

# **The Political, Military and Negotiating Strategies of the Chinese Communist Party (1937-1946) and Recent Developments in Nepal**

*By the MLM Revolutionary Study Group (February 2007, revised April 2009)*

Arguably the most important recent development in the international communist movement is the current political strategy of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). In 1996, it launched a people's war based among the peasants and oppressed nationalities in far western Nepal. For the next ten years, it built a mass base of support in the countryside, established base areas, and launched repeated military campaigns with great success. By 2005, the CPN (Maoist) had freed most of the country, and was poised to take the strategic offensive in order to seize nationwide power and form a new democratic state that would serve the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of Nepal.

At this juncture, the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) determined the international and domestic balance of forces were unfavorable and that there was another viable path to taking state power. In 2006, it negotiated a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with seven anti-monarchical parliamentary parties, paving the way for the overthrow of the monarchy, and for elections to a Constituent Assembly in the summer of 2007. These elections resulted in the establishment of the UCPN (Maoist) as the largest political party and the election of UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Prachanda as Prime Minister.

As a result of this agreement, the CPN (Maoist) has dissolved its organs of political power in the liberated areas, sequestered its 19,000 troops and arms in military camps under UN inspection, and agreed to "integrate" the People's Liberation Army with the 90,000 strong bourgeois/feudal Nepalese Army (which has also been confined to barracks under the peace agreement). As we explain in "Revolution and State Power in Nepal," the UCPN (Maoist) is currently implementing a strategy of "restructuring" the bourgeois/feudal state which it leads by peaceful means.

The most germane experience in assessing these developments in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country like Nepal is the military and political strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution. In an interview in 2001, Prachanda stated that the party's leadership was studying "On the Chongqing Negotiations."<sup>1</sup> This refers to the CCP's negotiations with the Guomindang that followed Mao's report to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1945 ("On Coalition Government"). A closer look at the CCP's

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<sup>1</sup> *A World to Win* magazine, #27, p. 40 referring to the article by Mao in *SW* Vol. 4, p. 53.

integrated political-military strategy and negotiating tactics from 1937-1946— which served to advance China’s protracted people’s war to final victory-- can yield important lessons for the revolution in Nepal and other countries, for how revolutionaries should be “firm as a pine and flexible as a willow.”<sup>2</sup>

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The years 1937 to 1946 covered two periods—the war of resistance against Japan from 1937 to August 1945, and the preparations in 1945 and early 1946 for the outbreak of nationwide civil war. In both periods, the CCP (representing the interests of the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie) and the Guomindang (GMD-representing the interests of the landlords, big capitalists and imperialism) fought and negotiated to achieve opposing political goals. When the CCP and GMD talked, they were preparing to fight. While Mao assumed a public negotiating position advocating the formation of a coalition government to replace the GMD’s one-party dictatorship, in his internal speeches to the CCP, Mao stressed the foundational point that “without a people’s army, the people have nothing.”<sup>3</sup> Convinced he could eventually crush the CCP at an opportune time, the GMD’s leader, Generalissimo Jiang Kai-shek, repeatedly rejected the CCP’s position.

An important added factor that the CCP had to contend with from 1937 to 1946 was that the Comintern and its representative in China, Wang Ming, and later Stalin, pressured the CCP to bring its armies and base areas under GMD control and form a coalition government with the GMD.

With the defeat of Japan approaching in 1945, Mao and the CCP prepared for the outbreak of civil war with the GMD principally militarily and secondarily at the negotiating table. At the same time, Mao and the CCP leadership were concerned with seizing the political initiative and the moral high ground from the GMD. They sought to fix blame on the GMD for the outbreak of civil war and advance the party’s work among the hundreds of millions of war-weary people still living in GMD-controlled areas.

The CCP was also concerned about the danger of direct military intervention by the U.S. imperialists, who were already providing the GMD with billions in funds, arms and logistical support. Thus they strung the U.S. along in the negotiations, attempting to exploit differences between the “democratic” rhetoric of the U.S. and the GMD’s undisguised dictatorship.

At the September-October 1945 negotiations at the GMD’s war-time capital Chongqing, Mao reiterated the demand for the end of the GMD one-party dictatorship and proposed, once this was accomplished, the formation of a coalition government. Again, Jiang rejected the CCP’s proposal—as Mao expected. Negotiations stretched out

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<sup>2</sup> From a 1944 speech to cadres of the Eighth Route Army. Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge: Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Revolution, 1893-1954*, 1972, p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., “On Coalition Government,” *Selected Works (SW)* Vol. 3, pp. 246-247.

for several months, while both sides positioned themselves for battle. Nationwide civil war broke out in the spring of 1946.

The rest is history. In less than three years, mainland China was liberated by the People's Liberation Army and the People's Republic of China was proclaimed.

## **A. The 1937-1945 United Front Against Japan**

As Japanese forces drove into northern China from Manchuria in early 1937, negotiations for a united front between the CCP and GMD began. The CCP demanded recognition of its Shaanxi-Kansu-Ninghsia border district area, cessation of civil war, guarantees of freedom of speech and association, convocation of an anti-Japanese people's congress, completion of preparations for resisting Japan, and improvement of the living conditions of the people. In response, Jiang demanded the total integration of the Red Army and base areas into the GMD army and administration, renunciation of class struggle, and an end to communist propaganda activities.<sup>4</sup>

These negotiations did not progress until after the beginning of a major Japanese offensive on Beijing in July 1937. The CCP then adopted a policy of waging a national revolutionary war, uniting all forces in the struggle against the Japanese invaders. This included building an Anti-Japanese National United Front with the GMD, which at that time was doing little to resist the Japanese advance. In September, an agreement was reached to end the civil war and unite all forces against Japan. The Red Army in north China was redesignated the Eighth Route Army of the GMD's 18<sup>th</sup> Army Corps (but not brought under operational control by the GMD). The Eighth Route Army received some arms and money from the GMD between 1937-39, and the CCP was granted legal status.

During these years, Mao's primary goal was to build up the armed strength of the CCP and its political-territorial base in the course of the anti-Japanese struggle. Particularly in the early stages of the anti-Japanese war, CCP military units and political cadres concentrated on building peasant associations and new people's administrative governments in the vast rural areas which the Japanese armies had swept through but didn't control effectively.

A mass base of peasant support for guerilla warfare was created, which eventually pinned down 60% of the Japanese troops occupying China. This strategy was a great success. By 1945, the number of people in the CCP base areas in north, east and central China rose to 100 million, and the CCP armies, which had amounted to only 30,000 in 1937, stood at 900,000.

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<sup>4</sup> Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, p. 336. Some of this book is based on interviews conducted by the author over 16 years with CCP leaders and members. Han Suyin was a liberal friend of the Chinese revolution who after Mao's death became a supporter of the Deng Xiaoping regime.

## **The Comintern and the CCP during the War against Japan**

In order to advance this political-military strategy, Mao had to deal with substantial political pressure from Stalin and the Comintern, a subject that is often neglected in discussion of this period. The Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with the GMD in 1937. Under the terms of this agreement, the Soviet Union channeled nearly all of its military aid during the anti-Japanese war directly to the GMD. \$250 million of Soviet aid, repaid in Chinese raw materials, was sent to China between 1937-41, including aircraft, artillery pieces, tanks and 5000 military advisors and specialists. Soviet aid to China reduced the superiority in firepower that Japan enjoyed in the early days of the war. (The US took over as main provider of military aid to the GMD in 1941 when it entered the war in the Pacific.)

The Soviet Union's goal was to tie down as many Japanese troops in China as possible and to avoid having to fight Japan on a second front. In order to carry out this strategy, Stalin put pressure on the CCP to join a national unity government under the leadership of the GMD. He told the CCP to coordinate its military efforts with Jiang and undertake mobile warfare, in opposition to Mao's strategy of guerilla warfare based on extensive political organizing in the countryside. On several occasions between 1937 and 1945, Stalin and Comintern leaders directed the CCP to merge its armed forces with the GMD armies.<sup>5</sup>

While the CCP had to resist Soviet pressure to subordinate itself to the GMD, it sought to utilize Soviet pressure on the GMD to restrain Jiang from launching major attacks on the CCP and its base areas during the war. The CCP also expected its fraternal communist party to provide substantial military assistance when the Soviet Union finally entered the war against Japan.

Within the CCP, Mao had to deal with supporters of the Comintern's "internationalist" position, who advocated subordinating the interests of the Chinese revolution to those of the Soviet Union. Wang Ming was the Comintern's representative in the CCP during this period. He was appointed to the Executive Committee of the Comintern in 1933 and to the Presidium of the ECCI in 1935. This was a powerful position, since the CCP was then considered to be a branch party, and subject to the directives, of the Comintern until its dissolution in 1943.

Arriving from Moscow in late 1937, Wang pushed for an accommodation with the GMD, supported by Zhou Enlai and other CCP leaders. Wang claimed that the GMD was actively resisting Japan, lessening the danger of a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union, and thus the CCP should cooperate fully with the GMD. In "A Key to Solving the Present Situation," Wang argued that the CCP should join with the GMD in creating a united government and a united army of national defense, and he proposed a unified system of command, armament, supply and war planning between the GMD and CCP

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<sup>5</sup> See pages 9 and 15 below.

armies. This view had some currency within the CCP, since its armies were still weak and many were overawed by Jiang's military might.<sup>6</sup>

Wang conveyed a three-part Comintern instruction to the CCP: That Mao did not understand Marxism-Leninism, that he lacked an internationalist perspective, and that he decided matters on the basis of narrow empiricism. Wang also claimed that some people in the CCP—another not too subtle attack on Mao—were influenced by Trotskyite ideas in attempting to disrupt the united front with the GMD.<sup>7</sup>

According to Wang, the decision of CCP leaders in north China to set up a border district self-governing area, the first new democratic government set up behind Japanese lines, was “rash and provocative” to the GMD. Wang instead argued that new government structures should be set up only if the GMD approved. In the cities, Wang said that mass organizations should be led by the GMD and register with the government, and the CCP should operate only via legal methods. According to Wang, a major object of these organizations should be “to help the government's armies.”<sup>8</sup> Mao's essays on revolutionary warfare, “On Protracted War” and “Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War against Japan” were written at this time in large part to rebut Wang's arguments.

In 1938, Wang was based in Wuhan on the Yangtze River. As Japanese armies advanced on the city, Wang ignored Politburo directives to pull the CCP's forces out of the positional defense of Wuhan, and to instead prepare for guerilla warfare in the surrounding provinces. The battle for Wuhan was lost, and the CCP squandered a great opportunity to expand into the Yangtze Valley.<sup>9</sup>

Wang's action and the setback in Wuhan were a decisive turning point, enabling Mao to win over the majority of the CCP Politburo and generals and solidify his leadership of the party. This new alignment in the CCP led to a compromise between Mao and Stalin. The Comintern recognized Mao's leadership of the CCP and gave cautious approval to his line of developing guerilla warfare behind Japanese lines. On the other hand, Stalin secured pledges of CCP acceptance of Jiang's leadership in the united front. Stalin believed that only Jiang could lead a national war of resistance against Japan. The terms of this agreement were laid out in a “Declaration by the CCP Center.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, Mao pursued unity with Stalin and the Comintern while he opposed the Comintern's representatives and political line within the CCP.

### **Mao's Speeches on the Role of the CCP in the United Front and on New Democracy**

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<sup>6</sup> John Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations 1937-1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism*, 1988. pp. 63, 66; Han Suyin, p. 345. Garver's book is based on research conducted in Nanjing and Taiwan during the 1980s.

<sup>7</sup> Garver, pp. 65, 67.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 70, 78.

By the Sixth Plenum of the 6<sup>th</sup> Central Committee held in October-November 1938, Mao was in a significantly stronger position, allowing him to present three reports that laid out his strategic thinking about the relationship between the role of the CCP in the anti-Japanese war and the revolutionary struggle for a new China: “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War” “The Question of Independence and Initiative within the United Front,” and “Problems of War and Strategy.” Mao started “Problems of War and Strategy” with:

The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.

He went on to explain:

The main task of the party of the Chinese proletariat, a task confronting it almost from its very inception, has been to unite with as many allies as possible and, according to the circumstances, to organize armed struggles for national and social liberation against armed counter-revolution, whether internal or external. *Without armed struggle the proletariat and the Communist Party would have no standing at all in China, and it would be impossible to accomplish any revolutionary task.*<sup>11</sup> (emphasis added)

With the publication of “On New Democracy” in January 1940, Mao insisted on the independence and initiative of the CCP in the united front with the GMD. He explained that the CCP’s strategic goal was establishing a new democratic society, which would be ruled by “the joint dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes of China headed by the Chinese proletariat.” After the establishment of a new democratic China, the revolution would be carried forward to the stage of socialism.<sup>12</sup> This was a significant step forward in revolutionary strategy, and set the political context for the CCP’s tactical demands from 1944 to 1946 for the abolishment of the GMD dictatorship and the formation of a coalition government.

During the rest of the anti-Japanese war, Mao kept up criticism of rightist views in the CCP which opposed the political-military strategy that the CCP should retain its independence in the united front and continue to expand revolutionary power in the countryside. Mao characterized the rightist line at this time as

making concessions to the Kuomintang’s anti-popular policies, having more confidence in the GMD than in the masses, not daring to arouse and give full rein to mass struggles, not daring to expand the Liberated Areas and the people’s armies in the Japanese-occupied areas, and handing over the leadership in the War of Resistance to the GMD. [After the defeat of Japan, the CCP’s rejection of this line] ensured our Party’s ability to switch smoothly and without loss to the course of opposing Chiang Kai-shek’s counter-revolutionary war with a people’s revolutionary war and to win great victories in a short time. All Party comrades must keep these lessons of history firmly in mind.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 219, 222.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>13</sup> “The Present Situation and Our Tasks,” SW, Vol. 4, p. 171 (1947).

In 1939, the number of GMD attacks on the CCP's border district steadily increased. Between June and December 1939, some 1350 soldiers of the 8th Route Army were killed by the GMD forces. Fighting between the GMD and CCP forces again intensified during late 1939 and early 1940, which was termed the "First Anti-Communist High Tide." During the second anti-communist military offensive, GMD forces killed 9,000 communist troops in southern Anhwei in January 1941. In response, the Soviet Union leveraged its military aid to pressure the GMD to suspend military operations against the CCP.

At the same time, the Comintern continued to press the CCP to give up its primary reliance on protracted guerilla warfare. A communist military offensive in the summer of 1940 demanded by the Comintern (the poorly conceived "Hundred Regiments" campaign) targeted Japanese transportation and communications lines in north China by means of mobile warfare. This campaign was unsuccessful both militarily and politically. The CCP base areas in north China suffered intense blockades and reprisals by both the GMD and Japanese. The Japanese instituted a scorched-earth policy in Communist-influenced areas, killing the men and burning houses and crops. The population of the base areas fell from 44 million to 25 million.

The CCP responded with renewed guerilla warfare and an extensive Production Drive in 1941, which mobilized cotton farming and textile production in the base areas. Small arms factories were established in caves and shacks. All planted and hoed, including soldiers and party cadre. The amount of cultivated land almost doubled during this drive. As a result, the base areas were able to feed and clothe their populations, as well as the CCP forces, through self-reliant effort.<sup>14</sup>

One of the purposes of the Zheng Feng, or Rectification campaign, from 1942 to 1944 was to break the remaining influence of Wang Ming and the Comintern on the CCP. The campaign singled out dogmatists who depended on foreign (i.e. Soviet) theories and formulations. A new internal publication on party history pinned the primary responsibility for the CCP's setbacks in the 1930s on Wang.<sup>15</sup>

The German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the Japanese attack on the US in December 1941 set up a new configuration of wartime alliances. Throughout the war in the Pacific, the Soviet Union avoided provoking Japan in order to avoid having to fight a two-front war, and it kept up its pressure on the GMD and CCP to collaborate closely in the war against Japan.

With the dissolution of the Comintern in mid-1943, which the Soviet Union hoped would move the Western imperialist powers more rapidly towards opening up a second front in Europe, there was further opportunity for Mao to break free of Soviet influence. At the same time Mao was committed to close cooperation with the Soviet

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<sup>14</sup> Han Suyin, pp. 358-359.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

Union based on Marxist-Leninist principles. He also knew by then that the Soviet Union was going to survive the German attack and would at some point enter the war against Japan. Until the arrival of the Soviet Army, Mao hoped to avoid political friction with Stalin and an all-out military confrontation with the GMD.

In the Far Eastern section of the Yalta agreement in early 1945, the Soviets agreed to promote China's unification under Jiang's leadership. At the Moscow Conference in the summer of 1945 that negotiated new terms for the Soviet-Chinese relationship, Stalin assured the GMD negotiators that he supported one government and one army in China, but continued to provide small amounts of covert aid to the CCP. A year earlier, Stalin told US Ambassador Patrick Hurley that he had ordered the CCP to enter into a coalition government with the GMD.<sup>16</sup> This position was consistent with Stalin's actions in France, Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece in 1944-45, where he demanded that local communist forces enter Popular Front governments or even coalition governments with monarchist elements.<sup>17</sup>

Stalin did not think the CCP could defeat the GMD after World War 2 ended. Stalin's primary interest was in consolidating the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe and preventing the US from launching another war, in which it alone had the atomic bomb. Thus, Stalin was not willing to disrupt his agreements at Yalta and the Moscow Conference in 1945 with the US and British imperialists by openly siding with the CCP.

Mao later said that Stalin had attempted to tie the CCP's hands at this juncture. "[The Soviet Union] did not permit China to make revolution; that was in 1945. Stalin wanted to prevent China from making revolution, saying that [we] should not have a civil war and should cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> In Greece, the KKE (Greek Communist Party) had established itself as the leading political and military resistance force in the country by 1943. It had helped to build an army (ELAS) through resistance to the German occupation, and had a broad base of popular support through its leadership of the EAM (National Liberation Front). As the German army withdrew in the fall of 1944, the KKE, EAM and ELAS were in a position to establish a new government in which they would play the leading role. The ELAS had a battle-hardened army of 50,000 men and women that controlled the Greek countryside.

At this crucial juncture, the Soviet Union advised the KKE to hold off on military action and instead join a "government of national unity" with the British-backed monarchist government-in-exile based in Cairo. At that time, Stalin had made a deal with Churchill to integrate Romania into its sphere-of-influence in exchange for giving Britain a free hand in Greece. As the KKE hesitated under Soviet pressure, the British transported elements of the Greek army in Egypt back to Greece and reinforced their forces based in Greece under the command of General Ronald Scobie. By the time the KKE decided to launch an uprising in Athens in December 1944, the decisive moment to strike had passed. Peter Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism: 1944-1949*, 1989, pp. 11-35; Andre Gerolymatos, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry*, 2004, pp. 94-147.

<sup>18</sup> Stuart Schram, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People, Talks and Letters: 1956-1971*, 1974, p. 191.



Had the CCP followed the Soviet Union's directives from 1937-45, it would have emerged from the war with a much smaller and weaker political-territorial base in north China. Most importantly, it would have surrendered control of its own armed forces to the GMD. The CCP would have ended up disarmed, politically and militarily, much as the French communists ended up in 1944 and 1945. In order to succeed in making revolution in China, the CCP had to disregard Soviet instructions at key points.<sup>19</sup>

A few years later, Stalin admitted that he was wrong. In 1948, he told Georgi Dimitrov, the former leader of the Comintern, that:

After the war we invited Chinese comrades to come to Moscow and we discussed the situation in China. We told them bluntly that we considered the development of the uprising in China had no prospect, and that the Chinese comrades should seek a modus vivendi with Chiang Kai-shek, that they should join the Chiang Kai-shek government and dissolve their army. The Chinese comrades agreed here with the views of the Soviet comrades, but went back to China and acted otherwise. They mustered their forces, organized their armies, and now, as we see, they are beating the Chiang Kai-shek army. Now, in the case of China, we admit we were wrong. It proved that the Chinese comrades and not the Soviet comrades were right.<sup>20</sup>

## **B. Preparations for Nationwide Civil War in 1944-1946**

Throughout 1944, the CCP was rapidly expanding its armed forces and base areas. In many areas, GMD armies were collapsing under renewed Japanese military pressure. In mid-1944, Mao called for raising the level of work in the cities to the same position of importance as work in the base areas:

Our work in the big cities and along the main lines of communication has always been very inadequate. If now we do not strive to rally around our Party the tens of millions of the toiling masses and other people oppressed by the Japanese imperialists in the big cities and along the main lines of communication, and do not prepare armed mass insurrections, our army and rural bases areas will face all sorts of difficulties for lack of coordination with the cities... While we are in the base areas, we must learn how to administer the industry, commerce and communications of big cities, or otherwise we shall not know what to do when the time comes.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In "The Identity of Interests Between the Soviet Union and All Mankind," Mao stated, "The interests of the Soviet Union will always conform and never conflict with the interests of China's national liberation. I hold this as absolutely without doubt." *SW*, Vol. 2, p. 281. Mao maintained this stance in public even when there were major tensions between the Chinese revolution and the national interests of the Soviet Union.

<sup>20</sup> Robert North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, 1953, p. 233, quoting Tito by Vladimir Dedijer, 1953. See also Garver, p. 263, who cites Dedijer, *The Battle that Stalin Lost: Memories of Yugoslavia: 1948-1953*, 1971, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> "Our Study and the Current Situation," *SW*, Vol. 3, p. 172 (1944).

By early 1945, around 100 million people lived in CCP base areas, 900,000 soldiers served in its armies, with an additional 2.2 million in the militia.

With the emergence of a more favorable situation, in mid-1944 Mao revived the tactical proposal for a CCP-GMD coalition government within the CCP's strategy of new democratic revolution. The CCP was more aggressively trying to move public opinion in GMD-controlled areas in opposition to GMD rule. Mao also sought to exploit differences between the GMD and the US, which was stepping up its intervention in China, and to buy time before the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan. However, the GMD was not willing to enter into negotiations at this time.

Faced with mounting losses, the GMD soon changed its position. In the negotiations that developed in early 1945, the GMD offered the CCP nominal participation in the government in exchange for the CCP giving up control of its armed forces and liberated areas. At the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in April 1945, Mao responded to Jiang's offer of one post in the National Military Council to the CCP. Mao demanded an end to one-party dictatorship, repeal of all repressive laws, abolition of the secret police, an end to the attacks and blockade against communist areas by 800,000 GMD soldiers, and recognition of the legal status of CCP-led troops and of the governments in the liberated areas.

Meeting these demands was the precondition for forming a coalition government with the GMD and the smaller democratic parties. The CCP maintained this negotiating position throughout 1945 and 1946 with the well based expectation that the GMD would reject its proposals. Above all, Mao never had any intention of giving up control of the CCP's armed forces.

One of the goals of Mao's report to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress ("On Coalition Government") was to place on the GMD the onus of triggering civil war, which would help increase support for the CCP in the GMD-held areas. While Mao took this public position, the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress decided to prepare for major campaigns to seize Japanese held cities, and to expand the Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army by more than 100,000 soldiers. In June, Mao issued an inner-party directive to get the party fully prepared for a civil war launched by "Mei-Jiang" (the US-GMD forces) in the near future, and that the CCP should rapidly expand its armed forces and liberated areas.<sup>22</sup>

While these offensives were getting underway, a new GMD-Soviet treaty recognizing Jiang as the leader of the sole government in China was signed on August 14, 1945. To avoid a major conflict with Soviet policy, the CCP leadership called off the offensive and returned to the negotiations at Chongqing.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 1997, p. 96. This valuable book explores the relationships between the CCP, GMD, US and Soviet Union from the 1920s to 1949. It is based heavily on sources that were released in China in the 1980s and 90s, especially intra-CCP documents and communications between Mao and Stalin.

<sup>23</sup> Garver, p. 263.

While he negotiated at Chongqing in the fall of 1945, Mao reiterated the CCP's position on ending the GMD's dictatorship as a precondition for forming a coalition government, and stated, "We are prepared to make such concessions as are necessary and as do not damage the fundamental interests of the people... Without such concessions, we cannot gain the political initiative, cannot win the sympathy of world public opinion and the middle of the roaders within the country, and cannot obtain in exchange legal status for our Party and a state of peace.... The Soviet Union, the US and Britain all disapprove of civil war in China."<sup>24</sup>

Based on these considerations, Mao offered to withdraw elements of the New Fourth Army from around Nanjing in exchange for the lifting of the GMD's blockade of the main CCP base areas. Mao also offered to cut the size of the Red armies with commensurate cuts on the part of the GMD. However, no agreement was reached on the crucial points of the future of the armed forces and the status of the liberated areas.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time as Mao negotiated in Chongqing in the fall of 1945, 120,000 soldiers of the Eighth Route Army, with 30,000 political cadres, were marching towards Manchuria with mule and horse packs. All the way people helped them and streamed back with them to return to villages destroyed by the Japanese.

### **CCP Relations with the U.S. from 1937 to 1945**

The massive German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 radically changed the world situation and ushered in a new configuration between the major players in China. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, there was a stronger basis for the CCP to deal with its new American ally.

In 1944, US General Stilwell reported that the CCP troops were pinning down 50% of the Japanese forces in China—no small thing to the US as it was fighting entrenched Japanese forces island by island in the Pacific and taking heavy losses. The obvious prospect of civil war in China was worrisome to the US. Since the US was primarily interested in the defeat of Japan in the Pacific, the CCP believed that it could persuade the US to help lift the GMD's military pressure on the CCP's base areas, and that the US might even give the CCP a portion of its military aid to China to aid the fight against the Japanese occupation forces.<sup>26</sup>

In response to a CCP proposal, President Roosevelt dispatched the "Dixie Mission," led by Stilwell, to CCP headquarters in Yen-an in July 1944. In December, the head of U.S. intelligence in China brought a plan to Yen-an that the US would provide equipment for up to 25,000 guerillas, but this was rejected by his superiors in Washington D.C.

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<sup>24</sup> Han Suyin, p. 451.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 455-56.

<sup>26</sup> Sheng, p. 76.

Mao and the CCP skillfully handled the American mission, assuring them that its paramount interest was in fighting the Japanese army and democratizing the Chinese government.<sup>27</sup> One of the main reasons for maintaining friendly relations with the U.S. was that the CCP was concerned about the possibility of a substantial American military force landing in south China, which would follow the “Scobie model.” In Greece, British General Scobie led a march into communist-controlled areas, and reactionary Greek forces followed in order to jointly suppress the Greek communists.

In the summer of 1944, Roosevelt sent Patrick Hurley to China to undertake what proved to be an impossible mission—to mediate between the CCP and GMD. The US wanted to construct a government of “national unity” that could confront the Japanese military more effectively, and in so doing hoped to reform the GMD so that it could eventually prevail in a future showdown with the CCP.

Mao and the CCP had another idea. They launched a diplomatic offensive to make use of the US to undermine and isolate the GMD’s one-party dictatorship. Part of this was a proposal in August 1944 to the US that the CCP would agree to join a provisional assembly in which the GMD would have half the seats. The assembly would have full authority to reform the government and pass new laws.<sup>28</sup> Mao calculated that the democratic parties, some local GMD authorities, and the allied powers would support the plan, while Jiang would reject it.

In November 1944, Hurley conveyed Jiang’s counter-proposal that focused on bringing the CCP military under GMD control. Mao rejected it and countered with a proposal to reform the existing government and give legal status to the CCP. Jiang rejected it, and the talks broke down. The CCP considered formally declaring a separate government in the liberated areas, but decided to stick with the proposal for a coalition government to take the political high ground in the war against Japan.<sup>29</sup>

Faced with a situation in which the US was not applying sufficient pressure on the GMD, and encouraged by the prospect that the Soviet Red Army would soon join the war in the Far East, Mao decided to break off negotiations with the US, but not with finality. He was aware that the U.S. military was more likely than the Soviets to land in China first.

By April 1945, the CCP started to openly attack US support for Jiang. Mao was increasingly concerned with the prospect of a Scobie-type US intervention on the behalf of the GMD in the last stage of the Pacific war. During his speech at the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in April, Mao explicitly warned of the danger of China becoming an American semi-colony along the lines of the Philippines.<sup>30</sup> In the middle of July, Mao wrote three

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 83

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> “On Coalition Government,” SW, Vol. 3, p. 225.

articles attacking Hurley and US imperialism, setting the stage for the next round of struggle.

When the war in the Pacific ended in August 1945, the bulk of the GMD forces were in south China, while the CCP troops were concentrated in north, central and eastern China. Faced with the prospect of the CCP armies moving into Japanese occupied areas, US General MacArthur issued an order on August 15 ordering the Japanese troops in China to surrender to the GMD only. He also ordered General Wedemeyer, the US commander in China, to transport GMD armies to northern China.

### **The Soviet Army and the CCP Meet Up in Manchuria**

The Soviet Union entered the war against Japan in August 1945 by driving into Manchuria and northern Korea. It then started providing significantly more direct assistance to the CCP. While it couldn't openly proclaim its support for the CCP due to the Yalta and Moscow Agreements, the Soviets' policies in Manchuria from August 1945 until April 1946 provided the CCP with new political support and military resources as it prepared for the outbreak of nationwide civil war.

In the far north, Mao ordered the CCP armies to destroy GMD forces and meet up with the Soviet Army in Outer Mongolia and northeast Manchuria. In north and central China, Mao ordered the 8<sup>th</sup> Route Army to expand its territory and seize key railways and cities. On August 10, Mao cabled his commanders in the South: "A civil war is pending. Considering your circumstances, you cannot seize major cities; nonetheless, you should take advantage of the situation to expand your territory, to seize weapons, to strive for small cities. You should mobilize the masses to prepare for a civil war."<sup>31</sup>

On August 14, a new pact between the Soviets and the GMD was signed, and Jiang cabled Mao to open up negotiations in Chongqing, expecting Soviet pressure on Mao to accept GMD terms. The signing of this pact effectively put an end to the CCP's hopes that the Soviets would drive into northern China, as they had done in Poland, but it still expected to receive Soviet aid. Mao understood the Soviet-GMD pact to be a diplomatic maneuver on the part of Stalin that would not force the CCP to make any fundamental compromises.<sup>32</sup>

The Soviet-GMD pact provided for the GMD alone to take the Japanese surrender. However, in mid-August Stalin ordered his generals to secretly support the CCP in Manchuria. CCP cadres and troops left for Manchuria quickly and received help from the Soviets in setting up the CCP's Northeast Bureau. The Soviet Army assisted the

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<sup>31</sup> Sheng, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> In April 1946, Mao gave his viewpoint on compromises between the Soviet Union and the Western imperialist powers, which Mao often encountered during the Chinese revolution. According to Mao, "such compromises do not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions." "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," SW, Vol. 4, p. 87.

CCP forces, under the name of the People's Autonomous Army of the Northeast, in military operations to take control of Japanese-held cities in southern Manchuria.

While the CCP and GMD raced to get their forces into Manchuria in the fall of 1945, Mao and Zhou, Hurley and Jiang were negotiating in Chongqing. Mao and Zhou reiterated their demand to dismantle the GMD's one party dictatorship as a precondition for the formation of a coalition government and joint armed forces— knowing full well that Jiang would reject it.

Faced with growing GMD armies in Manchuria that outnumbered the CCP forces, Mao requested that the Soviets delay their withdrawal from Manchuria, and try to put obstacles in the way of the landing of GMD forces. Stalin agreed to do so. He also agreed to hand over the captured weapons of the Japanese army, fully arming the 275,000 CCP troops that had arrived in Manchuria by the end of 1945.<sup>33</sup> As a result of the CCP's concentration in the northeast and generous Soviet support, the Communist armies captured 220,000 puppet and Japanese troops, 197 small towns, and brought 20 million more people into the CCP base areas in two months.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Threat of Direct US Military Intervention**

In the fall of 1945, Mao was concerned that the US would support the GMD by landing substantial military forces.<sup>35</sup> This influenced his decision to go to Chongqing to reopen negotiations. However, Mao was not counting on the peaceful intentions of the US. An inner-party directive stated that if the Americans tried to force their way into CCP areas, they should be warned. The CCP should prepare to fight the US forces, but “never fire the first shot.”<sup>36</sup> The CCP began to label Wedemeyer “China's Scobie.”

In 1944, US generals were in fact considering launching a major offensive against Japanese troops in southern China, but decided against it in favor of its “island hopping” campaign in the western Pacific. After the end of World War II, and continuing until the end of the civil war in 1949, there was a significant possibility that the US would commit its armies to fight alongside the GMD against the CCP.

The US decided against this course of action for a variety of reasons,<sup>37</sup> but at the end of the world war, it was not clear to the CCP what US intentions were. In the fall of 1945, more than 50,000 US Marines landed in key ports, airports, railways and communications centers in north China to await the arrival of GMD forces. In early October, US naval forces approached Yantai, a port city on the Shandong Peninsula, and ordered CCP forces to leave the city. Mao ordered armed resistance to any landing

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<sup>33</sup> Sheng, pp. 110-111.

<sup>34</sup> Han Suyin, p. 459.

<sup>35</sup> After 1941, the U.S. became the main source of funds and armaments for the GMD. The US provided the GMD with over \$4.5 billion in military aid up to 1948.

<sup>36</sup> Sheng, p. 116.

<sup>37</sup> One important reason was the war-weariness of US troops. In the fall of 1945, units in the Philippines, Guam and France were demanding return to the US and discharge.

attempt. CCP Chief of Staff Ye Jianying publicly stated that “if U.S. forces insist on landing...they will have to bear the responsibility of serious consequences.” The US backed off in the face of this strong warning.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the civil war years, the PLA made preparations for combating US military intervention. In April 1949, as the PLA crossed the Yangtze River, the Second Field Army of 400,000 troops prepared for US landings on the coasts. When the Third Field Army took Shanghai in May 1949, it left the U.S. garrison alone so as to not provide a pretext for US intervention. The marines left shortly afterwards.

The CCP stressed the importance of self-sufficiency in the case of a US naval blockade of China’s ports. In the middle of 1949, the CCP even made some new overtures to establish trade relations with the US, raising US hopes that Mao would become another Tito, with the goal of preventing US military intervention. In all likelihood, this was conscious disinformation on the part of the CCP.<sup>39</sup>

### **1946: The Marshall Mission and Preparations for Nationwide Civil War**

US General Marshall arrived in late December 1945. At this time, the CCP was preparing to move towards more vigorous “talk.” As a result of the Moscow Conference, Stalin advised the CCP to end the civil war and seek a coalition government with Jiang that would “democratize” China.<sup>40</sup> At that time, Stalin believed that the CCP would not be able to achieve victory in a civil war with the US- backed GMD.

Mao decided to return to the Political Consultative Conference (PCC) in January 1946, where Marshall tried to broker an agreement. While the US was backing Jiang militarily, and was insisting on the disarmament of the CCP, it was publicly committed to a “democratic” China. The CCP hoped to use this divergence between the US and Jiang to maintain the talks while it prepared to fight. At this conference the CCP negotiated a truce and made an agreement “in principle” to reduce the sizes of the GMD and CCP armies.

At this point, there was a sharp struggle in the CCP leadership over the way forward. Under the influence of Liu Shaoqi, the party center issued a directive in February 1946 which stated that China had “entered a new stage of development of peaceful and democratic reconstruction... Currently, the main form of the Chinese revolution has changed from armed struggle to nonarmed parliamentary struggle of the masses.”<sup>41</sup> However, this line was soon reversed in favor of Mao’s position of negotiating while preparing for the intensification and expansion of revolutionary warfare.

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<sup>38</sup> Shu Guang Zhang, *China’s Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War*, 1995, pp. 31-32.

<sup>39</sup> Sheng, p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123-124.

After a number of reactionary incidents staged by the GMD, Mao announced in March 1946 that the CCP would not participate in the National Assembly set up by the PCC. While these diplomatic maneuvers were going on, the CCP was extending its territorial control in Manchuria as much as it could with the help of the Red Army. The Soviet Union was increasingly concerned about the prospect of having an American military outpost on their border in northeast China. Therefore, the Soviet Army stayed on in Manchuria past the February 1 deadline until late April 1946, and refused to turn the major cities over to the GMD as it withdrew from southern Manchuria.

By the end of March 1946, the CCP started the process of seizing all of northern Manchuria as the Soviet Army left, but it also strung out the negotiations with Marshall. The CCP didn't want to be the party that broke off negotiations, which would have alienated public opinion in the GMD-held areas and given the US *carte blanche* to expand its support to the GMD.

In order to give the CCP more time to consolidate its position in northern Manchuria, Zhou Enlai proposed a truce to Marshall in late April, and Jiang predictably rejected it. The stage was set for a series of major battles in southern Manchuria in May and June. Still the CCP continued to use Marshall's presence to buy time in order to prepare for nationwide civil war, which finally broke out in June 1946.<sup>42</sup> The CCP called it the Revolutionary War of Self-Defense.

Throughout the rest of 1946, while civil war raged, the CCP continued to engage in negotiations. In October Mao wrote to Zhou:

In the situation of nationwide civil war, all negotiations are for the purpose of exposing the reactionary feature of Mei-Jiang, and educating the masses. As long as Mei-Jiang do not give up political negotiations so they can continue to deceive the masses, we shall not take the initiative to announce the breakdown of the negotiations with Mei-Jiang. If we did it, that would put us in an unfavorable light.<sup>43</sup>

As it turned out, when the National Assembly set up by the PCC met in November 1946, it was boycotted by the Democratic League and other small "third force" parties due to the assassination of two Democratic League professors by GMD agents and the rape of a student at Beijing University by a US marine.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, the CCP's efforts to open up a political "second front" in GMD-held urban areas was achieving great success—in large part due to the negotiating tactics of the CCP. This propaganda campaign focused on denouncing the GMD for selling out to the US as it had to Japan, and placing the responsibility solely on the GMD for the outbreak of civil war. The CCP also waged psychological warfare within the GMD army, and convinced many units to defect as the CCP's armies went on the offensive.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 141. Marshall didn't depart until early 1947.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 158.



When nationwide civil war broke out in the spring of 1946, Mao and the CCP had achieved three important goals by means of their negotiating tactics: Buying extra time to build up military strength and to expand political work among the peasantry in the base areas and among all progressive classes in GMD-controlled territory; making it more difficult for the U.S. armed forces to intervene directly; and indicting Jiang and the GMD for bringing on civil war.

This integrated political, military and negotiating strategy paved the way for the victory of the new democratic revolution in the 1949 and the socialist revolution that succeeded it in 1956. While revolutions in every country have unique features and will utilize flexible strategy and tactics to advance the revolutionary process, the experience of the CCP between 1937 and 1946 holds important lessons for the future of the revolution in Nepal and other countries.

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## **Who We Are**

*The MLM Revolutionary Study Group is not affiliated with any party in the U.S. We advocate the development of a broad and dynamic anti-imperialist struggle that is closely connected to the most exploited and oppressed sections of people in the U.S. Additionally, we anticipate that serious revolutionaries who share an internationalist perspective and mass orientation will undertake the building of new communist organization to concentrate and develop leadership for such efforts, and to chart the pathways for revolution in the U.S., with a significant section of the working class and oppressed nationalities in the lead. We encourage such a project and will work to assist its development in every way we can.*

*Our revolutionary struggle and communist movement must be firmly anchored in internationalism, in solidarity with people's movements against imperialism and particularly Maoist revolutionary forces who are battling to achieve socialism and the complete liberation of humanity under communism.*

*We believe that the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism need to be identified and affirmed, that the positive and negative experiences of revolution and socialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century need to be carefully considered and summed up, and that MLM must be developed in many areas in order to lead the next wave of communist revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We hope to take an active part in the great debates sweeping through the international communist movement on these questions.*

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