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## Nationalism and the Communists: Re-Evaluating the Communist Guomindang Split of 1927

Ryan C. Ferro  
*University of South Florida*, rferro470@gmail.com

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Nationalism and the Communists:  
Re-Evaluating the Communist-Guomindang Split of 1927

by

Ryan C. Ferro

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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University of South Florida

Co-Major Professor: Golfo Alexopoulos, Ph.D.  
Co-Major Professor: Kees Boterbloem, Ph.D.  
Iwa Nawrocki, Ph.D.

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**Abstract**

The 1924-1927 United Front period has long been understood within a civil war context. The major revolutionaries of ethnic Han origins and the myriad of Comintern advisors that played significant roles have subsequently all been evaluated in those terms. My work decenters the civil war narrative in order to dislodge the rigid labels that have historically accompanied the identities of the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party. When re-evaluating the activities of the First United Front as a loosely defined tactical alliance, the White Terror - perpetrated by the GMD onto Communists and their affiliated members – then becomes a moment of permanent dichotomization of Communist and Nationalists groups. Analyzing the activities of the First United Front without rigid Communist and Nationalists labels, aids in clarifying the organizations actions. Moreover, when viewing these activities within the broader context of a global anti-colonial movement, the shared goals of the tactical alliance become more comparable to many of the ideological tenets driving self-determination in the twentieth century.

## Chapter One: Introduction

The struggle to build an independent China in the wake of an imperial collapse in the 1916-1949 period has been largely understood as a battle for supremacy between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Party, the Guomindang (GMD). However, prior to the White Terror of 1927, which resulted in the execution of large numbers of suspected Chinese communists, neither organization existed as a coherent political movement in the way they are often portrayed in the historiography. In 1916, Chen Duxiu, who went on to become a founding member of the CCP, wrote the now famous essay, *Our Great Awakening*.<sup>1</sup> In it, Chen stated that the importation of Western ideas had caused periods of “awakening and befuddlement” in China, yet the country was still awaiting a “final awakening.”<sup>2</sup> His essay outlines the struggle between Europeans and surrounding East Asian “minor barbarians” versus those of Confucian roots, primarily the ethnic majority Han Chinese.<sup>3</sup> The final awakening that Chen desired was meant to be a moment of political and ethical realization that would result in the unification of “our China” under the banner of a newly discovered collective political identity.<sup>4</sup>

Many have argued that revolution in China was driven by nationalism, not communism, equating Chen’s aforementioned great awakening with nationalistic idealism. I do not focus on

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<sup>1</sup> Chen Duxiu, February 1916, “*Our Final Awakening*,” Jason M. Gentzler, ed. *Changing China; Readings in the History of China from the Opium War to the Present*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), 168.

<sup>2</sup> Chen Duxiu, “Our Final Awakening,” 168-169.

<sup>3</sup> Chen Duxiu, “Our Final Awakening,” 168.

<sup>4</sup> Chen Duxiu, “Our Final Awakening,” 168-172.

the later presence of nationalism among participants of the revolution in the 1930s, but instead focus on explaining the split of the First United Front – the cracks of which began to appear in May 1926. While I do agree that conventional Marxism was not a major contributing factor in the early successes of the First United Front, I challenge the notion that it was driven by nationalism.<sup>5</sup> I argue that only in wake of the White Terror did the ideologies of Chinese Nationalists and Communists - and their concomitant political identities – crystalize into rigid and antagonistic ideologies. The Guomindang leader Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek) purge of the CCP, which he legitimized by equating communism with alien importations in order to brand it as anti-Chinese, polarized what had hitherto been a liminal collection of ideas that crosscut political lines.

In identifying a common foe – those foreigners who were imposing their will on China - communism and nationalism had fused in the 1920s, creating a storm of anti-imperial dissent. Preserving the cultural and regional identity of the long-exploited Han Chinese was the motivation for cooperation – and later became the motivation for Jiang's violent split. Once Jiang had convinced not only himself, but a majority of the right leaning Guomindang that the CCP was foreign, and “not native to China,” it became natural to brand them as the enemy and expel them. Prior to this declaration, it would not have been possible for Jiang to wage war on another group of revolutionary ethnic Chinese and later retain the support of the population. The massacre thus marked not only the end of a tactical alliance between the CCP and the GMD,

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<sup>5</sup> Conventional Marxism is to be understood as traditional Marxist theory. Not Marxism-Leninism. For example, the predetermined order of historical development in society. History, as Marx understood it, was to be viewed as a class struggle between those who own the means and modes of production. Applying Marxist theory to the Chinese revolution was flawed for many reasons, but most famously due to the lack of a developed, industrialized, working class. See *The Communist Manifesto*.

which had been formalized in 1924 as the First United Front with the goal of unifying China and safeguarding it from imperialist intervention. It also led to an enduring dichotomization of “communism” and “nationalism” and by extension, of the organizations themselves.

My work focuses on the 1924-1927 United Front period to recover the fluid exchange of ideas and the mutability of political ideologies that characterized GMD-CCP relations before the massacre of the Chinese Communists. In order to best recover that exchange, a wide variety of primary sources will be used. Three large collections of Comintern documents, each containing hundreds of party papers and correspondence, not only provide insight into the inter-workings of the CCP and GMD, but also detail the complexity and relative lack of direction prior to the alliance.<sup>6</sup> The architect of the GMD and CCP alliance, later known as the First United Front, Mikhail Borodin, also left behind an extensive collection of materials that will be utilized in this work. Perhaps the most critical primary source for my project is the *Manifesto of the Guomindang*. The *Manifesto* was authored by the leaders and ideologues of both the CCP and GMD upon the establishment of the United Front. Remarkably it encompassed, even if it did not reconcile, a number of competing ideological tenets. A thorough analysis of the *Manifesto*, written in January of 1924, demonstrates the fluid exchange of ideas that were occurring prior to 1927, and bring further contextualization to the alliance, one that I argue should be seen as tactical rather than ideological.

At the forefront of my final chapter, ‘From Coup to Purge, A Cleansing of Chinese Bolsheviks,’ is an analysis of Chinese language sources. The *Collected Works of Mao Zedong*:

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<sup>6</sup> Jason M. Gentzler, ed. *Changing China*; Xenia Joukoff Eduin and Robert C. North ed., *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927: A Document Survey* (California: Stanford University Press, 1957); Wilbur, C. Martin and Lien-Ying How, Julie, ed. *Documents on Communism, Nationalism, and Soviet Advisors in China, 1918-1927 Papers Seized in the 1927 Peking Raid* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

*Vol. 1 The Early Years, 1917-1927 (mao zedong ji: diyijuan, chuqi, yijiuyiqi dao yijiuerqi)* and *The Activities of the Peasant Movement Training Institute During the First Civil War (diyici guonei cao min zhanzheng shiqi de nongmin yun hui)*.<sup>7</sup> The private writings and official correspondence from Chinese actors Chen Duxiu, Jiang Jieshi, and Mao Zedong, in addition to foreign actors Joseph Stalin, Mikhail Borodin and M.N. Roy, will provide further evidence that, while there were disagreements among the leadership of the alliance, anti-imperialist sentiment and cultural identity was indeed strong enough in China to keep the Front together.<sup>8</sup> Sun Yat-sen's interview with the *New York Times* in 1923, in which he characterizes the possibility of an official GMD-Soviet alliance, also provides critical insight into the collective mindset of the Front as an organization, signaling an increased desire to operate as a group of anti-imperial militarists.<sup>9</sup>

By recognizing that the CCP and GMD lacked a rigid, predetermined, institutional and exclusionary ideology, it is possible to have a much clearer understanding of how the members were interpreting their roles, past and present. Subsequently, by clarifying the motives of the Front, I will also interpret its actions from 1924 through 1927. In addition, when the relationship between the members of the United Front is characterized by exchange, rather than conflict, the separation and development of both organizations in the remainder of the revolutionary period of

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<sup>7</sup> 毛泽东，中国社会的各阶级的分析，一九二六。毛泽东集：第一卷。初期 1917 - 1927. 近代史料供应社。一九七五年十月港版。第一次国内革命战争时期的农民运动。北京：人民出版社。一九五三年。

<sup>8</sup> “The Kuomintang National Revolution: Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang, January 30, 1924,” Gentzler, ed. *Changing China*, 196-204; “The Peasants as a Revolutionary Force, Gentzler, *Changing China*, 217-222; Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)* (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> In a *New York Times* article Sun Zhong Shan describes international support for China (July 23, 1923), “Foreign Control at Peking Means War, Says Sun Yat-sen” (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times) 11/20/2017.



1911 through 1927 then appears to be a process of evolution rather than sudden transformation. Two brief sections are also included on the historiography of 1920s China and the historical context that precedes it. This serves to aid in reconstructing the existence and development of the First United Front.

### *1920s China: Historiographical Overview*

The greatest challenge that faces those who attempt to write a history of 1920s China is finding a framework that makes the period more intelligible. Since there existed a myriad of actors -whose stories derive from the Soviet Union, China, Japan, Europe, and the United States – the most common methodology is to simply resign these actors to the political parties in which they participated without distinction. There are however, several problems with this approach. First, it limits the cultural and ideological scope - and simultaneously the story - of the participants of the Front. It also pre-supposes those actors to be ideologues of the party that they supported. In tracing the stories of the Front's participants, one quickly recognizes that a tremendous amount of ideological shifting occurred. It seems that not one major figure, Chinese or otherwise, was spared from what in other circumstances might appear to be a dramatic shift from nationalistic to socialistic tendencies, regardless of their alleged political affiliation. This can be largely attributed to the relative ambiguity in which Sun's vision of government was grounded.

The infancy of the Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party in the 1920s also contribute to the ideological confusion that has muddied the waters for historians of Revolutionary China. The rise of the GMD and CCP in the post-Qing years clashed heavily with

the West's thirst for overseas empire and remnants of the Qing's former generals.<sup>10</sup> The Republican era is complicated by innumerable power brokers who sought to carve up a sizeable portion of China, making it nearly impossible to digest tactical alliances and geographical claims. Thus, creating a historical triumvirate of Communists, Nationalists, and warring militaristic Warlords is not only broadly historically accurate, but it also creates simple, recognizable categories that artificially separate the most famous actors in the era.

Historians who have written on the period of Chinese Revolution (1911-1949), have done so through several lenses. The lenses include Soviet and Chinese perspectives, as well as through the lens of our modern political understanding of the Communist and Nationalist parties. National perspectives can also be problematic in the sense that they tend to ignore or minimize the impact of global events or movements. Understanding the May Fourth movement as one of many anti-colonial demonstrations in the wake of Versailles helps provide perspective on how the Chinese intellectuals were influenced by Wilsonian rhetoric. When dealing with Soviet-centric works, the discourse is largely centered on Lenin's vision for China colliding with the delusions of the Stalin era.<sup>11</sup> There also are monumental works and collections centering on the numerous advisors and agents of the Comintern in China that have shaped our understanding of Soviet influence.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This is in reference to the statement made by Sun that the norther Warlords were backed by Western powers. See page 6.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander V. Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and The Chinese Revolution: 1919-1927* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); Dan N. Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)* Vol 1 & 2. (Leiden: The Netherlands, 1991); Sergei Sosinsky and Vladimir Yeryomin, ed. *A.I. Cherepanov: As Military Advisor in China* (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, 1982); Wilbur and How ed. *Documents on Communism, Nationalism*.

Chinese-centric works cover innumerable subjects and methodologies. Biographical works often lay either too little or far too much blame on the United Front, but they none the less provided rich detail that shed light on the evolution of their protagonists ideological development.<sup>13</sup> This appears especially true when addressing the early life of Mao Zedong.<sup>14</sup> The historiography on the activities of the Communist Party clash with those that write from the Guomindang perspective. A peculiar aspect of twentieth century Chinese history is the large extent to which the field still largely relies on pre-1991 works. This is due in part to the still limited access to crucial party archives. However, it is also due in large part to the tremendous work of China's earliest scholars. Stuart Schram, Jonathan Spence and John K. Fairbank are all equally as relevant to this generation of scholars as they were to the generation for which they originally wrote. Rather than having to make major historiographical corrections, today's China scholars typically provide historiographical expansion or detail the grand outlines developed by those scholars.

With that said, my intention is to expand on what has been conventionally understood as a bout between Communist and Nationalist ideologies. I intend to remove those ideologies by suggesting that historians should no longer read back from the split of the United Front in the wake of Jiang's White Terror. Firmly shifting what have been understood as the major ideological tenets of the CCP and GMD allows for the examination of a new complex exchange

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<sup>13</sup> Chan, Fook-lam, *A Chinese Revolutionary: The Career of Liao Chung-K'ai, 1873-1925* (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1977); Alexander V., and Steven I. Levine, *Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander V. Pantsov, and Steven I Levine, *Mao The Real Story*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012; Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*. London: Penguin Books, 1967; Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong: A Life*. New York: Penguin, 1999.

of ideas that occurred during the period. Doing so will result in a history that is less deterministic and thus more global in nature. Furthermore, I do not seek to place an all-encompassing label on the entirety of the period from 1916-1949, in order to answer big historical questions. I suggest that historical questions such as, why did the Communist Party win China, or whether or not it was peasant revolution or nationalism that was responsible for the victory, are not useful for understanding the 1921-1927 period.

I will not be addressing the macroeconomics or the openness of the geographic borders in Republican China, as did Frank Dikotter in his work on Republican China.<sup>15</sup> Rather, I will shift the birth of traditional understandings of Chinese Communism and Nationalism out of the time of the United Front and address a multitude of other ideas such as cultural and regional identities, and political consciousness. The incompatibility between CCP and the GMD was not immediately apparent in the early days of Sino-Soviet cooperation, nor was the alliance driven primarily by ideology. The tactical nature of the of alliance coincides with the beginning of a major transformation among the ideologues within each organization. The unifying factor among the Front's participants was their shared values of Sun's principles and their anti-foreign sentiments. It is critical to more directly approach the Chinese Revolution in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in smaller periods, rather than addressing it as the CCP versus the GMD. Identifying 1927 as a moment of crystallization in the ideological and political identity of each party - a framework from which they only both operated in the later stages of the revolution - allows for further clarification of the context in which Chen Duxiu wrote, while also providing a more nuanced understanding of the First United Front. Doing so further clarifies rural participation in

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<sup>15</sup> Frank Dikotter, *The Age of Openness: China Before Mao*, Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2008.

each political organization as Chinese culture became a more significant factor in the larger goal of unification and statehood.

*China's Long Path, From Empire to Nation-State*

It is imperative to understand the time and place during which Chen Duxiu wrote, as it serves to better situate his notions of *political* and *final awakenings*. It also aids in understanding what the revolutionaries and ideologues envisioned in the struggle to create a national China. More than border restoration, they sought to build a society that fused the political consciousness and civil equality of modern Western nations while maintaining the cultural superiority of pre-Qing China. The most accomplished historians of China, from John King Fairbank to Jonathan Spence, have all admittedly struggled with making sense of the complexities of 1920s China.<sup>16</sup> Part of the reason for the complex nature of the 1920s is the historical situation that precedes it. There was no shortage of significant historical moments, and many of them could be perceived as catalysts for the collapse of the era of emperors and dynasties in the long history of China. China's revolution is further complicated by the great number of international actors who, in many cases, played the roles of conquerors and cultural imperialists. These foreigners introduced many competing ideas, causing the confusion that Chen referred to. Chen's essay makes clear that he was very much aware of the history that preceded him while writing.

By the time of the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, China was in a state of social, political and economic disorder. In the end, the collapse of the late Qing was anti-climactic at

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<sup>16</sup> John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution: 1800-1985*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999)

best. The last dynasty in China's great history was simply riddled with far too many problems to stay formally in power. Western intervention, spearheaded by the British influx of opium in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, caused immense political and economic corruption and widespread social dysfunction. The Qing ruling class who received opium from the British were often given undocumented extra supplies of the drug, allowing them to either indulge in their habits or profit from their corruption. The drug addiction spread rapidly, affecting a great number of the ruling class.

When the Qing attempted to resist and restore order, the West - including the U.S., France and Germany by the 1850s - responded with gunboat diplomacy. This resulted in the now infamous Opium Wars which crippled the Chinese state. Not only were seaports and urban centers leveled by war, the exposure of the Chinese Empire's lack of military readiness and technology functioned as an open invitation to aggressors around the globe. The wars were devastating enough. However, the diplomatic exchanges that followed were truly debilitating. The Treaty of Nanking, now known as the first of the Series of Unequal Treaties, forced China to pay for the cost of the West's war, which amounted to over three hundred of million dollars in reparations. China was also forced to grant extraterritoriality in five treaty ports to the West, and to cede Hong Kong to the British Empire. Chinese citizens were no longer allowed entry into parts of the treaty ports and some were subsequently expelled from those territories.

Anti-Western sentiments began to rise among some ethnic Han as a result, as did resentment against the Qing rulers. The native ethnic majority were Han Chinese, who represented over 90% of the population. The Han blamed the foreign Manchu ruling class, the Qing, for their inability to protect them from Western powers as well as their inability to

develop, or perhaps preserve, traditional Chinese society.<sup>17</sup> The crushing defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95, followed later by the violent events of the Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, further exposed the weakness of the Chinese state. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Qing failed to modernize and proved unable to address neither the internal nor external problems plaguing the country. In 1911, the Qing failed to suppress a small anti-Manchu military uprising. The majority of the ruling class simply fled after the last Emperor was granted safety. Yuan Shi Kai's broken Republic briefly seized power, though not in a consolidated manner. The Revolution of 1911 is then perhaps best understood more as a case of internal imperial collapse rather than a revolution.

The following period, from 1911 to 1919, China was a shattered country that was wholly adrift. Sun Zhong Shan (Sun Yet-san), the founder of the Nationalist Party, had been the face of revolutionary activities throughout the collapse of the Qing. By the time of the dynasty's end, however, he was outside of China. In 1912, Sun and Yuan Shi kai, the most powerful Qing general remaining in the country, agreed on Yuan becoming the President of the Republic of China. However, when Yuan declared himself Emperor in 1916, a revolt occurred, and Sun was proclaimed the President of parts of Southern China. During this unsettled time, the West, particularly Britain, France, Germany and the United States by 1918, engaged in various imperialist activities seeking economic gains, which undermined any real chance at a Chinese recovery. Simultaneously, numerous warlords - many of whom who were supported by the same Western powers engaged in military aggression in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – split and brokered various parts of territory throughout the majority of geographic China under their control.

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<sup>17</sup> The Han perceived the Qing as foreign because the Manchu's invaded and established their rule over China in 1636.

The failures of the Qing, Western imperialism, and the rhetoric of self-determination during the post-World War I peace conferences at Versailles in 1919, sparked the student led May-Fourth Movement that same year in China. The student demonstrations, which began at Beida (Beijing University), were the result of the failures of the diplomatic efforts in France to return territories that were annexed by Japan, back to China. Chinese intellectuals, perhaps none more famous than Chen Duxiu, were very critical of the situation in China. May 4, 1919 should be seen as the birth of nationalism among the educated elite rather than the population at large. The revolutionary government under Yuan, while it lasted, had become ineffective, and Sun Zhong Shan only had limited control over the small southern region of Canton. Under those conditions, reformers emerged calling for a return to traditional Chinese society. Simultaneously, some intellectual revolutionaries also came forward with proposals to rebuild China from the ground up. By 1916, China was facing innumerable obstacles. The state lacked a central governing body until the formation of the PRC in 1949 and the nation was splintered into fragments, with no real sign of imminent unification.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, the *political awakening* that Chen was referring to was the realization that among a small group of intellectuals and ideologues, a strong desire for change emerged that was rejecting traditional Chinese society. The centuries of exploitation that had plagued the ethnic Han fed into that desire. The longing for change derived from not only a culmination of the errors of the Qing dynasty, but was even more strongly rooted in a desire to expel all imperial forces from China. The presence of foreign imperial forces, represented by the United States, France, Britain, and Japan, was complicated by the domestic imperial forces represented by the

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<sup>18</sup> For a more thorough reading of the Qing Dynasty and Republican China see Richard J. Smith's *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture* or Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China*.



varying warlord factions. Collectively, those forces created revolutionary sentiments among the educated elite which aided in the creation of the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang. Both organizations sought to unite and revolutionize China by expelling all foreigners and gradually democratizing the Chinese state. While neither organization was fully ideologically developed, plenty of evidence exists to show that they were seeking to regain Chinese sovereignty. Moreover, their shared cultural identity functioned as the common ground to spark a revolutionary anti-imperial movement. Anti-imperialism, a global sentiment in the 1920s, was the fuel that drove the Front through much of the period.

*Chinese Nationalism, Communism and Political Consciousness*

The focus of my work is to challenge the notion that members of the CCP and GMD acted according to well-developed ideologies of nationalism and communism. If the members of the Front – intellectuals, ideologues and revolutionaries of the era – had not crystalized into well-developed Nationalists and Communists, then it may be important to address the rise of *Peasant Nationalism*.<sup>19</sup> For clarity's sake, I am not dismissing altogether the notion that nationalism existed in Republican China. Rather, I am asserting that the role of nationalism and the political ideologies that have previously been perceived in 'the first civil war' have been overstated. Subsequent chapters will more thoroughly demonstrate the Front's understanding and application of social and national revolutions. In order to better situate the terms and concepts most commonly associated with agrarian revolution, they need to be defined.

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<sup>19</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945*, (Stanford University Press, 1962).

Without question, the formal development of the Chinese Communist Party was rooted in Marxism-Leninism. Vladimir Lenin and Manabendra Nath Roy (M.N. Roy) were absolutely critical in the strategic development of Comintern policy on peasant participation in anti-colonial liberation movements across the globe. As China was a key focus for revolutionary development, the Soviet Union invested heavily in its operations (as far as it could during those days). Maring and Borodin, the architect and arbiter of the CCP and the United Front, utilized the Roy-Lenin policy in their attempt to cultivate a worker's revolution. Even with the contribution of advisors and military provisions supplied by the Soviet Union, they could not cultivate a broadly based, cohesive and successful Marxist revolution in Republican China. This should not be understood as a major strategic failure or a result of Sino-Soviet ineptness within the Comintern and Communist leaders. Rather, this chapter will highlight the general social-political status of citizens within China proper, and why a mass Marxist revolution could not be expected to occur for at least another decade or more.

Consequently, nationalism and its role in the United Front must also be examined, as much has been made of the period being one of a nationalistic awakening. First, and most importantly, is understanding the political consciousness of the peasants who made up the vast majority of Chinese citizens. A thorough examination of sources will allow for a more nuanced approach to ideas of political participation in agrarian communities. In this chapter, I argue that the beginnings of revolutionary activity have been misunderstood as something representative of a broader ideological development in 1920s China. Beginning with the May Fourth movement, I will demonstrate how political activism was limited to the educated elite and too fragmented to impact either side of the Front. It is of the utmost importance to address peasant nationalism in particular. By looking at cultural and social traditions together with the radical political

developments of revolutionary China, I will also demonstrate how any peasant understanding of nationalism was virtually impossible, given the political and social structure of late Qing and early Republican Chinese society.

### *Roy and Lenin*

It is easy to understate the significance of the Roy-Lenin debate at the Second World Congress of the Communist International of 1920. Roy's participation in the United Front has been ignored because of what has been understood as the inevitable split of the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang in the summer of 1927. The Roy-Lenin debate not only shaped the Comintern's policy on anti-colonial liberation movements globally, but the competing theses are emblematic of the attempted systematic political development in China from 1921-1927.<sup>20</sup> The policy adopted at the Congress was the precise framework used by Borodin to construct the First United Front. The most significant policy debated at the Congress in July 1920 was the manner in which the Comintern would aid liberation movements under colonial occupation. Chiefly, the debate was about how to conduct a revolution from above.

Lenin originally stated that the Communist International "must enter into a temporary alliance with the bourgeois democracy of the colonial and backward countries."<sup>21</sup> Roy thought Lenin was painting with too broad a brush and replied by stating that certain distinctions must be made among the national revolutionary movements. Not all bourgeois-democratic governments

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<sup>20</sup> North and Eudin, *Roy's Mission to China*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> John P. Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (Nov. 1963, 93-101) 94; North and Eudin, *Roy's Mission to China*, 13.

were worthy of supporting according to Roy. Additionally, only in the initial stages should the bourgeoisie be relied upon, while the “foremost task” of communist movements was the development of the peasantry.<sup>22</sup> Lenin ceded this point to Roy, re-structuring the language used in the theses to the support of, “revolutionary movements of liberation” as opposed to “bourgeois-democratic liberation movements.”<sup>23</sup> The difference appears subtle, but the rephrasing fundamentally altered and limited the scope of the Comintern’s support for bourgeois-democratic movements. Roy’s aim was to distinguish between those movements which were reformist in nature and those which were revolutionary. In response to Roy’s contribution, Lenin himself stated that, “...thanks to this, our point of view has been formulated much more precisely.”<sup>24</sup>

The Roy-Lenin debate not only provides insight into the Comintern’s plan for political development in China, it also clarifies some of the murky waters as to why self-proclaimed Communists and Nationalists would desire a United Front. The Guomindang and the CCP did not have well thought-out ideologies in the 1920s, both organizations were sketching out the basis for which they envisioned governance. Due to the instantly recognizable radical tenets of any Marxist revolution, the Guomindang-left have been historically minimized when juxtaposed with the CCP. It should be noted that there are very little in the way of reformist elements found among those in the GMD in its early years. In the “Manifesto of the First National Congress,” of the CCP-GMD United Front, revolutionary sentiments often equated with Marxism-Leninism are peppered throughout the document. Among them are issues of the regulation of capital, the squashing of capitalists who conspire with militarists, the destruction of foreign imperialists, the equalization of landholdings, the nationalization of industry, and state control of all, “...banks,

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<sup>22</sup> North and Eudin, *Roy’s Mission to China*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate*, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate*, 95.

railroads, and ship lines, and all other large-scale enterprise,” all which were most critical to their vision of a national revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The Second Comintern Congress also segregated the bourgeoisie into four categories – “feudal remnants and militarists, compradors, national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.”<sup>26</sup> Roy understood that, at some point, nationalistic movements would no longer be conducive to communist revolutionary development. The looming question remained as to when to change tactics, from a nationalist revolution from above, to a communist revolution from below. Indeed, this was the issue that plagued the United Front. Without a large presence of industrial workers, a revolution from below meant the transformation of peasants into a revolutionary force. Chen and the majority of the CCP never seriously wagered on a revolution from below, as they prioritized support for larger bourgeois platform as representatives of the Guomindang.

In April 1927, during the last phase of the alliance, debates raged at the Fifth Comintern Congress that focused on land redistribution. They sought to clarify which landowners could be classified as counter-revolutionary, rather than on Stalin’s simultaneous revolution from both above and below.<sup>27</sup> Roy opposed both tactics - believing them to be a mistake – and advocated for a strengthening of the communist revolution by suggesting a return to Guangdong (Canton) and nourishing the development of the agrarian revolution.<sup>28</sup> In step with his draft theses in 1920, Roy argued for a change of tactics alongside a complete withdrawal by the CCP from the alliance with the Guomindang. This was at odds with Stalin’s orders, which not only called for the pursuit of an immediate simultaneous revolution, but also sought to maintain the CCP-GMD

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<sup>25</sup> Gentzler, ed, *Changing China*, “Manifesto of the First National Congress,” 197-201.

<sup>26</sup> Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate*, 96.

<sup>27</sup> Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, 108-109.

<sup>28</sup> North and Eudin, *Roy’s Mission to China*, 121-122; Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, 108.

alliance. Roy's call for a withdrawal came with substantial evidence, as the revolutionary mindset of the peasantry had taken notable steps under the guidance of those such as Peng Pai, and the Peasant Movement Training Institute in the Guangdong regions.<sup>29</sup>

Jiang Jieshi's allegiance with Northern Warlords was a near perfect example of the aforementioned fusion between feudal and militaristic movements discussed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Comintern Congress. Jiang's cooperation with the varying warlords brought immediate success in the form of the Northern Expedition in the second half of 1926, but it did not result in a long-term ideological or political alliance. The Warlords proved to be too fragmented as their ideologies, religious affiliation and long-term desired outcomes varied, preventing any real chance of continued cooperation. Jiang's warlord partnership temporarily swelled the National Revolutionary Army (NRA), but he did nothing to politically develop the peasants. Jiang was not Sun, and his inability to spread his brand of nationalism was hindered by his tendency to try to remedy China's problems with a primarily military response.<sup>30</sup>

Roy's participation in the final hours of the First United Front did not prevent a split as Stalin had intended. Rather, Roy supported a more radical position for the CCP, one that Mao embodied and developed in the wake of the purge. Roy, Lenin, Stalin, Chen and Mao were critically aware of the lack of a 'political awakening' among the greater Chinese population. While their solutions varied, they all sought to more directly develop class consciousness in the peasantry. This suggests the obvious, which is to say that traditional Marxism was not a good fit

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<sup>29</sup> Gerald W. Berkley, *The Revolutionary Peasant Movement in China During the Period of the First United Front, 1924-1927*, University of Hong Kong, 1976; Fernando Galbiati, *Peng Pai and the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Hsiao Tso-Liang, *Chinese Communism in 1927: City vs. Countryside*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1970.

<sup>30</sup> - Panstov and Levine, *Mao*, 119-184; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 301-356; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 49-96.

for 1920s China. However, Maoism before the Great Leap, which blended class consciousness, land re-distribution and blended nationalization of industry and private markets, developed only in the wake of the dissolution of the First United Front.

*Nationhood and Nationalism as a concept in Revolutionary China*

Defining the moment when nationalism begins as a mass movement in China is a significant challenge. There are major questions, such as - how many Chinese were decidedly nationalistic in the 1920s; was the Front nationalist, communist or anti-imperial; when considering living conditions for the average Chinese in Republican China, and, why a sharp disparity between active participation in the Guomindang and the political indolence of the great majority of the population can be observed? It is incredibly difficult - arguably impossible - to know precisely how many Chinese were 'nationalized' at any point prior to the creation of the People's Republic of China, but that it remained a small minority seems likely. Consequently, it is more appropriate to work with the known instances of resistance to imperial activity that have been largely attributed to the tenets of nationalism. This is also why it is best to begin after Chen's essay in 1916 as the essence of his argument - that political awareness among the Chinese population hadn't developed - has gone largely undisputed.

"A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."<sup>31</sup> Hobsbawm pointed out that it was Marxists who began to etch out a more modern, palpable concept of nationhood and

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<sup>31</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 5.

Stalin's definition cited above is among the most famous. Defining nationalism first requires an understanding of 'nation,' however as Hobsbawm notes, nationalism precedes the nation.<sup>32</sup>

Stalin's definition is particularly fascinating because of the correlation with late imperial and revolutionary China. When applying Stalin's concept of nationhood to what is largely understood as geographic China, one quickly realizes that there could easily be several 'nations' in the vast regional expanse. Whether it is Manchuria, Canton, Xingjiang, Tibet, Shanghai or Beijing, the people of these regions have their own distinct their language and culture.

Social historians such as William Skinner have thoroughly demonstrated the validity of the concept of macro-regions in China, which is a widely accepted approach to understanding varying forms of development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>33</sup> Skinner's delineation of China shows how nine regions developed separately and addressed matters such as urbanization and modernization. Rooted in empirical data that considers factors such as imperial rule, geographic properties, population density, labor division, extra-regional trade and the application of technology, Skinner's work demonstrates the immensely complex diversity of late imperial China.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that while the Manchu's governed a vast composite empire, few things bound these regions together in a manner consistent with modern political notions of nationhood. When juxtaposing these factors with the further deconstruction of the imperial remnants during the Warlord Era, concepts of nationhood and nationalism appear even more difficult to apply and define across a geographic expanse that operated loosely, with a sort of segregated autonomy for hundreds of years.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 8-13.

<sup>33</sup> William Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China*, Stanford University Press, 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China*, 211-248.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Qing Dynasty*, 85-123.



Hobsbawm's three phases of nationalism are still applicable to the Chinese case, however, but much later than what has been suggested. Cultural and literary development precedes an era marked by political revolutionaries and ideologues who begin to embody a "national idea," which is then followed by a period of mass support. This is a critical moment which sometimes occurs much later than the initial spark and must be embodied by a notable portion of the population.<sup>36</sup> Skinner's extensive work notes how the greater Chinese population was approximately 397 million by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Taking into account peak membership of the Chinese Communist Party -roughly 57,000 in before the purge – and the Guomindang – roughly one to two million, counting participation of brief alliances with Northern Warlord armies - it is reasonable to argue that the third phase of large participation in a nationalistic movement had not yet occurred.<sup>38</sup>

When futile attempts of Qing reform resulted in the abolishment of the Civil Service Exam in 1905, the social mobility of the agrarian male population was negatively impacted.<sup>39</sup> In absence of a civil service examination, military service became an avenue of limited economic opportunity that may explain some of the growth of the Warlord armies that emerged after the dissolution of the Qing Empire. Participation in Warlord armies Nationhood also did not however, address a path to nationhood. The Warlords' allegiance had rarely had anything to do with a concept of nation, as even those who joined Jiang during the Northern Expedition later

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<sup>36</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China*, 213.

<sup>38</sup> This estimate is comprised of a collective of the varying points of data throughout the following works - Panstov and Levine, *Mao*, 119-184; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 301-356; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 49-96.

<sup>39</sup> Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 229.

broke off in a quest to acquire power.<sup>40</sup> Undoubtedly, there was no uniform system of government, nor was there a commonly shared ideology or goal of a unifying cause among them.

Even so, there are several dates that might be seen as the beginning of the Nationalistic awakening and Revolution in China. Whether it is the Boxer Rebellion, the May Fourth Movement, the Wests attacks on Wuhan in 1927, or the Mukden incident in September 1931, all contributed to galvanizing the longer revolutionary struggle for a Chinese nation-state, commanding the allegiance or loyalty of the mass of its population. However, those four landmark moments still fall under the second phase of Hobsbawm's formation of nationalism. The response to these events was either limited to the educated elite or was messy and took decades to truly develop into a massive form of resistance. This issue is critical, as it better situates the difference between the beginnings of nationalism and the formal embrace of it. As previously discussed, even the destruction of the Qing in 1911 was more of a collapse than revolution. This further suggests that broader participation in national revolution occurs after Jiang's purge for several reasons, all of which can be attributed to the absence of political dichotomy even among the Front's leadership.

Jiang's Guomintang lacked a comprehensive program that specifically developed nationalism through re-education. The Whampoa Military Academy became the most successful endeavor of the GMD in this regard, however, its success can be largely attributed to the aid of the Soviet Union. Military advisors such as Galin and Alexander Cherepanov provided a tremendous amount of military training and logistical and tactical legitimacy to a group of

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<sup>40</sup> See the following for an overview of the Guomintang cooperation and conflict with Warlordism: Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 204-239; Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 143-215; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 273-387; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 49-140.

relatively inexperienced military hopefuls.<sup>41</sup> Ironically, Whampoa was successfully transformed into an institution that reliably bred those who opposed communism. Cadets and graduates of Whampoa were considered totally loyal to Jiang and were heavily relied upon after his May coup.<sup>42</sup> Later chapters will detail how Jiang's greatest success may have been the branding of Chinese Communist as foreigners. This ideology was thoroughly embraced by the Whampoa cadets, but Jiang's central focus on the extermination of the CCP hindered his ability to develop Sun's brand of Nationalism into any mass movement. Consequently, Jiang conflated anti-imperialism with nationalism and overestimated the effects of his development of nationalism in urban centers.

'Peasant Nationalism' simply did not capture the countryside in the era of the First United Front.<sup>43</sup> Numerous programs and instances of communist development in the Guangdong region juxtaposed with military conquest by the National Revolutionary Army suggest that even in the early years of organizational development, the CCP took political education more seriously than the Guomindang. The nationalism of the greater Chinese population never galvanized in the 1920s at any particular moment. Jiang had rapidly expanded his territory by 1927, but the vast majority of the rural population remained uninvolved in political alignment, much less activism. While there were moments of substantial protest, it was largely the educated elite concentrated in the more developed urban centers such as Shanghai and Nanjing, to whom Jiang's brand of nationalism appealed. Student protests grew more frequent, but never amounted to organized nationalism.

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<sup>41</sup> A.I. Cherepanov, *As Military Advisor in China*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 62-65.

<sup>43</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1937-1945*, (Stanford University Press, 1962).

Meanwhile, the Roy-Borodin conflict not only represented growing ideological separation within the CCP, it also served to highlight a broader lack of commitment and institutional development among the supposed Marxist intellectuals gathered on the left. As a group, there never existed a united, developed ideology in which the Chinese Communists could ever plant its feet. In the 1920s, they never quite understood how best to launch mass class consciousness in a primarily agrarian society. While Jiang's purge eradicated the CCP as it had existed from 1921 to the summer of 1927, it also forced its remaining members to turn to developing a 'revolution from below.' Stalin's misguided approach of a simultaneous revolution from both above and below was a misreading of the greater Chinese population. Most important, by early 1927, the realization that the bourgeois nationalists could not be trusted came far too late for the Chinese Communist Party, as they had been out maneuvered by Jiang.

Additionally, the "Great Awakening" of the political consciousness amongst the Chinese diaspora is incredibly difficult to assign to any moment before 1949. Western notions of nationalism and Bolshevik notions of Marxism have been superimposed on the participants of the United Front and the rural Chinese population. It is true that some of those within the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang – National Party of the People – believed themselves to be agents of Marxism and Nationalism. It is also true that neither party acted entirely as being solely nationalist or communist, and they became more ideologically rigid after the White Terror. Issues such as their three-year alliance, mutual Soviet cooperation – and perhaps most important – their general ideological agreement on Sun's Three Principles, are clear examples of their collaborative spirit and lack of clear-cut distinction during the 1920s.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See "Manifesto of the Guomindang," 28.

## **Chapter Two: Toward the Creation of the First United Front**

When Jiang Jieshi began his brutal 1927 campaign in Shanghai - which resulted in the execution of countless suspected Chinese Communists - he not only eliminated a perceived danger to present and future China, but also created a political identity that did not yet exist. The very idea of the terms Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party were indeed malleable, and very fluid in nature. After the White Terror, being a member of the CCP or GMD carried a significantly different meaning. Prior to the Northern Expedition, neither party had managed any significant tactical or territorial gains without the other, and their identities were not yet separate or distinct enough in a predominantly peasant China. Many were familiar with Sun Yat-sen but were not yet acquainted with traits that would now be specifically associated with characteristics of the Guomindang.

Similarly, the small size and participation of both the CCP and GMD prior to 1927 also meant that the vast majority of the agrarian population of China lacked the means or exposure to understand what was happening in China. By and large, the majority of the peasant population was without any real knowledge of anything beyond its village. The United Front, the tactical alliance between the CCP and GMD, was in fact an umbrella organization that institutionalized an exchange of ideas born within a highly transnational conjecture. The United Front was primarily composed of formally educated Chinese, but as previously demonstrated, China itself had more than its share of foreign influences. Russians, Japanese, and Western intellectuals were

also shaping the United Front in a variety of ways and they held a shared goal of gaining control over China. Understanding the Front, requires tracing both its Chinese and foreign origins.

By 1921, two political organizations had arisen from the chaos of the previous decades. Sun Yat-sen founded the Guomindang (Nationalist Party of China, or KMT/GMD) in 1911 amid the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. Sun and his small GMD government were, at the time, operating in the Canton region of China. With little in the way of finances, and an almost non-existent and technologically ill-equipped standing military, Sun had no plausible way to gain ground by engaging in open combat with the Warlords. In spite of his strategic disadvantages, Sun became a globally known figure, as Japan and the Western media covered his struggle to unite China. National reporting agencies, for instance, presented Sun as the President of South China, although the region was but a tiny speck in China's great territorial expanse. Among his Chinese contemporaries, Sun had also gained the respect and support of other revolutionaries, such as Mao Zedong, who briefly aided Sun in his struggles during the late Qing and Republican periods.<sup>45</sup>

In the summer of 1921, a group of aspiring Marxists, including Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and Mao Zedong, founded the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Unlike the Guomindang, the CCP had no territorial base from which to operate and lacked the prestige of having a nationally renowned leader. The party itself was small, and largely struggled to gain any significant popular support. Over the course of two years, Chen, Li and Mao only managed to grow the CCP to approximately 300 members, most of whom were Shanghai workers. From 1921 to 1923, the CCP operated in a small-scale, underground fashion, publishing Marxist newsletters while

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<sup>45</sup> Pantsov, and Levine, *Mao*, 21-55; Spence, *The Search for Modern China* 294-299; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 7-48.

working to organize the proletariat in six cities, including the strategic urban centers of Yenan, Hunan, Canton and Shanghai. For the CCP, success at a national level, by way of party growth or public recognition, was not yet on the horizon, as its relatively secretive nature combined with the fragmented territorial division in China prevented any large-scale progress.<sup>46</sup>

While it received little national support during the period of 1921-1927, the CCP never operated without the assistance of the Soviet Comintern. As early as 1920, Vladimir Lenin addressed the Second Comintern Congress in Moscow on the issues at stake in China, and the possibility of staging a successful ‘backwards revolution’ with the aid of the Soviet Union. On June 3, 1921, a Comintern representative arrived in China dispatched by Lenin’s decree. Known to the Chinese as Ma Lin (Maring), Henk Sneevliet became a key figure in the anti-imperialist struggle to unify China. Within a month, by July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Maring with other leaders of the Chinese Communist Party held their first congress.<sup>47</sup> Although Maring and the Soviets provided small doses of economic aid and lessons in political organization, the CCP was still too small to gain any substantial ground. By March 1923, Maring himself was frustrated with the lack of the party’s growth in China and wrote several letters to Nikolai Bukharin, requesting for either re-assignment or a return back to the Soviet Union.<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, the year 1923 was a major turning point in the effort towards the unification of China, and to the outside world, it represented a significant strategic shift in the Chinese situation. Sun and the GMD became increasingly active that year. They managed to organize several workers’ strikes across the South, which included over a hundred thousand

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<sup>46</sup> Dan Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin’s Man in China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 2012; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 295-298.

<sup>47</sup> Pantsov and Levin, *Mao*, 98-106; Tony Saich, ed., *The Origins of the First United Front: The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)*, (Leiden: the Netherlands, 1991) 142.

<sup>48</sup> Saich, *The Role of Sneevliet*, 475-480.

participants in Hong Kong and Canton. However, even in GMD territories, the uprisings were violently suppressed by varying Warlords, who had control over the vast majority of Chinese territory. The aftermath of the strikes, followed by the suppression, was perhaps a tipping point for Sun, who understood that without outside economic and military assistance, liberating and unifying China would be impossible. In an article published by the New York Times on July 23, 1923, Sun stated that the West's refusal to aid the GMD had forced him to look towards the Soviet Union for aid. He not only lamented the imperial intervention that had plagued China for decades, but also accused the West of providing support to the Manchurian Warlords.<sup>49</sup> Sun's repeated calls for help from the West had indeed fallen on deaf ears, resulting in a significant strategic opportunity for both the Soviet Union and the GMD.

Sun and the GMD's ability to appeal to a larger audience did, however, catch the attention of the CCP, Maring, and the Soviet Comintern. On January 12, 1923, a resolution passed by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (E.C.C.I.) ruled that the CCP must work with the "only serious revolutionary movement" in China, the GMD.<sup>50</sup> A month before Sun's interview, on June 25, 1923, the Central Committee of the CCP sent him a letter, in which they explicitly expressed the desire to join forces and form a single organization.<sup>i</sup> The Central Committee stated that "public opinion shows increasing activity; that gives a golden opportunity for the development of our Party that we must not lose."<sup>51</sup> Maring forwarded that

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<sup>49</sup> In a New York Times article Sun Zhong Shan describes international support for China (July 23, 1923), "Foreign Control at Peking Means War, Says Sun Yat-sen"; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 304-309.

<sup>50</sup> "Resolution Passed by the E.C. of the Comintern on the Relations of the Communist Party of China to the "Kuomintang Party." 12 January 1923, Saich, *The Role of Sneevliet*, 565-566.

<sup>51</sup> "Letter from Central Committee to Sun Yat-sen sent with Accompanying Letter from H. Sneevliet to G. Zinoviev, N. Bukharin, A. Joffe and J. Davtian. 25 June 1923," Saich, *The Role of Sneevliet*, 657-661.



letter to the Comintern, stating that Li and Chen were still trying to reach an agreement with Sun, and that the CCP was working to win over the GMD.

On October 6<sup>th</sup> of that same year, the Comintern sent Mikhail Borodin from Moscow to Canton to become a special advisor to the CCP. Borodin's work with the Comintern in Mexico and Britain perhaps made him best suited for the job of constructing an alliance. Ideologically, Borodin aligned with Lenin's concept of fomenting a socialist Revolution in China - build up nationalism in order to create communism.<sup>52</sup> For Sun, his desire to expand his relationship with the Soviet Union was driven primarily by his desire to launch a strategic military campaign that would re-unite China – The Northern Expedition.<sup>53</sup> It should be noted that Sun's strategic partnership with the Soviet Union does not indicate a shift in ideology. Sun had been in contact with the Comintern since autumn of 1920 when he first met Gregory Voitinsky.<sup>54</sup> It is also true that Sun had attempted to forge an alliance with Western powers, but nonetheless remained steadfast on his vision of the revolution.<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, Sun reached an agreement with Comintern agent Adolf Joffe on January 26, 1923, in which they mutually declared that, "it was not possible to establish communism or even the Soviet system in China."<sup>56</sup> The agreement between Joffe and Sun temporarily quelled some of the apprehension among the GMD about cooperating with communists or Soviets.

While there was general excitement among the leadership of the CCP about the possible alliance, talk of the Front forced some to raise serious questions about the individual actions of

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<sup>52</sup> Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution*, 209-211.

<sup>53</sup> Dan Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1981) 114-116. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 306.

<sup>54</sup> Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism*, 138-139.

<sup>55</sup> Sun Yat-sen, "Foreign Control at Peking Means War, Says Sun Yat-sen" (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times) July 23, 1923. DOI November 20, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism*, 142-143.

its members. In a report to the Third Party Congress in June 1923, Chen detailed opposition to the alliance and some problems he saw within the CCP. He was critical, not only of himself, but of the entire Central Committee. “In our Party, there exist serious tendencies of individualism... We must correct our mistakes. In addition, relations between comrades in the Party are not very close... Everyone acknowledges that China needs to carry out a democratic revolution, but with respect to the question of how we should serve the democratic revolution, our view-points are different.”<sup>57</sup> After reading Chen’s report, Maring believed that it was “extremely pessimistic.”<sup>58</sup> Maring indeed saw the alliance as an opportunity of great significance that should not to be overlooked, especially when considering the relative stagnation in the CCP’s growth from 1921 through 1923.

As special advisor to the Guomindang, Borodin was able to use his authority to transform both parties. He immediately provided the CCP and GMD with the ability to focus on growing the base of the revolution, primarily through recruiting workers and appealing to the peasantry. The much larger nationally recognized platform from which the GMD operated gave Borodin the opportunity to appeal to a wider audience in order to grow the revolution. As the head of the propaganda bureau for the CCP, Mao Zedong helped to publish literature and spread it to the established communist organizations throughout the southern provinces of China. Mao’s work in Hunan had already been praised by CCP the leadership, who recognized it at the most successful operation under communist command.<sup>59</sup> Regardless, it was not long before Chen and the CCP began to operate in relative subordination to the GMD, by direction of the Comintern.

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<sup>57</sup> “Notes of Delegates’ Comments at the Third-Party Congress on the Question of Cooperation with the KMT. June 1923,” Saich, *The Role of Sneevliet*, 576.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

A major development in addition to Borodin's reforms was Sun's shift towards militarism through his newly developed partnership with the Soviet Union. He perhaps sensed that his window of opportunity was closing as quickly as it had opened. In early 1923, Sun sent a delegation of Chinese revolutionaries led by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) to Moscow to undergo significant military training. Jiang was a seasoned military officer and while he was in Moscow, the Soviets agreed to help fund the Whampoa Academy by providing funds, advisors and armaments. Whampoa became the military and political training facility of the United Front and remained under GMD control after the GMD-CCP split.<sup>60</sup> While in Moscow, Jiang met many Soviet leaders in the Comintern as well as the upper echelon of Soviet leadership. He wrote in his diary that he thought the Soviets were untrustworthy and that the ideas of class struggle were contradictory to Sun's revolution. However, in 1923, Jiang did not appear to be opposed to Soviet aid, or more specifically to Maring's assistance. In late 1923, Jiang wrote two letters from Moscow wishing Maring success and expressing his desire to work with him when he returned.<sup>61</sup> Upon returning to China, Jiang was chosen by Sun to become the commandant of the first military academy.<sup>62</sup> The construction of the military training academy in Whampoa provided the first organized military arm of resistance to the opposition.

The development of a relationship between the CCP and GMD in 1923 illustrates the central focus of both organizations. The fact that Sun would turn to the Soviet Union, which at the time was branding itself as an opponent of imperialist nations, further supports the notion that his revolutionary government was more concerned with creating tactical alliances with those

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<sup>60</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 42-44.

<sup>61</sup> "Letter from Chiang Kai-shek to H. Sneevliet. 14 November 1923" and "Letter from Chiang Kai-shek to H. Sneevliet. 28 November 1923." Saich, *The Role of Sneevliet*, 702-704.

<sup>62</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 307. Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 43.

who did not oppose him, rather than creating new enemies because of ideological separation. In addition, from a post-1927 perspective, Jiang's trip to Moscow seems ideologically inconceivable when considering his later raids on Soviet embassies. However, in the long struggle to build a Chinese nation-state, the ideological constructs of Communism and Nationalism had yet to be clearly defined and were simply far less relevant. Despite later becoming the national icon who most fiercely opposed Communism, Jiang's relative dismissal of his discrepancies with the Soviet Union is also emblematic a desire to accomplish a larger goal. Maring's role as mediator and organizer not only helped orchestrate an alliance but appeared to demonstrate that the liberation of China from imperialism was indeed possible. Simply stated, the shared anti-imperial sentiments of the CCP and GMD were strong enough to allow for a political alliance that might establish a Chinese nation-state that would allow full Han independence.

### *The Manifesto of the Guomindang and CCP-GMD Relations*

By January 1924, Sun's increased desire to expel imperialists and warlords - combined with the strategic advantages provided by an alliance with the CCP and the Soviets - coalesced into the formal construction of the First United Front.<sup>63</sup> The United Front should be understood as the tactical alliance between the Soviet-supported Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist Party of China, the Guomindang.<sup>64</sup> Once the alliance was cemented, both the CCP

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<sup>63</sup> Most historians of China, to include Jonathan Spence and John King Fairbank, refer to CCP and GMD cooperation in 1923. This is because of the frequency of communication between the organizations and should not be confused with the official establishment of the United Front.

<sup>64</sup> 1895 is the year of the Sino-Japanese War.

and the GMD frequently referred to themselves as the Guomindang. Maring made significant efforts to ensure a balance of leadership in the Front, though Sun Yat-sen was the unquestioned leader of the alliance. He not only had the support of Jiang, but of Chen, Li, and Mao as well. Anti-imperialism had indeed provided a solid understanding for mutual cooperation, regardless of any reservations held by the members. The opportunity to unite China once again proved too enticing of an opportunity to be overlooked.

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1924, The New Guomindang held its First National Congress, and subsequently produced The Manifesto of the Guomindang.<sup>65</sup> The Manifesto is perhaps the best testament to the fluid nature of the Front, and it reveals that clearly discrete conceptions of Communism and Nationalism did not exist in China in January of 1924. An analysis of the document reveals how the members of the Front defined its mission. It further displays precisely how some of the language utilized in the document takes on a different meaning only after Jiang's purge of the Communists in 1927. Accordingly, the Manifesto evidences that a strict dichotomy between the CCP and GMD did not necessarily exist between 1924 and 1927.

The Manifesto is divided into two separate sections, *a Report on the State of the Nation* and *The Principles of the Guomindang*, which function to define the purpose of the United Front and lay out on which principles it was to operate.<sup>66</sup> The state of the nation, as understood by the leaders and ideologues of the Front, was indeed of a nation in revolution. However, revolution "did not occur overnight,"; it was a process that spanned over a long period of time (in this case, it began in 1895). It is also important to distinguish what revolution was and why it had to take

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<sup>65</sup> "The Kuomintang National Revolution: Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang, January 30, 1924," Jason M. Gertzler, ed. *Changing China*, 196-204.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

place in the eyes of the Front's leadership.<sup>67</sup> The revolution needed to occur specifically because "...China was overwhelmed...by military pressures and economic pressures from foreign imperialists, which deprived China of independence and submerged her to the status of semi-colony."<sup>68</sup>

The fact that the Front's leadership understood China's status in 1924 not as sovereign but as semi-colonial, specifically due to foreign imperial action, helps to frame the alliance as one that was tactically motivated, rather than ideologically driven. The post-1927 constructs of the GMD and CCP, and the ideological tenets that emerged in the wake of the massacre, would have prevented cooperation, even for the unification of China. However, in 1924, Sun had stated to the *NY Times* in 1923, how foreign powers were faulted with aiding in the division and destruction of China by supporting the civil war being fought among the warlords.<sup>69</sup>

Not only did the experience of past and ongoing imperial military campaigns against China shape the Front's leadership, international ideas of governance permeated its ideology as well. The Manifesto introduced a multitude of competing political ideas. The front acknowledged that these originated from foreigners residing in China, who suggested a variety of models including Constitutionalism, Federalism, Peace Conventioneerism, and Capitalism. The leaders of the Front discerned that each of those models of government had significant problems when applied to the Chinese situation. The Front correctly recognized that in order for constitutionality to be effective, it had to be supported by the people. Since the *final awakening*

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<sup>67</sup> Reference to the GMD from the period of January 1924, to perhaps even as late as July 1927, could be understood as a reference to the Front, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>68</sup> "Manifesto of the Guomindang," Gentzler, *Changing China*, 196.

<sup>69</sup> "Manifesto of the Guomindang," Gentzler, *Changing China*, 197; Sun Yat-sen, "Foreign Control at Peking Means War, Says Sun Yat-sen" (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times) July 23, 1923; Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 167-203; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 143-295.

had yet to occur, that was not yet possible. The average Chinese peasant was not yet concerned with the grand political ideas of national revolution. Federalism had already proven itself a failure in 1916 under the banner of Yuan Shi kai's Republicanism. Furthermore, the Peace Conventioneers who called for a peaceful resolution to Warlord division did so in ignorance of the desires of Warlords who sought to consolidate their power.

The inclusion and acknowledgement of foreign government models reveals that the revolutionary members of the Front were cognizant of foreign systems of government. Understanding that the participants of the United Front grappled with various modern governments and how they could perceivably function in a Chinese context shows a highly sophisticated understanding of these systems. While ideas of nationalism and communism may not have been strictly understood or defined, it is clear that democracy in its various western iterations was. Specifically, that section of the Manifesto shows that Western ideas of democratic norms were carefully considered and found to be inadequate for Chinese society. The state envisioned by Sun, Chen, Li, Mao and others, was – at least for a time – one that placed the majority of power in the hands of Chinese citizens. Lastly, it removed any questions regarding reform; it was no longer seen as an option. Revolution was the only answer.

The section titled *The Principles of the Guomindang* outlined the future government operations and economic systems. The government envisioned by the Front was an inclusive government, which aimed for the abolishment of racial and economic inequalities, along with the expulsion of foreign imperialists. Issues of racial equality harken back to the subordination of the ethnic Han majority by the Manchu Qing thus had to be a prominent feature of modern China. However, the government would not officially form until after the successful liberation of China. The principal element of the United Front was to be the execution of Sun Yat-sen's Three

Principles of the People: anti-imperialist nationalism, democracy, and socialism. Sun's principles were sentiments that transcended party lines and gave the organization a focused goal that appeared to limit the possibility of any significant inter-party confrontation.<sup>70</sup>

The closing paragraph of the document focused on the ideological training that would be required of members of government, and how they were to interact with the population. While democracy and equality were central to the goals of the Revolution, the government had no plans for allowing any future developments that could challenge its authority. Party members were to receive training that would allow them to educate and connect with the people. Once the revolution succeeded, the government was to tighten its grip. "When political power is in our hands...the Guomindang will continue to function as the nerve center of the state, controlling political power to check [counterrevolutionary efforts.] We must attack and remove whatever hinders the enforcement of Guomindang principles."<sup>71</sup> Sort of a vanguard party in a one-party dictatorship. The concept of eliminating counterrevolutionaries and "vanquishing enemies of the people," as it appears in the Manifesto is markedly ambiguous and reveals traces of Bolshevism. This statement challenges the notion that the GMD government would have operated in a largely free and democratic manner. In hindsight, Jiang's consolidation of power in 1927 somewhat corresponds with that line. Accordingly, it perhaps provided either written justification for the massacre of 1927, or, at the very least establishes the degree to which the Guomindang believed in the existence of a coalition government made up of various parties.

The Manifesto accomplished, at the very least, two major tasks. It first provided a fundamental premise that could unite the two parties for a singular purpose: the expulsion of all

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<sup>70</sup> "Manifesto of the Guomindang," Gentzler, *Changing China*, 198-201.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 201.



imperialist forces. Imperialist forces, however, would later be equated with what was perhaps an unintended group of individuals, the CCP. Regardless of future developments, it is evident that while the leaders of the Front had been influenced by foreign forces in both positive and negative ways. Both the GMD and the CCP agreed that the liberation of China would only occur once the country was inflicted with the same anti-imperialist fervor that gripped the organization itself. The Manifesto's second accomplishment was to further unify the Front through Sun's Three Principles. As these were a broad set of ideals that were universally applicable to the critical nature of the situation plaguing China, GMD and CCP members alike could readily accept them.

### **Chapter Three: From Coup to Purge, A Cleansing of ‘Chinese Bolsheviks’**

The formal forging of an alliance between the Communist and Nationalist parties, whom by 1924, were receiving significant support from the Soviet Union, created the first strategic advantage against warlord opposition. The New Guomindang rapidly produced major victories across the Southern half of China. Over the course of two and a half years, the alliance dramatically altered the political, social, and military landscape throughout the country. From 1924 through the first months of 1927, the Front accomplished major military and strategic victories. Success was also coupled with tension, as new factions began to emerge within both the CCP and the GMD. The emergence of a more visible collection of leftist and rightists within both the CCP and GMD began to apply great pressure on the solidarity of the Front. Furthermore, the death of key political leaders created opportunity for upward mobility in an increasingly powerful political organization. Ideological inquisition by members such as Mao, Jiang and affiliated members of organizations in Wuhan and Kwangtung, polarized the left and right leaning within both parties. Despite that tension, the leftists and rightist, were allowed to continue to agitate in and around their respective places of operation until March 1926.<sup>72</sup>

Around the same time that the Manifesto was written, a major development occurred in the Soviet Union that permanently altered the role of Russia’s involvement in China. Vladimir

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<sup>72</sup> The formation of leftists and rightists within the Front is not an indictment on the idea that the organizations members were not yet working as Communists and Nationalists. Rather, it further highlights the evolution of political ideology in China. The period of the United Front can be seen as the birth and subsequent infancy of the application of Nationalism and Communism in China.

Lenin, the father of the Russian Revolution, died on January 24, 1924. In the wake of his passing, a figure with little prominence outside the borders of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin fought for singular political leadership with the commander of the Soviet Red Army, Leon Trotsky, along with a number of other close comrades of Lenin. Stalin eventually consolidated his power by late 1929, but the tug of war between Stalin, Trotsky and others, in the immediate aftermath of Lenin's death, perhaps accidentally, placed increased autonomy into the hands of Borodin. His record of recent success wavered and later clashed with other Chinese leaders, as the Front began to diversify ideologically.

To further complicate matters, on March 12, 1925, Sun Yat-sen died in Beijing. His death did not have any immediate repercussions for the CCP, but it did forge cracks among the ranking members of the United Front. Sun's revolution had been the intended brand of national revolution that Lenin believed was the gateway to a proletariat revolution. Wang Jingwei, a close friend of Sun's, later emerged as the new leader of the Guomintang, but he never wielded the same political clout or enjoyed similar international fame as Sun. Without Sun's guidance and reputation, others focused on power rather than revolutionary success and tried to take over the Guomintang leadership roles.

On March 20, 1926, The United Front embarked on a major social, political and military upheaval. From Jiang's Coup of March 1926, till the purge of Chinese Communist in April 1927, China was stained red by the hands of the Guomintang. Jiang's coup has been described in a variety of ways, from a simple case of a mistaken identity to a moment of carefully crafted political maneuvering.<sup>73</sup> Regardless, the outcome was one that placed him in a position of

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<sup>73</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, *Soviet Russia in China*; Panstov and Levine, *Mao*, 155; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 312; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*.

supreme authority over much of China. The 1926 coup itself had numerous implications, from marking the beginning of the end of the United Front, to forcing some groups of Chinese citizens to make a clear choice and politically align with either the GMD or CCP. Allegiance to one party meant accepting the wrath of the other. Additionally, greater military capabilities made the liberation of the southern regions of China possible through the military operation known as the Northern Expedition later in 1926. The goal of the Northern Expedition was to eventually fulfill a dream of Sun and the Front as a whole - the successful liberation of territories from Guanxi to Sichuan and northward through Wuhan.<sup>74</sup>

If this moment embodies a period of major GMD action, then it also represents a critical moment of paralysis among those in the Communist Party's Leadership. For their part, the members of the CCP became further divided ideologically, especially when faced with Jiang's tactical military and political pressure. Chen's leadership role came increasingly under fire and the direction of Stalin and Bukharin became even more difficult to follow. Borodin's dedication to his original mission in China blinded him to the reality of the situation on the ground. Soviet reliance on the larger GMD platform lingered too long, and ultimately helped lead to the extermination of the Chinese Communist Party as it existed since 1921. Mao later labeled the CCP's strategy during this time as "Right opportunism." But this was likely no more than a genuflection to Stalin, who would dub Bukharin's opposition to his radicalism as such. For the CCP, undoubtedly the close collaboration with the 'bourgeois' GMD was a mistake that afterwards could be condemned as right-wing. Yet, it was exactly then that Mao began to develop his idea of turning to the peasantry, which echoed Bukharin's advocacy for maintain the allegedly strong bond of hammer with sickle in the Soviet Union, which was sorely challenged

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<sup>74</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 62.

by Stalin's collectivization after 1928. During this time, Mao's analysis of class identity and a report on the Hunan peasantry brought forth what became the only avenue of preservation for the CCP by April 1927.

*“Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society”*

The “Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society,” written by Mao in December 1925 clearly highlighted the lens in which he interpreted the national struggle.<sup>75</sup> In this essay Mao defined the landlord, middle and petty bourgeoisie classes as he believed they could be identified in China. His unorthodox definition of the proletariat and semi-proletariat included the vast majority of Chinese citizens, the peasantry. Mao further divided the peasants into five categories among the semi-proletariat: the peasants, poor peasants, small handicraftsmen, the shop assistants and the peddlers. Mao's goal had long been to use Marxist categories of the class struggle – bourgeoisie vs. proletariat - in a industrialized society and apply them to China's pre-industrial revolutionary struggle. He believed that if the majority of Chinese, consisting of more than 350 million peasants, stood against the Warlord and Landlord classes -numbering in the millions – then the revolution would be won. While many within CCP supported his work, they collectively never really took the possibility of a sort of communist-led peasant revolution very

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<sup>75</sup> 毛泽东，中国社会各阶级的分析，一九二六。毛泽东集：第一卷。初期 1917 – 1927. 近代史料供应社。一九七五年十月港版。

Mao Zedong, “The Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society,” March 1926, *The Collected Works of Mao Zedong: The Early Years 1917-1927*. Vol. 1. (Hong Kong Press: Modern Historical Supplies Agency, 1975) 175-190.

seriously. By the time of the second publication of this article in March 1926, the situation within the United Front had become dire for the CCP.<sup>76</sup>

Jiang's public tolerance for the leftists decidedly decreased, beginning on the twentieth of that same month. After numerous clashes with Borodin and so-called Chinese Soviets, Jiang launched a coup designed to undermine Wang Jingwei and Soviet advisors. The naval warship Zhongshan – named after Sun Yat-sen – commanded by Li Zhilong, was ordered to move near the Whampoa Military Academy.<sup>77</sup> Jiang immediately declared martial law in Canton. He ordered the arrests of many ranking Chinese Communists, along with more than thirty Soviet advisors.<sup>78</sup> Workers and picketers were also disarmed and placed under direct supervision of those most loyal to Jiang. Those arrested were ordered to undergo re-education and communist news organizations were shut down in Canton. The Soviet advisors were soon released, and Jiang reconciled with them by publicly stating that he still believed in the alliance.<sup>79</sup>

Jiang used the opportunity to leverage increased control over the Guomindang and silence the CCP's propaganda arms. Borodin had been away since February and did not attempt to return to reconcile with Jiang until late April. The coup or gunboat incident proved incredibly fruitful for Jiang's growing faction. Borodin and the Comintern were increasingly desperate to maintain organizational unity within the United Front. Borodin was convinced that Jiang could be permanently swayed to the left by satisfying his desire for power and conquest. In doing so, they were willing to cede authority and oversight over the operational control of the Front.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 152.

<sup>77</sup> Jacobs, *Borodin*, 199-202; Pantsov and Levin, *Mao*, 155; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 312; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 312.

<sup>79</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russia in China*, 39-41; Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 154-155; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 312-313; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 56-57.

<sup>80</sup> Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism*, 219.

Jiang later noted that eight concessions were made at the Second Plenary Session of the CEC of the Guomindang.<sup>81</sup>

Most notable of the concessions was the decision by the committee to prohibit any member of the Communist Party from holding positions of authority. Additionally, they prohibited any GMD member from leaving and joining the CCP, while simultaneously requiring all communist party members to have dual membership. The CCP was further officially placed under the thumb of the GMD by preventing them from taking “separate actions without orders from the Party.”<sup>82</sup> The CCP was also ordered to provide a complete list of its members to the CEC for ‘safekeeping.’<sup>83</sup> Following the resolutions Wang Jingwei removed himself from the political spotlight, and momentarily, from any significant position of authority. He claimed that he had fallen ill – a move frequently used by Mao – and wisely retreated first to Shanghai and later to France.

There are still major questions concerning this coup, particularly whether or not the military warship *Zhongshan* was ordered to move to Whampoa by the leadership of the CCP or by Jiang himself. Also, it has been argued that Jiang made an agreement with the commanders of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth armies to totally crush the left, but they never showed.<sup>84</sup> Historians debate this issue still today. An examination of the primary sources available to me leaves the question moot.<sup>85</sup> The only thing that is clear is that Li Zhilong gave his crew the orders to move to Whampoa. Also, it is clear that Jiang still desired power and authority within the Front before

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<sup>81</sup> The CEC refers to the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang unless otherwise specified.

<sup>82</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russia in China*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russia in China*, 39-41.

<sup>84</sup> Jacobs, *Borodin*, 199.

<sup>85</sup> See Chiang Kai-shek, Jonathan Spence, Stuart Schram, Jon Taylor, Alexander Pantsov, Steve Levine, Dan Jacobs.

all else. Without the aid of the Soviet Union, his control over the Guomindang and the logistical success of future tactical military engagements seems unlikely. The Northern Expedition was on the horizon, and it was unlikely to succeed without the continued support of the Soviet Union and consequently the CCP. To this end, Jiang was not willing to jeopardize his only means of international support.

The months following the resolution of the coup were chaotic but significant. While Soviet military advisors such as Vasily Konstantinovich Blyukher (Galin) expanded their roles in strategizing the Northern Expedition, overall foreign influence over the Guomindang greatly diminished. Jiang thought Galin's participation in the expedition was critical to the success of the NRA and his assumption was ultimately correct.<sup>86</sup> Distrust for Soviet advisors in general had hit an irrecoverable low point. Jiang named himself Commander in Chief and quickly gained control over the entirety of the GMD. On July 7, 1926, the CEC promoted Borodin to the position of "Higher Advisor to the GMD."<sup>87</sup> Borodin's promotion only served to further highlight how out of step the Comintern had become with Jiang's ambitions.

While Stalin and Bukharin sought to reinforce Soviet authority over the Front's revolution, Jiang was preparing for greater Chinese hegemony within the Front. Since the beginning, the goal had been the expulsion of all imperial forces - both foreign and domestic - in order to complete the grand revolutionary scheme of discarding monarchical dynasties and implementing Sun's brand of social democracy. While loosely defined, Jiang's focus as a military-trained mind remained the consolidation of power by eradicating opposition. Both Soviet Russians and the 'Sovietized' Chinese were increasingly perceived as an imperialist force

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<sup>86</sup> Jacobs, *Borodin*, 209-211.

<sup>87</sup> Jacobs, *Borodin*, 211.



by the rightists in the GMD. Jiang had managed to equate the West's foreign intrusion with those Chinese revolutionaries who embraced elements of Marxist ideology. Anti-communist sentiment within the Front increased as a result. With Jiang at the helm, the Whampoa Military Academy had become a breeding ground for anti-Soviet communists among the cadets.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, the collapse and alignment of smaller independent Generals helped swell the NRA upwards of approximately 85,000 soldiers, some with more formal training than others.<sup>89</sup>

The only organizational salvation for the CCP was the Peasant Movement Training Institute. Since the spring of 1922, Peng Pai had worked to organize elements of the peasantry into a revolutionary force.<sup>90</sup> In May 1926, Mao was made the director of the sixth class of the PMTI.<sup>91</sup> Just as the Whampoa cadets were indoctrinated with anti-foreign imperialism, so too were the peasants at PMTI. The broad strategic goal was the organization of the peasantry into a large, unified revolutionary force. It was there that Mao developed his thoughts on the significance of the peasant population and the necessity to overthrow the entire landlord class.<sup>92</sup> This was in spite of significant landlord participation and support during the Northern Expedition. Membership within the Communist Party had grown into the tens of thousands, but the party lacked any real means of armed defense in the wake of Jiang's May coup.<sup>93</sup> Ideological separation between the CCP and GMD grew without the presence of a moderate, cohesive

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<sup>88</sup> Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 311.

<sup>89</sup> Jacobs, *Borodin*, 210 (notes 70,000 troops); Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 159 (notes 100,000 troops); Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 55.

<sup>90</sup> Gerald W. Berkley, Ph.D. Thesis, *The Revolutionary Peasant Movement in China During the Period of the First United Front*, (University of Hong Kong, 1976); Galbiati, *Peng Pai and the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet*; Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 125; Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, 313.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 156.

<sup>92</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 160.

<sup>93</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 180.

leader. The completion of the Northern Expedition was the last moment of unity for the United Front.

The Northern Expedition was commanded by Jiang, but he received notable guidance from Galin and Bai Chongxi.<sup>94</sup> The collectively-agreed-upon strategy was first the seizure of Hunan, followed by all Wuhan territories, and lastly an advance toward Peiking (Beijing) along the Yangtze River. According to Jiang, on July 9, 1926, the “Revolutionary Forces” swore an oath based on a manifesto rooted in Sun’s Three Principles, the implementation of which was to be the purpose of the military campaign.<sup>95</sup> The NRA’s rapid advance caused a great collapse of the Northern Warlords, and hundreds of thousands of warlord forces joined Jiang’s ranks between July and November.<sup>96</sup> However, there was much more to the success of the Northern Expedition than the seizure of territories.

Beyond the obvious liberation of local populations from being under the thumb of varying militarists and warlords, there were greater political implications as well.<sup>97</sup> For Mao, the seizure of occupied territories by an armed revolutionary force had been something he was advocating since his boyhood years in Yen-an.<sup>98</sup> In this way, even at this stage, Mao had more in common with the Guomindang than he did with members of his own party, especially by late 1926.<sup>99</sup> The major point of contention for Mao lay with the fact that it was largely the bourgeoisie, namely the landlord classes, who were the ones participating in the Northern

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<sup>94</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 66.

<sup>95</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russia*, 43.

<sup>96</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russian*, 42-44; Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 159-161.

<sup>97</sup> Peasant life in the liberated territories were often plagued by unfair taxation and strong-arm military rule. Rich peasants often levied harsh economic penalties which were sometimes reinforced with violent punitive measures. See Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution* for a period review.

<sup>98</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 40-67.

<sup>99</sup> Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, 93-95.

Expedition. Mao knew that tensions were now bound to rise between the landlords who now remained unchecked, and the peasantry in ‘liberated territories.’ With Jiang’s Guomindang in control of these regions, the peasants were to be at an immense disadvantage, with little chance of CCP interference.

While the success of the Northern Expedition could be broadly attributed to the collaborative efforts of the Front – again, meaning the Soviet Union, the CCP, GMD and the varying warlords who joined their ranks – Jiang now wielded unprecedented power. There were numerous Soviet advisors in China, but Stalin’s reading of the situation came primarily through the eyes of Borodin, who increasingly fell out of favor with Jiang over the course of 1926. Borodin’s lack of insight into Jiang’s most recent evolution hindered the Soviet’s understanding of the situation as it had developed. Neither Stalin nor Borodin thought the Soviet Union would ever credibly be branded as a member of the imperialist forces occupying China.

In the Soviet Union, at the Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI in February and March of 1926, during which Stalin spoke of the struggle to liberate China from imperialist forces, it is clear that he perceived Soviet Russia to be standing on the ‘right side’ of the Chinese Revolution.<sup>100</sup> By November 30, 1926, at the Seventh Enlarged Plenum, Stalin again displayed his grave misunderstanding of recent developments within the Front. He stated that the CCP must “intensify political work in the army.”<sup>101</sup> Stalin thought the CCP still had time to infiltrate the ranks of the NRA and radicalize its participants. By doing so he believed that the Communists would then become a first point of contact to peasants and educate them in class

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<sup>100</sup> Stalin, “The Chinese Revolutionary Situation and the Task of the Chinese Communists,” Eudin and North, *Soviet Russia and the East*, 347-350.

<sup>101</sup> Stalin, “Stalin on the Chinese Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution and the Peasant Question,” Eudin and North, ed., *Soviet Russia and the East*, 352.

struggle as a means of rallying them to the side of Marxism-Leninism. Ideally, they would then perceive the CCP as a driving force in the struggle against the imperialists. Stalin further stated that the Chinese Communists must now seek the nationalization of railways and the “most important factories.”<sup>102</sup> This was again a misreading not only of the political consciousness of the Chinese peasantry, but also of the authority and respect now commanded by Jiang amongst those within the NRA. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the CEC was never fully prepared to launch an agrarian revolution.<sup>103</sup>

In order to help preserve the Front and aid the CCP in their goal to develop the Chinese peasantry, Stalin sent Manabendra Nath Roy (M.N. Roy) to China shortly after the Seventh Plenum.<sup>104</sup> Roy, like Borodin, was an established revolutionary who was well respected amongst those in the Comintern. Roy’s famous debate with Lenin in 1920 on the role of the peasantry in the world-wide proletariat revolution – along with his notable actions in the anti-colonial Indian revolution - appeared to make him the perfect remedy to the recent struggles within the CCP.<sup>105</sup> What Roy actually represented was something markedly different from Stalin’s plan. Roy firmly believed that the CCP should act separately from the Front, return to Canton and apply revolution from below.

Since his major theoretical contribution in 1920 – which caused Lenin to alter the Comintern policy on which bourgeois-democratic liberation movements it would support – Roy sought to better identify which ‘nationalist’ movements were stable platforms for peasant

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<sup>102</sup> Stalin, “Stalin on the Chinese Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution and the Peasant Question,” Eudin and North, ed., *Soviet Russia and the East*, 355.

<sup>103</sup> North and Eudin, *M.N. Roy’s Mission to China*, 45.

<sup>104</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 171.

<sup>105</sup> Eudin and North, *M.N. Roy*, 44-45.

organization.<sup>106</sup> Key to Roy's position in China was his open hostility to GMD cooperation and the United Front as a political operation. Stalin, however, still believed the CCP should utilize the more recognizable GMD platform to launch a rapid revolution from above and below. In the eyes of Borodin and Stalin, the petty bourgeoisie still played a significant role. Roy further voiced his opposition by stating publicly in front of some members of the Guomindang that the only reason for the CCP's cooperation with the GMD was to infiltrate the ranks of national government and "use the state machinery as an instrument for achieving hegemony."<sup>107</sup> The proletarian hegemony that Roy was referring to can be likened to Voitinsky's belief in a worldwide proletarian revolution: a block of communist organizations standing in global solidarity without bourgeois-democratic liberation movements.<sup>108</sup>

However, even a Marxist would have to admit that the situation in China did not yet warrant a revolution on this scale, as the broad political consciousness of peasants was just beginning to be cultivated. Only in certain southern regions, such as the Hai-Lu Feng areas, did notable peasant activism take place. Roy's assignment in China served only to openly expose and exasperate tensions among the leaders of the Front. By March, Roy and Borodin had come to represent two broader ideological beliefs on how best to move forward with a proletarian revolution. Borodin remained committed to the existence of a United Front and still firmly believed that the CCP could carry out Stalin's wish of a simultaneous revolution from within both the peasantry and the NRA. Roy thought it was time to further radicalize Wang Jingwei –

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<sup>106</sup> John P. Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation," (*The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23. No. 1., November 1963.)

<sup>107</sup> Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, 111.

<sup>108</sup> Roy and Lenin both agreed that all bourgeois-democratic liberation movements were nationalistic in nature. Thus, limiting the duration of Marxist-Leninist cooperation. See John P. Haithcox.

the only remaining major political figure with the ability to sway those in Jiang's camp - and the Wuhan left to prevent significant isolation. The CCP looked to Chen in order to resolve this conflict, but he too feared that any further perceived radicalization could spark the wrath of the Wuhan generals. Regardless, time had run out for the Front.

On the morning of April 12, 1927, Jiang violently shattered the United Front. Just as he had with the Northern Warlords, Jiang reconciled and partnered with the infamous Green Gang in Shanghai. By Jiang's orders, the Green Gang, alongside Bai Chongxi's Seventh Corps of the NRA, launched a brutal culling of the CCP and those associated with communist ideals. Union members, picketers and workers alike were executed and arrested. Labor Unions were simultaneously outlawed, and any organized worker's parties were shut down.<sup>109</sup> Thousands were killed in the White Terror, with many thousands more arrested. Li Dazhao, Mao's teacher and a founding member of the CCP was among those executed in Jiang's violent purge. The White Terror, as it is now known, spread beyond the Shanghai city limits. Warlords and NRA members across Hunan, Hebei, Jiangxi and Guangdong crushed workers organizations, CCP members and their sympathizers.<sup>110</sup> In less than one month's time, Jiang eliminated the Chinese Communist Party as it had existed from 1921-1927.

This marked the first mass purge of political opposition in the long Chinese Civil War. Shortly after Jiang's assault, a group of the remaining members of the CCP – which had approximately 57,000 known registered members at its peak in 1927 before the purge – attempted a few Soviet-supported armed insurrections with little to no success.<sup>111</sup> By the summer

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<sup>109</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 178; Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, 103. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 320-321; Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 66-67.

<sup>110</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 178-186.

<sup>111</sup> Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 180.

of 1927, the First United Front officially concluded, coinciding with Wang Jingwei's defection. Jiang's only mention of the purge in his book, *Soviet Russia in China*, was limited to no more than a few lines. He claimed he "disarmed" workers in relation to a scheme designed to pit his NRA against Western forces.<sup>112</sup> Regardless, the result of Jiang's White Terror was the moment that caused the permanent stratification of the paths of Chinese Nationalism and Communism. Beginning on the morning of April 12, 1927, Jiang decided that a national party of the people was not to include those associated with Marxism, creating the first clearly defined modern political identity in China. Prior to that moment, however, no matter how resistant the Front's members may have been, those revolutionary members were largely open to discussion on the manner of government under the banner of Sun's principles. That was not to be the case in the wake of the purge.

By the time that tensions began to rise, the inexperience of the political minds within the CCP resulted in a constant stuttering and staggering in operational direction. Afraid to anger the moderates and militarists, Chen and others were unwilling to wager on any dominant form of Marxism. They were also unsure of how to retrofit Marxism in a uniquely Chinese way. It is true that much of conventional Marxism - namely organizing a revolutionary movement exclusively consisting of industrialized workers who had become victims of global capitalism - did fit the Chinese situation of the 1920s. Neither did the concept of using a nationalist liberation movement as the platform to launch Chinese Marxism in the United Front era. However, what the leaders of the CCP failed to understand was the simple fact that local iterations of capitalism had also victimized the poor peasants. This major issue later fused with a regional hatred for Japanese atrocities and fanned the flames of the peasant revolution Mao dreamed of since his

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<sup>112</sup> Chiang, *Soviet Russia in China*, 48.

report of the peasantry in Hunan province, forming the basis of the support for his communist party.

*“Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan”*

Mao’s “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” in 1927 was another fundamental treatise laying the groundwork for the future strength of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>113</sup> In January and February, Mao traveled through five districts in Hunan, holding conferences in order to collect information on peasant activities in the South. Hunan is only a few hundred miles from Canton, the long-standing base of operations for Sun Yat-sen and the Guomindang. The abuse by the gentry class had created significant dissent among the peasants in the areas surrounding Hunan and Guangdong. It was there that Mao found notable unrest and organization among the peasants. He boldly proclaimed that, “...several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back.”<sup>114</sup> Twenty years later, Mao seemed to be proven right.

The essay was filled with contradictions but nonetheless advocated for peasants, “using the greatest force,” in order to overthrow the landlord classes.<sup>115</sup> For all its imperfections, Mao highlighted some important nuances as it related to the actions of peasants. As he had done

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<sup>113</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” Gentzler, *Changing China*, 217-222; “湖南的农民” 毛泽东集：第一卷。初期 1917 – 1927. 近代史料供应社。一九七五年十月港版。“Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” *The Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, 197-207.

<sup>114</sup> Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan,” Gentzler, *Changing China*, 217.

<sup>115</sup> Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan,” Gentzler, *Changing China*, 219.



before, peasants were separated into rich, middle and poor sections. Peasant participation in revolutionary activity was directly tied to their economic status. Echoing the Soviet analysis of the peasantry in Stalin's collectivization, rich and middle peasants were hesitant to join any peasant associations, where as poor peasants were believed to be the main agents of revolution. It was poor peasants who had been most severely exploited by the gentry and it was they who were willing to participate in the necessary violence.

To Mao, it was not just the local gentry that was repressing the peasants and preventing the creation of the China that he envisioned. "Three systems of authority" subjugated Chinese people – all levels of political authority, clan systems (religious and philosophical), and supernatural systems.<sup>116</sup> Women were further victims of these three systems due to the patriarchal nature of the traditional Chinese social society that placed them beneath men. These were the same criticisms that many of the May Fourth intellectuals openly discussed. After his trip to Hunan, Mao saw the Peasant Associations as the answer to tyranny at every level and sought to promote them as the predominant force in the Communist Revolution. He saw in them not just another political ear ripe for Marxism. More important, they represented the future of the organized and armed militia of the CCP. The poor peasants appeared to be those who were most willing to violently resist those deemed to be enemies of the revolution.

What it did not represent, however, was an inherently Marxist or Nationalist political organization. Landlord classes may have been the target of their fury, but Mao's report says nothing about the peasants understanding of the broader situation in China, nor how they envisioned government. He may have believed that hostility to the peasants was to attack the revolution, but it did not necessarily work both ways. Mao's hope was that the CCP would take

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<sup>116</sup> Mao, "Peasant Movement in Hunan," Gentzler, *Changing China*, 221.

more seriously the political development of peasants throughout China. At that point in his analysis of the Chinese situation, Stalin still believed that both the peasants and the petty bourgeois were the key to CCP success. While Mao's investigation was indeed telling, the political consciousness of the population at large had yet to develop. Even if the CCP had acted immediately following Mao's report and Stalin's orders, the events of the 1930s suggest that it is unlikely that the White Terror would have been prevented.

## Conclusion

As historians examine the dissolution of the United Front, Jiang's White Terror should not be seen as the logical end to two ideologically incompatible organizations. As demonstrated throughout my essay, the political consciousness and ideals among both the peasantry and the ideologues within the Front were forged over the course of a decade of revolution. The Chinese revolution did not occur nor develop in a manner consistent with any other twentieth century revolution, except among broad, or superficial matters.<sup>117</sup> A tremendous amount of domestic and international ideas dramatically influenced the First United Front. Moreover, neither the CCP or GMD was so ideologically rigid that it could not collaborate with other political organizations. Sun's Three Principles remained a place of genuine visionary overlap for many of the leading figures of the United Front. While it is true that the Comintern had constructed plans to subvert the Guomindang via 'revolution from above,' there existed a lack of uniformity on how to handle revolution from below. Sun's successor, Wang Jingwei never wielded the political and moral clout as his predecessor, ultimately leaving room for conflict among the most ambitious revolutionaries.

Jiang Jieshi's demonization of some Chinese revolutionaries as Soviet elements foreign to China altered the course of high politics. Jiang ultimately sought a culturally hegemonic solution during an era in which foreign occupation had devastating effects. His constant political

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<sup>117</sup> As an example, the general overthrowing of a monarchy does not constitute as a similarity when attempting to draw comparisons with China and Russia.

wavering, along with his willingness to continue to seek Soviet aid, shows the relative mutability of his supposedly rigid ideological system of beliefs. It was his White Terror which created the great dichotomy between Chinese Marxists and those within the Guomindang. However foolish, some members of the CCP still sought cooperation even after Jiang's coup in 1926. The Manifesto of the Guomindang revealed that the goal of the United Front was never a singular political authority. The goal of the Front – and ultimately the goal of Sun's revolution – was “the recognition of the freedom and independence of China among the nations of the world.”<sup>118</sup> To this end, all political ideologies under the extremely broad umbrella of Sun's Three Principles had been acceptable. Only in the wake of Jiang's violent purge was extreme political persecution and intolerance become commonplace.

The national revolution may be traced to the 1920s, but it did not coalesce into a coherent unified force until decades after the collapse of the First United Front. Jiang was too concerned with military conquest and power consolidation to carry out Sun's desired national revolution. Participants of the time, such as Mao, Borodin, or Roy took notice of Jiang's intense militarization. Jiang himself conflated anti-imperialism with nationalism which incidentally allowed Mao to appropriate nationalism as a later tenet of Maoism in the war against Japan. More critical, the 1924-27 period should be understood as another developmental stage of modern political ideology in revolutionary China. That period was brought to an abrupt end when Jiang launched the terror, forcing the permanent dichotomization of Chinese communism and nationalism. Where Sun's principles had once provided common ground for open political dialogue, Jiang's narrow vision closed it.

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<sup>118</sup> Kuomintang Nation Revolution, “Manifest of the Kuomintang,” 199.

Of course, contradictions existed everywhere. The writings of Chen and Mao, or the actions of Jiang and Wang Jingwei, betray how they were only beginning to discover the key to leading a revolution to its successful conclusion. Their ideas of governance were naïve and their understanding of the relationship between government and its people were in the process of being shaped. In the future, I would like to continue this research by detailing those issues. Greater access to Chinese primary sources would allow for the continued exploration of Chinese nationalism and the ability to detail precisely how it continued to manifest among the population. There is much more to be said about the peasants' relationship with the Guomindang and the secluded Communist party. Nationalism and political ideology are topics that deserve a lot more attention, particularly in the Revolutionary Era, as there is a very critical interplay between traditional Chinese culture, national revolution, and the later Japanese occupation. Ideally, this examination would take place outside the bounds of the "who won or lost China," context.

## Appendix: Notable Historical Actors

### Chinese

**Chen Duxiu** 陈独秀 - Oct. 8, 1879 - May 27, 1942. Founding Member of the CCP. (Supporter of KMT alliance).

**Chen Gongbo** 陈公博. Supporter of Jiang and the Japanese puppet regime. Author of *The Communist Movement in China*.

**Jiang Jieshi** 蒋介石 – (Chiang Kaishek) - October 31, 1887 – April 5, 1975. Leader of the Nationalist Party in China. Founded the Republic of China (Taiwan).

**Li Dazhao** 李大钊 – October 29, 1888 April 28, 1927. Founding member of CCP. Hung after Peking raid on Soviet Embassy.

**Mao Zedong** 毛泽东 Communist Revolutionary and Founder of the People’s Republic of China.

**Sun Yat-sen – Sun Zhongshan – 孙中山 –** Founder of the Guomindang, Father of Modern China.

**Peng Pai**- 澎湃 – First known organizer of the peasantry into a pro-communist force. Credited with establishing the foundation for Mao’s peasant revolution.

**Tang Shengzhi** 唐生智 – October 12, 1889 – April 6, 1970. Warlord, Aided Jiang in the seizure of Beijing.

**Wang Jingwei** 汪精卫 – May 4 1883 – November 10, 1944. Political ally of Sun Yet-sen until his death in 1925. Member of the GMD until 1937 when he began collaboration with Japan.

Russian & Comintern

**Vasily Konstantinovich Blyukher** a.k.a. Galin. Chief military strategist to Jiang during the Northern Expedition. Well respected even among Jiang's circle due to his military prowess.

**Mikhail Borodin**- Most powerful Comintern delegate, Official Title "Adviser to Guomintang Government" working alongside Sun Yat-sen. (Strongest supporter of the CCP-GMD alliance).

**Adolf Joffe** – Comintern Agent, struck an agreement with Sun in 1923 detailing the nature of Chinese and Soviet cooperation.

**Vladimir Lenin** – Father of the Russian Revolution and ideologue of Marxism-Leninism. Bolshevik revolutionary and leader of the Soviet Union until his death in 1924.

**Henk Sneevliet** – a.k.a. Maring 斯里佛烈 His Chinese name Sleveland (a.k.a. Sneevlit, Maring) was found in *The Communist Movement in China*, an essay published in 1924 by Chen Gongbo 陈公博. Comintern agent who formed the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921. Potentially arrived in China in May 1920. Perhaps along with Voitinsky and S.A. Dalin.

**Manabendra Nath Roy, a.k.a. M.N. Roy**- Indian Communist Revolutionary, Comintern Agent – orthodox Marxist, called for CCP autonomy. Pushed for peasant revolution.

**Joseph Stalin** – General Secretary of the Soviet Union from 1929-1953. Had the final say in Comintern activities in China after Lenin's death.

**Gregory Voitinsky** – First known Comintern Agent to make personal contact with Sun. Later opposed Stalin's strategy in China.

### Warlords 1916-1928

*This is for general reference and is in no way exhaustive. These are just a few of the Warlords who played a major role in the balance of power between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party and thus are discussed in some manner in my work.*

General Zhang Xun – Devout Manchu supporter, a military escort of Cixi. Led Military coup in June 1917 on President Li Yuanhong in Peking. General Zhang declared the restoration of the Qing dynasty, putting Puyi back on the throne. Puyi was deposed in mid-July by rival Generals. His defeat launched the Warlord Era.<sup>119</sup>

General Yan Xishan – Shanxi Region – Drew from European and U.S. heroes to construct “his ideal image.”<sup>120</sup> Tried to balance “ism’s” in order to create a balanced rule.

General Zhang Zuolin – Peking – Fierce opponent of Communism. In November 1926, Zhang sent his army of 150,000 men south to the Yangzi in order to stop the Guomindang approach. Though he made an unexpected change, reversing his original orders. The CCP suspected that Jiang held secret negotiations with the Japanese and Zhang, giving the GMD a clear path to Shanghai. After CCP retaliation, Zhang launched his infamous raid on the Russian embassy in Peking. Li Dazhao was hung as a result.

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<sup>119</sup> Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 272-273.

<sup>120</sup> Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 274.



General Tang Shengzhi – Hunan – Originally anti-Guomindang, defected in June 1926 to become Jiang’s Eighth Corp’s in the Northern Expedition.

General Bai Chongxi – Guangxi – Defected to the NRA to become commander of Jiang’s Seven Corps. Bai led the White Terror in Shanghai beginning on the morning of April 12, 1927.

General Chen Jiongming – Shantou – Defeated by Jiang in February 1925.

Feng Yuxiang – Wuhan Region, known as the Christian Warlord.

*Allegiance from the Coup in 1926 to the Purge in April 1927.*

Warlord	Region	Alignment
Zhang Zuolin	Peking	GMD
Yan Xishan	Shanxi	Qing/Confucian reformer
Zhang Xun	Nanjing	Qing restoration
Tang Shengzhi	Hunan	GMD
Feng Yuxiang	Wuhan	GMD
Bai Chongxi	Guangxi	GMD
Chen Jiongming	Shantou	Non-aligned

*Early Revolutionary Time line 1911-1927*

*Again, this is in no way exhaustive. This timeline serves to highlight major moments in the early revolutionary process.*

- February 1912 – Puyi abdicates as the last Manchu emperor at age six.
- February 1912 – Sun Yat-sen steps aside in claims for presidency, Yuan Shikai supported as President.
- Dec 1915 - Yuan Shikai inaugurated as emperor.
- March 1916 – Yuan Shikai ends Monarchy.
- March 1916 – Li Yuanhong succeeds Yuan.
- June 1916 – Yuan dies.
- June 1917 – General Zhang Xun leads coup, briefly restores Puyi to the throne.
- July 1917 – Puyi deposed, Warlordism begins.
- May 1919- May 4<sup>th</sup> movement in response to the failures at Versailles.
- Fall 1920 – Voitinsky meets with Sun Zhong Shan.
- July 1921- Formation of the CCP with Comintern agent Maring.
- January 1923 – First Soviet agreement struck between Sun and Adolf Joffe.
- October 1923 – Borodin becomes special advisor to the GMD.
- January 1924 – First National Congress of the United Front.
- January 1924 – Death of Vladimir Lenin
- January 1924 – Maring sent back to Moscow
- May 1924 – Creation of Whampoa Military Academy
- March 1925 – Death of Sun Zhong Shan
- March 1925 – Wang Jing Wei as Sun’s successor

- May 1926 – Zhongshan Gunboat incident and Jiang's Coup
- July 1926 – Borodin's eight concessions to Jiang
- July 1926 – Wang Jing Wei out as leader of GMD, replaced by Jiang
- August 1926 – Beginning of the Northern Expedition
- December 1926 – Warlords through Shanghai defeated and fold into the NRA
- January 1927 – Mao tours Hunan, eventually publishes his Report on the Peasantry
- March 1927 – M.N. Roy arrives in China
- May 1927 – Jiang's White Terror launched via NRA armies and the Green Gang.
- July 1927 – Official collapse of the United Front after Wang Jing Wei breaks with the CCP.
- July 1927 – Roy and Borodin recalled back to Moscow.

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