Chapter III  Rejuvenation: Organizing China (1936-1956)

Chiang Kaishek flanked by Mao Zedong and US Ambassador to China, Patrick J. Hurley, during negotiations in Chongqing, August 1945

Voices from the 1940s --the three roads

[Liang Shuming]: Political Program of the League of Chinese Democratic Political Groups (1941)¹

1. To resist Japan to the end; to recover all lost territory and sovereignty; to oppose all compromise [with the Japanese].

2. To put the democratic spirit into practice by ending on-party rule; to establish an [interim] organ, representative of all parties and groups, for the discussion of national affairs until a constitution is implemented.

3. To strengthen internal unity by fundamentally settling all current points of disagreement in order to normalize their [the diverse parties and groups] relations.

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¹ The League’s political program was published in the October 1, 1941 issue of the League’s official newspaper, Guangming boa [Light] (Hong Kong), as translated in Alitto, The Last Confucian, p. 309.
4. To supervise and help the Guomindang in thoroughly carrying out the "Outline of National Resistance and Reconstruction."

5. To establish actual national unity, and oppose local separatism, but also to define suitably the jurisdiction of the central and local governments.

6. To oppose all party organizations within the armed forces and the use of armed forces in inter party struggles. The army belongs to the nation and the military personnel should be loyal to the nation. ....

Wen Jize (1914-1999): Diary of a Struggle (1942)

Monday, June 1

Today, the central theme of the meeting progressed from eradicating extreme democratic tendencies to a discussion of Wang Shiwei's thought. The majority of the fifteen speeches in the day concentrated on this issue. The third speech was given by Li Yan. First, he gave some statistics: Many of our Institute's researchers more or less sympathized with Wang Shiwei when the first read "Wild Lilies." Even those who disliked this essay did not realize the fundamental mistake of the author's position. But over two months of studying rectification documents, and, moreover, attending the meetings convened by the Central Committee Propaganda Department, studying [Mao Zedong's] "Combat Liberalism" and "On Egalitarianism," [Liu Shaoqi's] "How to be a Good Communist Party Member" and other documents and the debates on "Wild Lilies" and "Politicians, Artists" have clearly enabled everybody to know the seriousness of the errors in thought and method contained in "Wild Lilies." (How necessary is thought reform! How important are the rectification documents!) Li Yan went on to report on the process of the six talks held between Wang and the party committee. Wang did not admit his mistakes until now. In order to "cure the illness to save the patient," we must completely expose Wang's mistakes and carry out a serious ideological struggle against him.

Wen Yiduo (1899-1946): The Poet's Farewell (1946)

A few days ago, as we are all aware, one of the most despicable and shameful events of history occurred here in Kunming. What crime did Mr. Li Gongpu commit that would cause him to be murdered in such a vicious way? He merely used his pen to write a few articles, he used his mouth to speak out, and what he said and wrote was nothing more than what any Chinese with a conscience would say. We all have pens and mouths. If there is a reason for it, any not speak out? Why should people be beaten, killed, or even worse, killed in a devious way? [Applause]


3. Wen Yiduo, "Zhuihou yici de jianghua" [The Last Speech], given at Yunnan University in Kunming on July 15, 1946 [Wen was shot by government agents shortly after the speech], translated in Cheng & Lestz, The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection, p. 337.
Are there any special agents [Guomindang spies] here today? Stand up! If you are men, stand up! Come forward and speak? Why did you kill Mr. Li? [Enthusiastic applause] You kill people but refuse to admit it and even circulate false rumours that the murder happened because of some sexual scandal or as the result of Communists killing other Communists. Shameless! Shameless! [Applause] This is the shamelessness of the Guomindang but the glory belongs to Mr. Li. Mr Li participated in Kunming's democratic movement for a number of years. Now he has returned to Kunming and sacrificed his own life. This is Mr. Li's glory, it is the glory of the people of Kunming!

**The Ideological Moment: Building China**

Revolution had brought new regimes to power--the Nationalist state based in Nanjing from 1927 and a series of Communist Soviets, first in the mountains of Southeast China (Jiangxi) and then in the North West (Yan'an) and across north China. In the years after 1935 each was in the position to implement its revolutionary goals and each set about rejuvenating China through nation-building in the areas they controlled. In all, there were three paths to this rejuvenation at mid century: Sunism, Communism, and the "Third Road" of liberalism. The Guomindang (GMD) Nationalists pushed the first under Chiang Kaishek, the Communists, under Mao Zedong by 1942, the second, and the "Third Road" was pursued by various liberal intellectuals through small political parties like the Democratic League. All three had their intellectuals. Hu Shi, perhaps China's most famous intellectual during these years, came to serve the Nationalists, even as China's ambassador to the US during the war, though he pushed the GMD dictatorship towards democracy. Deng Tuo, a journalist and theorist for the CCP came to define the role of the intellectual cadre. Older intellectuals, such as Liang Shuming, and younger scholars, like Wu Han, tried to serve China through the Democratic League. After the war, a generation of patriotic Chinese intellectuals trained and living overseas chose to return, largely to serve the new society under the CCP and soon its new state, the People's Republic of China. Amongst these returnees were the historian, Zhou Yiliang, the rocket scientist and Qian Xuesen.

The question that defined this ideological moment was *how to build the New China?* The answers China's intellectuals and political leaders offered all address national construction. Nation building seeks to strengthen the administration of the state and make coherent the social life and public culture of a polity. It has been the enduring project of 20th century China and was
the dominant ideological moment at mid-century and at its end. The nation was the solution that revolution came up with. The Nationalists and the Communists each had their own version. For both regimes, the single strongest shaping force of this ideological moment was war, total war—the devastating invasion of the Imperial Japanese Army in 1937 and the eight years known in China as the anti-Japanese War, to which the Chinese civil war was a heartbreaking coda. The dark side of each regime came to the fore in response to the years of unrelenting violence.

By 1945 China as a nation under the Nationalists had survived and the Communist Party under Mao Zedong had survived. In August and September 1945 a victorious Nationalist government accepted the surrender of Japanese forces in China. Earlier, in April 1945 the Communist Party had held its 7th Party Congress in Yan'an celebrating its survival and growth and consolidating the power of Mao. That same year, professors in China's famous Southwestern United University began returning from Yuannan to their home universities in Beijing and other areas that had been occupied by the Japanese. Many of them belonged to one or another of the small democratic parities.

In truth, however, there were two Chinas in 1945, and there were two contenders for national leadership: Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party government in southern China, as well as all the main cities around China, and Chairman Mao Zedong and his Chinese Communist Party government in a dozen "revolutionary base area" administrations across rural North and Central China, and soon Manchuria. Both had armies at their command and both conformed to the new politics of ideological leadership. Chiang had staked his claim as the modern version of a sage leader in his immensely popular 1943 book, China's Destiny.\(^4\) Sun Yat-sen was the spiritual father of the Nationalist revolution, the Guomindang was his church, and Chiang was now the chief prophet. The Three People's Principles, and related writing of Dr. Sun, were the public creed of the regime. Chiang had much to bring to the table. He had endured and contributed to victory in the anti-Japanese war, he had achieved the historic mission of ending unequal treaties with Britain and the US in January 1943 and established China as a "world power" that met in conclave with the US, Britain and the Soviet Union, and he had the political and economic support of the United States.

Mao Zedong staked his claim on his writings, many from the Yan'an Rectification Movement, that were collected in the Selected Works of Mao Zedong in 1944. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin were the great gods of Communism, the Communist Party was their church, and Mao was their Chinese prophet of this international liberation of working peoples. Mao Zedong had much to offer China's public in general and intellectuals in particular. While the truth on the ground was darker, the Communists were widely credited with major contributions to the defeat of the Japanese, the behaviour of their army was seen as enlightened while still being able to keep local peace, their local administration contrasted as beneficent in comparison to the corrupt local GMD bullies. Mao's ideas were much more inspirational than Chiang's to youth, and he had the political support of the Soviet Union.

The liberals had much intellectual power, the support of US and European governments, and popular support in the cities, but the liberals did not have an organization to match either Bolshevik party nor did they have an army. They were the "third force", the Democratic League (disbanded in 1947) and smaller democratic parties based in the cities and populated by professionals, academics and intellectuals. As China's cosmopolitan elite, many liberals had trained in America and Europe, leading major universities, government research labs, business and media. They sought to bring modern society and liberal democratic politics to China. They took the Republic of China at its word and formed political parties and militated for an end to Sun Yatsen's "political tutelage" and the installation of true constitutional government with popular elections. These intellectuals and professionals saw the road to rejuvenation and nation building through liberalism and democratic politics. Both Chiang and Mao made overtures to the liberals, since they had considerable public credibility, especially among the educated urban populations key to their modernization drives. Yet both the Nationalists and the Communists were not above controlling, bullying and on occasion killing intellectuals who seriously got in the way of their Party plans. By 1949 liberals would be faced with a forced choice--go with Chiang to Taiwan, stay in China with the Communists, or abandon China for the life of an overseas Chinese.

War and Industrialization
The total war of the previous seven years, and endemic fighting for the decades before that, had fundamentally shaped China's contending states. Full-scale war had put an end to the revolutionary efforts of the Nationalist party. During the Nanjing Decade (1928-1937) Chiang Kaishek's new government had tried to build a modern nation state, had struggled to improve public morality in the New Life Movement, and pushed to overturn the unequal treaties. The New Life Movement was launched in February 1934 to revive national morality to make China and the Chinese modern but with Confucian characteristics. Chiang started with a hygiene campaign, but the whole movement soon degenerated into a farce, seen by many as a poor copy of the Fascist youth organizations in Europe. However, as Wennan Liu argues, Chiang saw the New Life Movement as the fulfillment of "political tutelage" of the people promised by Sun Yatsen to prepare them to be modern, democratic citizens. Chiang's decision to use state power to enforce the campaign did not succeed but it reflects the same effort to enforce the "renovation of the people" that Liang Qichao's generation had advocated. Meanwhile, Nationalist efforts to build sound local and central administration collapsed in the face of the Japanese invasion.

Revolution, however, proceeded apace in the CCP controlled areas. Ironically, the Anti-Japanese War (which we know as World War II) had given the Communists their first period of sustained territorial control in which to implement their social and political revolution. In the northwest, soon known as the Yan'an period for the CCP capital in a Shaanxi market town from 1936-1947, the CCP opted for moderate rent reform in order to bring "enlightened gentry" on board. This was because of the renewed United Front between the CCP and the Nationalist government negotiated in early 1937. Nonetheless, the Party in general and its emerging supreme leader, Mao Zedong, in particular, used this window of relative stability to articulate and train a radically Bolshevik political system built around a robust Party-Army that was, in fact, more

7. Wennan Liu, "Redefining the Moral and Legal Roles of the State in Everyday Life: The New Life Movement in China in the Mid-1930s," Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review, E-Journal No. 7 (June 2013), pp. 30-59. Liu provides a thoughtful review of previous studies that saw the movement as Fascist and newer ones that see it a predictable political technology of modernization, pp. 31-32.
solicitous to the farming population than Nationalist or Japanese armies, but which was completely dictatorial in its politics. It was effective in bringing a new order to Communist areas but it demanded total commitment and obedience to Party leadership. The Rectification Campaign of 1942-44 succeed where Chiang's New Life Movement failed; it successfully married a new public morality with Party discipline and military control within the CCP's rural "base areas." 

The civil war between 1946 and 1949 forced the hand of all involved, including China's liberals. There was no third option, though the liberals tried. Liang Shuming joined Westernized liberals in forming what became the Democratic League in 1941. Whether Westernizing or neo-traditional, these third road intellectuals sought solutions for China, a road for China's nation-building that was independent of the two warring Leninist parties and their two -isms. They hoped for a more limited Republican state that would keep the peace and build the roads, but leave social space for individuals and communities to address the needs of local order, community revival, and cultural resurgence and public education. One thing that the GMD and CCP agreed on was that this third option was not acceptable. Both proffered their version of Sun Yatsen's pedagogical state that would fulfill the aspiration of traditional Chinese statecraft to "transform the people through the rites." They differed only in the rigour of their ideology and their ability to enforce it.

By the end of 1949 the Nationalists had been defeated and retreated to the island of Taiwan. The CCP now faced the greater challenge nation-building in China proper--some 400 million people and the huge territory of the defunct Qing empire (some 10 million sq km of territory, about the size of the US with Alaska or slightly smaller than the EU with Greenland) and the terrible residue of a decade of total war. The CCP administrative apparatus was was disciplined and coherent after the application of the Yan'an Rectification model of education and purges throughout the CCP administered areas in the 1940s. Thus, in the wake of the PLA armies CCP cadre were able to implement land reform. Landlords were shot, and more than that, CCP cadre mobilized local villagers to try, sentence, and execute their former landlords on the theory that enacting the revolution would mobilize the masses for the next stages of the revolutionary

project. Land reform also aimed to achieve the unity of intellectuals and peasants that Liang Shuming had attempted, and to some degree it achieved this utopian goal, at first.10

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However, both avenues--service to the Guomindang state or to the Communist revolution--carried great peril for China's intellectuals. While the corruption and repression of dissent under the Guomindang only got worse after the defeat of the Japanese in 1945 and the return of the Nationalists to their capital in Nanjing,11 service to the Communists was no idyll. Mao had consolidated his power in the Rectification Movement of 1942-44. This turned out to be a fateful development for intellectuals for several reasons. The campaign combined "political study" (closer to state-run religious conversion classes that produced "exegetical bonding" among the faithful) with authoritarian administration and uncompromising enforcement of Party policy.12 While reactionary forces were exterminated, so too was intellectual diversity and dissent. The unity that emerged out of the Yan'an Rectification Movement was impressive and certainly contributed to the CCP victory in 1949, but the cost of unity was high. In the name of the goal of a socialist, independent, and prosperous New China, China's intellectuals submitted to a dictatorship of the proletariat run by Mao and the CCP leadership. These were dire times and we do the participants injustice if we do not call to mind the utter devastation they faced, the proven venality and incompetence of the Nationalist government, and the lack of any viable alternative to improve their situation. The question of this ideological moment--how to build the New China?--really was a forced choice between the Nationalists or the Communists, as China's


11. A rich account of intellectual experience of during these years is given in John Israel, Lianda: A Chinese University in War and Revolution (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

12. The classic dualism of the Yan'an Rectification Movement (idealism and repression) are captured in Mark Selden, The Yenan Way and Merle Goldman, Literary Dissent in Communist China. A more recent account that includes interviews with survivors of the rectification campaign that reflect the "exegetical bonding" created from the intense study sessions is given by Apter and Saich, Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic.
small but vibrant community of elite political liberals and some progressive business leaders were to learn most painfully.

**China's Propaganda States**

The Nationalists and Communists provided a frame for intellectual participation in public life. Both were Bolshevik parties and both openly claimed the heritage of Sun Yatsen's reformed Nationalist Party from the early 1920s and the role as an enlightened vanguard that would lead China to glory under their "political tutelage." These were China's propaganda states, not unlike German and Italian efforts. These systems required awakened functionaries, elite staff endowed with Sun Yatsen's "foreknowledge." The Nationalists under Chiang Kaishek had begun the "partification" of universities and major institutions as part of this tutelage by the early 1930s. Part of their story is the failure of this effort. The most influential intellectuals, like Hu Shi, were prevailed upon to take up office (sometimes), but few "converted" to the disciplined role of an intellectual cadre for Chiang Kaishik.

The Communists in general and Mao Zedong in particular succeeded in creating China's propaganda state. Maoism provided the greatest opportunity and most fateful peril for China's intellectuals. On the one hand, Mao's revolution offered a noble vocation for China's intellectuals at mid-century: service to a revolutionary and idealistic regime that appeared to fight China's enemies (both foreigner invaders and domestic capitalists and landlord oppressors) and serve China's masses through an uncorrupted government administration. By joining land reform to give land to the tiller intellectuals were given the chance to change local conditions and, more satisfyingly, become once again teachers of the people. Hundreds of thousands of educated Chinese leapt at the chance to serve China in this way.

Beginning in the 1940s, the Communists brought this system to life through rectification campaigns designed to train, discipline and mobilize the Chinese people in service of social justice and national wealth. Chinese intellectuals were a key group--among workers, peasants, and soldiers--to be transformed into cadres. This campaign style is also significant because it set the style of politics for the People's Republic of China--mass activism, led by the Party-State, using straw men as "negative examples" to mobilize the public and to justify continued dictatorship of the proletariat (one-Party rule). This model would continue in the PRC under Mao, reaching a crescendo in the Cultural Revolution.
Nonetheless, from the start, there was internal dissent within the Communist movement and even within the Maoist camp. In this chapter we will see the cases of Ding Ling and Wang Shiwei, and there would continue to be internal debates all through the Mao period and into the post-Mao period since his death in 1976. There was dissent within the Guomindang and across Nationalist society, as well, and some, like Li Gongpu and Wen Yiduo got shot for their temerity. Many of the most daring, the most brave, and the most tragic of China's intellectuals took it upon themselves to speak truth to power in this most direct and dangerous manner. This history of Chinese dissent against these two revolutionary regimes is a important part of our story, a tragedy with inspiring examples of intellectual integrity and personal fortitude.

*Propaganda--the Directed Public Sphere of the Party State*

The Communist and Nationalist parties took as their model the propaganda system first outlined by Lenin in his 1902 pamphlet, "What is to be Done?", and implemented in the new Soviet Union in the early 1920s under Lunacharski's "Commissariat of Enlightenment." This is the system Peter Kenez calls "the propaganda state." Kenez's picture of the Soviet information system gives a vivid sense of the goals of print communism to which both parties aspired and which were achieved by the CCP by the 1940s:

The newspaper was the blood-circulation system of the body politic: it carried essential information everywhere rapidly. ... The average citizen learned what were the legitimate public issues as defined by the leaders and learned the verbiage of political discourse. For the activist and for the Party functionary, reading the newspaper diligently was even more important. They found out how they had to act in small and large matters and learned how to discuss political and even nonpolitical issues with their fellow citizens.\(^\text{13}\)

The CCP borrowed more than a media system from the Soviets. They created their own version of the Bolsheviks' propaganda state. Peter Kenez calls this a state-dominated polity that co-ordinates the education of cadres, the development of political language, the politicization of ever-larger segments of life, and the substitution of 'voluntary' state-controlled societies for

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independent organizations. Propaganda was not only a total media system; it was a political project. In China propaganda provided the concrete application of what came to be known as Maoist leadership methods through political campaigns (yundong). Party propaganda in newspapers and other media was meant to be a major example of the 'from the masses, to the masses' function of Party leadership in which Party representatives go down among the common folk, discover their problems and needs, go back and synthesize those particular problems with the insights of their ideology and finally return to the masses to publicize the Party's insights among the people in such a way as to make them take on such formulations as their own values. This was seen as transforming the masses through education (jiaohua). It fulfilled the dream of Sun Yatsen's pedagogical state. However, the Nationalists destroyed the local infrastructure of its own Party organization as a part of their purge of leftists after their break with the Communists. By the mid-1930s it was only the CCP that was effectively developing the institutional capacity to bring a full propaganda state into being.

The information system of the Chinese propaganda state corresponds in many ways to what Jürgen Habermas calls as the "public sphere" in European societies. This comparison is important not only for making the Chinese experience more comparable with other examples but also for highlighting the social role of intellectual service. The key difference in the European example, of course, is that Habermas sees the public sphere as independent of state power. In China's propaganda state the propaganda system has functioned as a sort of "directed public sphere" in which the Party directly manages "civil society." Miklós Haraszti has shown the appeal of directed culture for intellectuals under state socialism in Hungary. In his ironic novel, The Velvet Prison, Harazsti's cynical censor concludes, "Socialism, contrary to appearances, does


15. The classic formulation is in "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership," issued by the CCP central committee but included in The Selected Works of Mao (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), vol. III.

16. Bradley Geisart, CQ article.

not suppress the artists' Nietzschean desires but satisfies them. ... The state prevents my art from becoming a commodity, and it guarantees my status as a teacher of the nation.\textsuperscript{18} The propaganda system in China under the CCP came to include the arts and universities, as well as the media. Writers, professors, researchers, as well as journalists--indeed, all \textit{professions}--were incorporated into the propaganda and education system under the direct management of the Propaganda Department of the CCP.\textsuperscript{19} In Mao's China there was no other public space for intellectuals.

\textit{Intellectual Cadres--Servants of the Propaganda State}

The examination elite of Confucian scholar-officials passes in these decades, and the social space previously occupied by that group comes to be occupied by three alternatives, of which one attempted to maintain the integrated and holistic role of the scholar-official, and two which represented real innovations in the public life of China: the cadre, the professional, and the intellectual as independent writer and commentator. The professional and the independent intellectual were important developments in these decades, but the cadre role came to dominate intellectual options by 1950. Professional organizations (including universities) and the media increasingly came under the control of one of China's party states. The cadre, and in particular, the intellectual cadre, serving either of the new Leninist Party-States, the Nationalists or the CCP, combined the role of certified state administrator with a person of moral training and literacy. However, the role of cadre was both more comprehensive, including low-level functionaries such as clerks and police that had fallen outside of the Qing administrative system, and more diversified, including incumbents who did not consider themselves to be scholars or intellectuals. The struggles of intellectuals to cope with their re-integration into a new state system defines the intellectual history of the second half of China's long twentieth Century.

These were China's \textit{establishment intellectuals}. They were modern day scholar-officials in Leninist regimes who traveled in the most influential of China's metropolitan cultural and

\textsuperscript{18} Victor Serge's ideas on "directed" thought and culture are developed by the Hungarian poet and sociologist, Miklós Haraszti, in \textit{The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism} (NY: Basic Books,1987), 6 ff.; quote from Harazsti, p. 24, 94.

\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{xuanjiao xitong} is described in Kenneth Lieberthal, \textit{Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform} (NY: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 198-208.
political circles. They were at the same time both high-level intellectuals and high level cadres. Their senior positions in the Party-State made them high level cadres. Their commitments to high and general intellectual culture, their engagement in intellectual activities that define the "ultimate" or the ideal--issues inseparable from political authority--and their affirmation, acceptance and service to the ruling authorities makes them fit Edward Shils' definition of intellectuals. What makes China's establishment intellectuals different from similarly placed elites in other political systems is the system they served and the traditions from which they drew. China's version of establishment intellectuals could only exist in a system in which political control of culture is widely perceived as legitimate. Such was the CCP's propaganda state. The traditions that both state and intellectual drew from included both an idealized version of the Chinese tradition of scholar-officials (shi) who had served and in turn been certified by the Chinese dynasties through the Confucian examination system, and also included the elitism and social engineering goals of Leninism. Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Party-State embraced the same traditions and ambitions but was less successful in gaining popular support for its efforts to control culture. Thus, Chen Bulei, whom we will meet shortly as Chiang's private secretary, was an exception to the rule of a more secular, professional role of intellectuals under the Guomindang. Deng Tuo, the cultured propagandist, became but one of generations of intellectuals--elite and ordinary--who served China's propaganda state under Mao and his successors. China's establishment intellectuals under Mao became the ideal version of the intellectual cadre.

A defining feature of China's propaganda states has been the interpenetration of the Party-state and the intellectual. This was not a one-way street in which a distant "Organization" dictated to passive intellectuals. In practice, intellectuals were an important part of the Party state, often among its leadership. It is hard to think of Mao as an intellectual, despite his huge corpus of theoretical writings, because he has been the enemy of free-speaking intellectuals. However, by any reasonable definition he was an intellectual. More so, Mao provided the


21. Defined in Hamrin and Cheek, eds., *China's Establishment Intellectuals*, p. 4. The version of the scholar-official tradition was "idealized" because that image neglected the reality of most Qing-period intellectuals was not service to the state (as jobs were severely limited), but other cultural and administrative work in local society.
justification for a priestly function for intellectuals that recaptured some of the traditional élan of the Confucian examination elite. That is, Mao served as "the local intellectual cadre writ-large" just as the Pope is the local parish priest writ large, or the emperor of the Qing was the great Sage model for the local sage Confucian country magistrate or lineage patriarch. Those who served and who enforced Maoism—including the discipling and purging of dissenters—included similar, if less famous, intellectuals. This reminds us that, as Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik has pointed out, "in China, conflicts we normally regard as being conflicts between the Party and intellectuals are conflicts amongst intellectuals."23

Finally, the revolutionary Propaganda State offered intellectuals a way to overcome their bourgeois status in the Marxist world view by becoming revolutionary intellectuals. Just as seeing China in terms of Lenin's world revolution redeemed the failed Empire and Republic by making China the vanguard of the oppressed world that would lead the overthrow of capitalism and the liberation of workers everywhere, so, too, did the Party offer to redeem intellectuals from being lackeys of the capitalist class by making them revolutionary servants to the historical force that would lead China in its global emancipatory project. The Party was always ambivalent about intellectuals ideologically because of the link between China's intellectuals and the bourgeois world of treaty port cities and Western-style universities and practically because intellectuals criticized Party errors and could, and did, offer competing proposals, ideas, or interpretations of Marxism that challenged Party orthodoxy. In China's propaganda states, the way to stay safe and gain influence was to position oneself as a revolutionary, as an intellectuals loyal to the revolutionary ideology of the Party. This required discipline and limited intellectual freedom, but it offered China's marginalized intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s three appealing roles, a functional role as organizational leaders of society, an emotional role as heroes saving China, and a cultural role as sophisticates or culture bearers.24

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22. Sun Yatsen attempted this same role with less success, see Fitzgerald, *Awakening China*.


The Intellectual Cadre: Deng Tuo and Wang Shiwei

The role of the intellectual cadre may have faltered under the Nationalists and may have failed to draw many liberals to Chiang Kaishek's vision of a new China. The Communist, however, were much more successful in attracting a range of intellectuals into service. Some, like Wu Han, served largely on their own terms, at least at first. Some found Marxism-Leninism a compelling explanation for what was wrong with China, what had to be done, and what they personally could do that would make a difference. Deng Tuo (1911-1966), who served the Party for some thirty-five years as a journalist, propagandist, and theorist, like Chen Bulei reflects the life of the less-than-famous intellectuals who chose to serve one of the two Bolshevik parties at mid-century. Unlike Chen Bulei, Deng Tuo found his service to the CCP as an intellectual cadre to be not only satisfying but also an honourable vocation.25

Deng Tuo's career reflects the "deal" offered to intellectuals by the CCP. Born in 1911 in Fuzhou, Fujian just across the straits from Taiwan, Deng Tuo was the fifth son of a retired Qing district magistrate (and thus also a degree holder). It was not a wealthy family, but prosperous enough and highly cultured. Elder brothers studied at universities and came to serve the Nationalist government. Deng himself was rigorously trained in the traditional arts, particularly calligraphy and classical poetry, skills in which he excelled all his life. His father's traditional Confucian erudition, however, did not conflict with new ideas. Deng Tuo read New Youth and other iconoclastic May Fourth journals at home, at his father's urging. This provided Deng a sound grounding in the high culture and arts of China and a faith that Chinese identity was compatible with new ideas. He was schooled in the new middle schools of the 1920s and saw first hand what happens when the local warlords take over. Thus radicalized, the young Deng Tuo went to university in Shanghai to make revolution.

Deng Tuo joined the CCP in Shanghai at a singularly inauspicious moment, 1930. Only a rump of the Party really functioned in Shanghai after the brutal purge by the Nationalists in 1927, even though the formal leadership hung on to this urban perch before decamping in 1931 to the Jiangxi Soviet in the hinterland. Deng served the Party as a street propagandist and organizer of demonstrations. He was promptly arrested by Nationalist authorities. It took his farther some eight months to get his son out of jail, and not before he had been tortured and seen

comrades executed for their political views. The young Deng returned to his home in Fuzhou and in a few years to further study in Kaifeng at Henan University where he took a degree in Economics in 1937. During these years he abandoned street demonstrations for his beloved scholarship, but he did not abandon his Marxism. However, he did lose organizational contact with the Party (as was often the case in the 1930s as the Nationalists intensified their repression of radicals). Nonetheless, Deng's faith in Marxism-Leninism was formed in these years of study, particularly research into Chinese social history. He published a half dozen solid articles in major journals and published a major historical monograph, *A History of Famine Relief in China* (1937) that is still used by scholars today. Deng's historical studies adopt the perspective of historical materialism and draw more from Engels' economic determinism of class and modes of production than on Lenin's ideas of mobilizing the proletariat. The vision of social revolution, however, captured his imagination. In 1933, in a debate with a much more senior scholar, Zhang Dongsun, the young Marxist declared:

... that the society of the future will be entirely different from the present, that humanity will be able to control the natural world and moreover eliminate the natural character of society, that the development of history will be completely subject to human prescription, that people's will shall be completely free. Then human society will make unprecedented advances, developing humanity to the highest level of culture ...

To serve this revolution was, indeed, a heroic calling. The Japanese invasion in 1937 provided Deng Tuo the opportunity to take up that calling. He fled to the countryside of North China where the Communists were setting up a base area that became known as the Jin Cha Ji Border Region (for the single character names of the three provinces along whose borders the area was founded, Shanxi, Chahar, and Hebei). There the young radical intellectual re-connected with the Party and found the opportunity to use his writing skills to help organize the revolution in one place. He became a leading propagandist in this rural base and edited its newspaper. He also became the research advisor to its military leader, Nie Rongzhen and later its Party chief, Peng Zhen. Deng served in this rural base area throughout the anti-Japanese war. During most of

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these years, the Border Region, as a "base behind enemy lines," was subject to repeated and brutal attacks by the Japanese army. Yet these were perhaps Deng Tuo's happiest years and certainly amongst his most productive. There is a strange freedom in adversity, where goals are clear and a sense of historic purpose justifies effort and sacrifice.

The administrative system Deng served in the Jin Cha Ji Base Area was the Party-State of the CCP that was made famous in just a few years under Mao in Yan'an. It was an integrated system of organizations all interpenetrated by Party cadres to ensure that each moving part followed the ideological and administrative policies of the Party. It was the Propaganda State of Bolshevism and Deng Tuo loved it. Writing in the summer of 1938 as editor of the Border Region's newspaper, *Resistance News*, Deng reflected:

> Of course, the production of *Resistance News* has its mission. It must become the propagandizer and organizer of the Border Region's mass resistance and salvation movement, it must represent the needs of the broad masses, reflect and pass on the real conditions and experiences of the broad masses' struggle, promote various aspects of work, and educate the masses themselves.

This comprehensive role of Party leadership would be enshrined by Mao Zedong in the 1940s as the "from the masses, to the masses" cycle of leadership. The moral idealism is palpable. "At the same time," the young editor admonishes, the paper progresses through this service work. "It is the paper of the masses; it gives impetus to others, and at the same time it also gets impetus from others. It teachers others, and at the same time is taught by others." Here Deng Tuo echoes the sage-like vocation and anticipation of the reunification of the intellectual and the countryside that we saw Liang Shuming claim in 1934.

The dark side of this utopian vision is the constraint on intellectual freedom the Party put upon its functionaries, including intellectual cadres. This has been an endemic problem for both the Nationalists and Communists, and we shall see shortly the ugly side of this repression in Yan'an in the case of Wang Shiwei. However, it is important to note that it was not always the case nor for all intellectuals. Deng Tuo's 1939 lecture and article on literature and art prefigures

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themes in Mao's famous "Yan'an Talks" that laid down the party line for intellectuals in 1942. Before Mao spelled it out, Deng agreed that Party intellectuals had to use the language of the common people, or "national forms," to communicate their ideas and to mobilize "the masses." But for Deng this was not a matter of dumbing down for peasants, rather "best is to raise the cultural level of the masses in the midst of developing the real mass literary and artistic movement." Deng did not find popularization work to be a burden because he held a two-track policy for elite and popular culture. In Jin Cha Ji both policies could carry on side by side. Indeed, Deng Tuo joined Nie Rongzhen and other notables in a highly traditional "Yan-Zhao Poetry Society" in 1943, happily indulging in the exchange of refined classical-style poetry that was beyond most university students, not to mention farmers. Deng prospered intellectually, turning his skills to building up the culture of his area, helping to implement a new administration, and enjoying some moments of China's grand culture. This was the Chinese Marxist revolution for Deng Tuo.

Not so for others. In Yan'an other young radical intellectuals had also gathered in the wake of the Japanese occupation of China's major eastern cities in 1937 and 1938. These left-wing writers brought with them another sort of cosmopolitanism--international, European-oriented Marxism in the form of literary modernism. Key amongst this group was Ding Ling, whom we met in the last chapter inhabiting the garrets of Shanghai and the pages of May Fourth literary journals. By 1941Ding Ling was head of the local women's organization and a leader of the literary scene in Yan'an. She was editor of the literary page of Yan'an's major newspaper, Liberation Daily. She gave voice to the frustrations of these independent urban intellectuals in her own essays and by publishing their complaints, as they coped with both greater Party discipline and the considerable discomforts of rural life in this poverty-stricken backwater of central Shaanxi province. Ding Ling called for the revival of zawen (the 'polemical essay') in a Liberation Daily article in October 1941. "I think it would do us most good if we emulate his [Lu Xun's] steadfastness in facing the truth, his courage to speak out for the sake of truth, and his fearlessness. This age of ours still needs zawen, a weapon that we should never lay down."29

29. Ding Ling, "Women xuyao zawen" [We Need zawen], Jiefang ribao, 23 October 1941, p. 4.
Mao Zedong famously laid down "the line" for revolutionary intellectuals in his "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" in May 1942. Mao's themes are now familiar--literature must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, content should be Party directed and form should suit elementary readers' needs. Public criticism is not welcome, because "If we treat comrades with the ruthless methods required against the enemy, then we are identifying ourselves with the enemy." Mao is exclusive. An act of criticism without Party permission is an act of heresy. Proletarian art, Mao holds, must be subject to the will of the proletariat, especially its leader, the Party. Any other view is the same as the Trotskyite formula, "politics--Marxist, art--bourgeois." This was Mao's, and the Party's, response to Ding Ling and her fellow literary critics. The challenge by leftist intellectuals had been mounted in the main ideological institutions of Yan'an--the Party newspaper, Liberation Daily, and the Central Research Institute of the CCP. They were having an impact. That February, Mao had launched the study campaign (and purge) known as Rectification to improve Party ideology, clean up corruption, and get the administration of this poor and marginalized area sorted out.

Some left-wing theorists took Mao at his word to "rectify our Party's work style" to criticize shortcomings in the CCP administration and to put themselves up as revolutionary artists and intellectuals, as "the conscience of the people." Ding Ling called out the gender double-standard in Yan'an in which women were damned if they did (join in public affairs, as "hussies") and damned if they didn't (and stayed at home to raise children, as "backward"). But it was the cantankerous theorist and translator, Wang Shiwei (1907-1947), who came to represent this cosmopolitan vision of Chinese socialism in Yan'an. Wang is famous for his critical essay, a zawen satirical essay in the style of everyone's hero (in Yan'an), Lu Xun, titled, "Wild Lilies." It lampooned the privileged food and clothing of the revolutionary elite that belied propaganda about Yan'an's egalitarian life. Wang had, in fact, outlined his approach to two main issues--of language and authority--earlier. In 1941 Wang tussled with a colleague (Chen Boda) over National Forms of literature--a core issue in Chinese Marxism in the 1930s and 1940s: how to mobilize China's population with a vision that the intellectuals had learned via awkward

30. Mao, in the original text as translated by, McDougall, Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art', pp. 80-81; this translation will be available in Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912-1949, vol. VIII, Stuart Schram, et al, eds.
It was a bit like figuring out how to inspire North American workers to go on strike using only translations of Michel Foucault. Mao favoured casting revolutionary ideas in folk Chinese symbols and idioms. Wang, however, was adamant: form was inseparable from content, and modern equaled Western:

For example, if the communication tools of modern culture--automobiles, trains, steamboats, airplanes... are separated from form what content can they possibly have? 'Old National Forms' would have to be carts, sedan chairs, junks, paper kites, sickles, hoes and such! But how can the essential content of this modern culture--speed, carrying power, precision, efficiency, etc.--be combined with the 'Old National Forms'?

In Wang's view, the new revolutionary consciousness from Europe and Russia also needed new foreign forms. Yet, he felt the Chinese could make them their own. "I believe that whenever a people (minzu) are able in their own way to master something and make it serve them, then essentially it has already become 'national,' no matter if it came from outside or was originally possessed (Today it's an import, tomorrow it's our own)." This openness to foreign or external ideas is a fundamental criterion for any cosmopolitan stand.

In early 1942, Wang made clear his view on the second issue, authority: the role of the individual, especially the role of the revolutionary artist under socialism. In a theory essay titled, "Politicians, Artists" Wang proposes a vital, independent and useful role for Communist writers and artists as society's caring but relentless critics of evil. He sets up revolutionary artists as the active loyal opposition, the public Censor, the Ombudsman of revolutionary society itself. Wang insists that the artist alone can maintain a grasp on morality and provide the spiritual inspiration to supplement the military revolution and to check its abuses. Wang borrows Stalin's term and designates artists "engineers of the soul," limiting the job to himself and fellow left-wing

31. The "national forms of literature" debate is well covered in David Holm, *Art & Ideology in Revolutionary China*.


This was in utter contravention of Mao's vision of rectification. It was ideological insubordination.

Mao Zedong won this round. Wang Shiwei was purged and made a negative example for the edification of other left-wing writers (as we have seen the the Voices selection at the start of this chapter). Ding Ling caved, performed a public self-criticism in June 1942, criticized the unrepentant Wang, and then dutifully went off to the villages to reform herself. This was a case of "manufactured dissent" common to Stalinist regimes in which a loyal critic is transformed by authorities into an implacable opponent. The key difference with Maoism at this time was that there was a way out--grovelling self-criticism would save your life, and in the case of many, including Ding Ling, ultimately get you back into the good graces of the Party. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that this was a fight *internal* to Chinese socialism; Wang Shiwei was not a liberal democrat. In many ways Wang's "Politicians, Artists" brings to mind John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644). Both authors served a revolution fuelled by high ideals only to find a shocking intolerance when their new leaders took power, both argue the right and necessity for a more free press and betray a priestly self-importance as artists, yet both men's call for freedom of public expression diverted from liberalism in the name of activist or localist needs. There were excluded classes: Papists for Milton, non-leftists for Wang.

The contrast between Deng Tuo and Wang Shiwei in the CCP during the war years is instructive. The invidious political distinction between "national forms" of folk culture and elite literature in revolutionary society that exercised Wang Shiwei and writers in Yan'an did not arise when the content of elite literature was, as in Deng Tuo's case, not May Fourth European models but Chinese literati arts. The problems of left-wing writers which have served to set the impression for Western scholars on intellectual-CCP relations, are highlighted by this contrast.


35. The centrality of this campaign model for intellectual life in the PRC, of which Mr. Wang was an unfortunate early example, is demonstrated in Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics & Purges*.

36. Tom Fisher distinguishes commentary that was legal at time of publication in China that was retrospectively designated as 'dissent' from examples of 'permitted dissent' in the Soviet Thaw of the 1950s in, "Wu Han: The 'Upright Official' as a Model in the Humanities," in Hamrin & Cheek, *Establishment Intellectuals*, pp. 183-4.
between the Yan'an left-wing writers and the Yan-Zhao Poetry Society of Deng Tuo and his Jin Cha Ji colleagues. The left-wing writers were generally out of power, offered a competing strategy for the rectification movement, were unable to harmonize their elite pastimes with popularization work among the peasantry, and were small in number, even among the tiny class of the educated elite. On the other hand, establishment intellectuals like Deng Tuo were in positions of influence, abided by the tenets of Yan'an rectification policy, were comfortable with the peasant population, were much more numerous, and maintained friendly relations with the military and political leadership. Equally, Deng Tuo's two-track approach to culture was unlike that of the 'cog and screw' artists in Yan'an who produced the yang'ge folk propaganda dramas that Wang Shiwei so detested. Establishment intellectuals like Deng Tuo carried considerable cultural authority and respect in the eyes of Party and military leaders for their artistic and scholarly skills. Deng Tuo used this cultural authority to carve out a "culture bearer" role that combined something of the moral autonomy of the left-wing critical writers and the loyalty of the yang'ge dramatists. It was a powerful and attractive role--he saw it as an honourable vocation.

Deng Tuo entered Beijing and the life of the establishment in the People's Republic of China in 1949. He was the founding editor of *People's Daily*, the Party's paper, the *Pravda* of China. This was the peak of Deng Tuo's career, rounded out by appointments in the Beijing municipal government as head of propaganda, and formal positions such as head of the Chinese Journalists Association. He lectured at universities not only on ideological reform but on land reform based on his work in Jin Cha Ji and earlier historical research. Within a few years he lived in a pleasant traditional courtyard house, able to bring his aging father up from Fuzhou. He returned to his beloved Chinese arts and became a notable art collector and connoisseur. He was married and his children were healthy. It was a good life.

And it was a busy life. Official service for Deng Tuo was mostly in journalism and Party theory. Looking at his official world of propaganda articles and *People's Daily* editorials compared to his private life of elite cultural interests might seem a contradiction, but as we have seen from his life in the 1940s, Deng Tuo and those around him maintained a comfort with both popular and elite culture, and both Chinese and cosmopolitan influences. This all rested in a

profound belief in the ideology and fundamental faith in Mao Zedong. In the early 1950s this worked well enough for establishment intellectuals like Deng Tuo who believed in socialism. However, Maoism had two sides. The distinction between rational and emotive versions of Maoism will help us to understand not only the tribulations that would arise in Deng Tuo's service to the Party beginning in the late 1950s, but also the growing split within the entire Party that would explode and involve everyone in the 1960s. Deng Tuo was no more free of ideological commitments than any other actor in politics, and he subscribed to Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought, Maoism. In 1944 Deng Tuo had been the editor of the first official Selected Works of Mao Zedong. Unlike Wu Han, Deng Tuo did not take what suited him, he understood and accepted the whole ideological system. Deng insisted that ideology and ideological remoulding (thought reform), tenets from the Yan'an rectification movement, were primary in public work. What emerges from Deng Tuo's theoretical writings in the mid-1950s, however, is that ideological remoulding is a real but complicated process that must be handled in a nuanced and humane manner. It was for Deng a product of rational reflection, not emotional conversion.

In this, Deng reflected the leadership of the Party. Other Party intellectuals--such as Sun Yefang the economist and Jian Bozan the historian--pursued their new duties with a similar mix of professional skill and moral commitment to the new order. Deng's own work at the People's Daily reflected that commitment. Editorials in the People's Daily were notoriously dull. For Deng Tuo, this was not good enough; propaganda was too important for China's future to be done badly. In 1955 Deng lectured the paper's editors and journalists:

The most common structure for a formulaic editorial cannot but begin with a discourse on current conditions, followed by a presentation of good examples and a criticism of a few bad examples. And then, the subjective causes of each. Toss in a few lessons from experience, and repeat a few generalities on advancing our work, which everyone already knows anyway. Finish up with a few sentences on how under the leadership of the Party this task will be completely achieved. Frankly, this kind of formula makes people vomit.38

Whether on such practical matters or on ideological questions, Deng spoke for the transformational bureaucrats of new China, serving up a very orderly, indeed rather bureaucratic, administration. His approach to ideological struggle and thought reform was rational rather than emotive. He sought to regularize and tame powerful forces the rectification process unleashed both within the individual and in society. Mao Zedong Thought, propaganda, ideological remoulding, and Party dictatorship were not problems for Deng Tuo; they were the tools of his trade. Deng Tuo's approach did not admit to the possibility of differences between the Party committees that provided rational administration and the Party leader who inspired them all. Thus, he saw no need for political institutions independent of the Party and never suggested them.

Deng Tuo saw himself as a culture bearer rather than as a cog and screw in the revolution. He embraced a bureaucratic Maoist vision of a scientific, rational, and ordered social revolution based on a complex ideology best ministered by elites such as himself. Deng Tuo accepted Mao's cultural populism but did not accept Mao's inherent anti-intellectualism. It was one thing to have a common touch, but altogether another to denigrate learning. Deng Tuo was a scholar and he was proud. In 1955 he had no reasonable expectation to think that it would all soon blow up.

During these same years, a new generation came of age while the Hu Shi's and Deng Tuo's were in the midst of their careers. In the 1940s, Yue Daiyun was a school girl in the embattled Southwest, who found in the CCP a salvation she felt she would never otherwise have found—especially with the corrupt Guomindang government she had watched plunder her hometown in Guizhou province during the anti-Japanese war. She struggled to study and to attend the 1948 university exams in Chongqing, Sichuan province. She passed, was admitted to Peking University and with help from American missionaries and distant relatives, she got herself to Beijing. Too young to participate significantly in the revolution, she appreciated it, and joined student radicals in the CCP underground. The CCP was her hope and her pathway to success. Slightly older than Yue, Wang Ruoshui was active in the CCP in the 1940s and joined the staff of the People's Daily as a junior editor. Both Wang and Yue felt they rode the crest of a wonderful historical wave propelling themselves and China into a new era. Wang also had

studied at Peking University, leaving just as Yue arrived in 1948. Wang went to the nearby CCP base areas and became active in CCP journalism.\textsuperscript{40} Wang's work was in the theoretical department--studying and applying Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought--and in time he would catch the eye of the editor, Deng Tuo. For this young intellectual Maoism and the Party that implemented it promised to end the corruption and poverty of the Guomindang government.