

The Yan'an Period and the Xi'an Incident 1935-1945

Questions to bear in mind:

1. How far would you agree that the Xi'an Incident as the most important event in the development of the CCP from 1935-1945
2. How far did Mao Zedong use the rectification campaign at Yan'an to consolidate his authority over the CCP
3. The entry of the US into the Pacific War in 1941 strengthened the CCP and undermined the GMD. Explain why you disagree or agree.

The Yan'an Period 1935-1945

NB: In 1931, whilst the Jiangxi Soviet was in existence, the Japanese had occupied China. This will be studied later but runs coincident to the Yanan Period so some reference will be made in these notes. We will need to consolidate the two angles once the Japanese occupation is studied in more detail.

So:

Jiangxi Soviet 1928 - 1934	Long March 1934-1935	Yan'an Period 1935-1945
Japanese occupation of China 1931-1945		

The Xi'an Incident 1936

- Japan had occupied China in 1931, taking more and more territory. Chiang took a 'buy time' approach as he saw China as too big to take entirely. He negotiated with the Japanese and agreed to 'autonomous regions', including withdrawing GMD troops from Beijing. This was often greeted with derision and distress. In addition, remember, the Communists had said their march North was to resist the Japanese occupation.
- Chiang Kai Shek went to Xian to berate the GMD there for not crushing the Communists. However, the GMD leader there, Zhang Xueliang had been persuaded to seize Chiang as he was frustrated by Chiang's approach to the Japanese, Zhang's father having been killed by the Japanese in Manchuria.
- Chiang was handed over to the Communists who agreed, in return for his life:
 1. End the persecution of the communists
 2. Form a Second United Front with the CCP to pledge war on Japanese aggressors. (The second united front is discussed again in the Sino-Japanese war)

What is interesting about this?

The Communists did not kill Chiang Kai Shek - which would have been normal in that era. By doing so, the Communists put themselves in a strong political position:

1. Chiang is allowed to stay as leader of China, despite having been captured, a massive propaganda coup for the CCP because they can demonstrate they are willing to take a 'step back' from power for the sake of the nation.

2. They can say they are THE party for China as they are willing to fight against a common enemy, Japan, under a leader of a different party (Chiang).
3. But, having extracted a commitment from Chiang to recognise the CCP as a party, they have undermined both his overall power (he was captured after all!) and his right to claim he as the sole representative of the nation.
4. Practically, although Chiang did try and crush the CCP again in the future, the agreement bought the CCP some time to set up a base in Yanan without constant bombardment. This, arguably, would not have happened if the CCP has chosen to kill Chiang.

The Communists in Yanan 1935-1945

- China was poor and many were on the brink of starvation. The Red Cross at this time was battling famine in other areas of China (which killed 30 million people)
- Thus, although life was apparently hard in the caves of Yanan, the communists grew their own food and thus food supplies were relatively reliable. (In addition, they grew Opium which generated 40% of their income!) A basic economy was established.
- Some also argue that cave living increased the 'collective' feeling of the area, an interesting point when assessing how/why Mao's ideas took hold in this area.

The development of Mao's politics/Maoism:

When talking of communist revolution (as taken from Marx and the Russian model), there is an 'ideological' process that, some argue, must happen.

This is:

Capitalism, after an industrial revolution, creates an urban working class or the 'proletariat' who are badly treated and abused for the wealth they create for their 'bosses'.

In a communist revolution, the 'proletariat' (NB the **urban** working class) rise up against their oppressive masters.

There may be a 'bourgeois' stage which is when the middle class take control from the 'masters' before the real 'proletariat' crush all oppressors.

From then, a system is in place where all 'assets' are owned by the state and wages etc are controlled by the state.

Proletariat - a new definition:

The problem for Communism in China was that there was no real 'proletariat'.

Mao felt a revolution would come from the peasants but, more importantly, anyone who was oppressed by 'class enemies' could be termed the 'proletariat'.

He 'taught' this version of Communism in Yanan - he made Marxism fit the Chinese situation (NB Deng Xiaoping later talked of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics)

This 'countryside' version of communism caused some contention with the pro-urban Communists of China but Mao had such a strong power base in the country - and was quite ruthless when crossed - that his views became those of the CCP.

The CCP's Land Law 1932

Confiscate land from the gentry and landlords (using the Red Army). This was known as **liberation**.

The poor peasants receive the land. Middle peasants may have their land distributed, they will make their own decision.

Relatives of Red Army soldiers will also receive land.

The 'soviets' or liberated areas became quite well organised, with the CCP, the Central Soviet government and the Red Army controlling it. (See Edgar Snow quote p89)

This land liberation established pockets of CCP who were anti Nationalist and anti Japanese.

The Red Army

The Red Army was not just a military force but a propaganda tool and enforcer of CCP ideals. They were instructed to behave differently to other armies/militias/warlords that the Chinese were previously accustomed to.

It was the popularity for CCP policies that brought in large numbers of new CCP recruits...from where new Red Army recruits came.

Further policies

- Encourage all to 'fight Japan to the end' since the occupation of 1937, to this end cooperation with all strata of society was ostensibly encouraged.
- So, some land confiscation programmes were toned down so as to encourage loyalty from the landowners.
- BUT excessive rents and usury were continually fought against, with conjunction with the local peasant associations, generating massive loyalty from the peasants.
- Introduced literary and education schemes.

NB although a good percent of rural Chinese were welcoming of the CCP and their ideas, those who fought land redistribution were often brutally treated. It was an authoritarian situation.

The Rectification of Conduct campaign 1942-1944

The CCP and its policies were, on the face of it, ground breaking for the peasants. However, the atmosphere was less 'liberation' and more 'oppression' in the enforcement of the policies. Obedience was key, given the 'new' system but also the GMD and the Japanese threats.

In addition, Mao started to focus on '**revolutionary correctness**' which was an attempt to keep the party bureaucracy free of elitism (and thoughts that were contrary to Mao). Party members were to engage in 'self criticism'.

Kang Sheng become Mao's enforcer. He believed 70% of the party had **revisionist** ideas and arrested 1000 of them.

Self criticism became a key tactic - and one could only repent errors. If you were chosen for self criticism, it was seen as read you had revisionist ideas.

It had a huge effect on the psychological health of the party and 60 officials were said to have committed suicide. Mao was unrepentant, although he did ease back on the campaign.

An example made: Wang Shiwei

Wang Shiwei was a communist writer who strongly believed in social justice and was shocked at the coercion by CCP leaders, and their somewhat hypocritical lifestyle. He wrote an article to this effect and Mao backed other party leaders in condemnation of him, Mao suspecting him of being of the **intellectual class**. (thinkers, not doers).

Wang was subjected to a **show trial** after his last supporter, Ding Ling (a feminist writer) had abandoned him (under pressure) . He was accused of **anti party thinking** and was given a life sentence, tho executed in 1947 (in a very gruesome manner).

This 'example' frightened the powers that be in the CCP and many leading party members, including Zhou Enlai, made self criticisms. (not Mao).

Consequences of the Rectification of conduct campaign:

- Any opposition to Mao had been purged, including the pro Russians
- 'Cult status' had been achieved
- Mao's fear of intellectuals made clear
- Chinese communism was effectively Maoism
- 1943 Mao elected the Chairman of the Central Committee of the CCP 毛主席
- After the defeat of the Japanese, Mao became known as the 'great helmsman'.

Homework 20/9/18:

- Read Mao biography p87-88
- Read The Communists under Mao (hand out)
- Look up 'Mass Line' & 'Class Struggle'