

Civil Strife in China, 1934-49

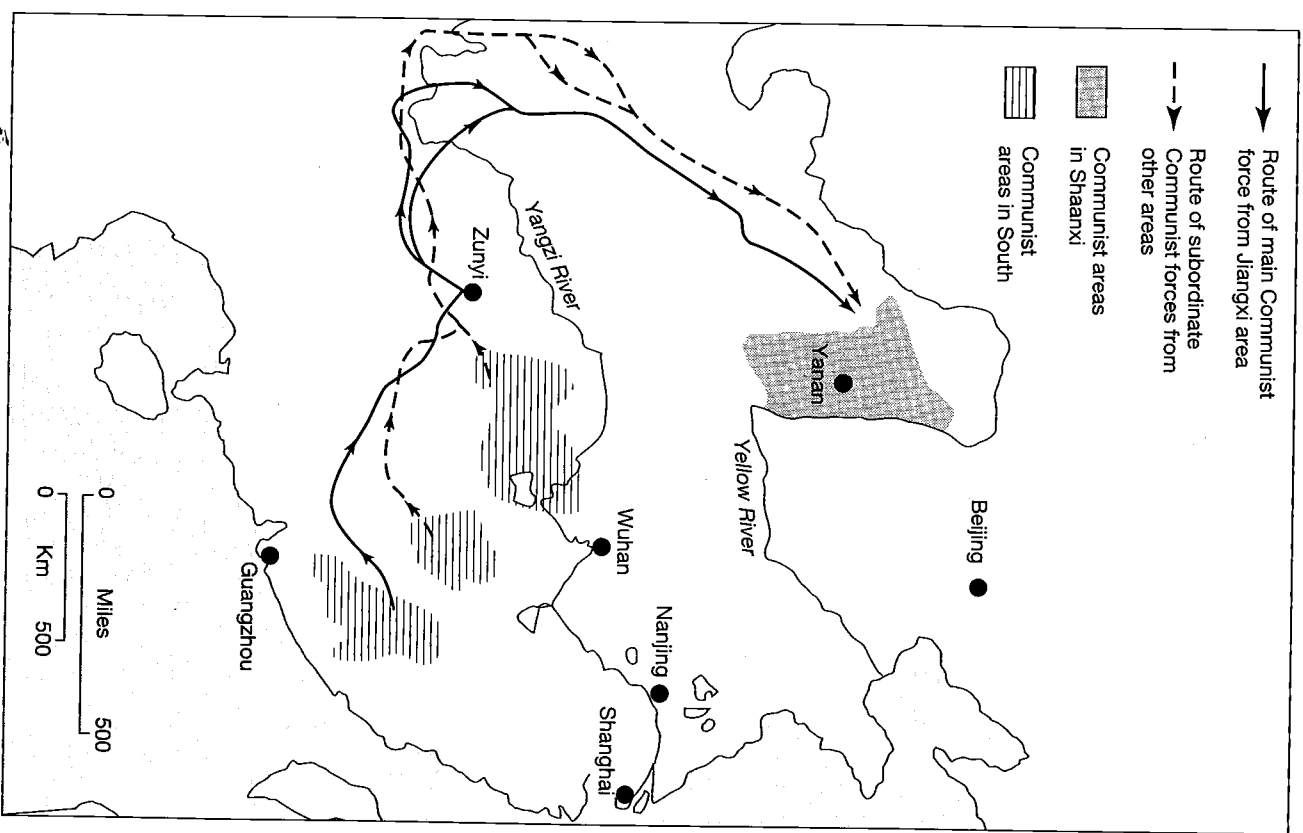
1 The Long March, 1934-5

The Long March has become the stuff of legend. Even after allowing for exaggeration it remains an extraordinary feat. The journey, which covered the year from October 1934 to October 1935, involved crossing 11 provinces, 18 mountain ranges, 24 rivers, and numerous desert areas and quick sands. The marchers fought 15 pitched battles and almost daily skirmishes against the GMD forces trying to destroy them. In the course of the march, over 60 towns and cities were occupied. The distance covered was 6,000 miles - the equivalent of marching from London to Lagos, or New York to Los Angeles and back, at an average of 17 miles per day. Of the 100,000 who set out scarcely 20,000 survived to reach Yanan. The sheer physical scale of the Long March helped to give it a political significance, which Mao defined in these terms:

1 It is a manifesto, an agitation corps, a seeding machine ... It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes ... It announces the bankruptcy of the encirclement attempted by the imperialists and Chiang Kaishek ... It declares to approximately 5 200 million people of 11 provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation ... It has sown many seeds in 11 provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future ... the Long March ended with our victory and the enemy's defeat.

The concept of martyrdom for the cause became enshrined in Communist lore. Comradeship, dedication and self-sacrifice were now the watchwords of the party. The March created a brotherhood among the survivors; all the leaders of the Chinese People's Republic from 1949 until the mid-1990s were veterans of the Long March: Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Liu Shaohqi, Jiang Qing and Deng Xiaoping. The marchers, with their willingness to accept privation and suffering without complaint, were an extraordinary invocation of the Confucian spirit of fatalism. The poems Mao wrote during the March were very much in the Chinese literary tradition of embracing nature as a measure of human achievement:

- 1 I desire to compare our height with the skies;
In clear weather, the earth is so charming,
Like a red-faced girl clothed in white.
- 5 Calling innumerable heroes to vie with each other in pursuing her,
The emperors Shih Huang and Wu Ti were barely cultured,

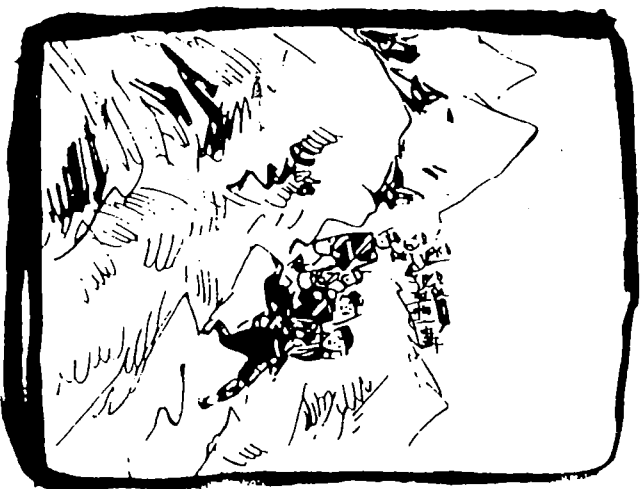


The Long March 1934-5

The emperors Tai Tsung and Tai Tsu were lacking in feeling, Genghis Khan knew only how to bend his bow at the eagles. These all belong to the past - only today are there men of feeling!

Mao Zedong had not been the only leader of the March, but he was the one who emerged from it with the greatest prestige among his fellow Communists. By the time they reached Yenan he had achieved a remarkable supremacy in the military and political counsels of the CCP. During the March what proved to be a crucial party gathering had been held at Zunyi (Tsunyi) in Guizhou (Kweichow) province early in 1935. At the meeting Mao successfully exposed the urban Reds as being out of touch with the CCP's real needs. His principal charge was that they had reduced the party to its present crisis by abandoning the successful guerilla tactics in the countryside and opting instead for pitched battles in the urban areas. In a key vote on the issue the majority of the members supported Mao, a decision that marked the end of the predominating influence of the pro-Moscow urban element in the CCP.

There had also been a serious dispute over the route the Red armies should follow. Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-tao), a rival to Mao, urged that the marchers divert westwards through Xinjiang (Sinkiang) in order to take them closer to Russian protection. Mao, backed by Zhu De (Chuh Teh), insisted that the agreed northern route should be



Drawing of the Long March by one of the marchers, 1935

maintained. Zhang broke away but after some months had to admit that the western route he had attempted was impossible. He abandoned it and rejoined Mao's contingent on its northern march. This vindication of Mao's strategic judgement, increased his standing within the CCP and meant that he arrived at Yenan as the leading figure in the party.

The romantic image of the Long March tends to obscure the fact that at the time it was widely seen as a defeat for the Communists. After all, they had been driven out of their southern base and in the course of their flight had lost four-fifths of their number. As in 1927 at the time of the White Terror, so in 1935 the Nationalists seemed on the point of establishing an unshakable control of China: Chiang Kaishek and the GMD had been recognised by the Western powers and the USSR as the legitimate government of China, the warlord menace had been subdued and the Communists appeared to be a broken force, confined to a distant province. Although the Nationalists did not yet have total power, they possessed the greatest degree of authority of any group since the fall of the Manchus. The question was would they be able to use that authority to consolidate their position. The answer to that depended on two key factors, the presence of the Japanese in China and the attitude of Chiang Kaishek.

2 The Xian Incident, 1936

Japan's aggressive designs on China had been openly declared in 1931 with the invasion of Manchuria. That proved to be the first step in a programme of Japanese expansion that was to lead to open war between the two countries from 1937 to 1945. During those eight years large areas of China were occupied by the Japanese. Ironically, this proved the saving of Mao Zedong and the Communists, for it was they who took on the role of the real defenders of the nation against the aggressor, a role which the GMD under Chiang Kaishek seemed unwilling to fulfil. Although Chiang formally committed his government to the anti-Japanese struggle, he continued throughout the war to make his priority the elimination of the Communists. One of the major criticisms to be made of Chiang was that his obsession with crushing the Reds diverted the Nationalists from attending to China's more urgent problems. Resources were dissipated on anti-Communist campaigns which should have been devoted to China's economic recovery or to its anti-Japanese war effort. It is certainly the case that throughout the period of Nationalist control Chiang's preoccupation with the Communist threat condemned China to a continuous civil war at the very time it was engaged in a fight for survival against Japan. The CCP denounced Chiang's failure to conform to the promise he had originally made when entering the United Front; they stressed that while they were prepared to confront the Japanese, the GMD invariably adopted the line of least resistance.

Chiang's strategy against Japan derived from his belief that China was too large a country for the Japanese to occupy without exhausting themselves; a protracted war must end in Japan's defeat. He defined his approach as 'selling space to buy time'. However, the policy of avoiding engagement with the invader proved uninspiring and brought obvious political dangers. His supporters frequently found it difficult to maintain their loyalty. Throughout his time as leader of the GMD, Chiang was subject to opposition from within his ranks. In 1933 it took him over a year to suppress a rising among his troops at Fujian (Fukien), who were reacting against his failure to confront the Japanese. Open criticism of the GMD's irresolute war policy was sustained by a series of demonstrations in Beijing, the most serious occurring in 1935. The climax to Chiang Kaishek's discomfiture came in a remarkable episode in 1936. During a visit to Xian, which, ironically, Chiang had undertaken in order to berate his GMD forces for their slowness in crushing the Reds, he found the tables turned; he was seized by troops acting under the orders of General Zhang Xue-liang (Chang Hsueh-liang). Zhang had been persuaded by the CCP to commit himself to the anti-Japanese struggle and to use his contacts with the Nationalists to embarrass Chiang. After his arrest Chiang was handed over to Zhou Enlai, Mao's closest colleague, who offered to spare his prisoner's life if he would promise to end his persecution of the CCP and lead a genuine resistance against the Japanese. Finding himself in an impossible position, Chiang Kaishek gave in; in December 1936, he sanctioned the formation of the second GMD-CCP United Front, pledged to wage unceasing war against the Japanese aggressors.

Given the bitter relations between Chiang and the Communists, it is at first sight surprising that the CCP did not simply assassinate him; that after all would have been normal Chinese politics. That they refrained from doing so suggests an interesting degree of subtlety on their part. They took a calculated risk that paid off. By allowing Chiang not merely to survive, but to remain as the recognised leader of China, the CCP had won a major propaganda victory. They had shown remarkable restraint in forging party advantage for the sake of the nation. They had obtained Chiang's formal commitment to cease his suppression of the CCP, as well as his promise to lead a new united front against the Japanese invader. The Communists could now claim that it was they who were the genuine nationalists whose prime motivation was their love of China. They had undermined the validity of the GMD's claim to represent the nation.

3 The Communists at Yanan, 1936-45

Detached from Comintern interference and close to the Japanese lines, the CCP base at Yanan provided the Reds with a remarkable opportunity both to develop an independent political programme and to assume the

role of defenders of the Chinese people. Mao was able to give practical form to his belief that China's revolution must come from the peasants. This was heresy in the eyes of the Comintern; to them the CCP was too small and historically out of phase. Since China lacked an established proletariat, it was incapable of creating a genuinely proletarian revolution. The best that the CCP could achieve would be to help bring about the bourgeois stage of revolution by merging with the Nationalists. Peasant revolution was not an end in itself; it was merely the precursor of the final proletarian revolution. Mao rejected this analysis and replaced it with his own conviction that for China the people's peasant rising would be sufficient to fulfil the dialectical imperative. He tended to despise the purely intellectual approach to revolution which emphasised theoretical concepts without taking sufficient account of the actual conditions in China. For him, the term proletarian described not so much a social class as an attitude. Those who were genuinely committed to revolution were *ipso facto* members of the proletariat.

That was very much the spirit that prevailed at Yanan from 1936 onwards. Aided by the base's distance from Soviet influence, Mao was able to dominate the urban-orientated members of the CCP and bring the party to accept his line of thinking. He was acting very much in the Chinese tradition of taking from a foreign ideology those elements considered to be of practical value for China. Under him Marxism became Simplified. For some years he had to contend with opposition from within the party concerning his reordering of revolutionary Marxism, but by outmanoeuvring and, where necessary, removing opponents he was able to establish an unmatched authority and so impose his ideas. Mao had few scruples about how he achieved this. It is known that he tightened his political grip by the use of informers and secret police. There is no reason to believe that in the story of Mao's rise to power in the CCP the Futien incident was an isolated occurrence.

During the Jiangxi and Yanan years Mao's tactics for imposing CCP control in the countryside were essentially simple. Once the Reds had infiltrated or seized a village the landowners were driven out or shot. This done, the land was immediately reallocated to the peasants, thereby making them supporters of the CCP so that was then established. The character of the land expropriation and distribution policy may be judged from the following extracts from the CCP's Land Law of 1932:

1 A. *Whose Land Should be Confiscated?*

Land, houses, and all forms of property that belonged to members of the gentry and landlords.

Land and farm implements owned by those rich peasants who have been verified as members of counterrevolutionary organisations.

B. *Who Should Receive Land?*

The amount of land to be distributed is the same for all tenant

farmers and poor peasants. Whether the land of the middle peasants should be distributed so as to assure that they have the same amount as that of tenant farmers and poor peasants depends upon the decision to be made by the middle peasants themselves. If the majority of them so desires, the land of the middle peasants will be redistributed.

C. How is Land to be Redistributed?

15 Insofar as tenant farmers, poor and middle peasants, unemployed farm labourers, and unemployed independent artisans are concerned, population and land productivity shall be taken into consideration.

20 No government official in any of the revolutionary organisations is entitled to land distribution if he is not a tenant farmer, poor or middle peasant, unemployed farm labourer, coolie, or independent artisan.

D. How is Land to be Distributed Among Members of the Red Army?

25 The relatives of a Red soldier will receive land in the same manner as poor and middle peasants. The land they receive shall not be located too far from where they live.

What the CCP's occupation of what it called the 'liberated areas'



Trial of a landlord by the Red Army, 1949

actually entailed was described by Edgar Snow, an American Communist, who travelled with the Red Army and became a confidant of Mao Zedong. Writing in 1938, Snow observed:

1 While theoretically the soviets were a 'workers and peasants' government, in actual practice the whole constituency was overwhelmingly peasant in character. Various committees were established under each of the district soviets. An all-powerful 5 committee, usually elected in a mass meeting shortly after the occupation of a district by the Red Army, and preceded by an intensified propaganda campaign, was the revolutionary committee. It called for elections or re-elections, and closely co-operated with the Communist Party. Under the district soviet, and 10 appointed by it, were committees for education, co-operatives, military training, political training, land, public health, partisan training, revolutionary defence, enlargement of the Red Army, agrarian mutual aid, Red Army land tilling, and others. Such 15 committees were found in every branch organ of the soviets, right up to the Central government, where policies were co-ordinated and state decisions made.

The work of all these organizations and their various committees was co-ordinated by the Central Soviet Government, the Communist Party, and the Red Army. It can be said in general 20 that they were all skilfully interwoven, and each directly under the guidance of some Communist, though decisions on organization, membership, and work seemed to be carried out in a democratic way by the peasants themselves. The aim of soviet organization obviously was to make every man, woman, or child a member of 25 something, with definite work assigned to him to perform.

At Yanan Mao urged that the first task for the CCP was to consolidate itself as a military force. This was not only in order to be able to fight Japan and the Nationalists, but also because, as the Long March had so graphically shown, the Red Army was the party's major political weapon. It was the means by which the word was to be spread. Until the Yanan period, the Chinese soldier had not stood high in popular estimation; recruited from the dregs of society, he had traditionally been a terror to the civilian population. The marauding imperial and warlord armies had wrought fearful havoc among the peasantry. But the Red Army was different. Its prescribed duty was to aid and comfort the people. Mao laid down a code of conduct for his troops:

- 1 1. Replace all doors when you leave a house.
2. Roll up and return the straw matting on which you sleep.
3. Be courteous and help out when you can.
4. Return ~~all~~ borrowed articles.

5. Replace all damaged articles.
6. Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
7. Pay for all articles purchased.
8. Be sanitary, and especially establish latrines at a distance from people's houses.
9. Don't take liberties with women.
10. Don't kill prisoners of war.

Many of these instructions may have a naive, boy-scout, tone to them yet they provided a guide which when followed endeared the Red Army to a rural population whose previous experience of marching armies had been unremittably bitter. The political role played by the Red Army during the Yanan years was part of what Mao described as 'the new democracy'. In a series of reflections, which were published in 1940 under the title *On New Democracy*, Mao defined the revolution which the Chinese Communists were leading not as a class movement but as a national one. The aim of the Communists was 'long-term co-operation with all those classes, strata, political groups and individuals who were willing to fight Japan to the end'. He appealed to all Chinese of goodwill to unite against the enemies of the nation. To encourage unity, Mao chose to play down the political threat that the Communists represented to the provincial landowners. The CCP's former land-confiscation programme was modified so that only those landlords who actively collaborated with the Japanese had their property seized. At the same time Mao was careful not to depart from the party's policy of forcing down excessive rents and prohibiting the usury that had so often blighted the lives of the peasants. These programmes were often effected through CCP co-operation with the local peasant associations, a technique which encouraged non-party members to feel that they were directly responsible for improving their own lot. The same applied to the literacy and education schemes that the CCP introduced. Undoubtedly this sensitivity to the wants of the peasants was the most popular of the CCP's policies and played its part in the growth of the party from 40,000 in 1937 to 1 million by 1945. It was from this expanding membership that the volunteers for the Red Army came.

Historical balance requires that such admiring descriptions as Edgar Snow's of the CCP's organisation of the peasants be matched by reference to Nationalist denunciations of Mao's policies. The removal of the landlord class in the areas where the Red Army held sway could be a brutal process. C. W. Young, A western spokesman for the GMD, wrote in 1935 of the Communists' 'indescribable reign of Terror':

The populace was forced to undergo unnecessary hardships and suffering and to live a life of bondage, a veritable nightmare, instead of receiving equality and benefits and good treatment such as they had been led to believe they would receive.

While this might be viewed as Nationalist propaganda rather than objective reporting, it needs to be borne in mind that, notwithstanding its feeling for the ordinary Chinese and its genuine popularity, Mao's regime was politically authoritarian. There was a rigour and sense of purpose about the atmosphere at Yanan that bordered on the oppressive. Discipline and obedience to instructions were required of all those living under it. In one sense this was understandable, given that the regime was engaged in a constant fight for survival against both the Japanese and the GMD. But it went deeper than that. Mao had begun to manifest a belief that was to become his outstanding political characteristic - the notion of revolutionary correctness. He held that unless the party maintained a constant struggle against error the revolution would be betrayed from within. For Mao, an obvious danger was that those responsible for running the party would become a bureaucratic, self-justifying elite. To fight this tendency, in 1942 he launched a 'rectification of conduct' campaign. Party members were to engage in public self-criticism. To assist them in their search for revolutionary truth they were obliged to study prescribed texts, among which Mao's own writings figured prominently.

Historians have argued over the motive behind Mao's campaign. Some see it as a logical part of his progression as a revolutionary thinker. Others view the campaign as a calculated move to rid himself of opposition and consolidate his position as leader. What is certainly true is that by 1942 Mao had already begun to move towards cult status in Yanan, and the rectification campaign with its emphasis on the wisdom of his ideas obviously added to this. In 1943 Mao was elected Chairman of the Central Committee of the CCP; by 1945 when the Japanese war came to an end, Mao was being regularly referred to as 'the great helmsman'.

4 Nationalist China, 1937-45

The GMD's power in China was always more apparent than real. At no time did the Nationalist government control more than one-third of China or two-thirds of its population. These, of course, were quite substantial proportions in themselves, but given the strength of Chinese regionalism and the distribution of the population the authority exercised by the GMD was far from complete. A clear example of this was the Nanjing government's failure, in the face of resistance from the local ruling factions, to carry through its declared policies of land reform and equitable rents. Moreover, despite the impressive victories of the Northern Expedition, the defeat of warlordism was only partial. A number of the warlords had agreed to accept the GMD's authority only on condition that they were allowed to keep their private armies. Others were won over by being offered executive positions in the party or government.

It is arguable, therefore, that the Nationalists did not so much conquer the warlords as come to terms with them. This was the constant assertion made by the CCP in its propaganda against the Nationalists. A further obvious limitation of GMD authority was the Japanese control of large parts of China between 1931 and 1945. That the Nationalists had to remove their capital city inland from Nanjing (Nanking) to Chungking (Chungking) was an outstanding illustration of this. The fourteen-year occupation by Japanese armies was a violent and humiliating reminder of how far China was from being an independent nation.

The underlying political weakness of the GMD was that the social composition of its membership meant that it could never become a mass party. The GMD claimed that its revolutionary purpose was to serve the Chinese population as a whole, but in practice it became the representative of particular minority interests. Chiang Kaishek's party was largely drawn from the entrepreneurial capitalist class of China, congregated in the ports and cities. These urban merchants and businessmen had little sympathy for the rural peasants. The character of the party was manifest in the manner in which it acquired its finance. Over 90 per cent of the revenue raised by the Nationalist government came from the area around Shanghai, China's largest international port and money market. Yet the revenue was not well used. Throughout its whole period in office, the government's most pressing need was to fund its war effort. Almost all that it raised went on military expenditure, which left a minimal amount for the vital areas of industrial investment and agrarian reform.

In political terms the GMD's lack of genuine popularity might have mattered less had they been able to satisfy the demands of the particular interests they were thought to represent. However, rather than forge a partnership with China's business interests, the Nationalist government tried to make those interests dependent on it for their freedom to trade while at the same time denying them access to political influence. The GMD's governmental elite were not prepared to share their power even with their natural supporters. The record shows that the government's ill-conceived policies forfeited the goodwill of the financial and business classes, the very groups on which a genuine modernisation of China depended. The government tried to acquire the money it needed by nationalising China's private banks and imposing heavy taxation on individual and company profits. But since it invariably spent more than it raised, it also had to resort to borrowing from foreign financiers, usually American. The GMD government was leading China towards bankruptcy.

After 1935 the GMD had a whole decade of opportunity to shape China in accordance with their revolutionary programme. Judged by this, their record was an uninspiring one. They operated an inefficient bureaucracy which easily fell prey to corruption. Intent on gaining

American dollars, the GMD government in China compromised most of its professed revolutionary values. Having started as a party dedicated to the rejection of foreign dominance over China, the GMD, from the 1930s on, modelled itself in practice on the capitalist methods of the Western merchants and financiers whom it had previously affected to despise. It was no accident that many of its leaders, including Chiang himself, either married or ingratiated themselves into the social circles associated with Western capitalism. Chiang's second marriage to Soong Mei-ling, sister-in-law of Sun Yatsen and daughter to one of China's richest and most influential families, was a calculated step to make himself more acceptable to the Americans. Similarly, his avowal of Christian Methodism may be interpreted as an attempt to impress Western opinion.

Yet Chiang's adoption of Western values did not extend into the political field. Despite their constant avowals of dedication to the 3 Principles of the People, the Nationalists made few real concessions to democracy and paid scant attention to providing for the welfare of the people. The sacrifice and commitment to the nation which Chiang called for in his *China's Destiny*, published in 1943 as a textbook of the revolutionary ideals of the party, were rarely found in the conduct of public life under him. Although the Communists exaggerated the extent of corruption in the Nationalist ranks, there was no denying that during the Nationalist years public office was bought and sold and nepotism was the main means of advancement.

This corruption provided the CCP with a powerful political weapon in its conflict with Chiang Kaishek. The Communists were not above committing unscrupulous acts themselves, but the general perception was that not only were they steadfast in their resistance to Japanese aggression but that they also behaved with genuine integrity in their political dealings. This may now be judged a misconception, but what mattered at the time was how the ordinary Chinese saw things. For many of them the Communist refusal to engage in the traditional brutalising of the population was proof that the CCP was sincere in its claims to be truly concerned with the fate of the Chinese people. The difference in the ways the leaders of the GMD and the CCP treated their troops could not have been more marked. The President of the Chinese Red Cross was appalled by the barbarity suffered by the Nationalist conscripts. In a formal report he recorded:

1 In one reception centre, I met a group of draftees from Kwantung. 'How many draftees are there in your group?' 'There were 700 of us at the beginning of the journey. Now only seventeen have remained.' 'Are you telling me that all but seventeen have successfully escaped on the road?' 'No, sir', they replied. 'Where could they run away to on the road?' 'The areas we passed through were nothing but wilderness where one could not find food or

water. We had no food with us when we started the journey, and we had to survive on whatever we could find on the road. When we could not find anything, we, of course, starved. In some areas water was so contaminated that we suffered from diarrhoea the moment we drank it. Since no medicine was available, people died in droves.'

In many of the reception centres that I had visited, the draftees were tied to one another to forestall any possible escape. They had no freedom of movement whatsoever. They would be immediately whipped if, in the judgment of their officers, they had misbehaved. The food they ate was not only crude to the greatest extreme but also inadequate in quantity. Its only function was to prevent them from starving to death. Under cruel treatment like this, many of them died before they could even be sent to the front.

In Yunnan province, I saw a group of army recruiters gambling with large stakes. Being occupied with what they were doing at the moment, they paid little attention to the draftees who, being sick and lying beside them, were on the verge of death. One draftee pleaded hopefully: "Give me some water, please; I am so thirsty that I am about to die." Instead of showing any sympathy, these army recruiters scolded him in angry voice: "Get out of here! Why do you always want to make trouble?"

³⁰ Cruelties like this appeared time and again during my inspection tour. The lack of sympathy on the part of army recruiters was almost universal. According to my estimate, the total number of draftees who died from a variety of causes during the eight years of war (1937-45) was no less than 14 million.

5 The Civil War, 1945-9

By a strange twist of history, what should have been Chiang's moment of triumph proved to be the beginning of his downfall. The surrender of Japan in August 1945, directly following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was in one obvious sense a great Chinese victory. Japan had been defeated. But it had not come the way that Chiang had expected. The war had ended too soon. His belief throughout had been that the fanatical Japanese resistance would eventually lead to two critical developments: first, the setting up of US air bases in China from which the Americans would attack Japan; second, the landing in China of huge American armies, which would roll up the Japanese in a large land operation. Chiang calculated that in the course of this the Americans would overwhelm not only the Japanese but the Chinese Communists as well. This would leave him both the victor over Japan and the master of China.

But events betrayed him. The Americans chose to establish their airbases not in China but on the Pacific islands that they wrested from

Japan. Then, when the war abruptly ended in August 1945, the location of the Japanese and their Communist resisters meant that it was invariably the Reds to whom the Japanese formally submitted. The events of 1945 had thus destroyed Chiang Kaishek's dream. He did not have the expected American troops at his disposal in China, which prevented him from crushing the Communists as he had planned. A further limitation on Chiang's claim to mastery of China was that Russian armies had now occupied Manchuria, the USSR having declared war on Japan the day after the Nagasaki bombing. It is true that the Americans then provided a massive airlift to enable the GMD to transport its forces to the northern cities so as to be in a position to take the Japanese surrender. But by then the war was over and the CCP resisted the GMD's claim to the liberated areas, which during the years of anti-Japanese struggle had become Communist administered zones.

CCP-GMD hostility mounted and the USA felt constrained to attempt to bring the sides together. In 1945, for the first time in twenty years, Chiang and Mao Zedong met personally. In October 1945 it was announced that the two leaders had reached an agreement. But it could not last; after two decades of animosity neither was willing to accept the other's authority. By 1946 the civil war which had continued intermittently during the years of Japanese occupation had broken out into a full-scale conflict.

The renewed civil war soon revealed how shrunken the GMD's popular support had become. It was a crippling weakness for which not even the resources that Chiang Kaishek continued to receive from the USA could compensate. The initial aim of the Nationalists was to move north to enlarge their area of control which had hitherto been restricted to southern China. However, this required that the Communists be driven from the liberated areas they held. It was the GMD's attempt to achieve this that marked the renewal of open hostilities. At the beginning, Chiang's 5 million troops outnumbered those of the CCP by over four to one. In addition, the GMD's military resources and equipment, much of which was supplied by the USA, were far superior. But these advantages were more than balanced by the higher morale and superior strategy of the Communists. Able to live off the land and confident of the support of the rural peoples among whom they moved, the CCP armies simply by-passed the main GMD strongholds, avoiding set battles unless troop dispositions were in their favour. Mao's strategy was expressed in a mantra that all his troops knew by heart. 'When the enemy advances, we retreat. When the enemy escapes, we harass. When the enemy retreats, we pursue. When they tire, we attack.'

After some seemingly impressive successes in the first year of the war, including the taking of Yenan, the Nationalists were unable to achieve a single major victory between 1947 and 1949. Faced by growing desertions, even among the higher ranks of the officers, and a deepening war weariness in the GMD-held areas, Chiang increasingly resorted to

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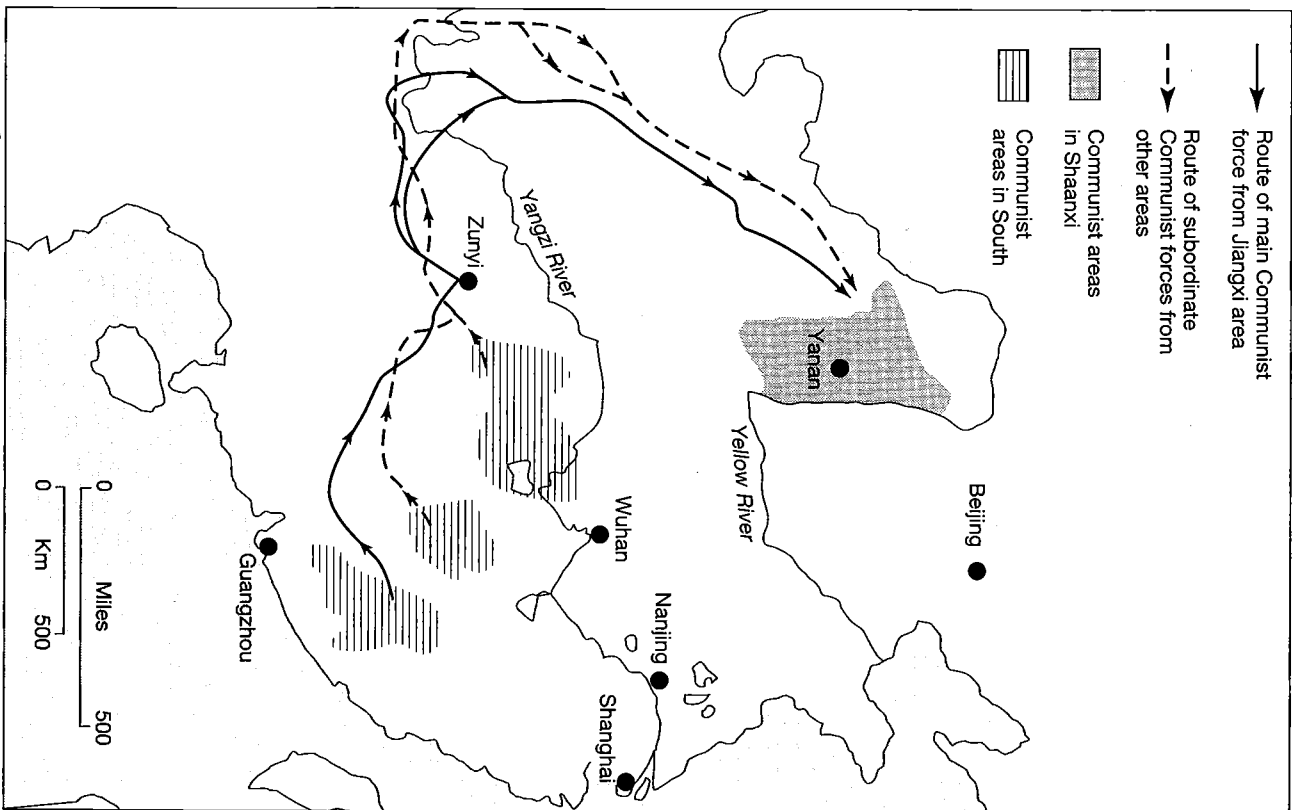
1 The Long March, 1934-5

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