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## The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party: An Overview and Sources

The rise to power of the Chinese communist movement has shaped the history of China for most of the twentieth century. Almost from the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1920 to its seizure of state power in 1949, its struggle with the Guomindang (GMD, Nationalist Party) dominated the domestic stage of Chinese politics. The main elements of this story are well-known but the period of reform in China launched in 1978 has been accompanied by the release of an unprecedented amount of new documentation that has enabled a refinement of key components of the story. This newly available documentation shows how the CCP interpreted the revolution in which it was participating, how it devised policies to meet the changing circumstances, how these were communicated both to party members and to the public at large and how it dealt with its complicated relationship with the Comintern. The message was not always the same, not even for party members. How much one was entitled to know or which particular interpretation of an event one was entitled to see depended on party rank. This hastily written paper will address three issues. First, it will discuss some general problems in the relationship between the Comintern and the CCP; secondly, it will seek to provide a more detailed overview of the relationship (clearly this cannot be complete given the scope and complexity of the relationship); and thirdly some of the key sources will be presented.

### The Comintern and the CCP: Some General Observations<sup>1</sup>

During the fifties, the assumption that the CCP was under the tutelage of Moscow led to attempts to see Comintern influence on the CCP in earlier phases of the revolution. It was not difficult to find.<sup>2</sup> Indeed some western scholars saw the destruction of the first united front in China as amounting to a failure of Soviet policy or even more particularly that of Stalin himself.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, this is also the conclusion of more recent scholarship by historians in the People's Republic of



China.<sup>4</sup> In terms of Western scholarship, the work of Schwartz has stood out as an exception. While he acknowledged the debt owed by the Chinese communists to Bolshevik theory and organization, he was aware of traditional influences and the "originality" of Mao Zedong and his supporters that was of increasing importance after 1927.<sup>5</sup> The indigenous elements that had gone into Chinese communism became major objects for retrieval particularly after the Sino-Soviet rupture became apparent in the early sixties. Some researchers began to explore the "sinification of Marxism" and to stress that much had happened in spite of Comintern influence rather than because of it.<sup>6</sup>

Recently available materials show that there was continual tension between the CCP and the Comintern resulting from China's perceived position in the world revolution and Moscow's perception of Soviet geo-political interest. Comintern influence was of major importance in the party's founding and development but its authority was not always accepted nor decisive in all periods.<sup>7</sup> Yet it was a voice that could not be ignored and up until 1938, when the Comintern could articulate its message clearly and get it through the communication network to the CCP leadership it had a reasonably decisive say.

For the Comintern, China was also an important topic and it became embroiled in the polemics between Stalin and Trotsky. The CCP had a permanent mission at the Comintern and until the early-mid thirties, the Comintern tried to coordinate its activities through the Far Eastern Bureau in Shanghai. Of particular importance were the agents and representatives that the Comintern sent to implement its policies in China.

Comintern agents in China enjoyed high prestige, but had to find Chinese party members through whom they could transmit their orders and the Comintern's strategic and tactical visions. At the very best, they were always one step removed from the realities they were trying to influence and interpret. A stream of Comintern representatives from Maring through Borodin and Roy to Vladimirov were frustrated in their attempts to apply Comintern policy to China.<sup>8</sup> Many discovered that the ideologically derived, policy positions of the Comintern proved too simplistic



to devise policies to deal with the complex realities faced. While Comintern agents in the field could enjoy considerable short-term freedom aided by the difficulties of communication with Moscow, over the long-term room for manoeuvre was limited. The ideological predilections of the Comintern set strict constraints on the extent to which policy could be moderated in the light of local conditions. Overloaded with details and information sent to Moscow from the periphery, the centre in Moscow tried to catalogue information and provide policy prescriptions in terms of simple formulae based on the shifting class alignments. Attempts by field agents to redefine their mission in the light of reality did, on occasion, bring them into conflict with Comintern leaders who interpreted such redefinitions as "ideological deviation."

Problems for Comintern agents were increased by the fact that not only were they in an alien environment but also had to interpret it through the views and experiences of others. Comintern representatives relied on the Chinese leaders for their information about the local situation. Thus, Maring depended on Liao Zhongkai for information about the GMD and cooperation with the CCP. Liao was a member of the left-wing of the GMD and a strong supporter of such cooperation perhaps leading Maring to adopt a positive assessment while underestimating opposition within the GMD.

Further, to get their own messages across, Comintern representatives had to find local "carriers" to propagate their views within the CCP. In some cases this worked well but in others it did not. For example, Pavel Mif was able to work through Wang Ming and Bo Gu in the early thirties to repudiate the policies of Li Lisan and keep the focus of official policy on revolutionary activity on the urban areas. By contrast, Maring was often frustrated in his attempts to push cooperation with the GMD and to establish a viable pro-CCP labour movement.

Even Chen Duxiu, who supported Maring's view of the need for cooperation with the GMD at the CCP's Third Congress had originally rejected Maring's ideas. In fact, it was only after Maring appealed to Comintern discipline that he was able to get Chen and other key CCP leaders briefly on his side.

One area where the Comintern representatives were particularly successful in instilling ideas were on the need for strong organisation and the role that ideology would play in inner-party debates. Bolshevik organisation was attractive to CCP leaders from an early stage. Acceptance of a modern, political party as a suitable form of organization could fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the Confucian bureaucracy. It was expected to provide an institutional form that transcended the personal authority of an individual leader<sup>9</sup> and a rational hierarchical structure that would facilitate decision-making and policy implementation.

Many of the CCP's early leaders were attracted to the Bolshevik form of organization because they felt that it would challenge what they saw as a traditional Chinese political culture that stressed obedience to the powerful individual leader.<sup>10</sup> This view simplified the past as the traditional system culminated in an institution centred on an individual, the "Emperorship", and previous Chinese rulers had been aware of the role played by "abstract" institutions. In their search for organization, these early leaders missed the fact that while, in theory, Bolshevik organization would transcend the individual, from the outset it was inseparable from the role of Lenin. Later, this tendency towards the domination of the organization by the supreme leader became more apparent under Stalin.

In addition, Bolshevik organization seemed to offer an alternative to the rule of individual warlords or the GMD which, from its reorganization in the early twenties, combined Leninist organization with leader worship. Sun Yat-sen was a supreme leader, a function subsequently taken over by Chiang Kai-shek. In the CCP, the reemergence of this tradition took longer and came with the assumption of supreme power by Mao Zedong in Yan'an in the forties.

A number of factors combined to instill the notion of the Bolshevik party among CCP members. First, there was the translation of key works and the promotion of the Bolshevik form of organization in the party press. Secondly, there was the influence of the Comintern emissaries such as Voitinsky and Maring who already had experience of such party organization and devoted considerable time to propagating their views. Indeed Maring was appalled by the lack of discipline

which he witnessed in the early CCP. Maring provided information on the idea and importance of party organization and of propaganda as a political weapon.<sup>11</sup> Further, he stressed the view that the struggle was linked to a much wider one: it was a part of the worldwide struggle against imperialism. Within this context, according to Maring and subsequent Comintern agents, the national party was subordinate to the Comintern.

Thirdly, in the early twenties there was the gradual return of key figures, such as Cai Hesen who had studied in Europe and had become acquainted with both communist ideology and organization as well as the modern labour movement. As the twenties progressed, the idea of a Bolshevik party was strengthened through the visits or training of key CCP figures in Soviet Russia. The first group of Chinese students went to Soviet Russia for study as early as spring 1921 and some 1,000 were trained in the twenties and thirties at the Communist University of the Working People of China.<sup>12</sup> While the students who returned from Soviet Russia were a very varied group they had all received a thorough training in notions of party organization and discipline. Of particular importance were Wang Ming, Bo Gu, Zhang Wentian, Wang Jiaxiang and Chen Yun.<sup>13</sup>

The Comintern was also influential in shaping the language of the CCP and its forms of inner-party struggle. The already existing influence of the Comintern and the use of ideology as a weapon in inner-party struggle was increased by the events at the 7 August Emergency Conference of 1927. The removal of Chen Duxiu as party leader was a potentially traumatic event in CCP history. For many, Chen had been a symbol of progress not just from the May Fourth Movement (1919), but from his earlier struggle against the Imperial system. A number of the early leaders had been drawn into the party because of personal connections and loyalty to Chen. In terms of the Chinese tradition, to turn on a respected senior and elder was an event of major significance.

Chen's removal was legitimized not merely through criticism of his "mistakes" but also through the invocation of ideological symbols to justify the attack. Adherence to the correct ideological line came to legitimize policy, and understanding of the "line" was a necessary



condition for leadership. This had the effect of strengthening Comintern control over party leadership as the Comintern was thought to possess a "higher wisdom" and vision of the revolutionary process than a mere national party. Concurrently, debate in the party became governed by the manipulation of ideological symbols with the result that genuine debate about policy disputes became even less feasible than had previously been the case. As the resolution of the Second Plenum of the Sixth CC pointed out (June 1929), there was no such thing as peace in the party. Erroneous tendencies always had to be fought against. All too often policy dispute was raised to the level of line struggle. Thus, the 7 August Emergency Conference (1927) ushered in ideological correctness as a key element in control, leadership and cohesion within the CCP. With it many of the debates within the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern were imported into the Chinese party. Those who opposed party were policy were labelled as "Trotskyites", "Anarchists", "Right Deviationist", "Left Deviationists" etc. Once labelled their objection to policy was more easily dealt with by the Party Centre. The idea of "correct line" also had consequences for the Party Centre itself. It could not recognize faults in its own leadership and thus policy failure was followed by the hunt for "scapegoats" who had sabotaged the party's correct line.

The tendency toward the dominance of an organizationally derived ideological truth was inherent in the choice of a Bolshevnik form of organisation from the beginning. Yet in the early stages it was not so readily apparent. The CCP had been organized before there had been any serious discussion of Marxism, and indeed the choice of a Bolshevnik organization removed the need for theoretical analysis. As a result "an organizationally defined analysis became for them [the original founders] a substitute for theoretical analysis."<sup>14</sup> Naturally, it was presumed that those from Soviet Russia or their emissaries had a greater understanding of this problem and the relevant needs.

One last general question that deserves our attention is the relationship between the Comintern and the rise to power of Mao Zedong. Some previous analyses viewed Mao Zedong's rise to power within the CCP as occurring in spite of the Comintern, but it now appears that the

Comintern was at least willing to acquiesce in Mao's rise and his victories over rivals within the party such as Zhang Guotao and Wang Ming (Moscow's own trainee). In both conflicts, the actions and words of the Comintern tended to favour Mao over his opponents.<sup>15</sup> Whether the Comintern perceived so clearly what was at stake is another matter. Further, on a number of occasions the Comintern called for the CCP not to ape Soviet experience, but to develop its own policy, and the Comintern's Seventh Congress (1935) accepted that individual parties should have more freedom. Whether the Comintern approved of what was finally developed is a different question. In September 1938, the Comintern informed the CCP that it approved of the United Front policy during the previous year, a year during which the party had been under the control of Mao Zedong and during which he had been in competition with Wang Ming. Further Dimitrov, the person responsible for Chinese affairs at the time, let it be known that Mao Zedong should be the party's senior leader in preference to Wang Ming (the man thought of as Moscow's closest ally).<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Comintern was not anti-Mao nor was Mao inevitably opposed to the Comintern.<sup>17</sup>

### Periodisation

#### 1920-1927

This period is marked by Comintern help in establishing the CCP, the attempts to simulate cooperation with the GMD and finally the increasingly desperate attempts to provide class-based analyses of the internal forces within the GMD in order to justify continued cooperation.

Apart from the intellectual attraction of Marxism, a number of factors led to an increase of its appeal in its Bolshevik form. The Bolshevik revolution demonstrated to some Chinese the possibilities for radical change in the context of underdevelopment and the growing prestige of Soviet Russia was boosted by the Karakhan Declaration (1919) that appeared to renounce the former czarist privileges in China. It was within this essentially favourable predisposition towards

Soviet Russia that the Comintern began to press its interests in China and to promote the idea of the development of a revolutionary party to guide and control future actions.

In April 1920, Voitinsky visited China as the head of a group sent by the Vladivostok Branch of the Bolshevik's Far Eastern Bureau. He and his fellow visitors found fertile soil in which to plant the seeds of a Bolshevik organization.<sup>18</sup> According to the historian Dirlik, the timing was fortuitous as the radical movement in China had reached a point of crisis because the previous ideological and organisational premises appeared to have run into a dead end.<sup>19</sup> Voitinsky's group established contacts with radical intellectuals such as Li Dazhao in Beijing and Chen Duxiu in Shanghai. Out of their discussions emerged the idea of founding a Communist Party in China.<sup>20</sup>

However the early communist organisations in China did not just emerge out of the blue nor were they summoned up by Voitinsky's visit but evolved from the study societies set up during the May Fourth period. Out of study groups such as the "New People's Study Society", the "Awakening Society" and the "Social Welfare Society" came many of China's later communist leaders.<sup>21</sup>

The group in Shanghai was the first communist organisation to be set up, most probably in August 1920,<sup>22</sup> and it functioned as the provisional Party Centre until the First Congress was opened in the following year. Although the precise structure and names varied from place to place, by the time of the First Party Congress the communist organizations functioned in a three-fold structure. Operating illegally at the core were the communist small groups; then there were units of the Socialist Youth Corps operating semi-openly and providing a recruitment pool for the party; and finally the marxist study societies presented a public face, trying to reach the widest possible audience.<sup>23</sup>

It was Maring (the Dutchman Sneevliet), sent by Lenin to look at the possibilities for a communist movement in the Far East, who was the first to grapple with the complexities of the environment in China on behalf of the Comintern. His main contributions, in this respect, were to



try to instill in members the notion of organisation, to impress on them the need to establish a revolutionary labour movement and to push the party towards cooperation with other class forces.

The CCP's First Congress (23 July-1 August 1921) had adopted a policy of hostility towards the bourgeoisie that ran counter to the policy line that was evolving in the Comintern. The Comintern's Second Congress (July-August 1920) had put forward the idea of a temporary alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie during the phase of the national revolution. The subsequent period saw an attempt to force on the CCP a policy of cooperation with the bourgeoisie in the nationalist revolutionary movement. The pressure on the CCP to collaborate with other class forces was increased by Maring's generally negative assessment of the party and his positive response to the GMD that was based in the South of China.<sup>24</sup> This led Maring to propose that CCP members join the GMD to form a bloc within. The ideological complication of the proletariat joining a bourgeois party was swept aside with the assertion that the GMD was not a bourgeois party at all but a combination of four groups, the intelligentsia, the Chinese patriots overseas, the soldiers and the workers.

Initially, the idea was totally unacceptable to the CCP leaders as Chen Duxiu's letter of 6 April 1922 to Voitinsky clearly shows. Yet by June 1922 signs of a shift in attitude were apparent. Presumably the influence of both Maring and the Youth International representative, Dalin, was beginning to take effect.<sup>25</sup> CCP propaganda began to refer to the GMD as "revolutionary" and the CCP's Second Congress (16-23 July 1922) confirmed the party's decision to join the democratic revolutionary movement in a temporary alliance. It is important to note that this decision referred to "all the nation's revolutionary parties" not just the GMD.

The Congress favoured a horizontal alignment alongside the GMD rather than a "bloc within" as had been proposed by Maring. On his return to China (from his consultations in Moscow) in the summer of 1922, Maring found major opposition to his policy. Four of the five members of the party's Central Executive Committee belonged to a "small group" under Zhang

Guotao. This "small group" was based on the Labour Secretariat and was hostile to the idea of cooperation with the GMD.

To get his ideas accepted, Maring convened the Hangzhou Plenum (28-30 August 1922), the first plenum ever held by the CCP. To overcome the opposition of the majority, Maring was able to cite the "Instructions for the ECCI Representative in South China." This document, drafted by Radek on the basis of Maring's statements, was an endorsement of the latter's views. This imposition of Comintern discipline was intended to move the CCP away from its idealism and exclusionist position to embrace the bourgeoisie in a tactical alliance. Moreover, Maring used it to argue that CCP members accept his view that they join the GMD to form a "bloc within". The Third Party Congress did eventually pass resolutions in favour of cooperation with the GMD on the lines suggested by Maring but substantial opposition remained within the party.<sup>26</sup> It was left to Borodin, who was sent as Maring's replacement to implement the policy.

Borodin worked within the general framework sketched out in the Comintern's decisions on the China question of January and May 1923. According to the Comintern, the main targets of the revolution were imperialism and its Chinese supporters. While fighting these enemies, the CCP was to strengthen its position within the GMD and more broadly within the nationalist movement through CCP control of the peasant and labour movements. To use Stalin's metaphor, the GMD would be squeezed like a lemon and flung aside. All acknowledged that a time would come when the interests of the bourgeoisie at the head of the nationalist movement would clash with those of the proletariat. At this point, the representatives of the proletariat were to cease the temporary cooperation and take over leadership. Deciding when this time had come proved difficult and it was Chiang Kai-shek who acted first putting down the CCP-led workers' movement in Shanghai in April 1927.

Initially, the united front had proved very successful for the small group of communists. Between January 1924 and May 1926, communist influence in the GMD grew steadily and CCP membership grew from just under 1,000 in January 1925 to almost 58,000 by April 1927.



The CCP's success was one major reason for its undoing. Some GMD leaders came to see it as a real threat to their leadership of the revolution. The increasing revolutionary activity in the countryside unsettled those GMD leaders who did not favour a complete break-up of the traditional power structure. In fact, the CCP was caught between the consequences of conflicting objectives. On the one hand, it was trying to promote the national revolution in cooperation with the GMD while also pursuing a social revolution that brought it into conflict with powerful elements within the GMD. As the CCP tried to restructure the GMD in order to attain its own goals, opposition within the GMD to CCP membership strengthened. This conflict with the CCP and a reassessment of cooperation were accompanied by a growing rift between the left and right wings of the GMD and the concentration of military power in the hands of the emerging leader of the GMD-right -- Chiang Kai-shek.

The CCP also remained divided on the policy of cooperation with the GMD. The situation looked quite different to Chen Duxiu, Voitinsky and the Party Centre working illegally among the proletariat in Shanghai than it did to Borodin and the communists working openly in Canton under GMD protection and developing the peasant movement. Borodin spoke of this conflict in Moscow in 1930 during his self-defence against accusations of counter-revolutionary behaviour. He remarked that there had been "two lines in the Chinese Revolution", one in Shanghai and one in Canton.<sup>27</sup> Friction between these two rival centres undermined the party's capacity to act coherently when threatened by opponents in the GMD. While Chen Duxiu, on a number of occasions, called for the withdrawal of CCP members from the GMD and the creation of an open GMD-CCP alliance, the Canton party organization called for the takeover of the GMD leadership. The situation was complicated by the Comintern's repeated insistence that the CCP remain within the GMD while, at the same time, strengthening its independent position among the mass movements.

Communist influence within the GMD was helped by the aid Soviet Russia was willing to donate and by the reorganization of the GMD into a Leninist-style party. Borodin had been sent to monitor this work. Unlike Maring, he was not merely a Comintern representative but was sent by

the Soviet Government and also represented the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).<sup>28</sup> Arriving in Canton early in October 1923, Borodin immediately set to work. His first task was to bring about the reorganization of the GMD and in this endeavour he found Sun Yat-sen's willing support. Borodin acted as adviser to the Provisional CEC set up in late-October by Sun Yat-sen to draw up plans for party reorganization and to prepare for the national GMD congress. It was Borodin who provided the draft of the GMD Constitution.<sup>29</sup>

The twists and turns of proposed strategies to different class forces within the GMD are too complex to go into here but suffice it to say that many CCP members were finding it difficult to strike a balance between developing the GMD in the nationalist movement while not ignoring the CCP's own agenda. Many including Chen Duxiu at the Fourth Party Congress expressed caution about CCP involvement with the GMD worrying that the CCP would become a "yellow" party and pursue a policy of compromise between capital and labour.

This tension was particularly highlighted after the "Zhongshan Incident" of 20 March 1926. Chiang Kai-shek ordered martial law claiming that a gunboat under communist command, the Zhongshan, was planning to kidnap him. Whether the plot was real or not it provided Chiang with the chance to clip the wings of the communists. He placed some 50 together with the soviet advisers under house arrest. Borodin was able to negotiate their release but at a price. This

included restricting CCP activity within the GMD, providing a name list of all its members in GMD and abandoning its separate organizations in the GMD. Further, CCP members could no longer serve as bureau head in nationalist organizations. This last point meant that the communist, Tan Pingshan, had to give up the powerful post of head of the organization department to Chiang Kai-shek. Borodin was also forced to support the Northern Expedition to which he had previously been opposed in return for Chiang's promises to curb the GMD-right.<sup>30</sup> Chiang was still, of course, dependent on Soviet arms and aid for the Northern Expedition and made it clear that his original actions had not been against the alliance with Soviet Russia as such. The Northern



Soviet Union concluded with Japan on 13 April 1941. However, both events allowed the CCP to pursue its own course independent of Moscow's aims. Thus, for example, the CCP's comments on the neutrality pact stated that it marked another triumph of the Soviet Union's peace policy. It was claimed that this pact had in no way compromised Soviet support for China's war effort, a view quite different to that of Chiang Kai-shek. However, the CCP used the pact as a chance to put forward the view that it was up to China itself to recover all the Chinese territories south of the Yalu River by itself. Despite this, the CCP was being forced into defending a position that was clearly not going to push forward its nationalist claims. From the CCP's point of view, the German invasion of the Soviet Union that began on 22 June 1941 came as a fortunate relief. Overnight the Soviet peace policy in the midst of a capitalist war was changed into a position of the Soviet Union as the leader of the fight against fascism.

Now, the "capitalist powers" such as Great Britain and the US which had been "conspiring" to encourage a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union to preempt a Japanese push southward had to be courted as a part of the international united front against fascism. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour brought the US into the war and enabled the CCP to call for international involvement in the war to push forward the united front. The CCP had moved swiftly from the view of recovering all its territories on its own.

The CCP's 9 December 1941 declaration called for the formation of an anti-Japanese and anti-fascist front in the Pacific that would include all the governments and peoples who were opposing Japan. Now the USA and Great Britain were seen as having an important role to play in defeating Japan and bringing about unity in China. "Left" deviation was to be avoided and all party members were to cooperate with the British and Americans.

The dissolution of the Comintern (15 May 1943) freed the CCP from any need to bow in its direction and re-affirmed what was already a reality for Mao and his supporters that the CCP should get on with creating its own revolution on its own terms. Also, it undercut any last possible

support base for Wang Ming and his followers. Combined with other internal factors, it contributed to the build up of a cult around Mao Zedong.

On 26 May, after the CCP had received the information, the Politburo met to discuss the issue and in the name of the CC issued a decision on the matter. Not surprisingly, the decision wholly agreed with the Comintern's abolition pointing out that this would strengthen the local CPs by making them "even more nationalised." Such a leading centre was no longer considered necessary and, interestingly, the decision points out that the Comintern had not interfered in CCP affairs since 1935. The need to assert the continued and strengthened role the CCP would play without the Comintern was further necessitated by the calls by some CCP domestic critics that it could now disband.

#### Sources

There is an abundance of sources for the study of the relationship between the Comintern and the CCP but still many areas of the relationship remain murky. Some of the outstanding questions may be resolved by the opening of the archives in Moscow.

##### a) Archives

Outside of Moscow, there are three main archive holdings which are of relevance:

i) The Central Archives (Zhongyang dang'an), Beijing. These archives comprise the main holdings of the CCP. Among other material, it contains archives and related documents since the founding of the CCP from the Central Committee and its affiliated organisations, their agencies, as well as from revolutionary groups and front organisations from different periods. There are 202 complete files with approximately 8 million pieces. Of particular importance is the archive of the CCP delegation to the Comintern. This contains important documents of the Comintern, and resolutions, decisions, announcements on China by the ECCI, the Far East Bureau, and the Eastern Department, as well as by the Youth Communist International and the Workers' International. Alas, entrance is highly restricted even for Chinese researchers and virtually impossible for foreigners.



ledge the folly of continued cooperation with the GMD. In May 1927, the ECCI also interpreted the break with Chiang Kai-shek in a positive light. It re-emphasized the need to place the rural revolution at the centre of the stage but only within the context of the continued alliance with the GMD.<sup>34</sup>

The high-point in CCP compromise came with the adoption by an enlarged Central Committee meeting on 30 June of an 11-point resolution on relations between the two parties. The resolution acknowledged that the GMD was the leader of the national revolution. Communists in government functions were to work only as GMD members. To minimize conflicts, communists holding government positions would give up their posts. Further, mass organizations were instructed to submit to the leadership and control of the GMD authorities.<sup>35</sup> At a late stage, the party was stumbling towards the formation of a "bloc without" rather than a "bloc within," something that had been suggested by Chen Duxiu on a number of occasions.

Submissive gestures did not resolve the conflicts with the GMD-left in Wuhan. Wang Jingwei's suspicions of the communists had been aroused further in early-June when the Comintern delegate, M.N.Roy, had shown him the contents of a telegram from Stalin. It called for the communists to reorganise the left and expel "reactionary leaders" and to prepare concrete steps for a revolutionary army, albeit still under nationalist leadership.<sup>36</sup>

An uneasy truce prevailed until mid-July and then events moved rapidly. Under pressure from the Comintern, Chen Duxiu resigned his position as General Secretary.<sup>37</sup> On 12 July, a new five-person temporary standing committee of the Politburo was chosen and the following day it issued an open statement critical of the Wuhan government. On 15 July, the Wuhan GMD Political Affairs Committee announced the end of cooperation; on 1 August the CCP's Nanchang Uprising was launched; and on 5 August, Wang Jingwei began a large-scale purge of communist activists. Cooperation was ending in tragedy and it was clear that a new strategy had to be found by the CCP.

1927-1937

This period is marked by two diverging tendencies. The first is the tighter grip that the Comintern was able to hold over the central party apparatus in Shanghai. The second is the increasing autonomy of the CCP leaders in the base areas that were set up in the late-twenties and early thirties in parts of central and south China. Comintern control of the Party Centre was a two-edged sword. On the one hand it enabled the organisation to appoint leaders sympathetic to its policies while on the other hand it had to extricate itself from the blame each time policy failed.<sup>38</sup> This resulted in a stream of missives from the Comintern blaming individual CCP leaders for incorrectly applying or even betraying its correct policy line. Life in the base areas offered a learning experience independent of Comintern agendas that was returned to and developed further after Mao Zédong and his survivors arrived in the Northwest of China after the Long March.

As mentioned above the 7 August Emergency Conference of 1943 resulted in a tightening of the Comintern's grip over the CCP's central leadership. The intention of the Conference was to evaluate past policy, put forward a new strategy and to elect the new party leadership. The newly arrived Comintern representative, Lominadze, had called for the meeting together with Qu Qiubai, Weihan and Zhang Tailei set about the preparatory work. The Conference marked the formal transition from a strategy of cooperation with the GMD to one of opposition. Mistakes were blamed on the previous leadership of the CCP. This is clearly to be seen in "The Circular Letter" sent to party members after the meeting and in the comments of Lominadze to the Conference itself. The letter denounced the "opportunist" mistakes made in attitude towards the GMD and the mass movement, particularly stressing the failure to support fully the rural revolution. It had little to say about future strategy, emphasising the sole leadership of the CCP yet still calling for collaboration with GMD leftists. It is worth pointing out that this appeal for continued cooperation derived not only from Stalin's need to show infallibility in his political struggles with Trotsky but also from the situation within China. Significant members of the GMD still supported the CCP and it was hoped that they could be rallied to the communist cause. In the GMD central leadership

there was Song Qingling (Sun Yat-sen's widow) and Deng Yanda, in the military He Long and Ye Ting. A number of grassroots GMD branches and troops also favoured the communists.<sup>39</sup>

The Comintern's need to place the blame on the CCP leadership is apparent in Lominadze's speech to the Conference. According to Lominadze, far from having given bad advice, the fault lay in the failure of the CCP to carry out Comintern instructions among the masses.<sup>40</sup>

The new strategy ushered in by the Conference of rebellions, inciting army mutinies and initiating peasant uprisings was not successful leading to a further depletion of the communist forces. However, failure did not dampen the CCP's enthusiasm (particularly that of Qu Qiubai). In November 1927 policy for the rural and urban areas was radicalised. Landlords, big and small, were to be shown no leniency and workers were to take power in the factories into their own hands. This decision led to the disaster of the Canton Commune uprising in December 1927.

The defeat of the Canton Commune coming so swiftly after the defeats of the communists in the Nanchang and the Autumn Harvest Uprisings, made it clear that a shift in tactics was necessary. It was impossible for the Party Centre under Qu Qiubai to continue with its "putschism." The party had lost contact with the working-class in major centres such as Shanghai, Wuhan and Canton. The insurrectionary policy even where the peasantry had been mobilised had been intended to restore the initiative to the proletariat under the CCP's leadership by seizing major urban centres. The failure of this approach signalled the effective end of the proletariat as the main force of the revolution. Over time this would also lead to a drastic reduction in Comintern influence over real policy implementation in the CCP.

A National Congress was needed to reassess the past and sanction a shift in policy direction. Thus, preparations began for the Sixth Congress and for reasons of security it was held in Moscow (18 June to 11 July 1928).<sup>41</sup> Not surprisingly, Comintern influence was dominant. The "Political Decision" described the revolution as being in a trough between two waves. The first revolutionary wave had receded because of "repeated failures" and the new wave had not yet arrived. This notion allowed the "putschism" of Qu Qiubai to be attacked while supporting future



insurrections. Judging the waves was a difficult business and it is not surprising that the new Chinese leadership would seize upon any sign of heightened activity as the arrival of a new crest.

The notion of the movement developing in waves was not an innovation of the Congress but had been put forward by the ECCI in February 1928. While criticising the previous "excesses", in particular the Canton Commune, the ECCI maintained that a further revolutionary upsurge was possible. However, such upsurges would be irregular and thus the party must take care not to allow the movement to run out of control. Instead the mass organisations were to be built up to ensure coordination.<sup>42</sup>

On the surface, the Sixth Congress appeared to have produced an appropriate long-term program. In reality, it presented the CCP with an intractable problem. The central issue of the revolution was to be the agrarian question while it was of paramount importance that the CCP recapture its proletarian base in the urban areas. The chance of fulfilling these objectives was further complicated by the more radical turn of events both in China and the Soviet Union shortly after the Congress.

Of immediate direct influence on the new party leadership was the factional struggle between Stalin and Bukharin. Although rumours of differences had circulated at the Sixth Party Congress, Bukharin supervised the Congress on behalf of the Comintern. Indeed, the "Political Resolution" was based on the nine hour (sic!) speech that he delivered to the Congress and the new Politburo was put together on his instructions. By the end of 1928, Bukharin had become the main target of Stalin's attacks for his "rightist" or "rich peasant line."

This caused the CCP to adopt an increasingly left policy that culminated in what the Comintern was itself to denounce as the Li Lisan line. On 8 February 1929, the ECCI issued a letter to the CCP's Central Committee claiming that signs of a new revolutionary wave were clearly detectable in China. As a result the ECCI warned that at the present time, the "rightist trend" was particularly dangerous.<sup>43</sup> Shortly after the letter arrived, the Politburo drafted a formal

resolution on how the party should apply the Comintern line in its practical work.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the period until April 1930 marks a distinct phase in the shift of party policy.

The anti-rightist drive in Moscow continued to affect the Party Centre in Shanghai. On 26 October 1929, the ECCI sent another letter to the CCP CC, this time announcing "the beginning of the revolutionary wave."<sup>45</sup> The party was to take over the leadership of this new revolutionary wave by overcoming its "petty bourgeois waverings." Once again the Comintern reinforced the view that at the preset time, "rightism" was the most dangerous trend in the party. The Politburo responded to this letter by adopting resolutions on 20 December 1929 and 11 January 1930 that fully accepted the Comintern's position and that heralded a louder criticism of "rightism."<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately the revolutionary tide did not exist, at least in the urban areas. The Comintern's insistence on political strikes and preparation for armed insurrection served to alienate the proletariat rather than to rally it to the communist cause. The CCP leadership decided to use the rising Soviet movement in the countryside as a means of recapturing its influence in the cities. This policy reached its fruition under Li Lisan's direction and was spelled out in the Politburo decision of 11 June 1930. The current stage was seen as one of revolutionary upsurge and it proposed that Wuhan be seized as a part of the take over of one or more provinces. The resolution sought to implement the Comintern's wishes in China but the failure of the strategy caused it to become the focus of critical attention in the Soviet Union some months later.

The resolution was sent to the Comintern for approval but the Comintern delayed making a formal reply possibly because of the link made by Li Lisan between the Chinese and world revolutions.<sup>47</sup> Later the Comintern was to criticise the efforts made in the resolution to show the interdependence of the Chinese Revolution and the world revolution. The 11 June resolution claimed that because China was the weakest link in the ruling chain of world imperialism, the Chinese revolution could occur first setting off the world revolution and the final class war. While such an analysis could be justified in terms of the Comintern's view that the stability of world capitalism would soon erode, though at an uneven pace, depending on place, the Comintern may



not have been too happy to have Li Lisan lecturing them on the world revolution. The resolution also hinted at the need for Soviet aid, something that Li Lisan would soon openly ask for. This was ignored by the Comintern. It was not in a position to call on the Soviet Union to support the Chinese Revolution. This appeal was later denounced as an error of "semi-Trotskyism." The prediction that a successful bourgeois-democratic revolution would soon be transformed into a socialist one was also cited later as proof of Li's Trotskyite tendencies. However, this too had been a prediction in line with Comintern analysis at the time.

On 16 July, the Party Centre sent another letter to the Presidium of the ECCI calling for approval of the strategy outlined in the resolution of 11 June. Two days later, the National Conference of CCP Organisations opened in Shanghai. The Conference announced that the general task of the party was to organise armed uprisings to seize political power and that the party was one preparing to take power. Further it called for action committees to be established at the central and local levels. In the "red areas", workers' and peasants' revolutionary committees were to be established. These would be the sole leading organs.

A reply was eventually made by the Comintern, whose letter of 23 July 1930 to the CCP CC has produced different interpretations.<sup>48</sup> The letter contained no substantial disagreement with

Lisan either in the general policy or even with respect to practical strategy. What was indicated between the lines, however, was worry over Li Lisan's operations and shirking of responsibility, which fully accorded with the position of the Comintern leaders in the early 1930s. The Comintern leaders were not so foolhardy as Li to claim world revolution was imminent nor did they dare to exclude the possibility of a successful revolution in China. The letter did not oppose the idea of taking over Wuhan and one or more provinces but it seemed to oppose Li's notion of an "immediate nationwide revolution."

It is a moot point as to when Li Lisan and the Party Centre knew of the Comintern's views. Letters could take up to one or two months to arrive and the full text probably did not



arrive until early September. However, CCP leaders were already informed of its contents by late July from telegraphic messages received by the ECCI Far East Office in Shanghai.<sup>49</sup>

While it is uncertain just how much Li knew and when, he certainly rejected Comintern concern. On 6 August, Li Lisan chaired the first meeting of the Central Action Committee calling the whole party to mobilise for immediate revolution. By this time, the Comintern was more clearly of the opinion that Li had gone too far. Qu Qiubai and Zhou Enlai were sent back to China to moderate Li's excesses but not yet to repudiate his policy wholesale. This is not surprising given that it would be difficult to extricate the Comintern from sharing the blame.

While the Comintern refrained from criticism of Li Lisan while the strategy was in operation, as soon as it failed harsh condemnation followed. Between the Third and Fourth Plenums (September 1930-January 1931), factional conflicts and power struggles within the CCP increased. Li Lisan's strongest opponents were Wang Ming and the "returned students" group. They had as their principal supporter Pavel Mif, the Comintern representative in China.<sup>50</sup> Yet, opposition had little to do with current or future policy and was not based on opposition to a "leftist" line. Wang Ming, in an article published four days after the 11 June Resolution, only differed from Li in his assessment that the Chinese Revolution could occur immediately without depending on world revolution as its precondition.<sup>51</sup>

Also, the Comintern began to toughen its stance as Pavel Mif and his supporters in the Comintern became dissatisfied with the decisions of the Third Plenum. In October 1930, the ECCI sent members of the CC a letter stating that Li Lisan's mistakes were ones of line.<sup>52</sup> It labelled Li Lisan "anti-Comintern" and a "semi-Trotskyite." Mif himself arrived in China in mid-December 1930 and proposed that the Fourth Plenum be convened as soon as possible. The Plenum was held in Shanghai on 7 January and was dominated by Mif and his protege, Wang Ming.

The resolution of the Fourth Plenum drafted under Mif's guidance was harsh in its condemnation of Li Lisan. Li was accused of betraying the correct instructions of the Comintern and bringing havoc to the party. Li's "line" was summed up as being contradictory to that of the

Comintern and comprising "a policy of opportunism under the camouflage of 'leftist phrases', and an opportunistic passivism in regard to the task of organising the masses in a practical and revolutionary way." Betraying the Comintern line was true to the extent that the Comintern itself had abandoned the idea of using the Red Army to seize the urban areas.

For its new leadership in China, the Comintern did not turn to the Soviet areas but to Wang Ming and the "returned students". There were substantial changes in the Politburo with Wang Ming, who had not even been a CC member before the Plenum becoming a full member. While Xiang Zhongfa remained General Secretary, real power lay with Wang Ming. Several months after the Plenum, the strength of the "returned students" was increased with the promotion of Bo Gu and Zhang Wentian.

However, the failure of the Li Lisan strategy fatally wounded the strength of the CCP in the urban areas and many key figures in the communist movement were rounded up and almost all of the underground branches were rolled up. This increased the relative importance of the party organisations in the base areas that had been set up. The Party Centre in Shanghai was reduced to little more than a liaison organisation relaying instructions from the Comintern to the Soviets. Indeed, it appears that in early 1931 the Comintern made the suggestion that the Party Centre consider a move to the rural Soviets.<sup>53</sup> While the Party Centre became more involved in the work of the Soviets, transferring key personnel, it was not until early 1933 that Bo Gu and the Party Centre arrived at the Central Soviet.<sup>54</sup> The conditions under which the Party Centre began its move to the Soviets meant that in reality legitimate leadership of the revolutionary movement had passed to the Soviets. However, the process inevitably produced conflicts and frictions. Yet this is not to say that Mao and his supporters were an immediate conscious target of the "Returned Students" who dominated the Party Centre when it began its transfer to the Jiangxi Soviet.

However, the Comintern was to take one last decision that would have a major effect on the CCP. This led to a second period of alliance with the GMD in 1937. The Comintern's Seventh Congress (July-August 1935) adopted a new policy that called for a united front of all elements.

classes and nations in the fight against fascism. This policy shift came primarily as a result of Soviet Russia's awareness of the increasing threat to its security posed by Germany and Japan.

This new policy line was applied to China by Wang Ming, the head of the CCP mission to the Comintern in Moscow. However, it should be pointed out that Wang Ming's own ideas had been evolving from the notion of a united front from below to a united front from above.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the Japanese occupation of Northeast China had caused the Central Committee to suggest a shift in policy in the Manchuria region in January 1933.<sup>56</sup> This letter indicated that it would be possible to cooperate with the national bourgeoisie if a solid united front from below had been assured. This, according to the letter, would ensure the proletarian leadership in the united front.

The "August First Declaration" (1935) issued in Moscow in the name of the CCP and the Chinese Soviet Republic, was a clear signal that the CCP was to make the strategic shift from civil war to a new united front.<sup>57</sup> The declaration claimed that it was the "sacred duty of everyone to resist Japan and save the nation." It then criticised the actions of "scum" and "traitors" such as Chiang Kai-shek, Yan Xishan and Zhang Xueliang who had not adopted a policy of resistance to Japan. If the GMD would stop its attacks, the CCP and the Soviet Government pledged that it would cooperate closely with them to defend the country against the Japanese no matter what their other differences might be. The CCP declared its willingness to cooperate with all those prepared to join a government of national defence that would pursue a ten-point programme to expel the Japanese. The suggestion was clearly for a united front from above.

It is not entirely clear when this news reached the Party Centre as communications with Moscow had been severed during the Long March. Certainly communications were restored in November when Zhang Hao, an envoy of the CCP mission to the Comintern, arrived in Northern Shaanxi but evidence suggests that its contents were known earlier. A Central Committee secret directive in October 1935 reflected the thrust of the declaration.

In December 1935, a Politburo meeting was convened at Wayaobao to discuss the implications of the united front strategy. The meeting decided to adopt the widest political front



possible to oppose Japanese imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek. This front would include workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie and even members of the national bourgeoisie, rich peasants and small landlords. The party was to strive for leadership of this coalition. The highest manifestation of this new united front would be the government of national defence and the united anti-Japanese army that would be united on the basis of the ten-point programme. This conciliatory approach was reflected in the change of name of the Worker and Peasant Soviet Republic into the People's Soviet Republic and in the policy shifts. Also, policy was moderated. Rich peasants were to enjoy the same rights as others and not have their property confiscated while industrial and commercial entrepreneurs would be welcomed to invest in the area.

Despite this new approach, it would take another two years before the CCP accepted Chiang Kai-shek as a partner in a new united front and then only after his arrest by his own officers in what is commonly referred to as the Xi'an Incident. It is worth pointing out that it seems that the Comintern applied what pressure it could to persuade that the incident be resolved peacefully and that Chiang be released to head the national resistance to Japan.

#### 1938-1943

During this period, Comintern direct influence on the CCP was slight and, as argued above, was not necessarily detrimental to Mao's ascendance to power within the party as many authors have suggested previously. The decline in the influence of the Comintern is clearly seen in the manner of interpretation by the CCP of key Comintern decisions during this period.

As noted above, it was on receiving news from Moscow of the Comintern's tacit support that Mao decided to convene the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee (September-November 1938) at which he defeated Wang Ming politically.

The war with Japan did not exist in isolation and the CCP leadership in Yan'an could not afford to ignore the Comintern totally. Just as publicly Mao and the CCP gave full support to the Soviet-Nazi Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939, so they supported the neutrality pact the

Expedition was officially launched at the beginning of July 1926 even though some units had gone north earlier.

These events caused the communists further confusion. Publicly, they accepted the new regulations passed by the GMD CEC in May but privately there were conflicts about the way forward. It appears that the Canton area proposed an immediate counter-attack against Chiang and the take over of the GMD from within while Chen Duxiu proposed withdrawal. In June, a compromise was suggested, cooperation would continue but as a bloc without rather than a bloc within.<sup>31</sup> However, this alternative was blocked by the Comintern.

Withdrawal from the alliance with the GMD or some elements of it was consistently rejected by the Comintern even after the massacre of the communists by Chiang Kai-shek in April 1927. The tenure of Comintern policy was set in the 'Theses on the Chinese Question' adopted at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI (November-December 1926). This called for continued CCP cooperation with the GMD-left to bring about the success of the nationalist revolution.<sup>32</sup> The GMD-right was not to be allowed to turn the GMD into a bourgeois party. At the same time, the 'Theses' called for the CCP to take control of the social revolution. The agrarian revolution was defined as the central component in the revolutionary struggle and the communists were to gain "real power" in the rural areas through the peasant associations.<sup>33</sup> According to the 'Theses', the fear that intensification of class struggle in the village would weaken the united anti-imperialist front was unfounded. The approach may have seemed feasible for those situated in Moscow but the CCP was unable to act on these conflicting demands. The CCP alienated the radical peasant leaders by trying to check the "excesses" but at the same time it still aroused the hostility and suspicion of the GMD-left.

The CCP tried to grapple with the repression and slaughter of the communists at its Fifth Congress (27 April-9 May 1927). Far from ordering a break with the GMD, delegates argued about how to push ahead with the peasant movement without upsetting cooperation. Chiang's "betrayal" was met head on and was treated as a positive sign for the revolution. In a long and interesting

review of party work since the Fourth Congress, Chen Duxiu said that Chiang's betrayal had brought the Chinese revolution to a new stage. According to Chen, the bourgeoisie had now deserted the revolutionary front reducing its numbers but improving its quality. The four-class bloc had been reduced to a "united front of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie." Thus, the future task was to strengthen these three classes and CCP work in the military. The small number of bourgeois elements who remained could be expelled if they displayed "counter-revolutionary tendencies."

Future party policy was to concentrate on creating a "revolutionary democratic regime" in the areas held by the GMD, although it was acknowledged that this objective was still far away. According to Chen, the party was to discuss preparations for seizing power and he described it as "no longer an opposition party" but one that was really going to lead the revolution.

However, despite such bold words, the CCP was still going to have to work through its cooperation with the GMD. This meant that its policy towards the peasantry still erred to the side of caution and ideas of confiscation of all land were rejected. Chen commented that while policy towards the peasant movement had been "too rightist" in the past, it would be wrong to adopt now radical proposals to confiscate the land of all landlords.

The re-definition of the revolutionary forces and the moderate land policy did not help pull out of its dilemma. Despite the restrictions placed on the peasant movement, "excesses" continued to occur. The CCP finished up pleasing no-one, the GMD government in Wuhan blamed the communists for the excesses and the peasant leaders blamed it for not supporting their radical actions and leaving them prey to the military force of warlords and GMD troops. Suppression of the communists continued and the events of summer 1927 seemed to make a mockery of the CCP leadership's decision to continue the alliance with the GMD. The communists suffered blow after blow as one group after another of nationalist generals and politicians "betrayed the revolution."

The possibility of breaking with the GMD-left was reduced further by the messages coming from Moscow. Given his struggles with Trotsky, it was impossible for Stalin to acknow-



ii) The Sneevliet Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. One section of this archive covers the period of time that Sneevliet (Maring) spent working for the Comintern in Moscow and in China. The most important materials are Sneevliet's reports to the Comintern on the situation in China, the relationship between the CCP and the GMD, and the state of affairs within the party. In addition, there are interesting notes on key events either made by Sneevliet himself or for Sneevliet by his interpreters. Of particular interest in this respect are the notes concerning the Third Party Congress. The archives are entirely open. The most important materials concerning Sneevliet's period in China are published in Tony Saich, The Origins of the First united Front in China. The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring).

iii) The Archives of the Bureau of Investigation, Taibei. These archives contain materials captured by the GMD and taken to Taiwan after 1949. While the archives do not contain materials concerning the Comintern directly, there is much of interest to be found here. There is a wealth of documentation concerning CCP activities underground during the late-twenties and early-thirties and also on the base areas. These sets of documents were captured by the invading GMD armies. Finally, there are complete sets of party newspapers and periodicals that contain articles about the Comintern or that transmit its decisions. The archives are now completely open for researchers.

#### b) Publications of Documents

The most important set of original documentation on Comintern-CCP relations is the three volume series Gongchanguoji youguan Zhongguo geming de wenxian ziliao (Materials of the Comintern Concerning the Chinese Revolution), vol.1 1919-28, vol.2 1929-36, and 1936-43 (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1980, 1982 and 1989). It is edited by the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

An indispensable collection of CCP documents including those which are party responses to Comintern documents is to be found in the two-volumes Liuda vilai--dangnei mimi wenjian (Since the Sixth Party Congress--Secret Inner-Party Documents) and Liuda viciian (Before the Sixth Party Congress) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1980). These two volumes were originally

compiled and distributed by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CCP between December 1941 and October 1942. they were produced as study materials for high-ranking cadres in preparation for the Rectification Movement (1942-44). the collections were re-issued after 1980 in connection with the writing of the new Resolution on Party History (1981). The main drawback of this reissue is that pieces by Mao Zedong were withdrawn and readers are referred to the official works.

Based on these two publications and their own holdings, The Central Archives published their 14 volume selection of Central party documents intended for internal use only--Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji (Selected Documents of the CCP CC) (Beijing: Central party School Publishing House, 1982-1987). This collection provides a massive amount of previously unavailable material. More recently, an open (gongkai) version of the collection has been published. At the time of writing 12 volumes had been published (1989-91), covering the period 1921 until 1940. In terms of information about original publication details etc., this latter series is more useful than the neibu series. However, not all materials are included.

The Contemporary History Division of the Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has edited a series of books containing materials on Comintern representatives in China. The most important in this series are materials on Voitinsky, Maring, Borodin, Mif and Otto Braun.

In English, there are three collections worth mentioning two of which are now very dated but still useful. Jane Degras (ed.), The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents, 2 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951-53). Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, Soviet Russia and the East, 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957). For a survey of the CCP in general see The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Document and Analysis (Armonk, New York: M.E.Sharpe Inc., forthcoming) by Tony Saich with a contribution by Benjamin Yang.

c) Memoirs, biographies, biographical handbooks

Unfortunately, most of the important Chinese participants died before the recent fad for memoir writing got off the ground in China. However, there are a number of sources which are useful.

M.N.Roy's memoirs are interesting to read while those of Otto Braun are far less so. A Comintern Agent in China, 1932-1939 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982). Wang Ming's quasi memoirs are worth a dip into although the reader is advised to read carefully, Mao's Betrayal (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979). Lydia Holubnychy's unfinished study of Borodin presents a wealth of detail Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, 1923-25, (New York: East Asian Institute, Columbian University, 1979) and is a good companion to Jacobs, Borodin, Stalin's Man in China.

Two recently published China memoirs are worthwhile in this context. The first are those of Li Weihai, Huivi yu yanjiu (Reminiscences and Research) (Beijing: Materials on CCP History Publishing House, 1986). This work is particularly interesting for party development and high-level politics such as were played out at the 7 August Emergency Conference. The second are the memoirs of Wu Xiuquan which provide valuable information on how the influence of the pro-Soviet group in the party was broken up. Wu had been an interpreter for the CCP in many of its dealings with Comintern representatives in the thirties.<sup>58</sup>

For CCP and related Comintern personnel, the most extensive new guide is the series that was launched by Professor Hu Hua before his death, Zhonggong dangshi renwuzhuan (Biographies of Historical Personages of the CCP) (Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 1980-present). This is a projected series of 50 volumes and to date over 40 have been published. In general the quality of the biographies improves as the series progresses but it is uneven. This series can be used in conjunction with Chen Yutang's Zhonggong dangshi renwu bieminglu, ziming, biming, huaming (Pseudonyms of CCP Personalities in the History of the CCP, Original Names, Pen Names, Aliases) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1985). the dictionary contains 192 entries on



key figures in the Communist movement. Each entry provides brief biographical details and a list of aliases etc and where they were used. Most useful is the index of aliases.

There are a huge number of bibliographies published but as far as I know there is not one specifically for the Comintern.

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TÜSTAV  
TARİH

## Notes

1. The neglect of Soviet writings and archives on the Chinese revolution is deliberate. This will be the subject of a separate presentation by Professor A. Grigoriev, The Russian Academy of Sciences.
2. See, for example, Robert C. North, Moscow and the Chinese Communists (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953).
3. Conrad Brandt, Stalin's Failure in China (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958). An earlier analysis published in 1938 that laid the blame at Stalin's feet was Harold R. Isaacs, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961, second revised edition).
4. These accounts acknowledge the general correctness of the Comintern's line on China during the period but claims that mistakes were made during the period from 1925 to 1927. PRC official historians claim that these mistakes derived from the rightist tendency within the Comintern at the time and General Secretary, Chen Duxiu's slavish adherence to the instructions from the Comintern.
5. Benjamin Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979).
6. Schram has analyzed in detail the process of the "sinification of Marxism" and the interplay of the traditional and Marxist in the persona of Mao Zedong. See, for example, Stuart R. Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969). For his most recent views see The Thought of Mao Tse-tung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For a recent view that sees the relationship between the CCP and the Comintern in terms of conflict see John W. Garver, Chinese-Soviet Relations 1937-1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) and "The Origins of the Second United Front: The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party," in The China Quarterly, No. 113, March, pp.29-59.
7. Dirlik is the most recent scholar to argue that the role of the Comintern was crucial for forging together the party in its nascent period. By contrast, van de Ven highlights the indigenous roots of the communist movement. Not only did this localism have a strong impact on the first decade of the CCP but also there were regional groupings, such as that in Sichuan, that came into existence without reference to the Comintern and even without contact with the "founding fathers", Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. Arif Dirlik, The Origins of Chinese Communism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Hans van de Ven, The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party and the Search for a New Political Order, 1920-1927 (Harvard University: Unpublished Ph.D dissertation).
8. For an account of the role of Maring and the problems he encountered see Tony Saich, The Origins of the First United Front in China. The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring) (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1991). The best account of Borodin's work in China is Lydia Holubnychy's uncompleted work Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, 1923-25 (New York: East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1979). Otto Braun has written his own account of his work in China and the frustrations he encountered, A Comintern Agent in China, 1932-1939 (Stanford: Stanford university Press, 1982). See also the memoirs of M.N. Roy and finally the frustrations encountered by Vladimirov when he was in Yan'an, The Vladimirov Diaries: Yen-an, China, 1942-45 (New York: Doubleday, 1975).
9. On this issue see Lawrence R. Sullivan, "The Evolution of Chinese Communist Organization and Leadership Doctrine, 1921-1949", in Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (eds.), New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution (forthcoming).
10. See Sullivan, ibid. The tension created between the party norms and Mao Zedong's rise to supreme power is interestingly handled in Teiwai, 'The Formation of the Maoist Leadership' in Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (eds.), New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution.

11. Apart from his regular contact with early party leaders and his briefings at meetings, Maring also published many articles in the Chinese communist press under one of his pen-names, Sun Duo (Sentot). For an English translation of these articles and others written while he was in China see Saich, The Origins of the First United Front in China, vol.2, 737-836.

12. This latter figure includes also those from the GMD. From 1925 to 1928 the university was called the Sun Yat-sen University of Working People of China. The first batch of 14 students to go to Soviet Russia were from the Foreign Language School in Shanghai. For details of the training programs see M.F.Yuriev and A.V.Pantsov, 'Comintern, CPSU (B) and Ideological and Organizational Evolution of the Communist Party of China', in R.Ulyanovsky (ed.), Revolutionary Democracy and Communists in the East (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990), pp. 283-333. The authors estimate that of the 118 top leaders in the CCP during the period before 1949, some 70 percent were trained in Soviet Russia.

13. One might add Kang Sheng who was trained in the ways of the Soviet secret police and oversaw its Chinese equivalent until his death in 1975.

14. Dirlik, The Origins of Chinese Communism, p.269.

15. This is convincingly argued by Frederick C.Teiwes in 'The Formation of the Maoist Leadership: From the Return of Wang Ming to the Seventh Party Congress', in Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (ed.), New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution.

16. Wang Jiexiang relayed this information to a Politburo meeting held on 14 September 1938. It is claimed that it was after receiving this news that Mao decided to convene the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee (September-November 1938). See "Gongchan guoji zhixing weiyuanhui zhuxituan de jue ding" (Decision of the Presidium of the ECCI), September 1938, in The Central Party Archives (ed.), Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji (Selected Documents of the CCP CC), vol.10 (Beijing: Central Party School Publishing House, 1985), pp.574-75. See also, Zhao Shenghui, Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi gangyao (An Outline Organisational History of the CCP) (Anhui: Anhui People's Publishing House, 1987), p.145. Dimitrov, a Bulgarian communist, was appointed Secretary General of the Comintern at the Seventh Congress in 1935.

17. Mao himself felt that the Comintern had played a progressive role up until 1927 and again between mid-1935 and its dissolution in 1943.

18. The visit was decided on with the agreement of the Comintern. K.Shevelyov, 'On the History of the Formation of the Communist Party of China', in Far Eastern Affairs, no.1, 1981, p. 129.

19. Dirlik, The Origins of Chinese Communism, p. 253.

20. It would appear that Voitinsky had no specific brief to establish a Communist Party but that he suggested it after observing the situation in China.

21. For an interesting discussion of the study societies and their politicization see van de Ven, The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, pp. 84-120.

22. Formerly it was suggested that this group was founded in May but this is more likely the founding date of the Marxist Research Society.

23. See T. Saich, 'Through the Past Darkly: Some New Sources on the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party', International Review of Social History, vol.30, pt.2, 1986, pp. 167-76 for details concerning the founding of these organizations.

24. This is clearly seen in his report of July 1922 to the ECCI.



25. Dalin had been in Canton during the months of April to June to help with arrangements for the Congress of the Socialist Youth League. During this period he engaged in discussions about the feasibility of a united front with the GMD.
26. After the Congress, the policy was not smoothly implemented, indeed it was hardly implemented at all. The Central Bureau of the party decided to move back to Shanghai as it felt that not much could be achieved with Sun Yat-sen and because it wanted to create new organizations in the north either to bring about a radical change in the dominant opinions within the GMD, or to create a new nationalist party. This was quite contrary to Maring's intentions although even he was moved to muse about a GMD without Sun at its head.
27. 'Istoricheskie korni chentusiuzma' (Historical Roots of Chen Duxiu-ism), Problemy Kitaia (Problems of China), no.3, 1930, 210, quoted in L.Holubnychy, Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, 1923-1925 (New York: East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1979), pp. 376a-377.
28. Holubnychy, Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, pp. 254-56.
29. 'Sun zhongshan dui tanhe gongchandang chengwen zhi pishi' (Sun Yat-sen's Comments on a Petition to Impeach the Communist Party), in Tanhe gongchandang liangda yao'an (Two Important Cases of Impeachment of the CP) (n.p.: GMD Central Supervisory Committee, September 1927), in Geming wenxian (Documents of the Revolution), no.9, June 1955, p. 2.
30. C.M.Wilbur and J.L.Y.How, Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China 1918-1927, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 228.
31. Ibid., pp. 225-27.
32. The 'Theses' can be found in J.Degras (ed.), The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951-53), vol.2, pp. 336-48.
33. A policy that was being pursued quasi-independently by Mao Zedong.
34. See 'Resolution of the Eighth ECCI Plenum on the China Question' in Degras (ed.), The Communist International 1919-1943, vol.2, pp. 384-90.
35. See 'Guogong liangdang guanxi jueyian' (CCP Resolution on Relations Between the Two Parties).
36. X.J.Eudin and R.C.North, Soviet Russia and the East, 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 304 and R.C.North and X.J.Eudin, M.N.Roy's Mission to China, p.107.
37. According to Zhang Guotao, Chen handed in a letter of resignation on 15 July 1927. His reason for withdrawal was said to be that the Comintern's insistence that the CCP develop its own policies combined with its insistence that the CCP not withdraw from the GMD made work impossible. Chang Kuo-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party/ 1921-1927 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971), vol.1, pp. 655 and 715. However, this is not quite accurate as in accordance with Comintern instructions, the CCP central authorities were reorganized and Chen's leadership stopped on 12 July 1927. See Political Academy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (ed.), Zhonggong dangshi ziliao (Materials on CCP History) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, February 1982), pp. 57-58.
38. Obviously one cannot go into all the details here and discussion will focus on the case of Li Lisan's leadership and the formation of a second united front with the GMD.
39. This view differs somewhat from that expressed in C.Brandt et al. The authors attribute the mention of continued cooperation with the GMD to Stalin's need to "to hide the ugly facts which belied his infallibility." C.Brandt, B.Schwartz and J.K.Fairbank, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p.98.

40. B.Lominadze had arrived in China as the Comintern representative to replace M.Borodin and M.N.Roy. He participated in drafting the "Circular Letter" adopted by the meeting. He returned to the Soviet Union at the end of 1927.
41. The suggestion that the Congress be held in Moscow had been made by Qu Qiubai as head of the temporary Politburo and a Comintern representative in China, O.A.Mitkevich. This was accepted by the ECCI. A.Grigoriev and K.Shevelyov, "On the 60th Anniversary of the 6th CPC Congress" in Far Eastern Affairs, no.5, 1988, pp.81-82.
42. "Resolution on the Chinese Question", February 1928 in X.J.Eudin and R.M.Slusser (eds.), Soviet Foreign Policy, 1928-1934: Documents and Materials (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), pp. 83-86.
43. Gongchan guoji zhixing weiyuanhui gei zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui de xin, Materials of the Comintern Concerning the Chinese Revolution (Peking: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 1982), vol.2, pp.1-18.
44. Resolution of the CCP CC Concerning the Comintern's Directives in the February Letter and How to Implement the Correct Line of the Sixth Congress and the Comintern, in the Central Party School (ed.), Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao (Reference Materials on Teaching CCP History) (Peking: Renmin chubanshe, 1978), vol.2, pp.6-9.
45. The letter was published in Pravda on 29 December 1929.
46. See "Zhongguo gongchandang jieshou gongchan guoji dishici quantu huiyi jueyi de jueyi" (Resolution of the CCP Accepting the Resolution of the Comintern's Tenth Plenum), 20 December 1929 in The Central Party School (ed.), Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji, vol.5, pp.523-29 and "Jieshou guoji yijiu erjiunian shiyue ershilium ri zhishixin de jueyi - guanyu lun guomindang gaizu pai he zhongguo gongchandang de renwu" (Decision Accepting the Comintern's Directive of 26 October 1929 - Concerning Discussion of the Reform Faction of the GMD and the Tasks of the CCP) in ibid., vol.6, pp.1-11. On of the first victims of this attack on rightism was Chen Duxiu.
47. The agent of the Far Eastern Office of the ECCI in Shanghai did reply in a letter of 20 June. He expressed his disagreement with the resolution and requested that it not be distributed. This seems to have angered Li Lisan sufficiently that he wrote to the ECCI calling for his dismissal and the dissolution of the office. Yang Yunruo, Gongchan guoji he zhongguo geming guanxi jishi, 1919-1943 (Records of the Relations Between the Comintern and the Chinese Revolution) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1983), p.86.
48. See B.Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.143: "Far from condemning the Politburo 11 June letter, the ECCI letter of 23 July actually endorses its basic strategic suggestions"; Hsiao Tso-liang, Power Relations within the Chinese Communist Movement 1930-1934 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961), vol.I, p.25: "A close examination of the Comintern directive of 23 July 1930 and the CCP Politburo resolution of 11 June shows discrepancies which go beyond the scope of timing and tactics"; Thornton, The Comintern and the Chinese Communists, 1928-1931, p.175: "The Comintern's analyses then stripped Li of any theoretical ambiguities he might have attempted to use to maintain his position."
49. There was no direct telegraphic communication between the Party Centre and the Comintern before early 1931.
50. The "returned students" groups refers to those who had come back to China from studies in Soviet Russia. They formed a group under the leadership of Wang Ming, Bo Gu and Zhang Wentian. The group is also referred to as the "28 Bolsheviks" after the group of students who returned from Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow. Pavel Mif had been their patron and had influenced them through his positions as director of the

ECCI's Chinese Commission, deputy director of the Comintern's Far Eastern Secretariat, and president of Sun Yat-sen University.

51. Shao Yu [Wang Ming], "The Current War Among the Warlords and the Tasks of the Party", Bolshevik, 5 June 1930.

52. This letter is often referred to as the letter of 16 November 1930 because of the date of its arrival in China. "Gongchan guoji zhixing weiyuanhui guanyu li lisan luxian wenti gei zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui yuanhui de xin" (Letter from the ECCI to Members of the CC of the CCP Concerning the Li Lisan line), in The Translation Group of the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (ed.), Gongchan guoji youguan zhongguo geming de wenxian ziliao (Documentary Materials Concerning the Comintern and the Chinese Revolution) (Peking: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1982, pp.103-12.

53. Yang Yunruo, Gongchan guoji he Zhongguo geming guanxi jishi 1919-1943.

54. This is the date that is used in official publications and is still followed by PRC historians. See, for example, The Research Department on Party History of the CCP CC, Zhonggong dangshi dashi nianbao, p. 91. Some contemporary evidence suggests that the Party Centre moved as early as 1931. Here it is suggested that movement of key personnel did begin in 1931 but that the formal organization did not move until January 1933. However, the Provisional Party Centre in Shanghai was a largely ineffectual rump at this time.

55. On this see Shum Kui-kwong, The Chinese Communists' Road to Power: The Anti-Japanese National United Front (1935-1945) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.18-27.

56. Shum suggests that this policy derived from Wang Ming's ideas. Shum Kui-kwong, The Chinese Communists' Road to Power: The Anti-Japanese National United Front (1935-1945) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.19.

57. Because the announcement had been submitted to and approved by Dimitrov and Stalin at the Comintern Congress in August, it is commonly referred to as the "August First Declaration." According to Wang Ming, he drafted the Declaration while convalescing from an illness in June 1935. Wang Ming, Mao's Betrayal (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), p.68. Previously, the origins of this declaration had been subjected to much debate but now it is quite clear that it was prepared by Wang Ming in Moscow.

58. These memoirs were published in four parts in Zhonggong dangshi ziliao (Materials of CCP History) (Beijing: Materials on CCP History Publishing House), no.1, 1980, pp.114-79; no.2, 1982, pp.169-218; no.4, 1982, pp.50-135; and no.7, 1983, pp.143-225.