

THE UNITED FRONT AS PRACTICED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

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The United Front with the Kuomintang (1922-1927)

The United Front from Below (1928-1935)

The Transition from the United Front from Below to the
Anti-Japanese United Front

The Anti-Japanese United Front (1935-1945)

I. Introduction

I intend to discuss the united front as practiced by the Communist Party of China in the periods mentioned above. (I shall not go beyond the origins of the anti-Japanese United Front.) I intend to compare them to one another and to hold them up to the criteria for the united front established by Lenin and the Comintern and by Mao Tse-tung. I shall also discuss the anti-Japanese United Front in relation to the United Front against Fascism.

II. The United Front with the Kuomintang (1922-1927)

1919

The May 4th Movement was initiated by students in Peking to protest the Paris Peace Conference's approval of Japan's taking over Germany's possessions in Shantung Province. It spread through China, causing workers to stage strikes supporting the anti-imperialist movement. Marxist ideas and information about the Bolshevik Revolution spread among the Chinese intelligentsia as a result of the May 4th Movement. The Chinese working class became a political force.

1920

Chinese Communist youth groups were formed in Paris and, with the assistance of Comintern agents, were brought into existence in Shanghai, Ch'angsha, Peking and Canton. (Jerome Ch'en, Mao and the Chinese Revolution, pp. 76-78)

The Second Comintern Congress (July) adopted the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question," drafted and introduced by Lenin, which stated, in effect, that Communists could support bourgeois-led liberation movements in the colonies, if they were genuinely revolutionary.

The Communist International has the duty of supporting the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties -- which will be truly communist and not only in name -- in all the backward countries and educating them to a consciousness of

their special task, namely that of fighting against the bourgeois-democratic trend in their own nation. The Communist International should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries, and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it: it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage. (Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents, V. I, pp. 143-144)

1921

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) First Congress was held in Shanghai July 1. While the twelve delegates to the congress were intellectuals, some of the groups they represented did have contact with the working class (through, for example, workers' schools, trade union organization, and publications directed to workers.) Two Comintern representatives were present.

Maring (Sneevliet), a Comintern representative, proposed to Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Kuomintang Party (KMT), that (1) the KMT be reorganized "into a coalition of classes, particularly of workers and peasants"; (2) a military academy be founded; and (3) KMT-CCP cooperation. Sun refused. (Ch'en, p. 90)

August. Maring advised the CCP to join the KMT as individuals while keeping the CCP intact as a separate organization. This advice was strongly rejected by the CCP leadership. (Allen S. Whiting, Soviet Policies in China 1917-1924, p. 96)

1922

The Fourth Comintern Congress (November-December) heard the following argument from a CCP delegate:

If we do not join this party (KMT) we shall remain isolated; we shall preach a Communism which is certainly a great ideal but which the masses can not follow. The masses would rather follow the petit-bourgeois party, which would use them for its own purposes. If we do join the party we shall be able to show the masses that we favor revolutionary democracy, but that for us, revolutionary democracy is only a means to an end. Furthermore, we shall be able to point out, that while we fight for the still far-distant goal, we can still work for the everyday demands of the masses. We can rally the masses around us and split the Kuomintang. (Whiting, p. 95)

After the Fourth Congress, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) passed the following resolution:

(1) The only serious national-revolutionary grouping in China is the Kuomintang Party, basing itself partly on the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, and partly on the intelligentsia and workers. (2) Since the independent workers' movement in the country is still weak and since the central problem for China is the

national revolution against the imperialists and their internal feudal agents...the Executive Committee of the Communist International considers it necessary to coordinate activity between the Kuomintang Party and the young Chinese Communist Party. (3) Therefore under these conditions it is expedient for the members of the Chinese Communist Party to remain within the Kuomintang Party. (4) But this must not be purchased at the cost of destroying the specific political aspect of the Chinese Communist Party. The Party must preserve its own organization with a strictly centralized apparatus. In important specific problems, the Chinese Communist Party should organize and educate the working mass, forming trade unions in the aim of preparing a basis for a strong mass Communist Party. In this work the Chinese Communist Party must advance under its own flag, independent from any other political group, however avoiding, in this, conflicts with the national-revolutionary movement. (5) In the sphere of foreign policy, the Chinese Communist Party should oppose any flirtations of the Kuomintang Party with capitalistic powers and agents, Chinese military governors, or enemies of proletarian Russia. (6) On the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party should influence the Kuomintang in the idea of uniting its force with the forces of Soviet Russia for a mutual struggle against the European, American, and Japanese imperialists. (7) Supporting the Kuomintang Party in all campaigns on the national-revolutionary front, so long as it follows an objectively correct policy, the Chinese Communist Party nevertheless must not fuse with it and during these campaigns must not furl its own flag. (Whiting, pp. 240-241)

(By November 1922, the CCP had 300 members, of whom 180 paid dues. The population of China was about 400,000,000.)

Radek, Soviet member of the Presidium (permanent administrative committee) of the ECCI, made the following statement at the Fourth World Congress:

Comrades, the world situation at the time of the Second Congress was entirely different. The majority of delegates then counted on the immediate appearance of revolutions in the West; now we are in a period of gathering revolutionary strength. We must activate this tendency in the countries of the East... Therefore the slogan of this Congress must be: to the long-suffering masses of the east! ... We must be not only the nucleus of the future workers' party but also must become the true people's party in the East. (Whiting, p. 97)

Whiting points out that while the Comintern considered British imperialism the "main danger" to the peoples of the world, the Soviet diplomatic apparatus, Narkomindel (People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs), in the person of its Far East expert Vilensky, considered Japan to be such an imperialist threat that, in 1922, he predicted a degree of USSR-US cooperation (from different motives) in protecting China from Japan.

Lenin, in March 1923, in a "Pravda" article, "Better Fewer but Better," made the following comment which, tied in with Radek's statement above, would indicate a "shift of emphasis" in the Communist movement from West

to East:

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured. (Collected Works, V. 33, p. 500)

Whiting refers to a remark in a speech by Lenin January 24, 1920, in which referring to divisions among the imperialists, he says:

Japan, who has a stronger army than ours in Siberia, cannot fight us because she fears attack by America with whom she is at loggerheads over imperialist, colonialist interests in China. (CW, V. 30, p. 303)

Vilensky saw the Chinese bourgeoisie as the revolutionary force in China:

The Chinese bourgeoisie knows that the tomorrow in China belongs to it...the historical process is leading to the inevitable coming to power of the Chinese bourgeoisie, and consequently to what might be called the completion of the bourgeois revolution in China.

He considered the CCP "insignificant," though, it would, in Whiting's words, "lead the proletariat in the distant future." (Whiting, p. 116)

Vilensky (and the Narkomindel) saw Soviet assistance to what they considered the "leading power in China" (Whiting), the "best of the militarists" (Vilensky), General Wu Bei-fu, as the key to the unification of a bourgeois nationalist China which would be anti-imperialist. (By that time, perhaps, the CCP would have become "significant" enough to play a revolutionary role, but I'm not sure against whom Vilensky would then have it make revolution) (Whiting, pp. 118-121)

While it is my intention to refrain from commenting on the various attitudes and policies presented until I write my "conclusions" at the end of this report, I am compelled to say that it seems to me that this "line" of Vilensky's was based on (1) a lack of confidence in the Chinese CP and the Chinese proletariat -- and their potential, and (2) a mechanical outlook coming from the perhaps correct thesis that the capitalist stage of development could not be "skipped over" in China.

1923

The question of the united front with the KMT was the main item on the agenda at the Third National Congress of the CCP held June 1923 in Canton. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the Party Secretary, supported the Comintern position that CP members should join the KMT as individuals, and not give

up their CP membership. This would (in Maring's words) "make use of the Kuomintang organizational structure as a means of developing their (the Communists) own propaganda and contact among the masses." (Ch'en, pp. 90-91)

Ch'en argued that:

The task of the KMT at the moment is to lead the revolutionary bourgeoisie and cooperate with the revolutionary proletariat in the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Chang Kuo-t'ao, Organizational Secretary, opposed the Comintern position, which was upheld by the majority of the thirty delegates (representing 432 members). The argument continued into the question of what the party affiliation of the trade unions should be, Ch'en advocating joint KMT-CCP control of the unions, and Chang arguing that the unions should not be under the control of either party. Jerome Ch'en makes the following observation on the controversy:

Chang Kuo-t'ao's objection to the joint control was of very little practical significance, for the KMT was then a loosely organized party with neither politically conscious cadres nor a solid popular basis, and its control over the unions was not, and was not likely to be, firm. Once inside the KMT, the Communists with their usual zeal for work would outstrip the Nationalists in winning popular support and would put the unions under their wing. This must have been the view forming in the minds of Ch'en and Maring and later expressed in the seventh issue of the official organ of the Chinese socialist youth corps on 16 April 1924:

"Upon joining the KMT, we must concentrate our attention on the work among the rank and file and avoid unnecessary competition for high posts which may produce harmful effects (on the alliance). We must not, however, restrict the activities of the members of our corps. While adopting a conciliatory attitude, we should direct our attention to the development of our work in the district and city branches of the KMT."

J. Ch'en comments that it may have been the attitude expressed in the article that persuaded Mao Tse-tung to change his vote from support of Chang's position to that of Ch'en at the Third Congress. Mao was elected to the CCP's Central Committee at the Congress. He stated his main task was "coordinating the measures of the CCP and the KMT." (from Red Star Over China) (Ch'en, pp. 92-93)

The aftermath of the Congress saw an influx of party members, mostly students, into the KMT, creating its "left-wing." At the same time, at the request of Sun Yat-sen, Mikhail Borodin was sent by the Politburo of the Bolshevik Party to be an advisor to the KMT.

1924

The KMT's First National Congress was held January 1, 1924. The presidium of the Congress consisted, according to Ch'en, of three rightists,

one leftist and one Communist. The Manifesto of the Congress, "according to Dr. Sun, was drafted in English by Borodin, approved by Sun himself, and translated into classical Chinese..."

Twenty-four members were elected to the Central Executive Committee -- 16 rightists, 5 leftists and 3 Communists; there were 16 alternate members, including 6 Communists, one of whom was Mao.

Ch'en comments:

These facts and figures show that although the leftists and the communists had made considerable inroads into the centre of the KMT they were not yet in the majority. However, in the execution of policy decisions, the leftists and the communists were clearly more influential than the rightists.

There was a "powerful" standing committee of eight; five were rightists. But its authority was shared with the Political Council created in July, 1924, which was dominated by the left-wing (five out of eight, including Borodin and Sun).

Most of the departments (for example, organization, peasant, labor) were headed by Communists or leftists. Only the youth, the overseas Chinese, commerce and (significantly, I believe) military affairs departments were "free from Communist infiltration."

Out of the Congress came:

the formation of the left-wing which was to control the policy-making of the party, to consolidate and prolong the alliance with Russia and the CCP, and to become a major consideration in Russia's China policy -- the policy of the 'revolution from above'... (Ch'en, pp. 94-96)

Splits began to appear in the united front almost immediately. I get the impression that the left-wing was "protected" by Sun Yat-sen. But even so, it came under increasing attack from the right. Thus Mao Tse-tung, who became Secretary of the KMT organization department in Shanghai in March 1924, returned to Hunan by the end of the year to "convalesce." While he was "convalescing," he studied peasant problems and organized the nucleus of a peasant movement. He had found cooperation with his KMT "colleagues" in Shanghai to be impossible. (Ch'en, pp. 96-98)

In May 1924, a treaty was signed between the USSR and the Peking (warlord) government which established diplomatic relations between China and Russia, cancelled Russian extraterritoriality, revoked concession privileges, and, while recognizing Chinese sovereignty over the Chinese Eastern Railway, did, in effect, let the Russians continue to administer it. While recognizing China's "sovereignty" over Outer Mongolia, it did not repudiate the Soviet-Mongol Pact which excluded China from Outer Mongolia (Mongolia). (Whiting, pp. 230-235)

In 1924-1925, the Communists led strike movements (they organized

most of the Chinese working class) and, to a lesser extent, peasant unions (Hunan, Kwantung). The KMT did not oppose the Communists organizing peasants because such organization was done in territories controlled by the war-lords. In other words, most of the trade union work and all of the peasant work under KMT auspices was done by the Communists. (John E. Rue, Mao Tse-tung in Opposition 1927-1935, pp. 40-43)

1925

Voitinsky, who replaced Maring, repudiated his predecessor's view that CP members should join the KMT to broaden CP influence among the masses, while preparing to ultimately split the KMT by allying with its left-wing and driving out its right-wing. Voitinsky, representing the Comintern leadership, held that the KMT should be split into the right, left and center. The Communists should cooperate with the left-wing, but not recruit all its members into the CP; that would drive many to the center and isolate the Communists. By cooperating with the left-wing, the center could be neutralized, and the alliance with the right-wing maintained as long as possible. (This seems to be based on the premise that a proletarian or a peasant revolution had no prospect for success in the foreseeable future.) (Rue, p. 38)

The CCP, at its Fourth National Congress in Canton, January 1925, affirmed its independence of the KMT in the following resolution:

The organizations of the workers must be built upon the basis of the economic class struggle, and not only be independent of Kuomintang, but also not admit any other organizations into their own ranks in order not to create confusion in the consciousness of the working class. This is important because the working class after the completion of the national revolution also has its own goal -- the proletarian revolution. Therefore the organizations of the working class must remain independent in the national movement, and always be prepared for the second step in the struggle, for the proletarian revolution.

Our party is a proletarian party. We must not only win the revolutionary elements for our party, but must also bring the workers' movement as a whole under the leadership of our party. We must strive to bring under our leadership those unions which have attached themselves to the Kuomintang in order to transform them into class organizations, and under our leadership to win them for participation in the national revolution.

In making propaganda for the national revolution among the workers we must start from the standpoint of the interests of the working class and preach communism; we must not make propaganda for the doctrine of Kuomintang. We shall say to them: China with the national revolution will advance on the path of the proletarian revolution. (E.H. Carr, Socialism in One Country, V. 3, p. 736)

The "May 30th Movement," in which a demonstration organized by CCP and KMT cadres to demand an end to extraterritoriality and to demand the return to China of the Shanghai international settlement, was fired on by

British police, killing several people, turned into a nation-wide movement entailing a general strike in and boycott of Hong Kong, was probably the high point of the KMT-CCP united front. (Hu Chiao-mu, Thirty Years of the Communist Party of China, pp. 14-16)

(The membership of the CCP went from some 900, prior to the May 30th Movement, to more than 57,900. By 1927 the total membership of the trade unions would reach 2,800,000 and that of the peasants' associations 9,500,000) (Hu Chiao-mu)

The Comintern advised the CCP to scale down the strikes it was encouraging, no longer just against the many foreign-owned factories, but also against the few owned by Chinese. Thus Zinoviev, president of the Comintern, recalled at the Fourteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, December 1925:

There was a time when the Chinese Communist Party, which has recently grown up and now plays a big role in the movement, was confronted by the question to what further goal it should lead the revolutionary masses. The Chinese party received a directive proposing a certain putting on of brakes. There were moments when the young Chinese Communist Party and the leaders of the Shanghai trade unions put forward a thesis in favour of sharpening the conflict to the point of armed insurrection... Comintern gave a directive against these moods, recommending the party to execute a gradual putting on of brakes. We said that the issue was not at this moment, when the chances of success were very small, to carry the movement to the point of armed insurrection, but rather to retreat in good time in order that the movement might gain time, in order that the experience of the movement might begin to be digested by the proletariat, no longer by hundreds of thousands, but by millions, of the masses of the people. (Carr, pp. 760-761)

Carr comments:

Thus schooled, the CCP sounded a retreat, which was frankly justified by a cautious desire not to antagonize the petty bourgeoisie and to risk smashing the labour movement: the workers were encouraged to restrict their agitation to minimum economic demands, and put the revolutionary programme in cold storage. By this time the ebb had set in... (p. 761)

The year 1925 saw the ebbing of the strike movement, increased hostility toward the CCP by the KMT, the preparation for a campaign to Northern China by Chiang Kai-shek to eradicate the warlord governments there, and get it under KMT control.

According to Carr, the Central Committee of the CCP in October 1925. declared that the CCP should be prepared for a split in the KMT-CCP alliance; the responsibility for such a split would rest on the KMT. It suggested that ("unless absolutely necessary" - Carr) "new members of the CCP should not join it (the KMT) or engage in its work." (p. 764)

1926

When the KMT's Second Congress opened in Canton January 1926, ninety of the 256 delegates were Communists. (At that time, the membership of the KMT was about 400,000, including 87,000 overseas Chinese.) While the Congress endorsed no socialist demands, it did announce its intention to help develop the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and support the workers against "the imperialists and their tools." It hailed the Soviet Union as "the vanguard and protector of oppressed nations," and said the Chinese Revolution was part of the world revolution. Some of the most anti-Communist KMT leaders were expelled. But the Central Committee and the Steering Committee still had a minority of Communists, seven out of 36 in the former, three out of nine in the latter. Carr documents that the results of the Congress pleased both the Soviet government and the Comintern, and comments "immediate revolutionary action was neither expected nor demanded." In March 1926, a Comintern publication stated, in Carr's words: "The key to future policy both for the CCP and the KMT was a united front against imperialism." (Carr, pp. 774-780)

Roy, leader of the (practically non-existent) Indian CP. and a Comintern "expert", described the KMT as follows:

The party of Kuomintang, the fundamental core of which acts in alliance with the Chinese Communists, represents a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, intelligentsia and urban democracy on the basis of a community of class interests of these strata in the struggle against foreign imperialists and the whole military-feudal order for the independence of the country and for a single revolutionary-democratic government.

This rosy view was that of the Comintern.

In March 1926, Chiang Kai-shek arrested the political commissars attached to the army, most of whom were Communists, arrested Communists in prominent positions, and confined the Soviet military advisers to their quarters. He then apologized to the Soviet Union for confining the advisers, but had those advisers who might strongly oppose his actions removed. The Comintern continued to express its confidence in the KMT as

The centre which rallies, unites and organizes all the revolutionary forces against the pressure of the reactionaries and imperialists... the unassailable citadel of the Chinese revolution. (Carr, p. 812)

The Soviet advisers accepted the fact that the Northern Expedition would occur. (The Soviet Union had opposed the idea because it would upset their relationship with the northern warlords and because, Stalin at least, did not trust Chiang.) (Carr, pp. 797-798) They acceded, apparently to his demand that lists of CP members in the KMT be given him, that (Chinese) Communist political advisers be withdrawn from the army, that CCP members in the KMT refrain from criticizing Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles, and that the (Communist-led) League of Military Youth at the Whampoa Academy be dissolved. Borodin agreed to Chiang's demands that no conference of KMT members (including, of course, the Communists) would be convened without Chiang's consent. that Communists would not form more than one-third

of executive committees at any level, and would not be eligible to head any department in the KMT. (Thus the head of the organization department was deposed, as was the deputy head of the propaganda department, Mao Tse-tung. (Carr, pp. 805-823)

In May, the Russian Politburo decided that the Chinese CP should be prepared "in case of absolute necessity" to discuss "the possibility of a certain separation of functions" between it and the KMT; the removal of "well-known" Communists from KMT institutions, and leaving in those institutions Communists not known to the KMT. (Carr, p. 828)

In March, Chiang's armies, and the landowners, began attacking the peasant unions. The CCP asked Borodin that 5000 rifles from Soviet shipments being sent to Canton be put at the disposal of the Kwantung Peasant Union. Borodin refused. Borodin also "came out strongly" for ending the Hong Kong strike against British imperialism, already a year old.

In October (1926), after the start of the Northern Expedition, Stalin sent Ch'en Tu-hsiu a telegram (apparently as a Comintern leader) telling him to restrain the peasant movement so as to assist the Expedition. Ch'en relayed the instruction to Mao, who was head of peasant work, and who disregarded it, and, in fact, led the Hunan peasant associations to confiscate and redistribute land. (Rue, pp. 52-53) Stalin said the telegram "was unquestionably a mistake" and was rescinded a few weeks after it was sent. (Stalin, Works, V. 10, p. 18)

1927

Rue relates

As the Nationalist Army moved north, the Communists raced to control the growing mass movements in the newly occupied territory and the factions within the civilian KMT raced to control local governmental and party units. (p. 54)

In February, the chairman of the labor union in Kanchow (a large city in southern Kiangsi province) was murdered and his union outlawed - by Chiang. Chiang announced that the Communists would be expelled from the KMT. In Shanghai the Communist-led General Labor Union launched an insurrection in anticipation of the arrival of the nationalist armies. Chiang stopped his armies outside of Shanghai so that the workers there could be slaughtered. (The general who put down the uprising was later given command of one of Chiang's armies.)

In March, the Shanghai General Labor Union declared a general strike, drove out the warlord troops and took over the city. The Comintern advisers ordered the CCP to welcome Chiang into the city and conduct a "propaganda campaign against the right." The General Labor Union was told to hide its weapons. Chiang entered Shanghai March 26 and began negotiating with the imperialists (in the persons of their consuls), the Shanghai bankers, and the city's criminal gangs. On April 12, having arrived at agreement with the above parties, his army, the Shanghai police, and the gangs invaded the working class sections of the city, slaughtering those thought to be Communists or Communist sympathizers. (Rue, pp. 57-58)

The attack on the CCP spread through central and south China. In Kwangtung where the Party "had been making preparations for a break" prior to Chiang's attack, underground committees were formed to take over the peasant movement if its open apparatus was destroyed. This did not prevent arrests and executions in Canton. An underground military organization called the Workers' and Peasants' Party Relief Army was formed. Apparently, this was done on the initiative of the provincial leadership, not the Party's Central Committee. (Rue, pp. 58-59)

The remainder of 1927 saw the KMT officially split with and outlaw the CCP; the removal of Ch'en Tu-hsiu from leadership of the CCP (to be replaced for less than a year by Ch'u Ch'iu-pai); the first armed uprising organized by the CCP at Nanch'ang, Kiangsi (led by Chou En-lai); the Autumn Harvest Uprising in Hunan and Kiangsi provinces (led by Mao Tse-tung); the Canton Uprising; and other-CCP led urban and rural uprisings throughout China. All ultimately failed.

Mao characterizes both the desertion and liquidationism in the Party from the right and the ultra-revolutionism from the left as follows:

Pessimistic about the future of the revolution, a handful of capitulators in the First Great Revolution, with Ch'en Tu-hsiu as their representative, eventually became liquidationists. Adopting the reactionary standpoint of Trotskyism, they held that the Chinese bourgeoisie had already won victory over the imperialist and feudal forces after the revolution in 1927, that its rule over the people had been stabilised, and that capitalism was already playing a dominant role in Chinese society and was developing peacefully; and they therefore dogmatically asserted that the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution had already been concluded, that the Chinese proletariat must postpone the 'socialist revolution' to a future date, and that for the time being it could only carry on so-called legal movements centering round the slogan for a 'National Congress' and should give up its revolutionary movement; hence they opposed all revolutionary struggles waged by the Party and slandered the Red Army movement as a 'movement of roving insurgents.' They not only rejected the Party's advice to abandon such an opportunist, liquidationist anti-Party viewpoint, but even went to the length of forming an anti-Party faction in league with the reactionary Trotskyites: and as a result they had to be expelled from the Party and subsequently degenerated into counter-revolutionaries.

On the other hand, the ultra-revolutionism of the petty bourgeoisie, aggravated by hatred of the Kuomintang's policy of massacre and indignation at Ch'en Tu-hsiu's capitulationism, also found its expression in the Party and led to a rapid rise of 'left' sentiment. This sentiment reared its head as early as the emergency conference of the Central Committee on August 7, 1927. The August 7 meeting achieved something in the history of the Party. At a critical moment of the Chinese revolution, it resolutely rectified the capitulationism of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and brought it to an end, it laid down the general line of carrying on the Agrarian Revolution and putting up armed resistance to the Kuomintang reactionaries' policy of massacre, and it rallied the Party and the masses of the people to continue their revolutionary struggle --

all this was correct and constituted the main feature of the meeting. While combating the Right deviation, however, the August 7 meeting paved the way for a 'Left' deviation. Politically, it failed to realise that at that time, according to the different conditions in different areas. it should have organised either proper counter-attacks or necessary tactical retreats so that revolutionary positions could be preserved and revolutionary forces mustered in a planned manner; on the contrary, it tolerated and even fostered tendencies toward adventurism and authoritarianism (especially as regards forcing the workers to strike). Organisationally. it initiated an excessive, sectarian inner-Party struggle, over-stressed the importance of the working-class origin of leading cadres to the exclusion of other considerations, and brought about a serious state of extreme democratisation in the Party. At the enlarged meeting of the Central Committee in November, 1927, this 'Left' sentiment which continued to rise after the August 7 meeting, became a 'Left' line of reckless action (adventurism) and for the first time brought the 'Left' line to a dominant position in the Party's central leading body. The advocates of reckless action characterised the Chinese revolution as a 'permanent revolution' (confusing the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution) and the situation of the Chinese revolution as a 'permanent upsurge' (denying the defeat of the revolution in 1927), and consequently, heedless of the fact that the enemy was powerful and the people had just suffered defeat in the revolution, they refused to organise an orderly retreat, but commanded handfuls of Party members and the Party's followers to undertake local insurrections all over the country without the slightest hope of success... (Selected Works, International Publishers, V. 4, pp. 174-176)

The years 1928-1930 saw the Red Army fighting through much of South and Central China, the establishment of a base area at Ching kangshan (a mountainous region at the juncture of Hunan, Kiangsi, and Kwantung provinces), and other smaller bases and base areas throughout China. (By 1930 there were fifteen.) (Ch'en, p. 154)

In October 1929, the Comintern instructed the CCP to consolidate and expand guerilla warfare, develop political strikes, change various non-Communist rebellions against Chiang Kai-shek into class war, and transform peasant struggle into urban insurrection. (from Robert Carver North's "Introduction" in Nym Wales, Red Dust, p. 11)

Li Li-san (who had become General Secretary of the Party in 1928) translated this into a policy of attacks on major cities (Ch'angsha, Nanch'ang) which not only caused terrible defeat at those places, but alarmed Chiang Kai-shek and other leaders to the extent that they patched up their differences and began preparations for the first of the Encirclement Campaigns against Ching kangshan. Ch'en relates:

The defeat in 1930 also alarmed the Comintern which at once sent Ch'u Ch'iu-pai back to China in September and, at the 3rd Plenum at Lushan, he succeeded in obtaining an admission of his mistakes from Li Li-san but was unable to reverse the Li Li-san line since important members of the Politburo like Chou En-lai were still supporting it. (p. 159)

In September 1930, in the midst of Chiang's 3rd Encirclement Campaign, Japan began the invasion of Manchuria.

By November 1932, when the Ching kangshan area was proclaimed a Provisional Soviet Republic with Juichin (Kiangsi province) as its capital, it had a population just under 2,500,000. The Red Army, in January 1932, had 200,000 soldiers with 150,000 rifles.

Wang Ming, trained at the Comintern's Sun Yat-sen University, and backed by the Comintern's Representative in China, Pavel Mif, took over the CCP's chairmanship in 1931, after Hsiang Ching'fa, who replaced Li Li-san, was executed by the KMT. Wang was the leader of the so-called "returned students" or "twenty-eight Bolsheviks."

The Returned Students who retained the urban orientation of their predecessors, were at constant odds with the policies and growing power of Mao and the leaders of the Kiangsi Soviet. They recognized the legitimacy of Mao's activity, up to a point; but they denied its ultimate primacy and remained more attuned to Comintern directives than to Chinese realities. Under their leadership, the Central Committee had its headquarters in Shanghai, until the risks of continued operation there were simply too great. In the fall of 1932, they were forced to move the Central Committee to Juichin, the capital of the Soviet regime. An uneven decline in their actual influence can probably be dated from this time, though it was not until the Tsun-yi Conference of January 1935, after the beginning of the Long March, that Mao was able to assume the chairmanship of the Central Committee and the Politburo... (Van Slyke, pp. 35-36)

III. The United Front From Below (1928-1935)

After the Sixth Comintern Congress, August 1928, the United Front from Below, the winning over of the masses from non-Communist leadership, became the tactical line of the Communist movement. (see Degras, V. 2, pp. 461, 521-524)

When Li Li-san was being repudiated in 1930, he was accused of having rejected the united front from below. Van Slyke says:

Presumably this referred to the refusal of the CCP to join the yellow (KMT-sponsored) unions until late in 1929, on the grounds that these unions were hopelessly reactionary. (p. 38)

Liu Shao-ch'i, in an interview with Nym Wales, said:

In this period (1927-1929) the Kuomintang organized Yellow trade unions, and the Communists directed the Chinese workers not to join these Yellow unions. Later on part of the workers joined the Yellow unions by themselves. In 1929 there were seven big Yellow unions in Shanghai, such as those of the Commercial Press, the Post Office, and others. At this time it was necessary to join the Yellow unions but the Communist Party did not adopt this policy and on the contrary opposed the Yellow

unions. Because of this the Red labor unions could not win over part of the workers who were misled by their leaders into joining these unions. At the Fifth National Labor Congress, however, which had several tens of delegates though it was held secretly, it was decided to join the Yellow trade unions... (Nym Wales, The Chinese Labor Movement, pp. 64-65)

Van Slyke relates:

The Returned Student leadership under Ch'en Shao-yu (Wang Ming) and his colleagues, assumed power with explicit orders to carry out the united front from below. But in a formulation almost identical with that of the deposed Li Li-san, Ch'en promised, 'We shall be able to prepare uprisings in large urban industrial centers, and by coordinating the uprisings of the workers in the cities with the action of the Red Army (based in the rural soviets) we shall be able to take those cities.'

Van Slyke continues:

Although the united front from below had now become an explicit task of the CCP, the Party wrote only now and then of its concrete efforts to carry out this task in the cities of China; and the documents produced on the subject betray an almost pathetic awareness that an unrealistic policy was up against an overwhelming reality... (p. 40)

Wales, writing in 1945, says of the Chinese labor movement:

During the years from 1927 to 1931 the leadership of the Chinese labor movement was practically if not literally beheaded and the suppression and other difficulties were so great that it has thus far been unable to recover. Labor went into a period of depression though underground methods were improved. Prisons in China were constantly filled with accused Communists during the civil war and the charge carried the death penalty. (p. 65)

IV. The Transition from the United Front From Below to the Anti-Japanese United Front

In January and February 1932, Japan attacked Shanghai and met surprisingly stiff resistance from the KMT army there. (A resistance that had not been planned by Chiang Kai-shek -- he was negotiating with the Japanese and was careful to keep his "guard" (personal elite) divisions and navy "out of harm's way.") (David Bergamini, Japan's Imperial Conspiracy, V. 1. pp. 606, 624)

In April, 1932, the Chinese Soviet Republic declared war against Japan; that declaration included the assertion:

In order to wage war actively against Japanese imperialism, it is necessary first of all to destroy the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang, which is assisting the imperialists to strangle the national revolutionary movement. (Van Slyke, p. 43)

In January 1933, the Provisional Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Red Army, in the persons of Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, Hsiang Ying (Han Ying, Chairman of the Council, Red Dust, p. 89), and Chang Kuo-t'ao proposed an anti-Japanese and anti-KMT alliance with non-Communist military units. The conditions for that alliance were:

immediate cessation of the offensive against the Soviet areas; an immediate guarantee of popular democratic rights, such as freedom of assembly, association, speech, strike, and publication; the immediate arming of the people and the formation of armed volunteer troops for the defense of China's independence, unity, and territorial integrity. (Van Slyke, pp. 43-44)

The Fukien People's Revolutionary Government was formed from the following elements which revolted against Chiang Kai-shek in that province October/November 1933 because of his policy of appeasing the Japanese while fighting the Communists: outlawed sections of the KMT Left, various anti-Japanese and anti-Chiang militarists (including many who had recently been fighting the Red Army, the KMT Nineteenth Route Army which had led the defense of Shanghai, and the provincial governor.) They accepted the January 1933 proposal cited above. A military alliance was signed between the Chinese Soviet Republic and the Fukien P.R.G. in October 1933.

In spite of that military alliance

Throughout the Fukien revolt the Central Bureau attacked the Fukien rebels as sham democrats and simple military conspirators who were akin to the European Social Democrats. In contrast, telegrams from Chu and Mao expressed cautious hope that the Fukien rebels and the Red Army could work out a genuine basis for cooperation and that the rebel leaders would grant freedom to the people of Fukien. The soviet government and the CCP Central Committee issued no joint statements about either the revolt or the anti-Japanese united front in Fukien. As the Second All-China Soviet Congress convened in Jui-ching, the revolt in Fukien was put down by troops loyal to Nanking. By January 20 it had collapsed. After the opportunity for the CCP to form a united front with a friendly army had passed, Mao joined the Politburo in denouncing the rebels. (Rue. p. 261)

Van Slyke states that during the rebellion:

Statements coming from Juichin were less condescending and scornful than those of the Central Committee, but they expressed the same criticisms. Furthermore, at the Second National Soviet Congress (January 1934) Mao charged that the Fukien regime was simply a new trick to deceive the people into thinking that a middle course was possible. It had, he said, no revolutionary significance at all (pp. 45-46)

While it is evident that Mao did denounce the rebellion after its failure, I can not determine which of the above versions regarding his attitude during the rebellion is correct. Also, Rue, in his notes, p. 338, says that Mao's comments and those of others "were completely

rewritten in the second edition" of Red Star Over China. In the "revised and enlarged" edition of Red Star Over China, Mao states

In this (Fifth Encirclement Campaign) period we made two important errors. The first was the failure to unite with Ts'ai T'ing-k'ai's army in 1933 during the Fukien rebellion...

Hu Chiao-mu, in Thirty Years of the Communist Party of China, refers to a May 1933 CCP alliance with the warlord Feng Yu-hsiang (the "Christian General") in the organization of the people's Anti-Japanese Allied Army in Chahar province (now part of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region). (p. 39)

In late 1934, there was a change in Red Army tactics. Abandoning all flexibility, is sought to defend "every inch" of Soviet territory from Chiang's armies. The new tactics turned out to be disastrous. Because of its wrong tactics and because of the increased strength and blockhouse tactics of Chiang's armies, the Red Army was forced to abandon the Central Soviet and attempt to link with Soviet forces in Hunan and Kweichow provinces. On October 16, 100,000 began the journey, including 35 women. Twenty-eight thousand soldiers, including 20,000 wounded were left behind to fight a rear-guard action. (Ch'en, pp. 181-184) With the exception of Red Army units in northern Shensi province, "the Red Army units in all other places withdrew from their original bases one after another and joined the Long March." (Hu Chiao-mu, p. 43)

V. The Anti-Japanese United Front (1935-1945)

Hu Chiao-mu relates:

During the Long March of the Central Red Army the Central Committee of the Party continued to commit military blunders. Several times the Red Army was placed in dangerous predicaments with the enemy blocking the route of advance and pursuing from the rear, and consequently suffered tremendous losses. In order to save the imperiled Red Army and China's revolutionary cause, an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party was called in January 1935, at Tsunyi, Kweichow Province, as a result of the resolute struggle conducted by Comrade Mao Tse-tung and others. Thanks to the political consciousness and support of the majority of the comrades, the Tsunyi meeting removed the "Left" opportunists from the Party leadership and established Comrade Mao Tse-tung's position as leader of the whole Party.

At the Tsunyi conference, Mao called for

the utilisation of every conflict inside the reactionary camp by taking active steps to widen its cleavage (and for standing) against isolationism and for the winning over of all possible allies. (Selected Works, International Publishers, V. IV, p. 198, referred to in "Resolutions on Questions in the History of Our Party")

Rue interprets this statement from the Tsunyi conference to mean:

He (Mao) felt the time had come to abandon the united front from below and to work with any group opposed to both the Japanese imperialists and the central armies of Chiang Kai-shek.

Rue continues:

Others in the world Communist movement were taking the same position at this time, Thorez, Browder, and Dimitrov among them. Stalin, however, had not yet made up his mind, and Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Mif, and Wang Ming were still supporting the united front from below... (pp. 271-272)

Also at the Tsunyi conference, the Central (or First Front) Army was reorganized and the slogan "Go North to fight the Japanese" was adopted. (Ch'en, p. 189)

In June 1935, in Moukung in western Szechuan, the First Front Army under Mao and Chu Te met the Fourth Front Army under Chang Kuo-tao. Mao - and the majority of the Politburo - insisted the Red Army go to the (only remaining) Soviet in northern Shensi from where "they could drive east to meet the Japanese in battle." Chang Kuo-tao contended that "since the revolution was at a low ebb, the enemy too strong, and the Red Army in flight," it was impossible to create an advanced position in order to carry on an anti-Japanese struggle. The better alternative was to remain in Sikang and north-west Szechuan, build a Soviet there, and then contact the USSR through Sinkiang.

The main Soviet forces arrived at the Soviet in north Shensi October 1935. (Chang Kuo-tao had squandered his Fourth Front Army, so that only 1,000 men survived.) Before the Fifth Encirclement campaign, the Red Army had 300,000 soldiers: at the end of the Long March it had less than 30,000. (Hu Chiao-mu, p. 44, Ch'en, pp. 192-199)

At the Seventh Comintern Congress (July-August 1935) Wang Ming, still the titular leader of the CCP, and the CCP's resident delegate on the ECCI, was one of the main speakers, discussing Dimitrov's report as it applied to "the question of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and to the tactics of our Communist Parties." (Rue, p. 53, VII Congress of the Communist International Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings, p. 280)

In the part of his report titled "The Establishment, Extension and Consolidation of the Anti-Imperialist United Front -- the Major Task of the Communists in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries," he said, regarding the Japanese occupation of China:

The question is put squarely: either to resist the offensive of imperialism -- and live; or to renounce resistance against the external enemy -- and die. Under the conditions of the growing national crisis there is no other means of saving China than the general mobilization of our entire great nation for a decisive and relentless struggle against imperialism. At the same time, the Communist Party has no other means for the general mobilization of the entire Chinese nation for the sacred national-revolutionary struggle against imperial-

ism than the tactics of the anti-imperialist united People's Front.
(VII Congress... p. 284-286)

He went on to point out mistakes he thought the CCP had made in its united front tactics, including its failure to organize a general strike, and to arm the workers in Shanghai in support of the 19th Route Army's resistance to the Japanese attack on that city January-February 1932. That failure, he said, resulted from "Right opportunist sabotage and the 'Left' sectarian errors of our trade union functionaries." Another error, Wang said, was the failure of the CCP to follow up its appeals to the KMT military for an agreement for a joint armed struggle against Japanese imperialism with more concrete proposals. When one of Chiang's generals, with his commanders, had responded to that appeal, the general was sacked and denounced by Chiang. "But," said Wang Ming, "because of the inconsistency with which the Communist Party of China was carrying out its policy it merely limited itself to a negative reply to Chiang Kai-shek, assuming that it had thus exposed him."

He continued:

Such errors were, first of all, a consequence of the fact that many of our comrades did not understand and do not understand the new situation which has arisen in China in recent years. They do not understand how to advance the subject of the anti-imperialist united front in China in a new manner.

I believe that now -- considering our previous positive and negative experiences, considering the present position of our country in which the national existence of our people is threatened -- our Party, in this situation, must further develop its anti-imperialist united People's Front tactics, consistently trying to achieve the most daring, extensive and most powerful range of this movement in order that the Chinese people should thus be able, in the shortest possible time, really to unite for the common struggle against imperialism and for the salvation of our fatherland.

How should these tactics of the Communist Party of China develop further? In my opinion and in the opinion of the entire Central Committee of the Communist Party of China our tactics should consist in a joint appeal with the Soviet government of China to all the people, to all parties, groups, troops, mass organizations and to all prominent political and social leaders to organize together with us in an all-China United People's Government of National Defence.

Van Slyke cites denunciations of the KMT in resolutions and reports that came out of the Seventh Congress. (pp. 54-55) I was unable to find any such references in the resolutions contained in the Abridged Proceedings of the VIIth Congress (refer particularly to the section entitled "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in the Colonial Countries," p. 583). The book citing the report was published in 1939 and such references may well have been deleted because of the then-existing CCP/KMT united front.

In August 1935, during the Long March, the CCP issued what was called the "August First Declaration." It denounced Chiang Kai-shek and the leaders

of the KMT as men with "human faces but the hearts of beasts." It urged the destruction of the Japanese imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek and called for "all" to "valiantly fight together with the Chinese Soviet Government and anti-Japanese governments in various places in the northeast for the formation of a united national defense government."

Van Slyke points to three "new beginnings" in the August First Declaration:

The first is the broad scope of the appeal, addressed to "men and women in all walks of life -- labor, industry, agriculture, military affairs, politics, commerce and education." No statement since 1927 had been so sweeping in scope or so neutral in class terminology. Second is the call to form a "united national defense government." This is the first suggestion that the CCP might even consider entering a political structure in which it was not the sole organized political participant. Third and most significant was the absence of any conditions for alliance between the Red Army and Kuomintang or regional armies save the cessation of attack on soviet districts and willingness to fight Japan. No longer were the conditions of January 1933 a part of the united-front program of the CCP.

Van Slyke continues:

In August 1935, therefore, the positions taken by the Comintern and by the CCP were similar. Both called for greater attention to the problem of a united front against Japan. In Moscow, as in Maoerkai (the place where the declaration was issued), the leadership of the Nanking government was looked upon as an enemy, not a potential ally. Both called for the formation of a popular front government under the leadership of the Chinese soviets: neither specified the form that this government -- or indeed the united front -- was to take. Later the Comintern advanced somewhat more rapidly, and certainly more easily, to a position including Chiang, but the differences that this change produced between the Comintern and the CCP had seemingly been adjusted when the Sian Incident (the coup against Chiang Kai-shek, December 1936) revived all the old issues once more in a new and intense form. The resolution of the Sian Incident formed the prelude to the outbreak of war with Japan seven months later. (p. 57)

Ch'en comments:

Coming immediately after the five Encirclement Campaigns and the Long March, the decision to establish yet another united front with the KMT was not taken without misgivings among the members of the CCP. So at the Wayaopao plenum of the Politburo in December 1935 Mao had to win over his comrades to the idea. (p. 213)

Mao's argument is contained in the article "On the Tactics of Fighting Japanese Imperialism." (Selected Works, International Publishers, V. I, p. 153) The first section of that article is titled "The Characteristics of the Present Political Situation," and contains the following main features:

(1) A very great change has taken place in the political situation. Our Party has defined its tasks on the basis of this change. What is the present situation? The main characteristic of the present situation is that Japanese imperialism wants to reduce China to its colony.

(2) Mao analyzes the political attitudes of the various classes in China toward Japan's aggression there.

Both the workers and peasants in China are demanding resistance. The Revolution of 1924-1927, the agrarian revolution from 1927 up to the present, and the anti-Japanese upsurge since the Incident of September 18, 1931, all prove that the Chinese working class and peasantry are the most resolute forces in the Chinese revolution.

The Chinese petty bourgeoisie also demands resistance. Have not the young students and the urban petty bourgeoisie already started a broad anti-Japanese movement. The petty bourgeois elements in China took part in the revolution of 1924-1927. Their economic status, like that of the peasants, is one of small scale production, which is incompatible with imperialism. Imperialism and the forces of the counter-revolution in China have done them great harm, reducing many of them to unemployment, bankruptcy or semi-bankruptcy. Now seeing that they may soon become slaves of a foreign nation, they find no way out but resistance.

The big bullies and bad gentry, the big warlords, the big bureaucrats and the big compradors have long made up their minds. They have said and are still saying that revolution (of whatever kind) is after all worse than imperialism. They have formed a camp of traitors: for them such a question as whether or not they are to become slaves of a foreign nation does not exist, because they have already obliterated national demarcations and their interests are inseparable from those of imperialism; and their chief of chiefs is none other than Chiang Kai-shek. The traitors of this camp are the sworn enemies of the Chinese people. Were there not such a pack of traitors, Japanese imperialism could not have been so outrageous. They are the jackals of imperialism.

(A footnote to the above paragraph (p. 313) explains that at the time of the report Chiang was giving away the Northeast (Manchuria) and "continuing his frenzied war against the Red Army. Therefore the CCP had to do its utmost to expose him as a traitor." It goes on to say that "serious conflicts did arise later between the Japanese and the Anglo-American imperialists after the former's aggression in North China. In view of the close connection between the Chiang Kai-shek group and Anglo-American imperialism, the Party concluded that Chiang might change his attitude towards Japan at the bidding of his Anglo-American masters, and accordingly adopted the policy of compelling Chiang Kai-shek to turn to resist Japan." It goes on to tell how this ultimately happened because of the Sian Incident.)

The national bourgeoisie presents a complicated problem. This class took part in the Revolution of 1924-1927, but badly frightened by the flames of that revolution, it subsequently went over to the side

of the people's enemies, i.e. the Chiang Kai-shek bloc. The question is whether, under the present circumstances the national bourgeoisie can change. We believe it can. This is because the national bourgeoisie is not the same as the landlord and comprador classes and there is a difference between them. The national bourgeoisie has not so much of the feudal character as the landlord class; nor has it so much of the comprador character as the comprador class. Within the national bourgeoisie there is a section of people who have more affiliations with foreign capital and Chinese landed interests, people who constitute its right wing, and we shall not for the time being speculate whether they can change or not. The problem lies with the sections which have no or comparatively little affiliation of this kind. We believe that in the new situation, when China is threatened with being reduced to a colony, the attitude of these sections of the national bourgeoisie can change. And the change is marked by their vacillation. They dislike imperialism on the one hand and fear the thoroughness of the revolution on the other, and thus vacillate between the two. This explains while during the revolution of 1924-1927 they took part in the revolution and why at the end of that period, they went over to the side of Chiang Kai-shek...

Hence we believe that in the present situation the attitude of the national bourgeoisie can change. What will be the extent of the change? Its general feature will be vacillation. But at certain stages of our struggle, one section of it (the left wing) can take part in the struggle. And the other section can pass from vacillation to neutrality.

Citing the Fukien revolt against Chiang Kai-shek in 1933, already mentioned in this report as substantiation, as well as other splits from the KMT, he says:

Those in our Party are wrong who hold the view that the whole camp of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie is united and consolidated, and that under no circumstances can it be made to change. Such people not only fail to realise the grave situation of today, but have also forgotten history.

Mao goes on to talk about what he calls the "negative side" of the question of the national bourgeoisie.

Namely the question that certain elements of the national bourgeoisie are often past masters at deceiving the people. Why? Because apart from the genuine supporters of the people's revolutionary cause, many others of this class may for a time appear as revolutionaries or semi-revolutionaries, and in that capacity are able to deceive the people... This increases the responsibility of the Communist Party to criticise its allies, to unmask the false revolutionaries and to win hegemony. To deny that during a great upheaval the national bourgeoisie may vacillate and join the revolution, is to abandon or at least belittle our Party's task of winning hegemony. For if, like the landlords and compradors, the national bourgeoisie appeared with the hideous features of traitors, then our Party might very well disregard its task of fighting for hegemony or at least

take it lightly.

On the question of class attitudes toward Japanese imperialism Mao concludes:

We may say that, along with the basic change in the situation caused by the Japanese invasion into China proper, the relationship among the various classes in China has changed, with an increase in the strength of the camp of the national revolution and a decrease in the strength of the camp of the national counter-revolution.

Mao speaks of the significance of the Long March ("without the Long March, how could the broad masses have known so quickly that there are such great ideas in the world as are upheld by the Red Army?") and of other recent successes in the Chinese Revolution, including the laying of the "cornerstone for the Party centre's task of establishing national headquarters for the revolution in the Northwest," guerrilla war and other struggles carried on by the peasants, the proletarian struggle's developing from "an economic struggle into a political struggle," the advance in the student movement, and the anti-imperialist struggles of the national minorities.

In the second part of the article, entitled "The National United Front," Mao asks -- and answers: "what is the basic tactical task of the Party?"

It is none other than to form a broad national revolutionary united front... While the task of the Japanese imperialists and the collaborators and traitors is to reduce China to a colony, our task is to transform China into an independent and free country with territorial integrity.

The counter-revolutionary forces in China and throughout the world are weaker than they used to be, whereas the revolutionary forces in China and throughout the world have become much stronger. This is a correct estimate, an estimate made from one angle. But at the same time we must also say that the counter-revolutionary forces in China and throughout the world are still stronger than the revolutionary forces. This too is a correct estimate, an estimate made from another angle. From the unevenness in China's political and economic development ensues the unevenness in the development of the revolution... For all that, the Chinese revolutionary war remains a protracted one, as determined by the strength of imperialism and the uneven development of the revolution.

We have said that the characteristic of the present situation is that a new upsurge of national revolution is coming, that China is on the eve of a great new nation-wide revolution; and this is the characteristic of the present revolutionary situation. This is a fact, or one aspect of the fact. But now we also say that imperialism is still a force to be seriously reckoned with, that the unevenness in the development of the revolutionary forces is still a serious defect, and that to defeat our enemies we must be prepared to fight a protracted war; such is another characteristic of the present revolutionary

situation. This is also a fact or another aspect of the fact. Both characteristics, both facts teach us and urge us to adapt ourselves to the situation, revise our tactics, and change our ways of disposing our forces and carrying on the war. The present situation demands that we boldly give up closed-door sectarianism, form a broad united front and curb adventurism. Before the time is ripe for a decisive battle, or before we have adequate strength for it, we must not rashly wage a decisive battle.

He characterizes as sectarian those who say:

The forces of the revolution must be pure and absolutely pure, and the road of revolution must be straight and absolutely straight... The national bourgeoisie is destined to be entirely and eternally counter-revolutionary. Not a single inch is to be yielded to the rich peasants. As regards the yellow trade unions, we should fight them tooth and nail. If we must shake hands with Ts'ai T'ing-k'ai, then while shaking his hand, we ought to call him a 'counter-revolutionary.' ... The intellectuals can remain revolutionary only for a day or two, and it is dangerous to recruit them. Hence the conclusion: closed-door sectarianism is the only magic wand, and the united front is the tactic of opportunism.

In a section titled "The People's Republic," he asks:

Why should we change the workers' and peasants' republic into a people's republic?

Our government represents not only the workers and peasants but the whole nation. This was originally implied in the slogan of a workers' and peasants' democratic republic because the workers and peasants constitute from 80 to 90 per cent of the nation's population. The Ten-Point Programme adopted by the Sixth National Congress of our Party stands not only for the interests of the workers and peasants but also for the interests of the nation. But the present situation makes us change the slogan and alter it into one of a people's republic. This is because Japanese invasion has altered the class relations in China and it is now possible not only for the petty bourgeoisie but also for the national bourgeoisie to join the anti-Japanese struggle.

The government of the people's republic is based principally on the workers and peasants, but will at the same time admit the representatives of all other classes that are opposed to imperialism and the feudal forces.

But isn't it dangerous to let the representatives of such classes join the government of the people's republic? No. The workers and peasants form the basic section of the masses of the republic... The majority formed in this government by the representatives of the basic sections of the masses...and the leadership and activities of the Communist Party in it. combine to ensure that the participation of the representatives of those people involves no danger...

The transition of the revolution is a thing of the future. In

the future the democratic revolution will inevitably be transformed into a socialist revolution. As to when the transition will take place, it depends on whether the conditions for it are ripe; it will certainly take quite a long time. Until all the necessary political and economic conditions are ripe, until the transition is not detrimental but beneficial to the greatest majority of the people throughout the country, we should not glibly talk about the transition. It is wrong to doubt this and to expect that a transition will take place within a very short time, as did some of our comrades in the past who maintained that the moment the democratic revolution began to triumph in key provinces a transition in the revolution would begin. They did that because they failed to see what kind of a country China is politically and economically, because they did not know that it is much more difficult and requires a good deal more time and effort for China than for Russia to complete her democratic revolution politically and economically,

The final section of the report is entitled "International Support." In it, Mao makes the distinction between "just" and "unjust" wars... "It is only the oppressed nations and the oppressed classes that can wage just wars" in the era of imperialism. He goes on:

In the present nation-wide anti-Japanese upsurge and worldwide anti-fascist upsurge, just wars will spread all over China and the globe. All just wars should support each other and all unjust wars should be turned into just ones -- this is the Leninist line. Our anti-Japanese war needs the support of the people of the world, above all the support of the people of the Soviet Union; and they will certainly support us, because we and they are concerned with each others' weal and woe. In the past the Chinese revolutionary forces were cut off for a time from the world revolutionary forces by Chiang Kai-shek and in this sense we were isolated. But now the situation has turned in our favour. From now on the situation will continue to turn even more to our advantage. We shall no longer be isolated. That is an essential condition for China to achieve victory in her anti-Japanese War and in her revolution. (pp. 153-174)

VI. Conclusions

Regarding the 1922-1927 CCP/KMT united front: did it correspond to Leninist and Comintern principles? In its conception? In its practice?

In his introduction to the Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, an excerpt of which is on the first page of this report and which was presented by Maring, Lenin says:

First, what is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasize this distinction. In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish the concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in all colonial and national problems.

The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The vast majority of the world's population, over a thousand million, perhaps even 1,250 million people,... in other words, about 70 per cent of the world's population, belongs to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies... (Lenin, Collected Works, V. 31, pp. 240-241)

It seems to me that this characterization of imperialism, the admonition that the Communist International "proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates"...justifies the proviso in the Theses themselves (p.413 this report) that the C.I. supports the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries "only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties...and justifies the C.I.'s "advice" to the CCP to have its members join and work in the KMT.

Further, the ECCI resolution (p.414) heeds Lenin's admonition to "proceed from concrete realities." I believe that its analysis (points #1 and #2), its instruction (point #3) and its admonition that the political and organizational integrity of the Party be maintained (point #4) are correct. I think it is simplistic, and therefore wrong, to tell the CCP to "avoid conflicts with the national-revolutionary movement" (last sentence, #4) as such conflicts are bound to occur if the CCP maintains its political integrity. It gives the illusion that there can always be complete unanimity between the CCP and the national-revolutionary movement which, of course, contains bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements. It should have, but did not, point out the weaknesses of those classes, and the possible dangers to both the CCP and the masses that could arise from such an alliance. Very evident is its failure to mention the peasant masses and the role of the CCP in regard to them.

The characterization of the KMT in the ECCI resolution does not seem correct to me. The KMT was the party of the bourgeoisie. The "workers" came in, it seems to me, later, through the activities of the CCP. Lenin held in State and Revolution that a party represents a class, not classes. Lenin must have thought the KMT was an exception.

Was the Comintern's direction for what the CCP had to do within the KMT correct? In other words, who was right, Maring or Voitinsky? (see p. 419) Or were they both right for the periods in which they respectively guided the CCP?

It seems to me that Maring's outlook was basically correct; Voitinsky's (or the Comintern's or Stalin's in 1925) incorrect. It was incorrect because it assumed an apparently near-perpetual alliance with the KMT Right (while struggling against it). It was incorrect because it was based on a serious mis-estimation of the strength of the Right Wing of the KMT, a mis-estimation that was surely fueled by the success of the May 30th Movement (p.419) and by the "Left" declarations of the KMT Second Congress (p.421) and the expulsion of the most (openly) virulent anti-Communist KMT leaders at that time. (p.421)

There was a danger of the CCP moving too far, too soon, leaving it and the peasant and worker masses exposed to counter-revolution and defeat. The CCP was weak -- numerically and qualitatively. (In January 1926, fewer than 2000 in all of China had been in the CCP for a year or more.) (Rue, p. 46) But what was the purpose of maintaining an alliance within a KMT which had become dominated by its Right Wing, as must have been evident by early 1927 (when, apparently the peasant movement was at its peak)? (Rue, p. 54) Certainly the Comintern's insistence on maintaining a united front under the circumstances of early 1927, in the same way it had been maintained a year or two earlier violated that part of Lenin's thesis that said the C.I. "must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement..." (p.414)

Borodin's concessions to Chiang regarding the political and organizational integrity of the CCP (p.421) are a travesty of any principle except that of expediency.

It seems to me the Russian CP seriously underestimated the revolutionary potential of both the Chinese working class and peasantry. This was evidenced in both Russian foreign policy (e.g., Vilenky's statement, center p.416) and in its leadership in the Comintern (e.g., Voitinsky's outlook, p.419 and Zinoviev's, p. 420). At all times it seemed to have more confidence in the anti-imperialist potential of the "best of the militarists" (p.416) or the national bourgeoisie. (Refer to Borodin's toadying to Chiang, p.421).

The CCP's "Resolution on Some Questions in the History of Our Party," written in 1945, apparently written by Mao, obviously reflecting his views, gives the following explanation of the defeat of "the first period of China's new democratic revolution."

The revolution ended in defeat because the reactionary clique in the Kuomintang, then our ally, betrayed it in 1927; because the combined force of that clique and the imperialists was very strong; and particularly because in the concluding period of the revolution (about six months) the Right viewpoint in our Party, with Ch'en Tu-hsiu as its exponent, developed into a line of capitulation, and the Party's leading body, in thrall to this view, refused to carry out the wise directives of the Communist International and Comrade Stalin on the one hand and rejected the correct proposals of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and other comrades on the other, with the result that when the Kuomintang turned against the revolution and launched an assault on the people, our Party and the people failed to organize an effective resistance. (Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, V. IV, pp. 172-173)

Regarding the united front from below: (refer to pp. 425-426).

The only place for application of the united front from below was in the cities. In so far as it meant Communists should join the KMT-sponsored "yellow unions" it was correct. It seems that for a Communist to function as a Communist in the Chinese labor movement after 1927 was akin to a Communist functioning as a Communist in Nazi Germany. Under those circumstances, the chances for a meaningful application of that policy, i.e., winning away the unionists from their mis-leaders (KMT appointees) would

seem slim indeed. (According to Wales, there were "Red" unions in some strategic industrial centers that "were reported to be quite influential." They "did not exist openly." How they functioned, she does not say. (The Chinese Labor Movement, p. 68).

Regarding the Anti-Japanese United Front: (refer to pp. 428-436)

Since both Wang Ming's speech at the Seventh Comintern Congress and Mao's article "On the Tactics of Fighting Japanese Imperialism" contain the theoretical basis of the anti-Japanese united front, it is those documents I shall examine to determine if the CCP's conception of that united front corresponded to the criteria for the united front established by Lenin and the Comintern in the early 1920s. Dimitroff's thesis, too, will be examined regarding that united front.

Wang Ming states that the very existence of China as a nation necessitates the creation of an "anti-imperialist united People's Front." He refers to the salvation of the fatherland but (apparently) makes no reference to the revolutionary struggle in China nor even the class situation, although it seems to me a class analysis would be necessary before a united front could be proposed for a given struggle.

Mao, too, calls for an anti-Japanese popular front -- to keep China from becoming a Japanese colony. He, unlike Wang, refers to the class situation in China, saying that the Japanese invasion has changed it. He then goes on to show how the Japanese aggression has changed the attitudes of the various classes in China. He, unlike Wang Ming, but like Dimitroff, presents the perspective of the united front being transformed into a socialist revolution (but only after a long period of time, only after the democratic revolution has been achieved.) But Mao is on surer ground than Dimitroff in that Lenin and the Comintern always held that in colonial and semi-colonial countries the success of the anti-imperialist struggle, the achievement of the democratic revolution, was a necessary prelude to socialism. Dimitroff talks of the struggle for the preservation of bourgeois democracy in places in which it had already been achieved, as a basis for a struggle for socialism. Lenin never envisioned that, but then he didn't envision German fascism.

In other words, one of the basic differences between Mao's formulation and Dimitroff's is that Mao's concerns an anti-imperialist united front (actually, a popular front), while Dimitroff's concerns an anti-fascist united front and popular front. It is true, that as a part of the world Communist movement, Mao's "united front" was part of the anti-fascist united front in that it was directed against Japan, which may or may not have been fascist, but certainly was part of a world fascist alliance.

The popular front proposed by Mao came from an armed movement which, with the support of the (peasant) masses, governed territory. That situation goes a long way in guaranteeing the autonomy of a CP as it forms a "front" with other forces. The other CPs in the world movement, with one (important) exception, did not have this -- to be sure, not absolute -- guarantee of autonomy.

It is probably because the CCP had power that Mao had to persuade his

comrades who had seen the mistakes of another united front paid for in blood. It is because Mao had to persuade his comrades of the correctness of his (and the Comintern) line (and all agree, they took a lot of persuading) that his argument is so developed.

At the end of his report (p.436), Mao links up the Chinese anti-imperialist struggle with the world anti-fascist struggle. He does not, and probably can not link up the world anti-imperialist struggle with the world anti-fascist struggle. Should he have been able to?

VII. Appendix: Chou En-lai on the Reasons for the Success of the 1927 Counter-Revolution

(Please refer to pages 422-423)

From: Edgar Snow, Random Notes on Red China 1936-1945, pp. 56-57

July 9, 1936

Edgar Snow: "What were the chief reasons for the success of the counter-revolution of 1927, and what were the chief mistakes of the Communists?"

Chou En-lai: "Our first mistake unquestionably was in not deepening the revolution among the peasantry, especially in Kwangtung and Kwangsi, where peasants were already armed. Our party followed an opportunistic policy in this respect, expanding horizontally (in numbers) instead of vertically (organizing fighters directly from the peasantry).

"Secondly, we failed to develop the necessary revolutionary leadership among cadres of the Kuomintang army. We let slip out of our grasp many good officers who could have been won over to our side. In 1926 it would still have been possible for us to enlist and equip ten divisions of Communist troops had we energetically sought to do so.

"Thirdly, we threw away our chance to hold hegemony of the Kuomintang, then still a revolutionary party, by mistakes in tactics. A single example: in Shanghai we failed to take advantage of contradictions which then existed in the Kuomintang and among the imperialists. We lost the hegemony of the Kuomintang which was rightfully ours. It was ours for the taking after March 1926, had we pursued correct tactics. All rightists had been driven temporarily out of power; the leftist Wang Ching-wei was cooperating closely with us; Chiang Kai-shek, then a centrist, was isolated. Had Communists entered into the Kuomintang in full force and struggled for hegemony, instead of remaining outside, we could have formed a coalition with the Left wing and secured and held leadership. The army, the merchants, the students, even overseas Chinese, then agreed to our main tactical program.

"Again, during Chiang's march on Shanghai, there was still time to organize a coalition against him and the rightists. The majority of the military leadership was still outside his hands. In the Northern Expedition were the Second, Fourth, Seventh and Eighth armies, all of which

were outside Chiang's control. He had only three divisions, and they were the least dependable of all."

Q.: "How do you explain such mistakes or miscalculations?"

A.: "They were due to several things. First, the lack of experience and Marxist tradition in China; our party was only a few years old. Second, leadership was divided in the party itself between Chen Tu-hsiu, a petty bourgeois mentality, and the younger, just-emerging groups with a thorough understanding of Marxism. Third, to the uneven development of the revolution in different parts of the country among different groups. Fourth, to the lack of proletarian organization and experience and to the success of the petty-bourgeois elements in maintaining supremacy in the party."

VIII. Footnotes

¹When Chiang Kai-shek visited Sian (the capital of Shensi province) in December 1936 to investigate why his soldiers there were not fighting the Communists more vigorously -- he found out. His generals seized him. At the urging of Chou En-lai, who may have saved his life, Chiang was released on the condition that he cease his war against the Communists and, instead, cooperate with them to resist Japanese aggression. This became known as the "Sian incident" and marked the beginning of a new CCP/KMT united front.

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