CCP ever established itself in China, its fate was being debated by the leaders of the Communist world. By 1920, Lenin was well aware of the revolutionary force of Asian nationalism as an ally of the Western proletariat. Lenin's strategy was to fight within China, not capitalism, but latent feudalism. Both the Western proletariat and the Asian bourgeoisie, he felt had a common interest in a colonial revolution. Imperialism weakened the Western proletariat, being that it won surplus profits for monopoly capital, while also weakening the Asian bourgeoisie by stifling native industry and fostering native feudalism.²⁰

With these ideas in mind Lenin came to the Second World Comintern Congress in 1920, carrying with him a preliminary draft of the resolutions on the National and Colonial question.²¹ Within this "Theses" there was put forth the idea of a temporary agreement or alliance with national liberation movements in independent countries. This of course foreshadowed the quasi merger that was to take place between the KMT and CCP in the 1921-27 period. The idea of these temporary alliances

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Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958, pp. 1-3.

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Whiting, Allen C., Soviet Policies In China, 1917-27, N.Y., Columbia University, 1954, pg. 42.

was to combine various classes in their common fight against imperialism. Lenin in the " Theses " emphasized that any alliance with a bourgeois group was to be only temporary, and Communist groups should retain the independent character of a proletarian movement.²²

One of the disastrous problems of this plan that became obvious to the CCP in the early 20's was the tight rope it would have to walk between conciliation of the bourgeoisie and conciliation of the urban proletariat and peasantry. These classes had different ultimate goals in mind. The peasants and proletariat desired to free themselves of the degradation and misery of chronic poverty, caused by an economic system which perpetuated the wealth of the land being syphoned off into the pockets of a few, while the bourgeoisie wanted to continue and enhance this system, by ridding themselves of foreign intervention. This desire to eradicate foreign interference was the only strong link between these classes. Otherwise the working classes and the bourgeoisie were at loggerheads--one trying to abolish the system, the other trying to perpetuate it. With this in mind one can see how it would be impossible for a political party to spearhead both of these groups when ultimate success for either of them meant taking two different roads, leading to two different ends. There would have to be a point in time when walking

this thin wire was no longer possible and the conflicting interests of these groups would cause the CCP to choose sides or perish. In the meantime it would be hard put to issue forth any sort of goal achievement plan, other than the fight against the imperialist aggressors, that would win the unflagging support of both the bourgeois oppressors and the proletariat and peasant oppressed.

Another ambiguity was caused by two conflicting reports included in the report of the Second Comintern Congress. This second report, presented by M. N. Roy, the Indian delegate to the Comintern, partly opposed Lenin's report. Roy raised the question of the social antagonisms within the anti-imperialist movement in the east. He argued that the bourgeoisie, growing richer, would come closer in their ideas to the imperialists, eventually turning against the peasants and proletariat. Roy went on to state that the peasants and proletariat were the only two real anti-imperialist forces.²³

Roy argued primarily in favor of the support of an agrarian revolution in the Chinese countryside, putting forth the idea that it was the peasantry, the largest and most oppressed group in China, that were the real revolutionary agents. Roy's argument and challenge to Lenin can be summed up in the following:²⁴

Two distinct movements which grow farther apart each day are to be found in the dependent countries. One is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a program of political independence under the bourgeois order. The other is the mass struggle of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all forms of exploitation.²⁵

Though Roy's and Lenin's views, for the most part were mutually antagonistic, the " Theses on the National and Colonial Question " did go part way in officially recognizing the peasantry as a potential revolutionary force. One of the five main policy points in the " Theses " stated:

.....all Communist parties must support peasant movements in backward countries and try and give them a revolutionary character.....they must try to organize peasants and bring about a close alliance of the urban proletariat of the West and the eastern peasantry.²⁶

Up until this time the peasant population, which formed a majority of the populace in China,²⁷ held a vacuous position in Communist doctrine, a no man's land in which they were definitely not considered among the bourgeoisie who were the exploiter class and yet were not considered capable of carrying on a revolution themselves. The above statement included in the " Theses " had a potential positive effect on the future line of the CCP; it meant that China could use its largest and strongest force in the implementation of a socialist revolution, though its main thrust was, of course, still to

²³ cont.

and Faber, Ltd., 1938, pp. 284-296.

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North, Robert C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China: The Communist Split of 1927, Berkeley & L.A., University of California Press, 1963, pp. 1-11.

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Communist International, " Supplementary Theses ", 2nd Comintern Congress, pp. 496-499.

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" Theses and Statutes of the Third (Communist) International " Adopted by the 2nd Congress, July 17 - Aug. 7, 1920; Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920.

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In 1921 the Chinese peasantry constituted over 80% of the population.

be in the hands of the urban workers. This meant that the urban proletariat could try and spread its base of support to include the peasantry--the peasantry was now a potential revolutionary force.

The final duplicity of the general trend of the " Theses " can be clearly seen in this small segment of that article:

While extending support to the middle class nationalists, Communist leaders are expected to make every effort to arouse and organize the working masses and to penetrate and gain leadership over existing revolutionary movements.²⁸

The duplicity of which we speak takes the following form: The very arousal and organization of the working masses against their oppressors, and depressed conditions would necessarily have to aggravate the middle class nationalists, in that, in some instances the bourgeoisie were the causes of the poverty and desperation felt by the proletariat and peasantry. A section of the middle class may have been nationalists, opposed to foreign investment, but they were also employers--employers of the cheap labor that the peasant and proletariat groups provided. While opposed to outside interference, they would also be opposed to any threat to the continuance of their rising economic standards. The support of their economic status by a group such as the CCP could not help but clash with its organization and arousal of the working masses against such standards as the middle class upheld.

What then was the theoretical posture of the CI and Moscow prior to the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921? To be generous one might say that the position of the Communist world was ambiguous. On the one hand Marx had called for the Communist Party to work in the interests of the "immense majority", Lenin had called for an alliance of the Communists and the bourgeois elements of society and Roy called for the advancement of the peasantry and an agrarian revolution, with the eventual establishment of soviet republics. Roy believed that any profitable use of the bourgeoisie would have to be in the initial stages of revolution and with great circumspection.²⁹ Clearly all these positions could not be carried out at the same time, and yet it was with these confusing ideas prominent in the Communist world that the Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921.

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North, Robert C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, pg. 13.

Chapter I

Economic, Political and Social Background

Now that we have laid down the Communist theoretical concepts concerning China that were prevalent before 1921, it will be necessary to delve into a bit of the economic, social and political manifestations of the 1920's era. In this way we will be able to get a better understanding of the desperatness of the situation and what actions were or were not taken by the Communist Party, and to be able to evaluate these actions within an historical perspective. It is to be remembered that it is the ailments of the majority of Chinese society that will be exposed here, that were the rends in the societal structure crying out to be healed. As we will see, not only were the Chinese a great anti-imperialist force because of ~~their~~ domination by foreign imperialists, as Lenin believed, but a social revolutionary force, owing to the fact that the average man in the urban and rural areas was desperately poor, barely eaking out a subsistence living, while a small minority of the population lived in comparative resplendid wealth.

At the dawn of the Communist party in 1921, the economic and political situation in China was chaotic; economically

China was moving towards disaster, both on the agricultural and industrial front, and a series of warlord style rulers throughout the countryside had made China politically unstable.¹

By the early 1920's China was in the midst of two main economic crises. In the agricultural sphere there arose in the early 1920's a three pronged crises. Its basic problems were the following: a.) swiftly increasing concentration of the ownership of the land into a small section of the population, leading to vast peasant landlessness,² b.) passage of the ownership of the land into the hands of absentee landlords, government officials, and urban capitalists, causing a breakdown in direct owner-worker relations and finally c.) a decline of agricultural production as a result of the preservation of backward farming methods.³ In the industrial sphere the main problem that arose in China in the early 1920's was a predominance of foreign investment, sucking dry her industrial resources; including abuse of unequal concessions to foreigners, and exploitation of indigenous labor.

The agricultural crisis in China was not a new phenomenon. The widespread poverty of the Chinese peasant was ancient

¹ Schurman, Franz and Orville Schell, The China Reader: Republican China, Vol. II, N.Y., Random House, 1967, pp. 34-49.

² By 1927 55 % of the Chinese peasantry were landless, 20% were holders of inadequate land, leaving only 25% with enough land in which to be able to get a subsistence or better living. 81% of all cultivatable land was concentrated in the hands of 13% of the rural population. For further information on this subject see: Isaacs, Harold R., The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 25-28

³ Ibid., pp. 25-28

history, but with the invasion of the village center by commercial capital and cheap commercial goods in the early 20th century, this situation worsened.⁴ The competition of cheap commercial goods with village handicrafts put an end to village self-sufficiency.⁵ The "closed nature of the communal system"⁶ in China was at an end. With the end of the communal system came a need for excess capital, with which to buy capital goods. Because of the inadequacy of the peasant's land and his primitive farming methods, a production of an excess was nearly impossible. It then became necessary for the farmer to mortgage his land to a rich landowner at tremendous interest rates, sometimes from 30-60%.⁷ Since the average peasant was incapable of ever making up this mortgage, he eventually lost his land and was forced to become a tenant of the rich land owner. With this tenancy came considerable rental rates due to the landlord, which was sometimes in excess of 70% of the yearly gross harvest. This plunged the peasant into constant poverty.

This chronic poverty lead over the centuries to sporadic, but localized violence, e.g. Red Eyebrow Revolt, Yellow Turban Uprising, Taiping Rebellion. If these peasants were living under the subsistence level it can be then asked why they did

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Fitzgerald, C.P., The Birth of the Chinese Revolution, N.Y., Praeger, 1964, pg. 27.

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Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1966, pp. 1-7.

6

Marx, Karl, "Formen die der Kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehen", pg. 35

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Isaacs, Harold R., The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, Stanford, Stanford University Press, pg. 27

not revolt and demand better living conditions? In isolated instances this did occur, but it could not occur effectively without a strong leader or leadership group. This leadership throughout Chinese history usually took the form of individuals or groups whose ultimate goals were to seize the throne and set up a new dynasty within the framework of the previous one; peasant discontent being used as a means of eliciting support off the overthrow of the oppressing dynasty. The peasant discontents were then only nominally⁸ dealt with. The peasants, on the whole, were not a politicized group. For the most part the peasant class were not effective in their political activities in China because of a.) their organizational naivete., b.) practical political inexperience c.) lack of education and d.) were in the constant throes of widespread poverty, all of which made political organization nigh near impossible. The Chinese peasantry, spreading over vast expanses of land, on their own, had never been able to mobilize in their own interests on a national level, in order to effectively demand better economic conditions.

Another burgeoning agricultural problem associated with the one just previously discussed was that many of the land owners no longer lived on the land and were city merchants,

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Examples of this are Lui Pang, founder of the Han dynasty in 210 B.C. and Chu Yuan-chang, first emperor of the Ming. Both were peasants who started new dynastys by overthrowing the previous one--they still ruled in the traditional manner in spite of their backgrounds. Even in the case of the Taiping Rebellion, the overriding goal was not only peasant land reform but the establishment of a unified Christianity. See: Wilson, Dick, The Long March, pp. 4-8, and Fitzgerald, C.P., China, pp. 150-156.

urban capitalists, bankers, government officials or simply former rural landowners who found city life more appealing. Therefore a less adequate land management emerged as city landlords lost their agricultural ties. This split between the city landlord and the rural worker lead to a.) a loss of contact between the peasant and his landlord and b.) to a merging, in some instances of rural landowners with city merchant interests, creating a double exploiter class.

The industrial crisis in China that was of the utmost importance in the early 20's was the control of this economic area by foreign capital. In the 1920's foreign capital owned 1/2 of the cotton industry, 1/3 of the railways outright and had mortgages on the rest and owned and operated more than 1/2 of the shipping in Chinese waters. China's adverse trade balance between 1912 and 1924 was 1,500,000,000 dollars (American currency, its worth as of 1935). 4/5 of this was⁹ invested in transport and industrial enterprises. Besides a virtual monopoly on Chinese industrial production, the foreign imperialists exploited cheap Chinese labor. Besides giving workers excessively low wages, there were numerous reports of beatings, and maltreatment. In certain instances cheap child labour was used to force down adult labor wages.¹⁰

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Isaacs, Harold R., The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pg. 30

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These instances are exemplified in conditions existing in the railways such as the Peking-Hankow, Peking-Suiyan and the Sunghai, and in the cotton mills, especially the Naigai mills, owned and operated by the Japanese. See: Chang, Kuo-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-27, pp. 226-241 and 412-422.

Foreign control of Chinese industry was despised by both the bourgeoisie element in society as well as the workers which the imperialists exploited. The bourgeoisie class would have gladly decreased the power of the foreign investments on Chinese industrialism so that they could also make a profit out of it but the bourgeois class still was too dependent on the foreigners and their invested capital to push them out. As far as taking the side of the peasants that was equally remote, since most of the urban bourgeoisie were also rural landowners, and to take the side of the peasant in his struggle would be to jeopardize the bourgeois position.¹¹

The urban working population, though not extensive in number during the 1920's (by 1927 factory workers numbered 1,500,000 and other industrial workers; miners, seamen, railway workers numbering 1,750,000) had become a politicized group.¹² Being small in number and concentrated into small areas they were aware of their conglomerate power. Early in the 1920's they started to form unions that were to make the separate working industries somewhat cohesive bodies. The new working class, composed of a large number of peasant immigrants, were receptive to new ideas, especially since these men and women were more independent of the family structure. Industrialization offered the peasant family not only an additional income

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Isaacs, Harold R., Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pg. 35

¹²

Ho Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1960, pp. 12-15.

but for an individual or married couple the chance for an independent existence outside of a larger family unit. This separate existence undermined the absolute authority of the head of the family, leading to more individualized thinking¹³ and a more receptive individual.

Politically China's greatest problem was centered around the fact that there was no central, stable ruling power in the country after the fall of the Manchu dynasty. What China suffered was the rule of a series of warlords, with separate power bases in various parts of the country. Even after the Republic was declared in 1911, the forces of Sun Yat-sen were coerced into giving the position of head of the government to Yuan Shih-k'ai, a former warlord, who promptly proclaimed himself founder of a new dynasty. Yuan fell for three reasons: 1.) he accepted the outrageous Twenty-one Demands presented by Japan and lost his prestige by bowing to imperialist pressure, 2.) he gained the enmity of the Japanese who feared he would succeed in setting up another empire and 3.) he was overthrown by the ambition and jealousy of his generals. By 1912¹⁴ he had fallen from power. After the fall of Yuan came other warlords, including Tuan Chi-jui, who was brought down by the

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Franke, Wolfgang, A Century of Chinese Revolution, 1851-1949, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1970, pp. 95-99.

¹⁴

Schurmann, Franz and Orville Schell, The China Reader, Vol. II pp. 26-29.

famous May 4th movement in 1919.¹⁵ The decade following the death of Yuan Shih-k'ai was a time of marked conflicts between individual warlords trying to gain control of the central government, part of the empire, or a province. Personal interests and concern with power politics became the open and prominent domain of the warlords.

The unstable political system presented no cohesive leadership with which to unite the various elements of society against foreign imperialism and to alleviate the widespread and pervasive misery of the poverty stricken workers and peasants. The warlord leadership that existed in the early 20's was not capable of this unifying action--the time became ripe for some other group to emerge and deal with the existing situation.

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The May 4th movement occurred in 1919 and involved thousands of middle and college students in Peking. Its main basis was a protest against the betrayal of the Tuan government during its actions at the Paris Peace Conference. This movement was a coalition of various sections of society: intellectuals, Westernized elements of society and the commercial bourgeoisie. Its main aims were to bring down the government of Tuan Ch'i-jui and withhold its signature on the Versailles Treaty which they thought was unfair to China. The May 4th movement also conveyed the message of the Confucian upheaval. Under attack were all customs that interfered with self-determination, e.g. arranged marriages, bound feet etc. Positively the movement was trying to convey the ideas of progress, democracy, science and confidence in the limitless potential of human resources. This pro-Western liberalism, with the onslaught of imperialism was soon to turn into nationalism, and burdened by social ills to Marxism. See" Grieder; Jerome B., " Communism, Nationalism and Democracy, The Chinese Intelligentsia and the Chinese Revolution: pg. 210 and Bianco, Lucien, Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-49, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1971, pp. 37-52.

Chapter II

The CCP, The Comintern and Moscow

It is at this point, after having examined certain aspects of pre-1921 Communist theory on China and the existing economic, social and political conditions prevalent in the 1920's, that we can delve into the first of our chosen areas of examination; an investigation of the groups and members involved in the policy making of our 1921-27 period. Both the CCP and the CI will come under scrutiny here; concentrating on the CCP's internal organization and composition, and the CI and its involvement with Moscow.

From the shadow of the nationalist movement of the May 4th uprising and the distant reverberations of the Russian revolution, came the early stirrings of the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP, one might say, had its foundations in the library of Peking University, under the direction of Li Ta-chao, the head librarian. Li, by 1920, well known for his advocacy of Marxism, had set up a small study group at the University to further the study of Communist doctrine.

These men, congregated in the Peking University library, were only a small example of those people reacting to the despicable imperialist methods and widespread economic and

and political discontent. Not yet Communists, these men, some anarchists, some nationalists, as well as those already leaning to the Communist cause, were a group of young intellectuals seeking an answer to the pressing problems of their time.

Li Ta-chao was not himself the physical implementor of the CCP. Li, by 1920 looked upon Marxism as the panacea for the national salvation of China, but believed, as did others,¹ that the time was not yet right for concrete socialist action. He believed that the people in China did not know enough of the theories of Marxism, and people who were Marxists should confine their activities to studying doctrine and to popularizing it by such means as publishing articles about it and translating various relevant works. Li's words echoed the intellectual strains that were to hamper the early Communist movement, a tendency toward talking instead of doing, of emphasizing theory, instead of practice. In Ho Kan-chich's book, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, he characterizes this as the trend toward "legal Marxism", which would turn the party into an academic institution, by only carrying² on propaganda and establishing schools.

It was Ch'en Tu-hsiu, who may be cited as the founder of the CCP. Ch'en was the first person to plan and call for the organization of a Communist Party in China. His interest in Marxism stemmed from his views on what he considered to be the deplorable political state in China. Chang Kao-t'ao in his autobiography states, " China's semi-colonial status,

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Chang, Kao-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party /1921-27

the dark side of her internal political situation and his own unpleasant political experience led him--a radical democrat--into the camp of international communism,"³ Ch'en, though, was not easily convinced of the merits of Marxism. Ch'en had been committed to a program of democracy and science, believing the regressive forces in Chinese society were superstition, Taoism, the fantasies of Buddhism and the authoritarian servility of Confucianism.⁴ He believed there were two paths open to China, "the enlightened path to republicanism, science and atheism, the other the obscurantist path of despotism, superstition and theocracy." Ch'en's attraction to Marxism finally came in the form of the appeal of its messianic expectation of a world revolution, freeing all the exploited classes from their masters, believing that the whole world was involved in a struggle between workers and capitalists;⁶ China not to be excluded.

1 cont.

Lawrence, Kansas, The University of Kansas Press, 1971, pp. 86-95.

2

Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1959, pg. 41

3

Chang, Kao-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27 pg. 101.

4

Schwartz, Benjamin I., Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966, pg. 14

5

Ibid. pg. 15

6

Franke, Wolfgang, A Century of Chinese Revolution, 1851-1949, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1970, pp. 115-118.

Ch'en and the other small groups, who were the founders of the Communist Party in China were intellectuals, who looked to Communism and Marxist ideology as a cure for the ailments of China.⁷ They saw communism as a hopeful idea, a Marxian ideal of the classless society, bolstered by a belief that this society could be achieved by a revolution led by a vanguard party, supported by a revolutionary working class, and a helping hand given by the peasantry. One must remember that the early founders of the CCP were saturated with Marxist-Leninist theory (which we discussed in the introduction), which expected China's socialist revolution to occur at a far distant time and which required a lengthy building of a vanguard, to try and implement change within the existing society. It did not call for an immediate upheaval of all societal structures and the immediate institution of a socialist system. Marxism would provide for China a role for the future; a way to free her from the bondage of imperialist capitalism, and poverty.

Those men, who formed the leadership of the Communist Party from 1921-27 were drawn from the thin upper layer of the Chinese population. They were primarily sons of landlords, merchants, scholars and officials and came from the parts of China where Western learning had had the greatest impact.

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Grieder, Jerome B., "Communism, Nationalism and Democracy", pg. 220.

8

Pool, Ithiel de Sola and Robert C. North, "Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites", Hoover Institute Studies, Stanford University Press, July 1952, pg. 46.

Educationally, members of the CCP formed an elite in respect to the rest of Chinese society. Of the data available, it is estimated that between 1921 and 1927, from 75-90% of the membership of the CCP had a middle class education or better. Of that percentage 30% had attended college and 35% had been educated abroad in either Japan, France, Russia or Germany. In comparison with the rest of society this was a phenominally high average.⁹ It therefore becomes evident that the CCP membership was an educational elite. This intellectual elite status gave these CCP members a different background¹⁰ than the rest of society. The college student was drawn from China's elite. Even the relatively low cost of a university education was the equivalent of five years pay for a Shanghai textile worker. A worker would have to spend 5½ years of his earnings to put his son through 4 years of college. Therefore a family had to have at least an upper middle class income¹¹ to send their son to a university.

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Wilbur, C. Martin, " The Influence of the Past: How the Early Years Helped to Shape the Future of the Chinese Communist Party", China Quarterly, 1968, vol. 36, pp. 23-41.

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It is also noted that the fathers of these early members were in elite positions. Out of the 12 accountable men in the original CCP organization, there were 8 whose fathers ranked into middle class or above occupations. Of those whose fathers were of peasant origin, all came from rich peasant backgrounds.

1921-28 Father's occupation of original CCP members:

Peasant	3
Proletariat	1
Scholar, official	4
Landlord	3
Merchant	1

Notice the difference in the 1931-35 statistics for the same variable--a reversal from dominance of middle class

Though the intellectuals were capable of understanding the overall mass problem and could even empathize with their pauperish conditions, they were incapacitated in their ability to communicate with the worker on a day to day level, and lead them in their struggles--they were incapable of creating a totally unified front with the poor masses who were essentially of a different culture. The CCP members were cloistered by their intellectualism (as intellectuals are in most parts of the world.) Again to quote Chang in his memoirs, he cites an instance where he and his student compatriots were trying to unionize shop workers at the Hankow Railway. He notes how most of the workers were alienated from the students. " I was the only one who gulped the food down noisily, like the workers, while talking patriotism with them. Perhaps because of my conduct the workers did not create a mental division between me as a student and themselves as workers." ¹² This of course, does not assume that the drawbacks of the CCP's elitist nature were the sole cause of their failure during this 6 year period under discussion, but only a contributing factor adding to their problems in establishing themselves as leaders of the proletariat movement.

At the first meeting of the Communist party in 1921, there was a division among those present as to the requirements

¹⁰ cont.

positions to dominance of peasant and proletariat backgrounds. Peasant, 7; Prol., 1; scholar, 1; landlord, 2; and merchant, 1.

¹¹

Israel, John, Student Nationalism in China, Stanford, Stanford University Press, pg. 23

¹²

Chang, Kao-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pg. 119.

necessary for membership. Li Han chun was recorded as saying that anyone accepting and spreading the principles of Marx should be admitted into the party without being obligated to participate in practical work. Lui Jen-ch'ing expressed an opposite point of view. In his opinion the immediate goal of the CCP was the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, opposing all paper and legal work.¹³ Chang Kao t'ao expressed the desire to see members of the party not only as sympathetic to communism and Marxism, but actively prepared to work for it. Speaking for all the members he stated, " Generally speaking, we regarded the Communist Party as something sacred and its participants had to be of the purest quality. We preferred to sacrifice quantity for quality."¹⁴ Ho Kan Chih, a prominent Chinese historian also states ".....the fundamental condition for forming such a party the CCP is to insist on the strict standard of its membership, raising its members to a high level and absorbing into the Party the finest, the most advanced and revolutionary elements of the working class and labouring people in general."¹⁵ Whether Chang's sentiments were shared by all of those present will never be known, but the statement of a preference of quality, instead of quantity was at least partial reality. At no time between 1921-26 did the party membership expand to any more than a thousand. Between

¹³

North, Robert C., Chinese Communism, McGraw Hill, N.Y., 1966, pg. 33

¹⁴

Pool, Ithiel de Sola and Robert C. North, "Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites", Hoover Institute Studies, Stanford University Press, July 1952, pg. 83

1926 and 1927 there was an upsurge in membership reaching at one point a reported 60,000,¹⁶ but by 1927 a vast majority had dropped their membership under the pressure of Chiang's "White Purge". By 1925 and the advent of the May 30th movement, this poverty in membership had led to an acute leadership shortage. In July of 1926 the Party needed 335 people to fill their Party positions and they could only find 120 responsible people.¹⁷ From these statistics one starts to get more of a sense of a membership in a private club than an unrestricted political Party. What was being cultivated was more or less a Party of leaders, of intellectual cadres. The CCP was failing to use effectually its most important resource; the millions of dissatisfied peasants and proletariat who could be easily trained to spread the message of Communism throughout the countryside and in the teeming urban centers. Instead, the CCP was relying heavily on the middle and upper class intelligentsia, who being so disgusted with the decadent Chinese system, turned to Marxism as an alternative. These convertees were very few in number, due to the fact that Marxism was not the only solution to China's problems that were being offered at the time. Other alternatives were forms of democracy, fascism, forms of nationalism etc. Communism was the most radical alternative, and for men and women coming from middle and upper class backgrounds, not

15

Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pg. 41.

16

Ibid.

17

Wilbur, C. Martin, "The Influence of the Past: How the Early Years Helped to Shape the Future of the Chinese Communist Party", pg. 31

always the most appealing. It required of these people an almost total break with their previous economic background and social relations. The peasants and proletariat, on the other hand, had very little to loose and the ideas of total equality and a classless society could be nothing but advantageous, in comparison with a future of continued poverty and semi-slavery.

Even more important than the actual party membership were the number of people on the Central Committee and the number of delegates present at the Party Congresses. The first Party Congress in 1921 had approximately 13 delegates representing 57 people,¹⁸ and the 2nd Congress had about 123 members represented by 9 delegates and in 1927 there were only somewhere between 20-50 people at the 5th Party Congress.¹⁹

¹⁸

Ho Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1959, pg. 40.

Delegates To The First Chinese

<u>Name</u>	<u>CCP Congress Representing</u>	<u>Fate</u>
1. Chang Kuo t'ao	Peking	Alive
2. Ch'en Kung-po	Kwangtung	Executed June 4, 1948
3. Ch'en T'an-ch'iu	Wuhan	Alive Jan. 1, 1950
4. Chou Fo-hai	Japan	Died prison, Feb. 28, 1948
5. Ho Shu-heng	Changsha	Shot May 1934 by KMT
6. Li Han-chun	Shanghai	Killed by KMT in 1927
7. Li Ta	Shanghai	Uncertain
8. Liu Jen-ch'ing	Peking	Uncertain
9. Mao Tse-tung	Changsha	Alive
10. Pao Hui-seng	Kwangtung	Alive March 15, 1950
11. T'ien En-men	-----	Uncertain
12. Tung Pi-wu	Wuhan	Alive March 15, 1950
13. Wang Ch'iu-meng	-----	Uncertain

See: Pool, Ithiel de Sola and Robert C. North, "Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites, pg. 110.

The number of people present at these Party Congresses where major policy line was set down were very few, and the same names keep reappearing throughout this period, e.g. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Li Ta-chao, Chang Kao-t'ao, Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, Li Ta, Chu Chui-pi and various others. One begins to get the feeling that there was a small central core that were the active participants in the CCP in the early and mid 1920's.

The Central Committee of the CCP was an even tighter knit group. Composed mainly of the same men throughout the whole 1921-27 period, it never became very large, and only changed from 3 members in 1921 to no more than 12 members in 1926. Until July of 1927 Ch'en Tu-hsiu held the position of Secretary General, and positions in the departments of organization, propaganda and labor were rotated among such men as Wang Jo-fei, Li I-san, Liu Shao-ch'i, Chang Kao-t'ao, Mao Tse-tung, Peng shu-chih and a handful of others. The everyday administrative decisions then were concentrated into the hands of a

19	<u>Congress</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>*No. of Delegates</u>	<u>*Reported Party No.</u>
	First	July 1921	Shanghai	13	50
	Second	May 1922	West Lake	20	100
	Third	June 1923	Canton	20	300
	Fourth	January 1925	Shanghai	--	1,000
	Fifth	April 1927	Hankow	100	60,000
	Special	August 1927	Kuikiang	22	-----

* Statistics vary according to sources, but generally remain within the same numerical range.

Pool, Ithiel de Sola and Robert C. North, " Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites, pg. 110

very few members of the Central Committee, and were also to a large extent the members who were the delegates to the CCP party conventions. The fact that there were only a small cluster of men with the same background and from similar walks of life within the party who were making both major policy and everyday decisions, led to a lack of diversity in the approach to their problems. This single mindedness led in some instances to narrow mindedness in approaching arising problems. Even the CI members who were the advisors to the CCP during this period, were imbued with the same, if not the partial instigators of, the solutions to the problems facing the CCP at any given time. Most of these solutions, as we will see at a latter time in the thesis, were so contradictory to Chinese reality and so confined to the Marxist-Leninist one, that their uses within China became dubious.

In the 20's the party existed mostly as a sort of abstraction in the minds of its members. It was scattered geographically; its major locations being in four areas; Shanghai, Peking, Canton, and Hunan, but with policy emanating from whichever center the CC was located at, that usually being Shanghai. The communications system was poor, working on a helter-skelter verbal basis, with policy emanating from the center and being discharged in a spokelike manner to outlying areas and to other cities. For most of the 1921-27 period

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CC stands for Central Committee

21

Wilbur, C. Martin, " The Influence of the Past: How the Early Years Helped to Shape the Future of the CCP, pp. 23-30.

the party survived financially by paltry contributions, the profit made from the sale of Hsin Ch'ing-nien (New Youth) and later the advances made by the Comintern. In other words, the CCP survived on a shoestring existence, with a small membership, a poor communications system and practically no money.

Putting together the organizational disabilities of the party and the drawbacks of its internal elitist composition and tendency towards intellectualism, the CCP was to be handicapped in any of its attempts to correct the societal ills already mentioned. The problems facing the CCP from its internal structure and organization are the following:

- a.) a tendency toward intellectualism and the educational elitist nature of the CCP members; a tendency toward making the party into an academic institution.
- b.) a middle class or better background and environment within the CCP causing a lack of total cultural communication with the masses, and in some cases subsequent distrust on the part of the worker toward the CCP organizer.
- c.) smallness and closed nature of party, i.e. membership, party delegates and CC members, leading to a lack of diversity in outlook among decision makers.
- d.) lack of money and communications, hampering the maneuverability and options open to the party.

The Communist International, better known as the Comintern, was an organization whose main purpose was to spread Communism

around the world. The Comintern's attempts to influence events outside of Europe, were really only of importance in China and Japan.²² Throughout the 1921-27 period and before, Comintern agents were working hand-in hand with Communist as well as Kuomintang leaders in China.

The CI²³ was closely allied with the Moscow government, in fact certain authors claim that one of its failings was that it was dominated by the Russians.²⁴ Whether or not domination is too strong a word can not really be assessed, but the usefulness of discussing CI policy without discussing Russian policy toward China would be dubious, since they seem to be impossible to untangle. Most Comintern decrees were based on policy emanating from Moscow. In 1920, when the first Comintern representative Voitinsky came to China, he tried to explain to the Chinese Communists the reason for the influence of the Russians by saying, "since the CPSU was the only party that had led a successful revolution, it therefore was natural for them to hold a leading position in the Comintern."²⁵ It might be best to examine the origin of this policy as our first step.

22

Borkenau, F., "The Communist International", London, Faber and Fabert, Ltd., 1938, pp. 284-286.

23

CI will designate Comintern

24

Isaacs, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 35-52

25

Chang, Kao t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pg. 230.

Bolshevism as started in Russia at the turn of the 20th century was not only nationalist in nature, but international. For Lenin and other Russian leaders the revolution not only meant the end of Czarism, but foreshadowed the universal downfall of capitalism. The Bolsheviks believed that their revolution was the first in a series of socialist revolutions around the world, believing that this was the start of the dictatorship of the proletariat. When these revolutions in Europe did not materialize, Russia was an isolated entity, which alone had to fight the onslaught of capitalism. Soviet policy began to shift from the premise of international social revolution, to a policy of internal Russian consolidation. Eventually this idea grew into Stalin's socialism in one country, the idea that socialism could triumph and maintain itself indefinitely in one country.²⁷ " This justified the gradual abandonment of the original ideas and perspectives of the Bolshevik revolution."²⁸ What arose out of this new perspective was an impulse to subordinate revolutionary movements abroad to the Russian national interests. This primary interest was the maintenance of a forceful Russia, stressing the establishment of strong allies against Western capitalism. Within the colonial areas of the world, Russia hoped to find new political, diplomatic and military support against the

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Isaacs, Harold R., The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 37-38.

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Deutscher, Isaac, Russia After Stalin, N.Y., Bobbs-Merrill, 1953, pp. 74-75.

²⁸

Isaacs, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, pg. 45.

Western powers and Great Britain by spurring the nationalist interests of these developing areas.

Stalin, during his rule feared the outbreak of a war in which the first phase would be the U.S. and Great Britain fighting and winning against Japan, with the victors parceling out Asia as the spoils and becoming mammoth super-powers. The only factor that could change this was a victorious revolution in China before this war. Imperialism in China depended on her being weak and disunited, while a unified China would break the bonds of imperialism, ergo the goal of unifying China was of the foremost importance, no matter what the method, even if it meant an alliance with the national bourgeoisie.²⁹ Stalin's aims were to supply Soviet arms and ammunition to anyone willing to oppose the imperialist militarists in China.³⁰

Within the CI itself, the sentiments concerning China and its Communist Party were put into words by Karl Radek in November of 1922 at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. He termed the CCP's approach to the social and economic situation "infantile leftism", upbraiding them on the one hand for taking a too literal approach to Marxism-leninism, and refusing to align with elements of the bourgeoisie, and on the other hand, claiming that "comrades working in Shanghai and Canton failed to associate themselves with the

²⁹

North, Robert C., Chinese Communism, McGraw Hill, N.Y., 1966, pp. 28-30.

³⁰

Ibid., pg. 31

working masses..." exclaiming that many comrades in China locked themselves up with their studies of Marx and Lenin as they had once studied Confucius.³² He summed up his criticisms by stating the immediate task of the CCP was 1.) to organize the young working class and 2.) to regulate its relations with the revolutionary bourgeois elements in order to struggle against imperialism.³³

In Russia's search to find strong allies in Asia there was a new emphasis put on "bourgeois nationalism"--a need for an alliance with the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a capitalist phase of development. This bourgeois alliance and establishment of the capitalist phase were going to be the means by which a quick unification of China was to be possible, the imperialists were to be thrown out, the capitalists weakened, and Russia saved from another menace.

The original concept of the alliance with a bourgeois element in society came, of course, from Lenin's "Theses on the National and Colonial Question". In the "Theses" Lenin left some areas open to debate as to what was really meant, and caused a great deal of difficulty during the period we are discussing:

- a.) Lenin explained how to deal with nationalist movements as opposed to nationalist parties. He spoke of the liberation of movements, not parties,
- b.) he left to his heirs the insoluble problem of finding a

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Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 31

³³

Ibid., pg. 32

Marxist definition of Asian nationalist parties. What classes³⁴ did such parties represent--were they multi-class parties.

It is interesting to note how both Stalin and Trotsky used these ambiguities in Lenin's "Theses" to defend their own points of view on the China issue. Stalin while giving his support to Chinese nationalist parties, distorted segments of the "Theses" referring to Chinese Soviets. The Stalinist line was based on capturing and directing the KMT, an organization with indigenous roots, led by more experienced politicians. He felt they would be successful in gaining control of China. In terms of Stalin's "Communism in one country", it was an attractive prospect in gaining a China pliant to Moscow's wishes.³⁵ Trotsky, while demanding the establishment of Soviets, in the belief that he could still save the Chinese revolution, shut his eyes to the problems incurred by provoking the KMT.³⁶ Trotsky's line generally called for an independent proletariat party, which fought under its own banner. His ideas stemmed from the belief that the interests of the bourgeoisie did not conflict with the imperialist's,³⁷ but were instead closely tied.

The fight that existed between Trotsky and Stalin for the head of the Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union had direct implications for China. As we have just explained, Stalin and Trotsky had different ideas as to the methods of running a revolution, and each man was intent upon proving his point

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Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, pg. 6

³⁵

Ibid., pg. 7

³⁶

Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 79

by making a living example of the Chinese situation. Stalin, in a more advantageous position, as titular head of the Comintern could have his ideas carried out through the representatives of this organization that were working with the CCP. Trotsky's attacks on Stalin's theories and the consequences if he were wrong, made it imperative that Stalin be correct if he were to retain a strong position as head of the party. If Stalin could not prove his revolutionary theories in China, it weakened his position at home in his fight against Trotsky and his followers. For this reason, all that Trotsky said, no matter how true or close to the realities that existed in China, were refuted by Stalin and his followers. To some extent all major policy emanating from either Moscow or the CI was inextricably linked with this controversy.

The whole idea of the work done together with the CCP and the CI, was to train a disciplined revolutionary elite for hastening the downfall of capitalism. The three primary objectives developed by the Comintern were:

- a.) development and organization of discontent and subversion within the various capitalist-dominated countries through local Communist parties.
- b.) exploitation of existing antagonisms amongst "imperialist" powers and to foment new conflicts and;
- c.) to drive a wedge between "imperialist" nations and colonies and semi-colonies.

37

Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 79

38

Ibid., pg. 32

The first CI representative to reach China and establish close ties with the Chinese Communists was named Voitinsky. Following him were Borodin, Maring, Roy and a handful of others. These men who came to China were looked upon as not only representatives of the CI, but also Moscow; well versed in the methods of instigating and leading a revolution. The early CCP leaders, being unsure of themselves in a revolutionary setting, surmised that the Comintern was much more capable of blueprinting revolutionary action. The CCP members therefore put their faith in the CI capabilities.

One of the major defects in the CI strategy was that in the complex and quickly changing situation, where quick and difficult decisions had to be made, the time involved in getting answers from Moscow and the difficulty in conveying the reality of the situation were at times insurmountable,³⁹ leading to ill-timed and unrealistic solutions. The decisions that did come down from Moscow were, as we have often stated, made on the realities of the Russian internal situation, instead of in full cognizance of China's problems.

Primarily from the CI and Moscow's desire for a stronger united China, no matter what the strategy, and the CCP's weakness in opposing some of their decisions, came one of the most disastrous policies of the 1921-27 period--the KMT/CCP alliance. This alliance, along with the CCP's own internal

incapabilities were to be the two major causes of the downfall of the party in 1927. We will see how these two factors had a completely adverse effect on the ability of the CCP to gather and win the support of the masses in a method consistent with the social aims of a Communist Party.

Chapter III

The CCP's Approach to the Problems of the Proletariat and Peasantry

At the first CCP Congress in June of 1921, the 13 delegates present expressed what they considered to be their main views on the future goals and appeals of the Communist Party in China. It was agreed that:

- a.) the CCP is a revolutionary proletarian party and its main purpose was the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- b.) stress should be laid upon studying Marxist theory and the practical development of the workers movement and
- c.) the CCP would stand firm on the Communist position, but would support the revolution of Sun Yat-sen, but its primary¹ direction would still be a Communist revolution.

The main task set up by this first Congress was the establishment of a labor federation,² its goal was to educate the worker with Communist doctrine and its appeal was to be the to the proletariat. The CCP undoubtedly considered themselves an orthodox urban Communist group, and though they openly acknowledged the work of Sun Yat-sen and would even support him in his struggle, there was no mention made of allying with Sun's group, and probably no thought of it either.

¹ Chang Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 136-152.

² Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 43

The delegates at the first Congress did discuss the nature of the revolution in China, stating that there would be two revolutions; the first a national democratic one and then the second, a socialist one. It was made clear then that the membership thought it extremely unlikely that the KMT could³ shoulder the responsibilities of the first.

In July of 1922 the CCP issued "The First Manifesto on the Current Situation" and "The Manifesto on the Second Congress". Both of these documents called for the first "united front" alliance of the workers, poor peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. The CCP were to form a front with other revolutionary groups, but at this time this did not include the KMT.⁴ This was not to be a "bloc within" alliance, as the KMT/CCP merger was to be later known, where two or more groups merge into one to fight a common cause, but where two or more groups externally ally, each maintaining their own separate identity. It is interesting to note that in the list of classes in the alliance, the bourgeoisie is nowhere to be seen. It is the inclusion of this group in 1923 at the insistence of the CI and Moscow, that would cause such a debate and furor over the "multi-class" party.

It is in the First Manifesto that the CCP first mentions the KMT, congratulating it on its liberal labor policy, but chiding it for making deals with the northern militarists.⁵

³ Chang Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 136-152.

⁴ Brandt, Conrad, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism, pp. 51-65.

⁵ Ibid.

The CCP saw the KMT as useful in certain areas, such as labor and peasant work, but too prone to capitulate to the imperialists and capitalists under pressure.

In August of 1922 the Comintern representative Maring, (Hendricius Sneevliet) called a special meeting of the Special Plenum of the Central Committee of the CCP, suggesting that the CCP members align with the KMT. The primary idea⁶ was that the KMT was a coalition party, composed of a proletariat and peasant section, as well as bourgeoisie, and that therefore the proletariat Communist party should enter it and transform it into a driving force of the revolution. Immediately there arose dissention among the ranks of the CCP. Ch'en Tu-hsiu⁷, Li Ta, Ts'ai Ho-shen and Kao Yu han opposed this alliance on the ground that it would confuse the CCP class structure. Ch'en in particular argued that the KMT was a multi-class party (including the bourgeoisie) and that the revolution⁸ could not be won by such a party. The questions Ch'en posed were: Were not the bourgeois exploiters of the poor peasants and workers? Would they not eventually turn against their allies, the peasant and worker, once the imperialists were crushed and become the new large scale oppressors? Ch'en lost his fight, Maring using the strong arm of Moscow and the CI to back him up.

At this point we must bring the Russian design into these

⁶ Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 44.

⁸ Brandt, Conrad, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism, pg. 63

⁷ McAleavy, Henry, The Modern History of China, pg. 230.

events. As we have already pointed out Russia needed strong allies in the East to protect herself from the onslaught of Western capitalism. Stalin, as we have also mentioned wanted a unified China to break the bonds of imperialism and capitalism, and prevent the United States and Great Britain from dividing China up as part of the spoils of war. Both of these goals necessitated backing the strongest force in China, no matter what its convictions, as long as it did not capitulate to Western powers. By having the CCP join the KMT it decreased the likelihood of this, and increased the chances of modeling the KMT into a more leftist organization. The Russians felt that they could not rely on the CCP to initiate proper revolutionary policy, considering the members of the CCP as mere inexperienced, petty bourgeois intellectuals.⁹

The problems that brought Moscow to the idea of a KMT/CCP alliance are much the same as the problems discussed in the section dealing with the internal organizational background of the CCP members. The problems were that the CCP membership was a.) small and made up of intellectuals, b.) out of touch with the labor movement (something we will discuss in full in the section dealing with the CCP handling of the labor movement), c.) a minimal political force and d.) it had no military force.¹⁰

The realization that the KMT was an older, more established political party probably enhanced the idea of the

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Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 199-213.

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North, Robert C., Chinese Communism, pp. 45-71.

alliance for the CI and Moscow, feeling that they could take the external shell of the KMT and install within it a well oiled, well sprung and perfectly working political machine. The error made was in thinking that the CCP would then be able to take over this machine.

At the Third Congress of the CCP in June of 1923 the policy was ratified whereby large numbers of CCP members could join the KMT and yet retain their membership in the CCP. The center of the discussion at this convention was the establishment of the revolutionary united front with the KMT, presenting the hope that the CCP would be somehow able to change Sun Yat-sen's basically bourgeois group into a "Communist led, anti-feudal, anti-imperialist democratic revolutionary alliance of the working class and other democratic forces.¹¹ It was also at this Congress that Maring set forth the line, established by the CI that the Chinese Communists were to follow:

- a.) the National revolution is the central task
- b.) the KMT leadership is the core of the National revolution and members of the CCP should join the KMT and actively work within it to overthrow imperialism.
- c.) the CCP should preserve its independent organization and freedom of political criticism and
- d.) the labor movement is still to be an independent movement developed by the CCP.¹²

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Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pp. 63-67.

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Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 300-301.

Examining these four separate dictums, we can already see some of the various ambiguities beginning to arise. How was the CCP to fully support and be a member of the KMT if it retained exclusive control of the labor movement? How can the KMT be the core of the leadership of the National revolution, while the CCP retains an organization capable of independent action and unlimited criticism of the KMT? Maring, in a simple answer to these questions responded by saying that the last two points were not to be over-emphasized in order not to antagonize the KMT.¹³

One must remember that the CCP was bound to accept the dictums of the CI as law, since they looked upon the CI representatives as accomplished revolutionaries and themselves as mere novices in the political arena. They also felt a certain monetary dependency on the CI, since they had very little independent income. What argument that did arise was over the size of the CCP membership in the KMT--the CCP members opting for only a limited number joining. Maring again blocked all objections, later stating that he considered the KMT to be much closer to an ideal revolutionary party, with more real strength than the CCP.¹⁴ It therefore made sense that he would wish for the CCP to join this superior group.

The CCP and KMT officially joined in January of 1924, through the Sun-Joffe agreement of January 26, 1923.

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Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 300-301

¹⁴

Ibid.,

Through these negotiations Sun agreed to accept the Soviet system of party, government and army organization. In the autumn of 1923 Michael Borodin began refashioning the KMT organization and Cantonese armies after the Soviet fashion.¹⁵ It is interesting to note that the standing army was being built for the KMT organization (of which the CCP was a member), and all supplies, money and material given to the KMT. The strategy of this was to build a strong military organization within the KMT structure with the thought that the eventual control of this military (in fact of the whole KMT organization) would go to the CCP and the left wing KMT elements. What did not seem to be taken fully into account, and yet was certainly a viable threat was the possibility that the KMT bourgeois element would turn on the Communists, giving the right wing all the military strength and leaving the CCP helpless.

The Bolsheviks in 1924 seemed to have all the various possibilities covered in China--not only was there a CCP/KMT alliance, they had established relations with Peking and a year later they made an agreement with the Northern militarist, Christian General Feng Yu-hsiang. Three years after these seemingly fault proof tactical maneuvers it all crumbled into dust.

Some blame for this complete annihilation of the Communist tactics can be traced to the deaths of two important leaders,

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Brandt, Conrad, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism, pg. 65.

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Van Slyke, Enemies and Friends: The United Front in Chinese Communist History, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1967, pp. 7-19.

Sun Yat-sen and V.I. Lenin. These two men represented the cohesive bond which welded together this precarious alliance.¹⁷ The death of Lenin left Stalin and Trotsky vying for power, using China as one of their tools in the battle for the leadership of the Bolshevik party. Trotsky demanded the Communist withdrawal from the KMT; Stalin wanted to preserve the alliance. Whatever the realities of the situation, Stalin felt he had to uphold his position or loose the struggle to Trotsky.¹⁸ Sun Yat-sen's death saw the end of his cohesive and charismatic leadership of the KMT.

Most of the problem of the annihilation of Communist tactics can still be traced to the fact that when the CCP joined the KMT, it made a theoretical impossibility a fact. It brought into existence the alliance of two groups that should try to work together in harmony, but whose ultimate goals and means of achieving them were entirely different. The problem the CCP and the CI had to face was that the bourgeois revolution might stop imperialism, but it would not stop the bourgeoisie.¹⁹ By driving out imperialism it put the bourgeoisie into the strongest position.²⁰ To guard against the bourgeoisie eradicating the Communists after the first revolution, a socialist revolution would have to have followed immediately. To do this the Communists a.) would have to have had a military

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North, Robert C., Moscow and the Chinese Communists, pp. 79-97

¹⁸

Ibid., pg. 81

¹⁹

Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, pg. 44

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This is exactly what did eventually happen and the KMT became a strictly bourgeois and upper class party, led by Chiang and (cont.)

machine b.) be more than just an auxiliary group within the KMT, making its own independent decisions and c.) have worked more extensively with the masses (peasants and workers), educating and convincing them of the necessity of a socialist revolution. None of this was possible with the CI and Moscow giving the arms and developing the army of the KMT, and believing that the Communists were not capable of making their own decisions. Furthermore, one could not very easily convince the masses of the necessity of a socialist revolution againsts the bourgeoisie, when one was supposedly working with and in the strictures of a party that was composed partially of bourgeoisie. The CCP was trying to manipulate these various groups, for the ultimate end of gaining control of the KMT and taking over the government. The error in this strategy was that the CCP did not have enough resources, i.e., manpower, money, revolutionary background; to be able to internally take over the KMT once it was strong enough to have accomplished a nationalist revolution. Maring's four points called for the CCP to further the nationalist revolution and work within the KMT structure, under KMT leadership, and yet be an independent and labor motivated group. This strategy was simply impractical and idealistic. Even if it could independently promote the labor movement and still stay and work under the KMT leadership to promote a nationalist revolution, how was it to take over the KMT after this revolution, when it had

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supported by the wealthy elements of society; e.g. large and small business groups, professional groups, the bureaucracy and landlords. See: Schurman, Franz and Orville Schell, The China Reader, Vol. II, pg. 44

such limited resources? The complexity of the situation simply put was: On the one hand the KMT had to be strongly supported and at the same time undermined--"helped into and²¹ kept out of power."

Another argument of the same nature, occurred between M.N. Roy and Michael Borodin. Roy argued for the arming of the worker and peasant and an immediate agrarian revolution, while Borodin opted for the position of the CCP remaining in the KMT and working within it and for it, instead of outside of it and maybe against it.

The only faction within the KMT that held similar ideas with the CCP was the left wing of the KMT, headed by Wang Ching-wei. If these two groups could have successfully unified they might have had a chance of capturing the machinery of the KMT from Chiang and turned it into a leftist organization. The problem with this union was that Wang and his followers shared common ideas with the communists, but were not completely convinced in entirety of their whole schema of world organization. Given enough time, the left wing might have come to see their point of view, but time was not a commodity that was in excess for the CCP. The threat of a right wing bourgeois take over became closer, the stronger that Chiang and the military faction became. Wang and his followers were frightened by the increasing anti-Communist sentiments among the Nationalist officers and the

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Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, pg. 44

knowledge that the Communists, backed by Moscow and Stalin, were planning to introduce peasant and working class elements into the leadership of the KMT.²² This move and the peer pressure of the other generals, threatened the leftist elements, and Wang Ching-wei, at the end of June in 1927, broke with the Communists.

Co-operation between the KMT/CCP was hindered from the beginning because of the conflicting aims of the two groups.²³ While the KMT was basically trying to attract a bourgeois following, the CCP was trying to strive for the support of the workers and peasants. It was an impossibility from the start for the two groups, one representing the oppressor of the masses, the other the mass of oppressed, to be able to work together in any kind of harmony. The alliance was bound to fail, for the goals and appeal of those two opposite groups could never achieve any kind of harmony.

It will now be interesting to see how all these factors influence the support that the CCP was to get from Chinese society. While examining this, it must be remembered that to remain viable as a Communist Party the CCP had to appeal to what Marx termed "the immense majority" of impoverished in society.

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McAleavy, Henry, The Modern History of China, pg. 249. In June 1927, Roy, convinced of Wang's friendship and desire to overthrow Chiang, showed him a telegram sent by Stalin, approving Roy's plan to galvanize the KMT leadership by introducing proletariat and peasant elements into it.

At the 1st Congress of the Chinese Communist Party the main task set for its members was the development of a strong labor movement and the establishment of a labor federation. As an orthodox Marxist urban party the CCP regarded the interests of the proletariat as the primary interests of the party. Since the proletariat was to be the "instrument of the realization of socialism" in China.¹ In 1922, the sole project of the party was labor organization, e.g. railroad workers unions, textile workers unions, First All China Labor Conference, etc.² Even in Marings 1923 list of CI directives, in which the CCP was nearly completely subjugated to the dictates of the KMT, the leadership of the labor movement was still to remain an independent movement led by the CCP.³ To take the labor movement out of the hands of the CCP, in the eyes of the Communists of the 1920's, would have stripped the Chinese Communists of their viability as a Communist party; the proletariat was the spearhead of the movement, proletariat action was the primary agent of the socialist revolution.

¹ Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 44

² Ibid.,

³ Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the CCP/1921-27, pp. 300-301

Looking at the statistics of the Chinese population once again, we will notice that the 1920 working class population (handicraftsman included) numbered only 14,000,000. This is an interesting figure when taken in comparison to the 300,000,000 plus number of peasants, trying to flee from overwork oppressive landlords and high taxes.

The question was why then did the CCP so unquestionably feel that the proletariat were their main concern, when the peasantry seemed a much more obvious source of revolutionary potential? To answer this question one has to remember that in Marx's original theses he put the whole revolution into the hands of the proletariat. Lenin too, even with the establishment of a vanguard party, stated it was the proletariat who were to be the right hand of the revolution. In China, because the economic preconditions did not exist for a strong proletariat force, it was the duty of the vanguard to aid the establishment of one. As a fledgling Communist party, I doubt they felt it was in their power to originate new Communist philosophy.

The goals that the CCP espoused in all the Congress doctrine were aimed toward the urban workers and only to a secondary extent to the peasant class. Such lines proposed were in the area of removal of the oppression of international imperialism, better treatment for workers, higher wages and

Some of these were the eight hour workday, abolition of the contracting system, sanitary conditions for workers, health clinics, factory insurance, protection for the unemployed, protection against female and excessive child labor.

limitation of land rents. In fact it was not until the 5th party Congress in 1927 that nationalization of land was even called for. Most goals proposed by various congresses dealt with conditions revolving around workers, and solving workers problems. It is interesting to note that though the CCP was already unofficially in alliance with the KMT in 1923, goals for bourgeois appeal were rarely ever present,⁵ and in actuality some of the goals elicited for the workers and peasants would have been repressive measures against⁶ the bourgeois class.

The immediate tasks set by both the CCP and the CI in the area of proletariat development were: 1.) the organization of the young working class and 2.) the regulation of its relations with the revolutionary bourgeoisie elements in order to organize the struggle against imperialism.⁷ The lack of success of the CCP in these two areas and in general proletariat organization was partially due to some of the problems presented by their internal background, and organization, (as brought out in a former section) and partially to their constant struggle with the bourgeois element of the KMT.

After the founding in July of 1921 the Party concentrated

⁵ Though in an indirect way the fight against imperialism might have appealed to those sections of the bourgeoisie interested in getting part of the industrial trade out of foreign hands and into their own.

⁶ For further information See: CCP Manifestos on the Current Situation, Nos. 1-5.

⁷ Schwartz, Benjamin, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao, pg. 57.

its efforts on leading the working class movement. To guide the workers in their struggles the Chinese Trade Union Secretariat was soon established. " Its chief tasks were to publish newspapers and periodicals and to set up clubs and night schools for workers and lead them in their day to day struggles."⁸

The first major landmark in the Chinese labor movement occurred in early 1922, taking the form of the Hong Kong seaman's strike,⁹ which tried to get better pay and more wages for dock workers. The average Chinese seaman got 1/5¹⁰ the pay of a foreign one. This was one of the first major strikes in which the CCP actively aided and participated in.

Up until the seaman's strike it was the Communist Youth Corp that was participating in and organizing the labor unions. In 1922 Ch'en Tu-hsiu even admitted that the Youth Corp had a much greater influence than the regular¹¹ party. The reason for this greater influence in 1922 and to an extent all the way through to 1927, was that the CYC had a more leftist inclination than the party. The CYC could afford these deviations to the left, because during the whole 1921-27 period it managed to retain some autonomy, both from the CCP and the CI.

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Ho, Kan-chih. : A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pg. 51.

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Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27 pg. 226.

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Op.cit., Ho, Kan-chih, pg. 52.

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Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, pg. 47.

In May of 1922 the First National Labor Congress was convened at which 162 delegates were present, representing 12 cities, over 110 unions, with a union membership in the area of 200,000. Among those present were representatives of the Communist Party, the Kuomintang and the Anarchist party. The Communists not only attended this meeting, but proposed the basic policy that was to be adopted; that of worker participation in the democratic revolution.

The method by which the CCP would organize an area proceeded in the following manner:

First: concentration on ideological work, i.e., running of evening classes in worker's quarters, education in areas of Marxism-Leninism.

Second: Set up strict organization among the workers; especially the establishment of the trade union.

Third: Try to remain flexible in the use of tactics in dealing
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with the broad masses.

Though generally active and somewhat successful in the labor work that it undertook, the CCP had some sharp setbacks caused primarily by flaws in a.) the CCP internal structure; its inability in communicating with the working class and a lack of organizational competence in running a large scale workers movement (mostly caused by a lack of trained cadres in the party, a to an extent simply a lack of members) and b.) the contradictions in its actions due to its alliance with the KMT.

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Chang, Kuo t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/1921-27, pp. 226-241.

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Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pp.58-59.

The first of the CCP disasters occurred on February 7, 1923 during the Peking-Hankow Railway strike. The uprising was caused by Wu Pei-fu's suppression of the establishment of the Peking-Hankow Railway Workers Trade Union. The railway men had begun to organize as early as 1921 and by December of 1922 there were 16 small unions along the Peking-Hankow line and on February 1, of 1923 they decided to merge into one general union. A general strike was called on February 7 to protest Wu Pei-fu's oppressive tactics in refusing to let the union merge. This strike, primarily organized by the CC of the CCP was a tragedy that led to the death and injury of over a hundred people and left thousands homeless. By the third day of the Strike CCP organizers had rounded up 10,000 men from the trade unions in the Kiangsi district, in order to hold a supportive demonstration. The foreign capitalists organized their powers with the forces of warlord Hsiao Yao-nan to smash the strike, killing men and women and imprisoning others. Much of this tragedy could have been prevented by using more foresight and planning, instead of relying on the emotional fervor of the moment. Once the CCP had banded together its 10,000 men from the local trade unions, it was unable to direct them all with the small force available within the party. The strike front, without proper guidance became chaotic. This strike failure led to the suppression of union workshops, closed the Labor Weekly Magazine and threatened the arrest of the Peking CCP members. Worse

than this, it led some workers to become anti-communist and others to become more sympathetic to anti-communist literature, not so much because of the CCP mismanagement of the strike, but because of their inability to aid the 1,000's left jobless and hungry because of the results of the strike.

The other major unsuccessful movement for the CCP was the May 30th movement of 1925, in which the mistreatment of workers in the Japanese owned Nagai Cotton mills and the shooting of Chinese workers in the International settlement, brought about widespread anti-Japanese and imperialist sentiments.

The Japanese controlled all the cotton production in the North and Northeast China and monopolized a network of¹⁴ transportation in Chinese territory. Besides this monopoly, she could exploit China's cheap labor, take special rights inherent in the Japanese concession and protect her own goods by tariff laws. The Japanese owners of the cotton mills exploited the Chinese worker, cutting their wages and making overtime work compensatory. The worst misuse of the Chinese workers, was the attempt by the Japanese to train children to replace adults in the factory, in order to be able to pay them lower wages.

These ruthless methods led to a strike of the Shanghai workers in February of 1925. This strike, showing the strength

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Ho, Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pp. 88-89.

of the workers, encouraged others to join the unions that CCP organizers were actively working to establish. Incensed by the growth of these unions the Japanese decided to ban them and dismiss their organizers. This caused another strike and on May 15th a Japanese factory guard openfired on a group of workers, killing one and wounding twelve. As a direct result of this shooting the May 30th movement broke out. The movement grew until over 200,000 workers and 50,000 students were protesting.

The problem that arose was not within the movement itself, but in the CCP's relationship to it. Again the problem that crept up was that the CCP did not have enough workers to manage a movement of that size. Consequently the leadership of the movement was taken out of the hands of the CCP and ceased to be a strictly Communist controlled movement. It turned instead into a nationalist movement, encompassing many diverse political points of view. As the fervor of the moment grew, more and more people joined the movement, proportionately decreasing the role of organized labor. By June 3rd organized small businessmen , instead of organized labor was at the head of the movement, capturing a nationalist¹⁵ wave for the May 30th movement.

Though the CCP made some progress on the labor front, the factors mentioned in this section, kept it from reaching its full potential. It must also be remembered that in any

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Brandt, Conrad, Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, pg. 70

labor dealings, the CCP members were further hampered by their inability to acculturate themselves with the working class.¹⁶

Before we are able to make any further judgements as to the effect these factors played on the cause of the CCP downfall in 1927, it would be wise to first examine the CCP dealings with the peasant situation during the 1921-27 period.

The peasant question in China between 1921 and 1927 is thought by many present day scholars to have been the deciding factor in the downfall of the CCP during that period.¹⁷ Because of the size of the peasant class and their pressing social and economic problems they were encountering, they would have been an ideal revolutionary class if given the proper leadership.

In traditional Chinese history it was always the "union of scholar and peasant" that was the key to success in China.¹⁸ Mary Wright in her article on " The Chinese Peasant and Communism" said:

Traditionally power in China was recognized to rest on the consent of the peasantry and the support of the intelligentsia or literati-scholar class. The peasantry was the source of military man power and material necessities. The intelligentsia was in a position to govern to the satisfaction of the peasants or lead them in revolt. Successful rebellions in Chinese society required not only peasant mass-

¹⁶ Chang, Kao tao, The Rise of the CCP/1921-27, pg. 119.

¹⁷ See: Wright, Mary C., " The Chinese Peasant and Communism", Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXIV, (1951), No. 3 and Fitzgerald, C.P., The Birth of Communist China, (Praeger, N.Y., 1964), pg. 68.

¹⁸ Fitzgerald, C.P., The Birth of Communist China, pg. 68.

action, but literati leadership, in a joint effort to overthrow any government which ceased to fulfill its function of maintaining social harmony.¹⁹

Noting already in an earlier section that the CCP members were comprised of men with intellectual backgrounds, therefore forming a pseudo literati-scholar class, while the peasantry composed the largest potential revolutionary class, the question then can be asked: Why didn't the CCP concentrate its efforts on educating and organizing the peasantry as the leaders of the revolution, instead of the proletariat? To answer this question we must now examine the role of the peasantry in CCP and CI doctrine, as well as in the context of the realistic events of the 1921-27 period.

The first major debate over the role of the peasantry in the revolution came in 1920 in the debates between M.N. Roy and V.I. Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress. It was at this Congress that Lenin, as has already been stated, introduced the controversial theory of the "revolution from above", declaring that "The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with the bourgeois democracy of the colonial and backward countries." Roy believed that the agrarian revolution should be emphasized and bourgeois national revolutionary elements could only be used in the initial stage and with extreme caution. Roy went on to state that ultimately the revolutionary forces in the West would depend decisively upon the strength of the mass revolutionary movement in Asia,²¹

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Wright, Mary C., "The Chinese Peasant and Communism".

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Point 11 on the original draft of the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question".

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North, R.C., and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, Cp. 1

a point which Lenin strongly disagreed with. The major contradictions to arise were between the concepts of "revolution from above" and "revolution from below", Roy arguing that the bourgeoisie was unwilling to lead an anti-imperialist movement and that the real revolutionary strength lay in supporting the peasantry and proletariat (below referring to the lower classes), while Lenin opted for the KMT alliance (the alliance with a bourgeois group). The effect that the eventual tactic of "revolution from above" had on the peasant movement was tremendous. Because the CCP was allied with a bourgeois group, it could not afford to offend this group by proposing goals which would undermine the economics and social position of the whole bourgeois class. Since many of the KMT officials had large holdings in the rural areas, any large scale confiscation of the land, or reduction in rents by the CCP would have been a death blow to the alliance.

The CI in a later statement on the peasant question strattled the line between recognition of the revolutionary nature of the peasant class and orthodox urban Marxism, which heralded the proletariat as the leader of the revolution. In May of 1923 the CI said, "The central question is the peasant question--China must overcome feudalism. There must be established a union of workers and peasants. The peasants must desire to fight against imperialism", but in the next breath stated that "all leadership must belong to the labourers(proletariat)²² . The CI did not take a strong pro-peasant stance

until early 1926 when it declared that the "revolution depends on the decisive move of 400 million peasants"²³ This idea was to be developed into the concept that the proletariat was the only class capable of carrying out a radical agrarian policy. The CI, as was later the CCP, was confounded as how to merge the idea of agrarian reform led by the proletariat and a KMT/CCP merger. It reconciled this impossible situation by finally stating that, "While recognizing land nationalization as the basic demand of a proletariat agrarian program, the Chinese Communist Party must at the present time differentiate its agrarian tactics and adapt them to the economic and political peculiarities in different parts of China."²⁴ In plain words this meant that the CCP was not to do any large scale reforming in areas where the KMT was present, or likely to be present.

These problems present in the CI council were also causing rifts between CI representatives. Roy, as we already know, was backing the agrarian revolution. He said that one had to choose between support of peasant demands or a repression of the peasants and an alignment with the bourgeoisie.²⁵ Roy's opponents were men like Borodin and Maring who thought that "The principal factor in the revolution (was) not the masses, but the Communist's ability to manoeuver with the petty

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"Communist International, 1919-1945", pg. 278.

²⁴Ibid., pg. 343.²⁵North, R.C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, pg.11

bourgeois, and with the various military elements".²⁶

The CCP itself, said very little about the peasants in their manifestations, concentrating mostly on proletariat problems. In the Manifesto on the Second Congress the peasant class was first mentioned, in the context of its membership in the "First united front."²⁷ It was not until that third Congress in 1922 that the peasant class and its importance in the revolution was thoroughly discussed. Mao Tse-tung, an original member of the CCP, state that the party should concern itself with the broad masses of peasants throughout the country.²⁸ Mao had at that time reached the conclusion that the peasant problem was of great importance for the revolution, substantiating his thesis by pointing out that throughout the successive ages of Chinese history all rebellions and revolutions had peasant insurrections as their mainstay. If the CCP would concern itself with the peasant movement and mobilize the peasants, it would not be difficult to build a strong and effective Party.²⁹ Instead in 1923 the party went in the opposition direction and merged with the KMT. In the early years of the CCP (1921-27) the assumption of the dependence of the peasant movement were in line with CI policy which stressed the importance of the peasantry in the Chinese revolution, but emphasized to a greater extent the proletarian leadership and

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North, R.C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission To China, Doc. 5

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Brandt, Conrad, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism, pg. 64

²⁸

Ibid., pg. 317

²⁹

Chang, Kao tao, The Rise of the CCP, 1921-27, pg. 315

the alliance with the KMT.³⁰

The first peasant organizations started were in 1921-23 in Hunan by Mao Tse-tung and in Kwangtung by a young revolutionary named P'eng Pai.³¹ P'eng's organization was the more successful of the two. He led his peasants in struggles against despotic landlords for rent reductions, under the banner of the Haifeng Peasant Association, which by 1923 had a membership of 100,000.³²

In February of 1924 the association was dissolved by the warlord Chen Chiung-ming, but subsequently this type of organization spread rapidly from Haifeng and Lufeng to Chaochow and Swatow and then to the whole province of Kwangtung. Mao's organizations in Kwangtung alone numbered close to 200,000 members. These peasant organizations were offshoots of the actual party, and not officially sanctioned sections of it.

The development of the peasant movement by the CCP did not come until the end of 1925 and the beginning of 1926. In July of 1926 the CC of the CCP approved of the peasant movement and began to organize to combat the peasant plight. This action was simultaneous with the upsurge in approval given by the CI on the question. In the Seventh Plenum of the CI Roy was arguing for strong Communist support of the agrarian

³⁰ Harrison, James P., The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions, N.Y., Antheneum, 1971, pg. 47.

³¹ Franke, Wolfgang, A Century of Chinese Revolution, 1851-1949, pg. 139.

³² Ho Kan-chih, A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution, pg. 83

revolution in the Chinese countryside. The CI accepted Roy's approach, but toned down, called for:

- a.) minimum rent reduction,
- b.) abolition of agricultural taxes,
- c.) confiscation of church and monastery land and land belonging to reactionary landlords and compradores,
- d.) perpetual lease on plots,
- e.) arming of poor and middle peasants and
- f.) support of peasant organizations.

The flaw in the Comintern position was that support for the Kuomintang and support for the agrarian revolution were antagonistic and mutually exclusive policies. The basic contradiction was between the tactic of "revolution from above" and revolution from below". The question in 1926 was whether primary emphasis should be placed upon tactical collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek, the bourgeois nationalist, or upon development of the Chinese Communist movement as an aggressive independent force.

The CCP became active in the rural areas, ironically, as an advance guard of Chiang's Northern Expedition. The CCP advance guard went into the field, not to fight, but to prepare the peasant for the coming of the nationalist forces, by using propaganda against the warlords in the countryside and

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"Communist International, 1919-1945,"pg. 355.

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North, Robert C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China Introduction.

the imperialists in the city. Their success as rural organizers brought to the fore the problem of: Retain the CCP/KMT alliance or neglect the masses.³⁵

By October of 1926, it became clear that the Chinese countryside was on the verge of widespread revolt. The CCP, before this expedition estimated that it had only enough trained workers in Shanghai, Kwangtung and Hunan,³⁶ but as Chiang's troops swept into new territory after new territory, where there was barely any Communist organization at all, the peasants were being released from their old restraints, with very little leadership at their head. By the spring of 1927 there were 15,000,000 organized peasants in Kiangsi, Kwangtung, Hunan and Hopeh. Rural agitators found the peasantry was all too willing to support their cause. The peasantry was willing to push way beyond the CCP/KMT imperatives.³⁷

There arose within the CCP ranks differences of opinion as how to proceed in the rural areas; in a drastic or moderate manner, and the blaring problem of how the KMT/CCP co-operation could be maintained after the launching of the peasant movement. If offended in a marked way, the KMT might dissolve their alliance and turn on them.

The eventual decision of the CCP on the peasant question

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Bianco, Lucien, Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949, pg. 51.

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North, Robert C., Chinese Communism, pg. 97

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Mende, Tibor, The Chinese Revolution, London, Thames and Hudson 1961, pp. 73-79.

was aided by the CI and Moscow. At what was considered a crucial moment in the uprising the Communist leadership held back. In October the Kremlin sent a telegram directing the Chinese Communists to restrain the peasants in order not to antagonize the Kuomintang generals.³⁸ Parts of the CCP also were willing to put a halt to the rural movement. The CCP section in Canton expressed opposition to the peasant movement and said that a movement of this sort would take the focus away from a national revolution and place it on a land revolution. The reasons then behind this opposition were:

- 1.) Moscow and the CI could not rationalize through Marxist Leninist doctrine the leadership of the peasantry in a revolutionary movement, above the urban proletariat,
- 2.) The desire to save the merger between the CCP and KMT on the part of Moscow and the CI made them issue orders to the CCP to squelch a peasant uprising which would antagonize the KMT, and
- 3.) As previously stated, the urban oriented CCP members feared being left of of a rural based revolution.

The CI and Moscow had accused the peasants of going to excess in their dealing with the landlords and gentry. The so called excesses of the peasant movement originally referred to the leftest actions that had occurred in the movement; but by the time these accusations were made, the connotations of

the term were quite complex. Excesses were generally exaggerations by opponents of the movement. At the time the failing was in differentiating between leftist deviations and the justifiable actions.³⁹ The main reactions of the peasants were the bullying and killing of landlords, refusal to pay land rent and the blockade of grain and rice, thus effecting the outflow of capital from the area.

It was during this period that Mao and the Kwantung peasant leaders tried to persuade the CCP to step in and institute radical land policies, even if it did mean antagonizing the KMT. In February of 1927 Mao wrote his "Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan."⁴⁰ In this report Mao attacked the Wuhan administration for suppressing the peasant movement, stating that the peasant movement, in the next few years, even without the help of the CCP would burst forth, ousting the feudal forces in the villages. He then declared:

To give credits where they are due, if we allot ten points to the accomplishments of the democratic revolution, then the achievements of the urban dwellers and the military units rate only three points, while the remaining seven points should go to the peasants in their rural revolution.⁴¹

Further chiding his audience he next attacked what he considered

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Chang, Kuo tao, The Rise of the CCP/1921-27, pg. 495

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Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1967, Vol. I, pg. 25

⁴¹

Ibid., pg. 26

to be the intellectualism of the CCP by stating:

Revolution is not a dinner party, nor a literary composition, nor painting, nor embroidery. Revolution is violence and insurrection--there is no kind way to do it.⁴²

At the Fifth Party Congress held in April of 1927, the CCP still failed to pass adequate land reform measures. Though it proclaimed the nationalization of land and the abolition of private property, it exempted all officers serving in revolutionary armies from this act. The reason for this was that almost all officers came from land owning families. Confiscation, also, was only to take place on large estates of 500 mou or more (83 acres or more) which was a fantastically large estate for China, thereby economically devastating only the very wealthy landowners. At the 5th Congress, which was led by M.N. Roy, Stalin finally capitulated to the demands of the Communists to separate from the KMT and operate their own separate party; this occurring only after what has come to have been known as Chiang's "White Terror", when all known Communists were either killed or forced into hiding.

Stalin took the posture that he had foreseen events accurately and that Chiang's defection confirmed the correctness of the Communist program in China⁴³ (Note: to have admitted his mistake to the CI and CCP, would have been to have admitted his mistake to Trotsky, his arch adversary).⁴⁴ The Chinese revolution, Stalin said, had entered its second stage of

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North, Robert C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, Chp. 4.

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Ibid.

development , moving away from the revolution of the all-national united front, toward a revolution of workers and peasants; an agrarian revolution which would strengthen and broaden the struggle against imperialism, and gentry and feudal landlords.

A variation in the Russian line was seen as reiterated in Pravda. It was reported as saying that the CCP had "only been a small circle of intellectuals and consequently the leadership--intellectuals and students, who with all their good qualities had no understanding of the masses and even now had found difficulty in comprehending that it had long ceased to be a small circle and had been transformed into a party of 30,000 members capable of influencing the peasants and workers." In fact according to the article " the upper circles of the party organization did not want to admit workers into the leadership." ⁴⁵ The line taken in Pravda, while pointing a finger in the right direction and emphasizing the closed nature of the party, failed to mention the failures of the CI and Moscow in their part in the leadership of the nearly destroyed CCP.

Epilogue

In April of 1927 Chiang Kai-shek dealt a near fatal blow to the Chinese Communist Party by assassinating many of the known members of the party and causing the other to flee to hiding places, in what was to come to be known as the "White Terror". As we have already stated, the Fifth Party Congress, held only a few weeks after this reign of terror, finally acknowledged the traitorous nature of Chiang and his henchmen, and called for a dissolution of the KMT/CCP alliance, but only after the Party had almost been annihilated.

In the next few years to follow the party became physically split into two sections, following to a great extent the theoretical split that had occurred in the 1926-27 period; one part establishing themselves in the urban area of Shanghai, the other in the rural area of the Hunan-Kiangsi border region.

The CCP members who resided in Shanghai were of an urban orientation and all three secretaries of the CCP from 1927-32, Chu Chui-pai, Li Li-san and Wang Ming, had either made their names as urban leaders or were proponents of the proletarian

¹ cause. The urban headquarters of the CCP was technically the official center of Communist activities, being the location of the Central Committee. It was to this center that Moscow and the Comintern sent its messages and representatives; after 1927 it can be said that Moscow and the Comintern were no longer just advising, but putting forth party line with an iron hand and will.

In the Kiangsi rural areas Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh, and their colleagues were establishing what were to be known as the rural Soviets. Mao, after his defeat during the Autumn Harvest Uprisings in 1928 fled in retreat to the Chingkanshang with a small band of 5,000 poor peasants and KMT deserters.² In late May of the same year Chu Teh arrived in this mountainous area and combined his forces with those of Mao. Together they drew up a plan to establish six rural Soviet areas and to stabilize and consolidate the Communist power in the Hunan-Kiangsi border regions.

The two areas, urban and rural, comprising the CCP in 1928, were members in the same organization, but functioned under different premises. The urban center still believed in the supremacy of the proletariat movement and its bright future in China, while the rural center had an unerring faith in the Chinese peasantry as a revolutionary force.

¹ Van Slyke, Enemies and Friends: The United Front in Chinese Communist History, pg. 35

² Snow, Edgar, Red Star Over China, pp. 152-155

In 1928 Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT had attained the ruling position in China and in the eyes of the foreign world were recognized as the legitimate rulers of that country. During the period of 1927-28 the KMT had formed a solid anti-Communist front and had achieved party stability under Chiang.³ By 1928 Chiang's regime consisted of a "Tight clique of personal friends, ex-warlords, Shanghai bankers, Whampoa military colleagues and a handful of other dedicated men",⁴ all of a bourgeois or upper class background, having abandoned the primacy of the economic and social needs of the poor peasants and urban workers.

In 1928 the CCP was a divided body, with two different centers trying to pursue two different methods of bringing forth a revolution in China, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT were ruling China and for the CCP the future did not look very bright. It was not until much later, after Mao had taken over the decisive leadership of the CCP (after the Tsunyi Conference in 1935 during the Long March) and during the Yen-an period and after that we can see a more united and cohesive Communist Party in China, with a view toward its ultimate victory in 1949 over the KMT forces.

³ White, Theodore and Annalee Jacoby, "The Rise of the KMT" from Thunder Out of China, N.Y., William Sloane Associates 1946, pp. 35-46.

⁴ Schurmann, Franz and Orville Schell, The China Readers, Vol. II N.Y., Random House, pg. 133.

Conclusion

The Communist Party that remained after Chiang's "White Terror" in April of 1927 was almost completely disabled, and even the most optimistic of viewers at the time would not have given much for the chances of the CCP to recover and again become a viable entity within China's political arena. It seemed at the time, especially to Chiang and his KMT forces that only a few more powerful blows - and the Party, which had previously been its ally; its comrades in the fight against imperialism and social injustice, would die and vanish forever. The question that is so prominent in the mind and that has been present throughout this paper is: How and why did the CCP come to the desperate situation it was in in 1927?

The first part of the question can be answered by referring back to one of our original queries, which posed whether the CCP, as a group committed to social change dealt with the existing social, economic and political problems. Judging from the historical facts presented in this paper, one can say that though they attempted to deal with these problems, they did not do so effectively. In our examination of the social, economic and political problems prevalent in the 1920's, we saw that the most pressing of

these were warlordism and disunity; foreign imperialism and widespread poverty. The CCP did make a valiant attempt at organizing the urban proletariat in their fight against imperialism and poverty (though maybe not with complete success), but failed to cope with the same problems in the context of the vast peasant population of China. The CCP's dealings with the problem of warlordism were also negligible, and neither had the force, nor the organization to unify China. Both warlordism, poverty and imperialism were still rampant in 1927, and ironically enough, the only group attempting to make any inroads into the problem at the time were the KMT.

The most important and also most complex part of the question then, and the key to our answer is: Why did the CCP fail to deal with what were the pressing problems of the day, and thereby gain the support of the people. There is no one answer to this question, but instead it involves many areas, and centers around the men in the CCP and their actions and interactions with historical events, some occurring between 1921-27 and others occurring years before. It must be remembered when examining this question that historical events are effected by the men who participate in them (either physically or by their intellectual influence) and in turn by their background, upbringing and convictions. Therefore, there is an inextricable link between historical events, the men who participate in them and their thoughts and beliefs.

When examining the "whys" of the failure of the CCP during this period, it is therefore necessary to examine both the background and organization of the CCP, as well as its association with the CI and Moscow. It was the men primarily from the first two groups; the CCP and the CI and to a lesser extent Moscow, and its influence, that were the actors in the events that took place during this period in time, whose actions were responsible for whatever fate the CCP was to have in 1927.

The CCP members, as we found out in one of our first sections, were mostly intellectuals, fairly unfamiliar with revolutionary tactics and relatively insecure as the instigators of a Communist party. Compounding these drawbacks was that the new CCP had very little money, no military force, and was hampered by poor communications. The CI's drawbacks were linked to its association with Moscow and the Bolshevik leadership. The Comintern was drawn into the tangled web of events that were generated by the Stalin-Trotsky struggle for power during the 1920's, in which both sides tried to use the China problem to prove their own points of view concerning the future of the Communist revolution; Stalin pressing for a KMT/CCP alliance and Trotsky calling instead for an immediate agrarian revolution. Compounding this problem was Stalin's belief in the idea of "Socialism in one country", in which was linked the necessity for a unified China, so that it could

become a strong ally of Russia, against the West. This became a driving factor in Stalin's backing of any group that would act as a forceful unifier of China, and would not capitulate to the forces of Western imperialism. Both the CI and CCP members were influenced in their decisions, not only by these factors, but by the debate raging between the theories of "revolution from above", first introduced by Lenin and the "revolution from below", brought forth by Roy; whether a revolutionary vanguard should ally with a bourgeois group, or remain strictly the leaders of the masses of poor peasants and proletariat, with no connection with the bourgeoisie at all, or a third alternative, a compromise between the two.

The CCP was hampered in its decision making capabilities not only by its own weak revolutionary background and working funds, but by its tie to the CI and Moscow and some of their ideological beliefs. A disenchanted Chang Kuo't'so stated in his autobiography:

We were enthralled by the Russian Revolution, but we lacked Marxist training and had even less experience in applying it to the actual conditions in China. Later most of the major policies of the CCP were decided for it by Moscow. Even if everything had been done with China's interest at heart the handling of the China situation from Moscow could not have been done completely from the defect of impracticability. As a result, the Chinese revolution suffered indescribable damage. The facts of the revolution were not as beautiful as the ideals.

This power play taking place within Moscow's political

¹ Chang, Kuo tao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/ 1921-27, pg. 208.

arena, influenced the CI and CCP decisions and in turn led to the eventual KMT/CCP alliance which was touted by Moscow and the Comintern as the most practical move that the CCP could make in gaining a more powerful position in Chinese society.

The KMT/CCP alliance was more of a misalliance, putting into practice a theoretical impossibility; the merger of two opposing groups, one which worked in the interests of a bourgeois following, while the other supposedly worked in the interests of the masses of poor peasants and urban workers. This alliance pushed the CCP into a compromising condition of trying to institute radical social reform on the one hand, and on the other, trying to appease the bourgeois element of the KMT, who opposed radical reform because it cut into their own livelihood. The CCP could not very well appeal to to opposing groups in society at one time; the oppressed and the oppressors, with goals that appealed to both. It became an impossible task to try and gain the support of two opposing classes in society, while maintaining an alliance with the KMT. By trying to appeal to both groups, they were not effectively getting the support of either.

The KMT/CCP alliance was instigated by the CI with the backing of Moscow. Though this alliance was opposed by certain factions within the CCP it became a reality in spite of opposition: a.) because the CCP was not a secure enough body to feel that it could supplant the CI and Moscow's tactics

considering that they were inexperienced in revolutionary strategy and b.) the CI, once having made up its mind to institute a plan of action, used the strong arm of Moscow to persuade what they considered to be the inexperienced intellectuals.

Even within the Comintern and Moscow the case was not clearcut as to which road was to be taken once the merger was completed. As Robert C. North and Xenia Eudin state in their book, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, practically no one knew how they were to manipulate this unweildy alliance:

What comes to light is that virtually everyone spoke up for a different course; that virtually everyone contended, hardly anyone agreed with anyone else, and that the misperceptions, the error and contradictory decisions were by no means attributable only to Stalin, but were widely shared by both the Chinese and the Russian communists. Scarcely anyone of them really understood what was taking place; none foresaw clearly and sufficiently in advance the difficulties in harmonizing revolution "from above" with revolution "from below".²

As North and Eudin have stated, the blame for this misalliance and its subsequent disastrous results can be laid at the door of not only Stalin, but the CI and the CCP. The main difference is that Moscow's and the CI's actions were by design, while the CCP acted primarily through inexperience.

The CCP, then as we can see, was hampered not only by its own revolutionary inability, stemming from the members background, but an an unweildy alliance agreed upon by a reliance on the guiding arm of Moscow and the CI. Taking

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North, Robert C. and Xenia Eudin, M.N. Roy's Mission to China, Introduction.

into consideration these two factors and the added constraints of classical Marxist writings and teachings, it is not hard to understand the reasons behind the almost total neglect of the peasant masses and the mishandling of the proletariat labor movement.

The CCP neglect of the peasant situation and its potential revolutionary force can be laid at the door of both classical Marxist writing and the CCP's alliance with the KMT. The peasant force in China was obviously a large mass of discontented people, and yet the depth of their discontent and revolutionary potential was virtually ignored because of their lack of status in Marxist writing and the bourgeois claim on the CCP due to its merger with the KMT. By 1926 it was all too obvious that the peasantry desired to overthrow the existing rural system; that an agrarian revolution was just a matter of time, yet the CCP procrastinated and finally disavowed the whole peasant cause.

As we have already indicated, classical Marxist literature does not give a positive revolutionary position to the peasantry and even Lenin conceded only a secondary revolutionary position to them. The urban proletariat was always to be the prime revolutionary agents and any peasant uprising had to be led by an urban proletariat group. At the time of the 1926-27 peasant uprisings the CCP was uncertain as of how to act and there was definitely no program for rural revolution. Compounding this problem was the CCP's alliance with the KMT; part of whose supporters were

trying to confiscate the land. The consequence of these two factors was that the CCP did not move to lead the peasantry in their struggle; deciding with this move to appease the KMT and remain loyal to the urban worker--the Marxist-Leninist prime force of the revolution. James P. Harrison in his book entitled The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions, emphasized the ultimate importance of the rural revolution during this period:

In China the peasant problem was particularly acute because by 1930, it was apparent that the communists, if they were to win at all, must do so first in the countryside, contrary to the classical theory of revolution.³

Because the CCP as a group refused to sanction widespread peasant work, only a few rebels, such as P'eng Pai and Mao Tse-tung went into the countryside to organize peasant associations. By 1926, when peasant discontent was widespread, and there were upwards of 15 million members of peasant associations, the CCP still disavowed the peasant groups.

The proletariat labor movement can only to a lesser extent be considered a failure. Though the CCP failed in certain areas to properly control and manipulate the various demonstrations, losing some of its effectiveness as a by-product, credit must be given to the CCP for deliniating a group of potential support and trying to direct its goals in their direction.

The proletariat movement in China was, as we have already stated, sanctioned by Marxist literature and the example of

³ Harrison, James P., The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions, pg. 53.

the Russian revolution. It was also fully sanctioned by Moscow and the Comintern. The CCP's problem was its complete concentration on the proletariat movement, despite the proletariats' minimal number in Chinese society. The CCP, because of its revolutionary backwardness and lack of control over the CI and Moscow's dictums, would not change the revolutionary policy set up by its superiors; in this case the concentration of action on the proletariat, with almost complete neglect of the peasantry.

Even in the CCP's dealings with the proletariat it was somewhat inept. To reiterate part of our previous section on the CCP's direction of the proletariat movement:

Though generally active and somewhat successful in the labor work that it undertook, the CCP had some sharp setbacks caused by flaws in a.) the CCP internal structure; its inability to communicate with the working class and a lack of organizational competence in running a large scale workers movement and b.) the contradictions in its actions due to its alliance with the KMT.

The CCP because of its poor revolutionary background and its "misalliance" with the KMT, failed to gain the support of what Marx had termed the "immense majority" of society; those men and women in society who were discontented with their lot and were driven to remove that government in order to better their lives. The CCP had not appealed to these people and in fact, only reached a small portion of them with concrete manifestations of their goals. The CCP was torn between trying to appeal to both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, negating any effect that its policies

could possibly have, and intarn loosing the support of those men and women from the peasant and proletariat class, who would be willing to follow and join in a new government.

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