

Preface

As winter turned to spring in 1942, a large-scale political movement commenced in Yan'an, the wartime stronghold of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and soon thereafter in other base areas of the Communist-led anti-Japanese resistance. It was a rectification movement that continued for many years, but because it was centered in Yan'an and most typically played out there, it came to be known as the "Yan'an Rectification Movement."

The Yan'an Rectification Movement was the first Party-wide political movement in the history of the CCP. Closely associated with and directly led by Mao Zedong, the campaign involved internal Party purges and reorganizations in various areas, including:

- Power struggles among the Party leadership and reorganization of the Party's central power apparatus;
- Ideological remolding throughout the Party;
- Examination of the personal histories of cadres and "elimination of counterrevolutionaries";
- Creation of a new system.

Among these, the high-level power struggles and the reorganization of leading organs always occupied a central position.

The Yan'an Rectification Movement began in early 1942, but its origins can be traced back much earlier. Its first manifestation occurred during the period from the 1935 Zunyi Conference to 1937, when Mao

used his advantageous position within the CCP leadership to make adjustments to Party policy and to the leading organs. Following the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth CCP Central Committee in 1938, these partial adjustments rapidly evolved into a series of major changes that Mao carried out with respect to the political line, the organizational structure, and ethos of the Party. The Sixth Plenum, which was held in Yan'an, was of decisive significance to Mao. It legitimized his power over the military and the Party, which he had achieved since 1935, and it radically enhanced his status within the Party core. The period from the end of 1938 until the autumn of 1941 was a critical phase during which Mao increased his control over the evolving situation and gradually weakened his opponents within the Party. This process reached a climax during an enlarged Politburo meeting held in September 1941, when Mao emerged victorious in his direct challenge to Wang Ming.

It was on the foundation of these years of meticulous preparation that the curtain finally opened on the Yan'an Rectification Movement in early 1942. The movement was a process during which Mao wielded his political power to thoroughly reorganize the top echelons of the Party and to redistribute power so as to establish absolute dominance. At the same time, the movement was a process during which Mao used his own ideas and thinking to thoroughly transform the Party's "Russified" character and to remold the CCP in his own image.

During the Rectification Movement, Mao wielded his creation of ideological remodeling, along with methods of examining the personal histories of cadres (*shen'gan*) and eliminating counterrevolutionaries (*sufan*), to deal a mortal blow to all remnants of May Fourth liberal democratic thought and blind worship of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) within the Party. This completed the foundation for the work of total Maoization of the Party, while also establishing a set of new Party traditions under Mao's distinctive personal style. Becoming second nature over time, these concepts and paradigms would change the lives and fates of hundreds of millions of Chinese after 1949.

Having emerged from isolation within the Party leadership after years of struggle, Mao further consolidated his political alliance with Liu Shaoqi during the Yan'an Rectification Movement, and with Liu's full backing Mao forced the Party core to accept his views and his paramount personal authority. The reasons for Mao's earlier period of isolation were his "heterodox" views, which departed from Moscow's orthodox theories,

and his arbitrary temperament. Borne out in practice, Mao's "heterodox" military strategy greatly facilitated an expansion of Party power, ultimately forcing the pro-Moscow faction within the Party to surrender to Mao at the same time that he rallied the Party's top military officials around him. Mao's arbitrary temperament first came to light in 1930 and 1931, when he personally led the suppression of the "AB League."^{*} This incident caused a major crisis in the Jiangxi Communist Base Area and weakened the strength of the CCP. In the face of a grimly complex and volatile situation after 1935, Mao reined in his domineering tendencies. As his power over the Party grew, after 1941 his arbitrary behavior erupted once again. This time, however, the top leadership of the Party could no longer effectively restrain him.

During the Yan'an Rectification Movement, Mao deliberately indulged his arbitrary nature in service to his political objectives. Among the high-level leaders, Mao drew a line to separate friends from enemies and then he created and used every opportunity to attack any dissent. In Yan'an and other base areas, Mao implemented a politics of terror by instigating "rescue campaigns" that were actually purges of the entire cadre corps. Following the Rectification Movement, the ultra-leftist policies of examining cadres' personal histories and eliminating counterrevolutionaries that Mao had implanted in Party organs became second nature and they had a lasting deleterious effect on post-1949 China.

The Yan'an Rectification Movement provided Mao with an arena to play out his complex and ingenious political strategy. Daring to shatter the Party's historical conventions, his methods were profoundly ruthless, and he used his keen assessment of the mindsets of his opponents to subdue his enemies with seamless and masterful proficiency. Mao's strategic skills resided in his skillful utilization of ancient Chinese political arts as well as his in-depth understanding of OGPU methods.[†] Due to an intensive drive by Mao, all power became concentrated in the hands of Mao during

^{*} Translators' Note (cited hereafter as TN): The "Anti-Bolshevik League" incident is described in detail in Chapter 1. The original Anti-Bolshevik League was an intelligence agency of the Nationalist government, but it was already defunct by the time that Mao led a campaign against it.

[†] TN: The *O(byedinyonnoye) G(osudarstvennoye) P(oliticheskoye) U(pravleniye)* (OGPU), or the Joint State Political Directorate, was the secret police in the USSR from 1922 to 1934.

the Seventh Party Congress in 1945. Mao's public image also developed around the time of the rectification, and amidst the heady intensification of his personality cult, Mao deliberately revealed himself to be leader of both the Party and the Chinese people. On public occasions and in encounters with all sorts of people, Mao invariably played the role of an enlightened ruler—courteous to the wise, cultivating the educated, and supremely open-minded. His cordial and proper reception of others bred general goodwill among Party members and people from all walks of life in the Kuomintang-controlled areas. In the upper levels of the Party, however, Mao indulged his headstrong, conceited, and arrogant nature. He took revenge against former political opponents for petty grievances and he relentlessly taunted Party colleagues. For a very long time, Mao's two-faced character prevented outsiders from understanding his true nature.

The Yan'an Rectification Movement occurred more than fifty years ago, but to this day a complete picture of the movement cannot be clearly deduced in conventional ideological terms. The purpose of this book is not to refute mainstream judgments about the Yan'an Rectification Movement but rather to attempt a differentiation and analysis by combing through all kinds of related historical materials, whether from the distant or the more recent past. My desire is to conduct new research into the Yan'an Rectification Movement, to brush away the dust of history, and to reveal the movement's true face, thus providing an alternative to the official historical narrative and interpretation. I must leave it to the reader to judge whether I have attained this goal.

Gao Hua
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Preface to the Second Printing

Publication of this book by The Chinese University Press in March 2000 received an enthusiastic reception from readers. I offer my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the many readers who have written to me offering encouragement and support during the past two years.

The Yan'an Rectification Movement was a major event that affected China's progress during the twentieth century, but scholarly research on the subject has been rather weak. In this book I have attempted to research and analyze the movement from one perspective, and I humbly welcome corrections from readers.

On the occasion of this reprinting, I would especially like to offer my thanks for the guidance provided by a number of venerable scholars. By various means, Chen-Ning Franklin Yang, Wang Yuanhua, Chen Fong-ching, Wu Jinglian, Wei Zhengtong, Chang Hao, Lin Yu-sheng, Chang Yu-fa, Dong Jian, Wei Liangtao, and others explored certain important questions with me and offered valuable encouragement and approval of my research. Jin Guantao, Liu Qingfeng, Jean Hung, Lu Fang-sang, Chen Yung-fa, Liu Xiaofeng, Xu Jilin, Xiao Gongqin, Zhu Xueqin, He Qinglian, Chen Yan, Ding Xueliang, Xu Youyu, Huang Ying-che, Tang Shaojie, Qian Wenzhong, Chien Yeong-shyang, Liang Kan, Mao Dan, Li Yang, Zhang Wenzhong, Qian Gang, Wu Dongfeng, and others offered positive and helpful suggestions as to how to carry out further research.

When the first edition of this book was published, computerized conversion of simplified Chinese characters into traditional characters was not optimal, and multiple rounds of proofreading failed to detect a

number of textual errors. This edition has been produced to correct these textual errors. Additionally, during the past two years, some new historical materials related to the Yan'an Rectification Movement have appeared, and these will be taken into account in a future revised and enlarged edition.

I would like here to express my heartfelt thanks to Yan Yi, Ma Peiwen, Wei Tianzong, and Xue Lin. Following publication of this book, Yan Yi and Ma Peiwen not only carried out in-depth discussions with me about its content and composition but also took the trouble to correct the textual errors. Wei Tianzong also sent me corrections on place names. Professor Xue Lin is a linguistics expert at Nanjing University, and her knowledge of linguistics enlightened my revisions to this book.

I would like to offer special thanks to my research student Huang Jun for his assistance with the corrections to the electronic text.

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