Mobilization nation: mass movements in the People's Republic of China

Melvin L. Barnes

Follow this and additional works at: http://utdr.utoledo.edu/theses-dissertations

Recommended Citation
http://utdr.utoledo.edu/theses-dissertations/20

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by The University of Toledo Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The University of Toledo Digital Repository. For more information, please see the repository's About page.
Thesis

Entitled

Mobilization Nation: Mass Movements in the People's Republic of China

By

Melvin L. Barnes Jr.

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts Degree in History

Dr. Roberto Padilla, Committee Chair

Dr. Diane Britton, Committee Member

Dr. Charles Beatty-Medina, Committee Member

Dr. Patricia Komuniecki, Dean
College of Graduate Studies

University of Toledo
May 2013
An Abstract of

Mobilization Nation: Mass Movements in the People's Republic of China

by

Melvin Barnes

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in History

The University of Toledo
May 2013

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role played by two mobilization campaigns in the development of a modern Chinese national identity in the People's Republic of China. After the triumph of the Communist Party at the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War mobilization campaigns became the primary force establishing the traits of a new Chinese identity. The Land Reform Campaign initially began as a divisive campaign designed to physically eliminate undesirable classes, yet by the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War it became a unifying movement for the advancement of the nation. On the other hand, the Resist America-Aid Korea Campaign began in response to American involvement in the Korean War. As the conflict raged across the Bohai Gulf millions of Chinese were mobilized to fight, what they interpreted to be American imperialism in Korea. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese men and women participated in the most direct way possible, by fighting imperialism on the Korean peninsula. Millions of other Chinese participated in the campaign by producing weapons, clothing, and buying bonds in support of the war effort. Essentially, resisting America helped to create a Chinese national self by defining New China in contrast to an imperialist other, embodied by the United States. Together these campaigns increasingly fostered a sense of what it meant to be a citizen in the People's Republic of China.
Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Contents ........................................................................................................................................ iv

Preface .......................................................................................................................................... vi

1. Evolution of Land Reform .................................................................................................. 1
   1.1. The Agrarian Question ............................................................................................ 3
   1.2. Hunan Peasant Uprising ....................................................................................... 5
   1.3. Early Land Reform ................................................................................................. 8
   1.4. Land Reform and the Second Sino-Japanese War ................................................. 14
   1.5. Land Reform and the End of the Chinese Civil War ............................................. 18
   1.6. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 24

2. Land Reform and the State .............................................................................................. 26
   2.1. State of the Republic ............................................................................................... 28
   2.2. The Land Law ........................................................................................................ 30
   2.3. Establishing the State and Communist Political Power ...................................... 33
   2.4. Destroying the Landed Class ................................................................................ 35
   2.5. Mutual Aid and the Peasant Experience ............................................................... 38
2.6. Conclusion............................................................................................................. 41

3. Resisting America and the Construction of the Nation........................................ 42
   3.1. The Korean War................................................................................................. 43
   3.2. Distinguishing the Enemy.................................................................................. 46
   3.3. The New Chinese Self..................................................................................... 54
   3.4. Unity Through Participation.............................................................................. 59
   3.5. Conclusion........................................................................................................... 62

4. Epilogue....................................................................................................................... 64
Preface

This project expands the discourse on mobilization campaigns in China by positing they played an essential role in the construction of a Chinese nation state. *Mobilization Nation* examines two movements, the Resist America-Aid Korea Campaign and the Agrarian Reform Campaigns. I have chosen these movements because they are national in scope, engaged a broad base of the population, and had a profound impact on daily life. The state carried out agrarian reform in every village throughout China, transforming social and economic relationships in the countryside and building a broad base of support, while the Resist America-Aid Korea Campaign mobilized the entire country in response to the Korean War. This study does not gauge the overall success of each of these movements, rather, it maintains, these campaigns, through popular participation fostered a sense of national unity. Essentially, I argue mobilization was the vehicle which generated the People's Republic of China's national identity by bringing people together through participation in campaigns under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese historiography offers a limited discussion of nationalism, while a discourse on a revolutionary Chinese national identity is absent from Chinese historiography. The chronological scope of *Mobilization Nation* spans nearly two decades from 1926 to 1954, and geographically encompasses all of modern China.
Methodologically, my work is informed by three intellectual frameworks, two theoretical constructs, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, as well as one conceptual framework, the tension between Maoist heterodoxy and Marxist orthodoxy. These three organizational paradigms are integral to the development of this study by framing the discussion on nationalism and identity construction in China. In the period under examination the Communist Party is concerned with gaining popular support and transforming that support into action designed to benefit the People's Republic of China. Anderson and Said establish the connections between the state and individual identity that are implied by the historical processes but not clearly expressed in the speeches and laws of the People's Republic.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson constructs a theoretical framework explaining the emergence of nationalism. He argues, the decline of sacred languages and the advent of print capitalism in the eighteenth century gave rise to a new concept of time called, "homogenous empty time," which, simultaneity is established by the clock and calendar. The novel and the newspaper transferred this style of imagining time to European and American populations, creating national bonds through the shared experience of their world, which existed only in the mind. Anderson defines the nation as an "imagined political community," inherently limited and sovereign." Although I have adopted his final definition of nation-state, I find certain aspects of his theory problematic; specifically, his emphasis on print capitalism over common activity in the formation of a nation consciousness. During the 1950s in Communist China, print capitalism was underdeveloped; furthermore, the majority of the Chinese populace was

---

unable to read well enough to engage novels. A national consciousness had to be instilled by other means. In chapters two and three I explain that the Chinese developed what Anderson coined an "imagined community," a term I modify, by expanding contact with the state through participation in mobilization campaigns. A Chinese individual living in the People's Republic of China of the 1950s could only hope to meet a small fraction of the men and women he understood to be his fellow countrymen; all the while he understood that they all shared common experiences, through mass movements.

The other theoretical framework important to this study is imaginative geography, borrowed from Edward Said's *Orientalism*. A central feature of Said's imaginative geography is that modern identities are constructed negatively. Building on Claude Levi-Strauss’s concept of the science of the concrete, Said explains the human process of designating the familiar and unfamiliar lends itself to a process of forming arbitrary geographical distinctions, creating “our land” and “barbarian land.” Said explains, “‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from ‘ours.’” ² Here, the term arbitrary is used because the occupants of the barbarian land need not recognize the traits that comprise their distinction. In chapter three, which focuses on the Resist America-Aid Korea Campaign, imaginative geography frames the construction of a Chinese national identity created in contrast to a perceived American identity, by mobilizing in opposition to, what Chinese understood to be American imperialism on the Korean Peninsula.

Conceptually, Maoist heterodoxy in contrast to Marxist orthodoxy exemplifies the struggle within the Communist Party between orthodox Marxist-Leninism and Mao's

---

interpretation of Marxism. The issues between these two perspectives have to do with
time and place, during the 1920s and 1930s China had not reached the stage of industrial
capitalism. In 1927 Jiang Jieshi purged the left of the Guomindang, beginning in
Shanghai, which at the time was China's nascent industrial center. The purge destroyed
the Chinese Communist in urban areas and eviscerated their revolutionary base among
China's workers. This event forced the Chinese Communist Party to adopt a rural focus
built around the construction of safe base areas called Soviets. Rapidly, the soviet became
a site of struggle between Maoist and Marxist, with the latter employing tactics of
unwavering class warfare. Mao understood that once in the countryside, the divisive
policies of unchecked class warfare were detrimental to the Party and the stability of rural
China, because the Chinese Communist Party's survival depended on a broad base of
support.

_Mobilization Nation_ engages the growing discourse on mass campaigns in the
People’s Republic of China. Early monographs produced in the 1970s on
mobilization efforts were broad based studies that defined campaigns and assessed
their overall value. In the United States, scholars worked to gauge the utility and
success of mobilization campaigns on Communist China’s economic developmental
model. Early monographs were general studies, focusing on the broad phenomena,
not merely singular campaigns. These efforts to better understand mobilization
campaigns by scholars in the west, took place during the polarization of the Cold
War. At this time, scholars had no direct access to collections in the People's
Republic, which limited the depth of their investigations to newspapers and
interviews with dissidents and defectors. The two most prominent monographs
produced by historians in the 1970s evaluate campaigns as a viable tool of social development.

Gordon Bennett’s *Yundong: Mass Campaigns in Chinese Communist Leadership*, published in 1976 was one of the first general studies of mobilization campaigns. In this monograph, Bennett establishes the definition of mobilization campaigns used throughout this study, as a "government-sponsored effort to storm and eventually overwhelm strong but vulnerable barriers to the progress of socialism through intensive mass mobilization of active personal commitment." Beyond positing a viable definition of campaigns, Bennett makes two important conclusions. First, he demonstrates that campaigns served as a vehicle of political participation, a concept which is central to my argument. Second, Bennett argues campaigns contributed more to the economy than they detracted.

Shortly after Bennett, Charles P. Cell published an investigation on mobilization campaigns in the People’s Republic. Cell’s monograph *Revolution at Work: Mobilization Campaigns in China*, assessed the utility of mobilization campaigns by testing the hypothesis produced by the Skinner-Winckler model, which concluded that campaigns were more useful in fulfilling ideological goals than economic goals. Cell determined the hypothesis generated by the Skinner-Winckler model to be incorrect. After comparing the shortcomings of ideological and economic campaigns, Cell argues that an insubstantial difference exists between the two types of campaigns; yet both produced a net positive impact.

---

Recent investigations into mobilization campaigns are detailed studies of a single movement. For example, Frank Dikotter's monograph *Mao's Great Famine* is an investigation of the mobilization campaign known as the Great Leap Forward. Dikotter argues, coercion and terror formed the foundations of the Great Leap Forward; and denies the resulting famine was caused by mismanagement. However, Maurice Meisner's work, which is a broad study of China from 1949 to 1980s, provides an examination of the same campaign and comes to a very different conclusion. In his monograph *Mao's China and After*, Meisner blames successive years of natural calamities, declining harvests, the abrupt termination of Russian technological aid, and general organizational chaos as the cause of China's most devastating famine. Mao Zedong, the chief architect the Great Leap Forward is culpable; but Meisner argues against framing him as a mass murderer similar to Stalin and Hitler, Dikotter has no such qualms. The key point of separation between Meisner and Dikotter is that Meisner identifies the vast moral difference between "unintended and unforeseen political consequences."4

Judith Shapiro's *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* implies a connection between the political repression associated with mobilization campaigns and the subsequent environmental degradation that occurred in the context of China's economic development. The intellectual and political repression caused by the One Hundred Flowers Campaign comprises the central theme of Shapiro’s work. She concludes that the mistreatment

---

of China's environment stemmed from suppression of intellectual freedoms and utopian idealism.

Zhou Yongming's *Anti-Drug Crusades in Twentieth-Century China* integrates nationalism and state-building into the discussion of mobilization campaigns. Zhou’s monograph traces campaigns from the late Qing to the Communist period. Zhou argues that nationalism and the needs of the state shaped how anti-drug mobilization campaigns were carried out. For Zhou these connections presented an opportunity for the state to utilize national anti-drug discourse in the form of campaigns to further consolidate the state authority.

My research contributes to Chinese historiography of mass campaigns by illuminating the importance of mobilization efforts in the creation of a modern Chinese national identity during the first decade of communist rule. This conclusion builds upon Bennett’s notion of mass movements serving as instruments of political participation and Cell’s conclusion that their impact on Chinese society was largely positive. Because I view campaigns as primarily positive movements my work diverges from Shapiro’s and Dikotter’s monographs which viewed mass movements as destructive endeavors. My research is closest to, yet fundamentally different than Zhou’s monograph, where he asserts connections between campaigns and nationalism, I assert connections between campaigns and national identity. Anderson provides a definition of nationalism which focuses on the connections between individuals and a broader community. Anderson's definition does not parse nationalism and national identity into independently distinguishable phenomena,
while, I on the other hand view the construction of a national identity as a precursor to nationalism.

A monograph devoted to the development of Chinese nationalism in the People's Republic is conspicuously absent from modern Chinese historiography. Nationalism's relative silence in the historical conversation regarding the People's Republic is due, in large part, to the notion that communism and nationalism are discordant ideologies. Nations are inherently self-centered, concerned primarily with the wellbeing of its own citizens. However, communism, which is centered on class, is international in focus and extends beyond the boundaries set by the nation. As a result, the focus of Chinese historiography has been on China's development of Marxism, not the formation of a distinct Chinese nationalism or a concomitant national identity. Despite placing a primary emphasis on Marxism, some scholars, such as Maurice Meisner, John King Fairbank, and Prasenjit Duara have conducted quick discussions of nationalism in their broader works.

Maurice Meisner's in *Mao's China and After*, described nationalism and socialism as an "inherently unstable combination."\(^5\) In his brief discussion Meisner argues nationalism in the People's Republic of China did not truly rise to the fore until after Mao's death in 1976, when it became the Party's dominant ideological concern under Deng Xiaoping. On the other hand, John King Fairbank's discussion of the Sino-Soviet split posits, that by 1960 Mao emphasized the primacy of China's historical experiences in lieu of the Soviet revolutionary model. Mao's de-emphasis of the Soviet example and elevation of the Chinese experience gave rise to national

communism in China. According to Fairbank, national communism was an amalgamation of Marxism and nationalism that had a tendency to become more nationalist than communist.⁶ Both books briefly discuss nationalism, but only after China became increasingly isolated after the Sino-Soviet split and in contrast to communism.

_Mobilization Nation's_ position highlighting the development of a national identity, not nationalism, in concert with communism in the People's Republic of China is supported by Prasenjit Duara's _Rescuing History from the Nation_. Here, Duara posits that nationalism and communism often come together in order to form the foundation of a given nation. Duara refers to the "class-nation," which extends the characteristics of a given class broadly across the entire spectrum of the nation.⁷ Duara ties this notion to the revolutionary movements of the Utopian Period. (1957-1976) _Mobilization Nation_ identifies the development of a revolutionary socialist national identity as early as 1949 during the Agrarian Reform Campaign and the Resist America-Aid Korea Campaign, both of which helped to establish the basis of China's national identity. The early formation of an encompassing national identity in the early 1950s eventually formed the foundation of Chinese nationalism in the People’s Republic of China, which according to Chinese historiography emerged at the beginning of the Utopian Period in response to the Sino-Soviet split.

The methodological approach utilized throughout this investigation incorporates primary sources that include political speeches, scientific reports, and

---

popular media such as pictorials, short stories, and pamphlets. These include selected speeches from Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai that focus on the development of nationalism and mobilization campaigns. In addition, the report produced by the *International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China* is featured prominently in chapter three. This report commissioned by the Chinese government and carried out by Western scientists confirmed the allegations of bacteriological warfare lobbied against the United States during the Korean War. Popular media plays an important role in this investigation as well. These sources, such as short stories and pamphlets, serve as a window into Chinese society during the early 1950s, they were primarily manufactured for popular consumption, as a result, they highlight Chinese perspectives on a myriad of social and political issues which can be gleaned from their pages.

My research is based upon Chinese language sources written in their original Chinese as well as translated sources. The majority of the political essays and speeches used throughout this study were translated sources. Throughout *Mobilization Nation* Chinese names will appear in Pinyin. The Chinese Communist Party developed the Pinyin romanization system in the 1950s. Currently, it is the standard romanization method used in class rooms throughout the United States and China, replacing the Wage-Giles system. In this study, Wade-Giles is only used in direct quotations, followed by a parenthetical transliteration into pinyin.

Chapter one, "Evolution of Land Reform," is an appraisal of the Chinese Communist Party's agrarian policies from its beginnings in southern China at the end
of the 1920s up to 1949. Land Reform, being a protracted campaign, underwent significant changes leading up to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. These changes allowed the campaign to serve as a broad based popular movement. The focus of this chapter is on the struggle between Maoist heterodoxy and orthodox Marxism's emphasis on class struggle. The chapter is divided into four sections: "The Hunan Peasant Uprising," "Early Land Reform," "Land Reform and the Second Sino-Japanese War," and "Land Reform at the end of the Chinese Civil War." In this section, "The Hunan Peasant Uprising" investigates Mao’s seminal moment when he recognized the revolutionary potential of China’s peasantry. In his report, which directed revolutionaries toward an agrarian based uprising, the peasantry is described as an unstoppable “tempestuous force,”8 poised to put an end to feudalism and imperialism in China. Early land reform compares and contrasts Mao’s policies with those of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks.9 The next section, "Land Reform and the Second Sino-Japanese War," begins after the Long March and examines the curtailing of land reform in favor of producing a Second United Front against Japanese imperialism. The final section, "Land Reform at the end Chinese Civil War," focuses on the resurgence of the Chinese Civil War and the effect the conflict had on the Chinese Communist Party's land reform policy. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Chinese Communist Party during a time of conflict was able to create a popular base of support in China.

---


9 The Twenty-eight Bolsheviks were exchange students that studied orthodox Marxism at Sun Zhong Shan University in the Soviet Union.
Chapter two, "Land Reform and the State," examines land reform after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. This chapter posits the land reform campaign changed immensely from the pre-1949 movement, capitalizing on the broad support already established and becoming a movement primarily concerned with the advancement of the nation. The chapter is divided into five parts: "State of the Republic," "The Land Law," "Establishing the State and Communist Political Power," "Destroying the Landed Class," and "Mutual Aid and the Peasant Experience." In the section "State of the Republic" the focus is on China’s economic disposition at the inception of the People’s Republic. Liberation was understood as just the first step of a protracted revolution, China’s war ravaged infrastructure and social and economic backwardness posed significant problems for the new regime. The second section titled, "The Land Law," discusses the Agrarian Reform Law, which the Chinese Communist promulgated in 1950. This portion of the paper highlights the changes made to agrarian reforms which were designed to transform the land movement from a regional to a national movement for the advancement of the state. Part three of this chapter investigates the development of state political power at the village level. Local organizations provided the citizens of China with direct contact with certain organs of the state. Conversely, the organization of the peasantry, in accordance with agrarian reform provided the Chinese Communist Party with a robust system capable of dispensing information and rousing the masses. The fourth section, "Destroying the Landed Class," briefly explains the process wherein landlords were eliminated in the People’s Republic of China through assimilation based upon labor. Mao, despite having few reservations about
using violence to achieve revolutionary aims, preferred to remold the undesirable elements of society to fit the new Communist state. The final section of chapter two covers the experiences of Zhang Zhongliang from Liu Ling village. Zhang’s experiences in Liu Ling village underscores the importance of participation in the establishment of China’s nation state.

Chapter three, "Resisting America and Constructing the Nation," surveys the development of a Chinese national identity during the Korean War. This final chapter argues that the Resist America Campaign, which began in response to the Korean War, united the Chinese people against what they understood to be American Imperialism, and fostered the development of a contrasting socialist identity vis-à-vis an American Imperialist other. Chapter three is organized into four sections: "The Korean War," "Distinguishing the Enemy," "the New Chinese Self," and "Unity Through Participation." The section, "The Korean War," provides a brief description of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula from the Chinese perspective, as well as the beginning of the Resist America Campaign. Part two, "Distinguishing the Enemy," makes up the largest portion of this chapter and highlights the varying depictions of the United States and subsequent representations of New China throughout Chinese popular media, such as, short stories, pamphlets, and pictorials. The final section of this chapter covers popular participation in the Resist America Campaign.
Chapter 1.

The Evolution of Land Reform

Land Reform in the People's Republic of China was arguably the most prodigious mobilization campaign enacted under Communist Party leadership, beginning in the latter half of the 1920s and lasting until the mid-1950s.¹ The campaign emerged in 1927 shortly after Jiang Jieshi expelled every communist members from the ranks of the city based Guomindang. The bloody purge transformed the Chinese Communist Party from an urban oriented organization that focused on the proletariat, to a party which reinvented itself on the rural periphery of Guomindang power. Once the Communists' emphasis shifted to the countryside, land reform became a site of near constant struggle between Mao Zedong and dogmatic Marxists within the Chinese Communist Party. This chapter argues that Maoist heterodoxy deemphasized class warfare in the land reform movement making popular support and unity possible. Mao never studied abroad in the Soviet Union and received little formal training in Marxist doctrine. As a result, he was utilitarian and flexible in his approach to Marxism, modifying its principles to fit the

¹ Here, I am referring specifically to the confiscation and redistribution of agricultural land. This does not include the collectivization of agriculture which began as early as 1953.
"mass line."¹ Mao’s opponents, many of whom were formally trained in the Soviet Union in Marxist orthodoxy, implemented an approach to revolution learned in classrooms abroad and applied in China's urban centers that called for unrelenting class warfare. Essentially, Mao and the dogmatist differed on how to effectively eliminate feudalism in China, Mao favored struggle which eventually forced their assimilation, but his opponents endorsed their elimination through physical and economic means.

Mao believed that individual experiences and human agency superseded economic determinism. Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy asserted that the objective forces of historical development propelled all nations through stages of economic development, feudalism became capitalism, and capitalism would eventually lead to communism. In Marxist-Leninist doctrine the transition from capitalism to communism is the end result of a proletarian revolution. The proletariat was the only class that possessed revolutionary potential, due to their positions as exploited industrial workers. However, Mao believed individual experience determined a person's revolutionary disposition. So long as an individual had "eaten bitter," (chi ku) meaning he or she had experienced hardships in life, they could become true leftist revolutionaries. This flexible interpretation of Marxist doctrine allowed Mao to look beyond the proletariat and identify the peasantry in the countryside as the potential vanguard of the Chinese Revolution.²

¹ John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1987), 238. The mass line was the continuity between the mentality, needs and interests of the common people. Essentially, it was the desire to have the revolution directed by the masses.
Chinese feudalism is fundamentally different from European feudalism.\textsuperscript{3}

Typically, when feudalism is used in relationship to nineteenth and twentieth century China it is understood as the social and economic system which allowed ruling classes to live off of a share of the production of laboring classes. The landed classes derived their power and influence predominantly from the private ownership of land, controlling who could access the land and at what cost. Peasants were bound to the land, not by law, but by social traditions.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{1.1. The Agrarian Question}

The agrarian problem was the direct result of China's dwindling land and feudal agricultural system. This problem of distribution became critical in the late nineteenth century. Under the Qing Empire (1644-1911) the Chinese population increased by over two-hundred percent.\textsuperscript{5} This population explosion quickly outpaced the growth of cultivatable land. As a result, the amount of arable land available to each Chinese peasant became a fraction of what it had been during the seventeenth century. According to Lloyd Eastman, by the late nineteenth century the Chinese peasantry subsisted dangerously close to China's "Malthusian limits."\textsuperscript{6} For the majority of China's peasants, life in the countryside grew increasingly precarious during the first half of the next century.

\textsuperscript{3} In medieval Europe feudalism was a system of land tenure that bound lords and vassals together. When a warrior pledged his allegiance to a lord, he was intern granted an estate called a fief. Agricultural workers known as serfs tended to the farms, living under the authority and paying taxes to the estate lord.


\textsuperscript{5} Lloyd Eastman, \textit{The Aborting Revolution China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 182. By the early twentieth century the Chinese population was roughly four-hundred-million.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
Downward mobility in rural China during the early twentieth century was driven by natural calamities and exploiting classes. By this time peasants labored on the precipice of human subsistence. As a result, minor adversities often determined life or death. Bad weather resulting in a poor harvest frequently challenged peasants abilities to make ends meet; but the primary agents bleeding the wealth from the less economically fortunate were the affluent. Families mired in hard times sold land to the wealthy or acquired loans at exorbitant interest rates. This pattern of selling land and taking out loans produced a self-sustaining system that ultimately doomed many peasants to abject poverty or death. The poorest peasants died at the nadir of society, always replaced by a new group of impecunious agricultural workers. Ultimately, wealth flowed upward in rural Chinese society accumulating in the hands of the landlord class.

Landlords were individuals that made a living solely off of the labor of others. In terms of Marxism, their access to income was purely exploitative. Rarely, if ever, did landlords take part in anything other than supplementary labor. Their primary source of income came in the form of land rent. Tenants that worked the land owned by landlords would be expected to pay a percentage of what they produced annually. In many cases, the tax levied by landlords often exceeded fifty percent, in some places reaching as high as eighty percent of the crop.

Landlords filled the dearth of banking institutions in the countryside. In early twentieth century China, modern capitalism was still embryonic, only taking root in

---


China in 1895.\textsuperscript{10} During this time, financial institutions spread throughout China's major cities, notably Shanghai. As a result, China's major urban areas accumulated capital, which did not flow into the countryside. As a result, villagers relied on a feudal system where credit resided in the hands of loan sharks and landlords, which in many cases were the same individual. According to the United States Air Force's Human Resources Research Institute, in 1933 just over eighty-nine percent of all loans extended to the peasantry came from private sources.\textsuperscript{11} The interests rates on loans provided to the peasantry from these sources ranged from anywhere between thirty and sixty percent, and in the worst cases one-hundred percent annually.\textsuperscript{12} Peasants forced to take out loans were at a great risk of becoming stuck in an inescapable free-fall of endless debt.

1.2. The Hunan Peasant Uprising

The "Agrarian Question" spawned the Hunan Peasant Uprising, which was the inspirational force behind the Chinese Communist Party's land reform policy. In March of 1927 Mao Zedong published his "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan." This report, produced by Mao, characterized the peasant uprising in Hunan as a legitimate conflict identifying the peasantry as the new vanguard of the Chinese revolution centered in rural China. What Mao witnessed was the "tempestuous force" of the peasantry as they targeted the rural power structure and patriarchal ideas and institution which supported the landlord system.\textsuperscript{13} The uprising transferred power and

\textsuperscript{11} Ong Shao-er, \textit{Agrarian Reform in Communist China to 1952} (Lackland: Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center, 1955), 4.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 28.
influence from their traditional feudal sources in rural society to the newly formed
peasant associations. The process of confiscating land, reducing rent, and empowering
peasant associations, first seen during the Hunan uprising, became the defining feature of
the Chinese Communist Party's Land Reform Campaign.

Peasant associations emerged as the primary governing body and the source of
peasant strength during the Hunan uprising in the wake of the Northern Expedition.
Agricultural workers in Hunan began organizing in January of 1926. At first, peasant
associations operated underground meeting in secret in order to avoiding arousing the
suspicions of the local government. According to Mao, during the first nine months of
1926 the membership of the peasant association numbered roughly three-hundred-
thousand. In October, the peasant association began engaging in revolutionary action
and experienced a substantial increase in membership. By January of 1927 almost half of
the peasants in Hunan were under the leadership of the peasant associations. The
strength of the peasantry came from their organization and high level of popular
participation. The uprising was made possible due to the timing of the Northern
Expedition. As the armies of the Guomindang marched north they conscripted any arms
and military men capable of aiding in the expedition, including the security hired by
landlords which Mao referred to as "local bullies" in his report. The transformation of

15 Ibid. In the report Mao presents the number of active participants at more than two million.
was a military endeavor begun by the Guomindang in order to unite China. The expedition began in
Guangdong, southeast China, and pushed north to Beijing. The Northern Expedition itself produced only a
nominal unification of China. Instead of unquestionably conquering all of China's existing warlords and
bringing them under the authority of the central government, many were simply admitted into the party and
given government positions on their sworn oath to serve Jiang Jieshi and the Guomindang. This decision
ultimately helped to dilute the revolutionary character of the Guomindang.
the rural power structure, caused by the Northern Expedition, provided the peasant associations with the opportunity to bring about immense change.

The primary target of the uprising in Hunan was the landlord class. In order to secure land, reduce rents, and curtail interest rates, landlords had to be weakened politically and economically. The economic success of the movement relied on the ability of the peasant association to wrest land and farming implements away from the landlord class. The peasant association achieved this goal first by checking accounts, a process which required a committee of peasants to audit the public financial records in search of landlords that had abused public positions by taking communal money or land for private use. If found guilty, the peasant association organized a major or minor protest against the landlord and his family. A major protest required a large crowd. After the protesters amassed outside of the landlord’s home they forced their way inside and took what they wanted, slaughtering livestock, and consuming the landlord’s grain, typically concluding with a hefty fine. Minor protests were smaller by comparison. Again, peasants made their way into the offender’s home, but only to force the occupants to write a "cease and desist" letter, pledging an end to the household’s resistance of the peasant associations.\(^1\)

Other forms of punishment included crowning, banishment, incarceration, and execution. When a local landlord was crowned he was forced to wear a tall paper hat bearing the words "local tyrant." Once crowned, the peasants chastised the tyrant and forced him to march through the streets surrounded by large crowds of peasants. This process symbolically stripped landlords of social prestige. The sentence of banishment was typically handed down to landlords that had already fled to larger urban areas, barring

\(^1\) Ibid, 37.
their return. Execution was reserved for the most hated local tyrants.\textsuperscript{18} Individuals likely to be executed were the perpetrators of heinous crimes against the masses, typically the murder of peasants. However, revolutions are inherently violent undertakings and even docile landlords and rich peasants certainly lost their lives.

The Hunan Uprising was Mao's seminal moment where he realized revolution in China was going to be a rural phenomenon. From this point on, Mao's revolution was an agricultural revolution that stressed unity over class. Mao also gained important insights on how to conduct the coming revolution. He identified his revolutionary vanguard as the peasantry, and the immutable fact that political goals often needed the backing of force. As Mao moved throughout the countryside in southern China these were lessons he would not forget.

1.3. Early Land Reform in the Jiangxi Soviet

Early Land Reform in the Jiangxi Soviet began in 1929 under Mao Zedong and was the first site of struggle between Mao and the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. The Jiangxi Soviet was a part of a larger base system known as the Chinese Soviet Republic, which at its height covering an area of southern China roughly the size of France.\textsuperscript{19} The Soviet was initially controlled by Mao Zedong and his supporters, but the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks began eroding his power in the Soviet as early as 1931 after their return from studying abroad at Sun Zhongshan University in Moscow. Mao Zedong and his supporters favored a moderate approach to land policy, an approach that assured the survival of the majority of those struggled against after they were deposed politically and economically so as to

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 38.
\textsuperscript{19} Fundamental Laws of the Chinese Soviet Republic, (Bristol: Westerb Orubtubg Servuces LTD., 1934), I.
protect their base of support amongst middle and well to do peasants. On the other hand, the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks, along with their mentor Mikhail Aleksandrovich Fortus, better known as Pavel Mif, favored an unforgiving approach to Land Reform policy that stressed class warfare, denying feudal elements of society access to a means of economic survival after the completion of land redistribution. By 1933, the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks dominated land reform in the Chinese Soviet Republic.

Before the arrival of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks, Mao Zedong implemented a moderate model of land reform in the Jiangxi Soviet. Prior to forming the Soviet, Mao gained considerable experience in conducting land reform in a mountainous region on the Jiangxi-Hunan border known as Jinggangshan.\(^{20}\) His experiences in Jinggangshan taught him to pursue a less draconian reform policy in dealing with landlords and rich peasants. Mao called for the Chinese people to “draw on the plentiful to make room for the scarce” and to “draw on the fat to make room for the lean.”\(^{21}\) Together these dual slogans instructed the citizens of the Soviet to restructure China’s feudal agricultural system, but not to do so blindly. "Draw on the plentiful to make room for the scarce," was a general call for peasants to take from the wealthy in order to provide for the poor, but the slogan had to be put into effect carefully. In western Fujian, this concept was put into place prior to the creation of "draw on the fat to make room for the lean." As a result, in western Fujian rich peasants gave up large swaths of land, but they horded the best and most productive tracts for themselves. In order to correct this error Mao implemented, “draw on the fat to make room for the lean.” This slogan referenced the overall quality of land.

\(^{20}\) Jinggangshan was the first major soviet base area controlled by Mao.

The terms “lean” and “fat” describe the agricultural yield that could be expected from the land in a given season. Together these slogans formed the foundation of land reform under Mao. It is important to note that these slogans imply that the feudal elements of society would retain some land holdings in post-revolutionary society. The peasants were to draw on the “plentiful” and “fat,” to make up for the deficiencies of rural society, not to create a new class of poor. Mao advocated something closer to the equalization of wealth; essentially the economic destruction of the upper classes, not their physical eradication.

Land reform in the Jiangxi Soviet changed under the influence of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. Essentially, land reform after 1933 suffered because of the decision to deny the feudal elements of society, landlords, gentry, and resistant rich peasants, a suitable means of subsistence after the redistribution of land. The Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic, introduced by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee in November of 1931, in its introduction landlords are identified as the primary targets of the land revolution. The land law called for the confiscation of all lands owned by feudal lords and landlords without compensation for redistribution. After the targeted individuals were stripped of their land their decline into starvation was almost assured because they were not allocated their own plot of land or a supplementary means of subsistence. In some cases, landlords after the agrarian revolution were utilized as a source of forced labor.

---

22 Ibid, 25.
23 Moise, Land Reform in China and North Vietnam, 33.
The Land Law of 1931 also targeted the families of the landlords throughout the Soviet. The head of the household lost all of his property, as the law called for the complete confiscation of all land, houses, property, and farm implements belonging to large landowners and their immediate families without exception. During the redistribution of land, as mentioned previously, landlords were not only excluded from the redistribution of land they were also barred from working the land altogether. After redistribution, the selling and leasing of land was legal under the Land Reform Law enacted in 1931, however, the same law made it illegal to lease or sell property to individuals, or the dependents of individuals, that had been identified as landlords. As a result, the immediate family of landlords also lost their access to a means of subsistence after the reform movement. The wives and daughters of landlords were only eligible to receive land allotments from the soviet or the peasant association after they remarried workers, farmhands, poor peasants, or middle peasants.

Rich peasants fared better than the families of the landlord class, but they were nonetheless targeted by the land reform movement as a class possessing a semi-feudal character. Under the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks, the severe treatment of rich peasants was inspired by Stalin’s policies regarding the Kulaks during the collectivization campaign in the Soviet Union. Rich peasants possessed more land than they themselves could work, but rich peasants earned part of their income from their own labor. Like landlords, rich peasants exploited poor peasants through land rents and high interest loans. Yet the Communists recognized, unlike landlords, rich peasants possessed a changeable

---

25 Kulaks were small independent farm owners in the Soviet Union that resisted agricultural collectivization under Joseph Stalin in the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a result, the Communist Government under Stalin supported the deportation of Kulaks to Siberia as well as their physical elimination, both of which resulted in the deaths of thousands.
revolutionary character, vacillating between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. At
the apex of the revolutionary upsurge rich peasants were likely to burn their title deeds,
divide their lands, and dawn the red star of the Communist Party. But according to the
document “The Rich Peasant Problem,” published in June of 1930, this was all done in
order to gain influence and leadership positions at the head of poor peasants and farm
hands. In the land law of the Jiangxi Soviet, the possessions of rich peasants, along with
the possessions of landlords were confiscated. Unlike landlords, rich peasants were
eligible to receive land during redistribution, but they were only designated land of the
poorest quality.

Middle peasants were protected under the Twenty-eight Bolshevik’s land law
because they were not seen as a counter revolutionary class; in fact, the Chinese
Communist Party by this time, considered winning over middle peasants integral to the
ultimate success of the revolution. The Party perceived middle peasants to be an
exploited class that produced his or her income based solely from their labor. As a
result, the agricultural land and farm implements owned by middle peasants were not
targeted for confiscation by the soviet government or the peasant association. Middle
peasant land was only redistributed if the majority of middle peasants and poor peasants
voted in favor of equal redistribution. In the absence of a plebiscite, the land possessed by
middle peasants only came into government control when they volunteered their land for
redistribution.

26 Ibid, 152.
27 Ibid, 187.
29 Tso-Liang Hsiao, The Land Revolution in China, 192.
As the surrogate proletariat and primary exploited class, poor peasants gained the most under the Twenty-eight Bolshevik’s land law. Poor peasants differed from middle peasants, in that, the poor possessed very little, if any, land or farming implements of their own. Furthermore, in order to survive, they had to sell their labor and rent land and farming implements. Since they were the primary exploited class, without exception poor peasants were entitled to the land confiscated from the landlord class and rich peasants during land redistribution.\(^{30}\)

In the face of Guomindang repression, the policies of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks in the Jiangxi Soviet proved to be disastrous, leading to the success of the Guomindang’s Fifth Communist Eradication Campaign and Mao's resurgence in the party. Their unwillingness to yield territory and insistence on using positional warfare to repulse the Guomindang's attacks resulted in the liquidation of the Jiangxi Soviet.\(^{31}\) Following the Communist Party's defeat in Jiangxi nearly one-hundred-thousand of its members embarked on the much heralded yet relentless Long March, from which less than ten thousand would survive. While blazing the tortuous path of the Long March, Mao regained much of the influence he had lost to the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. At the Zunyi Conference on January 15, 1935 the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks and their foreign advisors were criticized for their erroneous leadership in Jiangxi.\(^{32}\) As a result, Mao was again placed at the head of the Party. Eventually, under Mao's leadership the Communist column arrived in Shaanxi province where they resumed land reform.


\(^{31}\) Prior to the arrival of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks Mao stressed a fluid type of irregular warfare that we today equate with an insurgency. The Twenty-eight Bolsheviks applied lessons from the Soviet Union to the defense of the Jiangxi Soviet.

Shaanxi province should be considered the antithesis to any ideal geographic space for land reform. At the time of the Communists' arrival in 1935 a calcareous loess varnish blanketed everything in sight, giving the landscape a jaundiced appearance. The land in Shaanxi was not worth much and tenancy was low. In terms of reform, Shaanxi province was a substantial liability. Peasants only rented seventeen percent of the land in Shaanxi. Most peasants owned their own land, which was of marginal value and not highly productive. The true locus of wealth in Shaanxi resided in livestock. In this sense Shaanxi province differed greatly from Jiangxi. Since wealth in Shaanxi manifested itself in the possession of draft animals and livestock the focus of land reform shifted to draft animals and farming implements. Landlords in Shaanxi typically possessed an ox, a donkey, and a horse. As a result, land reform adjusted accordingly. The Party, over the next two years expanded throughout Shaanxi, Ningxia, and Gansu provinces, continuing land confiscation until 1937 and the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

1.4. Land Reform and the Second Sino-Japanese War

Land reform during the Anti-Japanese war lacked, by design, the revolutionary thrust to remold society and destroy feudalism. Instead, the Party downplayed reform in order to assure national unity against the Japanese. What had been a movement to end feudalism in China now became a movement to ease the exploitation of the peasantry and assuage the fears of the landlord class. The land revolution became rent and interest reduction. With rent and interest reduction pushed to the fore, agrarian reform ceased to

---

33 Moise, Land Reform in China and North Vietnam, 37.
be a robust anti-feudal movement and became a movement which temporarily maintained the status-quo in order to unite China.

After the conclusion of the Long March two events fundamentally impacted the trajectory of land reform. The Xi’an incident and the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War changed what the Chinese Communist Party identified as the primary contradiction in China. Previously, China’s class conflict, embodied by the struggle waged between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang, occupied the position as the primary class contradiction in China. But after the kidnapping of Jiang Jieshi in December of 1936 and the subsequent negotiations between the Chinese Communist and the Guomindang, the party agreed to transform significant aspects of Communist policy in order to unite with the Guomindang. The Luguoqiao incident further strengthened the alliance between China’s two largest parties.35 In the summer of 1937, Mao explained that Japanese aggression had fundamentally transformed class relationships within the country: “the contradiction between China and Japan has become the principal one and China’s internal contradictions have dropped into a secondary and subordinate place, changes have occurred in China’s international relations and internal class relations, giving rise to a new stage of development in the current situation.”36 This realization had a profound impact on party policy. As a result, the Communist Party altered its land reform policy in order to encourage a united front of all of China’s classes against Japanese aggression.

35 Luguoqiao is better known in the West as Marco Polo Bridge. In July of 1937, the area around the bridge was the site of skirmishes between the Empire of Japan and the Republic of China. The escalation of hostilities as a direct result of these skirmishes ultimately led to the Mukden Incident and the subsequent invasion of northern China by the Empire of Japan.

Due to the formation of the Second United Front against Japanese imperialism in May of 1937, the Chinese Communist Party agreed to end the confiscation and redistribution of land in favor of rent and interest reductions. The movement for rent reduction essentially kept China’s system of land tenancy intact. In communist base areas, landlords were now able to maintain ownership of their land. In addition, it was legal for large land owners to rent out as much of their land as they wished. Despite these facts, the Communist Party encouraged a substantial reduction in the cost of land rent, which were reduced by at least twenty-four percent. In circumstances where the peasantry demanded further reductions rents could be reduced up to thirty or forty percent. In carrying out rent reduction, the Party was reluctant to use coercive force in order to achieve the goal of rent reduction; instead the Party guaranteed reduced rents would be paid in full. Rent reduction was not intended to be a top down program but rather was designed to follow the "mass line." The reduction of rent was ultimately the task of the peasantry, and spear headed by the peasant associations. The communists believed that if the peasantry convinced landlords to reduced rents themselves then the results of the movement would be sound and possess more longevity than if the Party forced reductions on landlords.

In addition, the Chinese Communist Party ordered the reduction of interest rates to alleviate the financial burden placed upon the peasantry. But similar to rent reduction there were limits placed on the lowering of interests rates. It was important to the

Communist leadership that the economic system in the countryside remain intact. The Party reduced interest rates, but not enough to completely discourage rich peasants and landlords from extending loans.\textsuperscript{40} Essentially, from a Marxist perspective the exploitative aspects of extending loans were ameliorated by this policy.

The transition from agrarian revolution to outright cooperation with counterrevolutionary classes, as advocated by Mao, did cause interparty strife from the orthodox Marxist members of the Party. By 1940, many such Communist Party cadres wanted to return to the policies of the previous agrarian revolution in the Jiangxi Soviet, which called for outright class warfare and the widespread confiscation of land and its redistribution.\textsuperscript{41} Ultimately, these Marxists saw little value in maintaining the United Front between the Communists and China’s counterrevolutionary classes.

In December of 1940, Mao sought to correct the growing deviations in the party line by reaffirming the party’s commitment to the United Front in his essay “On Policy.” In this inner-party directive Mao explained:

\begin{quote}
It has to be understood that in no circumstance will the Party change its united front policy for the entire period of the War of Resistance against Japan, and that many of the policies adopted during the ten years of the Agrarian Revolution cannot just be duplicated today. In particular, many ultra-left polices of the latter period of the Agrarian Revolution are not merely totally inapplicable today in the War of Resistance, but were wrong even then.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

In reference to the erroneous ultra-left polices of the latter period of the Agrarian Revolution, Mao refers to three points of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks land law. The first point was the economic elimination of the capitalist class through ultra-left policies on

\textsuperscript{40} Mao, “On Policy”, 446
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 441.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
labor and taxation. Mao understood that capitalism, at least at first, was a necessary evil in order to assure China’s development into a socialist state. The second point was the economic elimination of rich peasants through the allocation of poor quality land. The third point was the physical elimination of landlords by not allotting them any land at all. Ultimately, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Mao's position was carried out in contrast to the wishes of the Marxist within the Party that advocated for an end to the United Front policies. The Party's experiences in Shaanxi solidified the ascendancy of Mao's Marxist interpretations, while at the same time the greatest threat to Mao's policies had been the intermittent Guomindang attacks on Communist forces and the Nationalist Army's constant aggressive posture towards the Communist base areas.\(^{43}\) The New Forth Army Incident in 1941 resulted in the massacre of several thousand Communist troops sullied the relationship between the Communist and the Guomindang, but the continued United Front of China's classes throughout the remainder of the war against Japan.

### 1.5. Land Reform and the Chinese Civil War

The conclusion of the Second World War produced a failed peace in China that initially had little impact on Mao’s policies on land reform. From the onset of peace Mao Zedong understood that civil war was on the horizon. On August 13, 1945, days before the Japanese Emperor took to the radio waves to announce the surrender of the Empire of Japan, Mao wrote an essay on Communist policy after the conclusion of the Second World War titled, “The Situation and our Policy after the Victory in the War of Resistance against Japan.” Throughout this document Mao spoke of the civil war as a foregone conclusion. He stated that it is necessary to be “soberly aware that the danger of

---

civil war is extremely serious because Chiang Kai-shek’s (Jiang Jieshi) policy is already set.”

Despite the growing conflict between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communists, Mao still advocated rent reduction as the defining feature of the Party’s agrarian policy. In November of 1945, Mao urged his party to redouble their efforts to reduce rents in spite of the pressure being placed on the party by Guomindang assaults. The confiscation of land was still ill advised primarily because of the nature of the emerging civil war. Mao understood the promotion of class conflict would surely force rich peasants and landlords into the nationalist camp, retarding efforts to win over ninety percent of the countryside.

Mao and the Party maintained their position on rent reduction until May 4, 1946. What came to be known as the May 4th directive, transformed China’s agrarian reform policy to fit peasant demands and the new realities posed by the outbreak of civil war.

Along with the conflict came the inevitability of settling China’s domestic class conflicts, and the new policy reflected Mao’s position against the physical elimination of landlords and rich peasants. Again, Mao reiterated it was imperative landlords and rich peasants were given some land and a means to support themselves.

Mao’s approach to reform during the Civil War was not unanimously supported by all of the Communist Party cadres, and as a result the Chinese Civil War prompted the reemergence of deviations within the party. Many Communist cadres accepted the importance of limiting domestic class conflict during the period of Japanese resistance, but once the threat of Japanese imperialism had been eliminated, orthodox tendencies

---

began to reemerge within the party. Stemming from Marxist doctrine, some cadres sought a return to China’s cities and were dissatisfied with the Party’s emphasis on building rural base areas.\textsuperscript{46} Many other cadres remaining in the countryside again called for a return to the agrarian policies of 1934. They saw no need to provide for landlords or protect landlords and rich peasants from the most severe retribution of the masses. As a result, many landlords and rich peasants in the first year of the Chinese Civil War, based on Communists judicial standards, were unrightfully put to death, a sentence reserved for the most heinous offenders.\textsuperscript{47}

Beginning in late-1946 land reform in Communist controlled areas underwent a transformation from moderate reform to a campaign centered on terror. The uneasiness caused by the ongoing civil conflict and Guomindgang offensives produced wide-spread uncertainty, which induced violent responses from Party cadres and peasants alike. In Western Shandong province, during a reassessment of the completeness of land reform, the situation devolved into chaos. According to Odd Arne Westad, "in the increasingly frenzied atmosphere that followed from meetings to classify and reclassify all peasants according to their class origin, rich and middle-rank peasants soon became fair game for all kinds of attacks, including executions. In one county, Sanghe, more than a thousand were beaten to death."\textsuperscript{48} A report from Bergljot Borgen, a Norwegian missionary supports this point:

We are still in the middle of land reform, and they [the CCP] are busy dealing with the landlords. They are hung by their toes and by their thumbs, they are whipped with thorns, their arms and legs are broken, and there are other tortures. All of this is to make them declare everything they own and where it is hidden. Land, houses, and everything they own are taken from them, and many die as a result of torture. Those who survive are systematically starved to death. They are sent out as beggars, but there is a death penalty for anyone who gives them anything. Many commit suicide. In some cases, even landless laborers are struggled against, while some rich peasants get away. It is often completely random. The people from the peasant association are in command, and they are using land reform to seek revenge on their enemies, whether they are landlords or not.49

This brand of land reform would last well into 1947, and would conclude once the civil war turned in favor of the Chinese Communist in 1948.

The erroneous positions of many communist cadres was indicative of the struggle waged within the Communist Party between Maoist heterodoxy and Marxist orthodoxy. The reality of the bifurcation of Communist ideology, along with the existence of rich peasants within the party, sparked a rectification movement beginning in late 1947, which strove to purge members of the Communist Party from questionable class backgrounds and to reassert Mao's interpretation of Marxism.50 Mao’s essay on land reform and the consolidation of the party directed Communist cadres to attended conferences aimed at teaching them how to properly analyze concrete situations in the countryside based on a given location's historical circumstances.

In October of 1947, the same year of the rectification movement, the Party promulgated a new land law reflecting Mao's positions on dealing with rich peasants and

landlords. In comparison to the land law issued in 1931 in Jiangxi, the 1947 law was quite moderate. Rich peasants received far more protections. Article two of the 1947 law exclusively targeted the property of landlords; the land of rich peasants was only confiscated in order to make up for deficiencies if the land owned by landlords was not sufficient enough to provide all peasants with their own land. Furthermore, the once condemned slogans of “draw on the plentiful to make room for the scarce” and “draw on the fat to make room for the lean” were clearly represented in the law, but not explicitly stated. Thus, the conclusion of article six reads, "with regard to the quantity of land, surplus shall be taken to relieve dearth, and with regard to quality of land, fertile land shall be taken to supplement infertile, so that all the village people shall obtain land equally." The new land law also stipulated that landlords and their families were to receive land of their own, a point unimaginable under the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. The Communist government only barred traitors from receiving redistributed property.

The new land reform policy was highly nuanced, in order to cope with the rapid changes in geographic territory and political fortunes which were a byproduct of the civil war. The Communist identified three different types of base areas: new liberated areas, semi-old liberated areas, and old liberated areas. In each of these three zones agrarian reform was administered differently.

Newly liberated base areas consisted of red territory captured during Communist offensives throughout the civil war. Within these areas the masses had yet to be aroused, meaning the power of the rich peasant and landlord class remained intact. In addition, the efforts of Communist cadres had yet to bear fruit in terms of transforming the political

---

consciousness of the peasantry. As a result, the land law could not be immediately implemented. To begin preparing the general population for land reform cadres were ordered to immediately create peasant associations and reduce rents and interest rates. Mao expected this phase of peasant organization to last roughly two years. Only towards the end of the second year, or the beginning of the third year, was it permissible to begin redistributing the land of landlords and rich peasants.

Semi-old liberated areas were considered to be any Communist territory liberated between the Japanese official surrender in September of 1945 until the first major Communist offensive in August of 1947. This type of base area by 1948 constituted the largest portion of red territory. The Party considered the political consciousness of these territories sufficient enough to begin land redistribution. Mao explained that if the land problem has not already been thoroughly solved in these areas, the universal redistribution of land was permissible. After the first round of distribution, semi-old liberated areas were expected to undergo redistribution for a second time to insure the adequate distribution of wealth.

Old liberated areas consisted of any territory controlled before the surrender of Japanese forces. The party line in regards to old liberated areas was to forgo attempting to apply the new land law. For the most part, the land in the old liberated areas was primarily found in northwest China and had already been adequately redistributed. As a result, the primary focus of the party was on the political awareness of the peasantry. Reform had already produced a predominantly middle peasant society. As a result, Mao

53 Ibid.
and the Party looked to these peasants to fill leadership roles in peasant associations and other organs of power.\textsuperscript{54}

1.6. Conclusion

The Chinese Communist began land reform to solve twentieth century China’s most pressing issue, the “Agrarian Question,” which was titanic. As a result, land reform became one of the most enduring and prodigious collective actions in human history. Within two decades, under Communist leadership nearly half a billion people witnessed the complete destruction of feudalism in China. For two centuries peasants labored under a feudal social and economic system that increasingly perpetuated their grinding poverty. From the ashes of this system materialized a novel restructuring of rural China which eventually demand new modes of thinking and an allegiance to a greater community.

In the end, Mao's moderate approach to land reform was superior to the dogmatic Marxist approach which advocated extreme class warfare. The Party's Commintern advisors dictated the Party's approach based on their own experiences, lagging behind the changing circumstances of China. Mao's pragmatism allowed the party to quickly adjust to the political realities of early twentieth century China. In the process, Mao provided a foundation for land reform that removed the landed gentry from the locus of power without eliminating them physically, ultimately incorporating them into the community building popular support. Under the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks and Party dogmatist, land reform was a means of elevating China's poor peasants and forcing landlords and rich peasants into abject poverty. On the other hand, Mao understood land reform as a

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 193.
unifying movement, destined to reach every corner of China and all of its individuals. Mao's policies were essential to begin uniting the Chinese people through land laws centered on practicality and the equalization of wealth, not the physical elimination of the individual.
Chapter 2.

Land and the State

On October 1st, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. This event was the crowning achievement of decades of social upheaval, culminating in the formation of a new revolutionary state. China’s revolutionaries became rulers and, as a result, their policies were also transformed in the progress. Land reform now became a predominantly national movement for the development of the Chinese state. This chapter posits land reform after 1949 emerged as a mobilization campaign which fostered the development of China’s nation state or "imagined community." The campaign asserted the authority of the central government throughout every village in China. It also leveled the social and economic status of the peasantry in the countryside. For the peasantry, participation along with the Party in the land reform process transferred allegiance from the traditional blood ties of the clan and family to the community of the state.

The theoretical framework of this chapter is borrowed from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.*
In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson argues that the modern nation state developed during the decline of the religious community and the dynastic realm.¹ The decline of these modes of political organization marked the ascendancy of the nation or the "imagined community." Anderson asserts that nation states are political communities based on an imaginary fraternal bond. The nation is imagined because even in small countries the citizens that comprise the state will only ever meet a tiny fraction of the individuals with which they share strong feelings of a national bond. Also, the bond is perceived to be egalitarian, despite the inequities present in a society. For Anderson print capitalism was the driving force that allowed these national imaginings to flourish and come to fruition. This chapter argues that China’s imagined community emerged not from print capitalism, but, in part is derived from participation tied to the land reform campaign after 1949. The bonds which tied China’s five-hundred-millions citizens together formed years after the decline of the Qing Empire, in large part, thanks to the shared economic act of aiding the nation through the land reform movement.²

This chapter is organized into four sections. Section one, titled “State of the Republic,” highlights the social, political, and economic position of China at the inception of the People’s Republic. The second section, “The Land Law,” examines the *Agrarian Reform Law of the People’s Republic of China*. This passage explores the

---

¹ Anderson characterizes the religious community and dynastic realm as cultural systems, each of which at its most influential comprised the primary lens through which individuals interacted with and understood the world, similar to the current state of nationalism. The medieval church provides an excellent example of a religious community. The Christian religious community in medieval Europe formed a social hierarchy where at the bottom resided the common people and the top were divine. What resided in between were Latin speaking clerical men that served as a medium between the world of men and the divine. The dynastic realm rested on the predominance of monarchies and subjects. In the dynastic realm the legitimacy of the monarch is derived from a divine source, not from a politically empowered population. Individuals under monarchical rule were not citizens with inherent rights, they were subjects always at the behest of their monarch.


27
changes made to the agrarian law and how these changes reflect the realities of an emerging state. Section three, “Destroying the Landed Class,” investigates land reform as a process of social leveling and the subsequent economic elimination of the landlord class. The fourth and final section, “Mutual Aid and the Peasant Experience,” is an exploration of land reform in a single Chinese village known as Liu Ling.

2.1. The State of the Republic

The Communist Party’s triumph in the Chinese Civil War and creation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 was understood by its leaders as an early phase in an ongoing revolution, often expressed as “the first steps in a long march of ten-thousand li.”³ The Chinese Communist fought for, and won, a China ravaged by decades of war. The country endured civil war in the 1920s and 1930s, followed by the Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation in the 1940s, and roughly four more years of a resurgent civil conflict. As a result, in 1949, China’s infrastructure and economy was in total disrepair. Due to the gravity of these facts, the Chinese Communist Party took to nation building as “somber realists,” in tune with the material challenges that stood before the People’s Republic.⁴

In 1949 just one fifth of China’s villages had carried out agrarian reform.⁵ Prior to the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, agrarian reform was enacted predominantly in northern China. Southern China’s Jiangxi province experienced communist governance, but fourteen years passed since the Party retreated from the south

---

⁴ Meisner, Mao’s China and After, 57.
⁵ Ibid, 91.
during the harrowing Long March. Territory that was under Guomindang control prior to 1948 had yet to experience the transformative process of agrarian reform, and at best they received some rent and interest reductions. As a result, Mao's regime planned to expand land reform considerably, encompassing the remainder of mainland China. Communist leaders determined that the goals of agrarian reform could be completed in three years. By 1953 only twelve percent of China’s rural population still needed to complete the redistribution of agrarian land.⁶

As revolutionaries turned rulers, the Chinese Communist Party ordered land reform to be carried out in a manner that did not destabilize the regime. With the war of liberation won, order and stability became the paramount issue. In March of 1950, Mao sought advice on how to carryout land reform without unsettling rural society. In the "Request for Opinions on the Tactics for Dealing with Rich Peasants," Mao writes: "the agrarian reform in the north was carried out in wartime, with the atmosphere of war prevailing over that of agrarian reform; but now, with the fighting practically over, the agrarian reform stands out in sharp relief, and the shock to society will be particularly great and the landlords' outcries particularly shrill."⁷ This passage highlights Mao's concerns regarding the challenges posed by conducting radical reform during peace time on an unprecedented scale.

---

⁶ Edwin Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the revolution at the village level* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 115. The twelve percent mentioned here is primarily comprised of territory governed by the People’s Republic of China’s fifty-six national minorities. Minority held regions of China carried out mobilization campaigns at a much slower rate than their Han counterparts.

2.2. The Land Law- A National Movement

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, land reform became a national movement for the advancement of the nation. On June 30th, 1950, the government of the People's Republic of China promulgated a new land law that articulated a clear shift in the emphasis of agrarian reform. Previous agrarian reform laws focused elevating poor peasants out of grinding poverty and reducing the social prestige and economic wealth of rich peasants and landlords. The new land law asserted agrarian reform as a collective movement for the economic advancement of New China (Xin Zhongguo). ⁸

The primary purpose of land reform in the People's Republic of China was to unleash agricultural productive forces in order to promote industrialization. Mao firmly believed in Marx's explanation of the economic stages of national development. This concept posits civilizations advance through predetermined economic phases. Early foraging communities eventually became slave or feudal societies with the development of agricultural surplus. Feudalism was eventually replaced by capitalism with the slow accumulation of technological advancements and subsequent development of new economic classes controlling the means of production. Capitalism in the end would be forced into crisis because of its own internal contradictions and the dialectical process of class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. In the end, Marx articulated the need for society to advance beyond the predatory phase of human existence, into

---

⁸ The term New China is often used to describe the People's Republic of China. The People's Republic was understood to be fundamentally different from old China, which had been subject to imperialist aggression and steeped in the cultural traditions of the past.
socialism.\textsuperscript{9} Marx argued this teleological model of economic progression would eventually culminate with the development of a communist society. Article one of the 1950 land law, identified agrarian reform as the primary force propelling New China to the next phase of economic evolution. The abolition of feudalism and the establishment of peasant ownership were both enacted in order to set free the productive forces of the countryside, fostering New China's industrialization.\textsuperscript{10}

Liu Shaoqi’s 1950 speech on agrarian reform highlighted the movements shift in emphasis challenging the notion of agrarian reform as a purely philanthropic endeavor. Liu argued:

The basic reason for and the aim of agrarian reform are different from the view that agrarian reform is only designed to relieve the poor people. The Communist Party has always been fighting for the interests of the labouring poor, but the viewpoints of Communists have always been different from those of the philanthropists. The results of agrarian reform are beneficial to the impoverished labouring peasants, helping the peasants partly solve their problem of poverty. But the basic aim of agrarian reform is not purely one of relieving poor peasants. It is designed to set free the rural productive forces from the shackles of the feudal land ownership system of the landlord class in order to develop agricultural production and thus pave the way for New China’s industrialization.\textsuperscript{11}

This position, articulating the primacy of industrialization, diverges from the thrust of previous agrarian laws. The Chinese Agrarian Reform Law enacted in 1947 in its introduction does not address the questions of production and industrialization. The focus, instead, is exclusively placed upon delivering “land to the tillers.” “The 1931 Land

\textsuperscript{9} Later Mao would begin to question Marx's explanation of the linear progression of nation states. Mao would begin to see the capitalist stage of economic development as unnecessary. Marx posited that capitalism was necessary to generate the surplus material wealth that would eventually be redistributed during the latter stages of development, but by 1957 and the conclusion of China's first five year plan, Mao has made up his mind that New China could leap past capitalism by developing agriculture and industry evenly. For more information on this matter see Maurice Meisner's Mao's China and After.

\textsuperscript{10} The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China: And other Relevant Documents (Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1952), 1. Henceforth referred to as the Agrarian Reform Law.

Law of the Chinese Soviet” exhibited the same emphasis on relieving the beleaguered poor as the 1947 law, only with more severe conclusions for the rich and landlord class.

With the emphasis placed on the industrialization of New China, the 1950 agrarian law sought to insulate rural industry from the possibly detrimental effects of land reform. The majority of what landlords owned was subject to confiscation, with the exception of any property tied to industrial endeavors. Article four reads, “Industrial and commercial enterprises operated by landlords and the land and other properties used by landlords directly for the operation of industrial or commercial enterprises shall not be confiscated.”

On the other hand, the land utilized by industrialists for agricultural cultivation or peasant dwellings was still subject to requisition, but all rural properties and lawful businesses were protected from infringement.

In the interests of the state, non-agricultural land that produced important resources, on behalf of New China, were allocated to citizens whom already possessed knowledge and experience extracting these resources. The lands identified in the agrarian law ranged from woods and tung oil plantations to bamboo groves and reed lands. Natural resources play an important role in the economic development of modern nation states; New China’s Communist leaders understood that if their fledgling socialist state was going to develop into a communist workers' paradise, the extraction of natural resources was a necessity. As a result, land reform had to be carried out in a manner that quickly reestablished the cultivation of China’s natural resources. This was done in the interests of production. In the event that the allocation of non-agricultural, resource rich

---

12 Agrarian Reform Law, 3.
13 Ibid, 9.
lands was detrimental to production the law stipulated that the aforementioned tracts should then operated by the local people’s government.\textsuperscript{14}

The new land law also stipulated that agricultural land near areas needed for defense or future national projects was exempt from redistribution. Article twenty-six of the land reform law inserted a form of eminent domain clause into reform policy. Land near and around railways, highways, river banks, and river dykes that were deemed strategically vital by the state were to remain in the possession of the state after confiscation.\textsuperscript{15} In addition the government did not redistribute land occupied by airfields, harbors, or fortifications. Article twenty-six also protected the space earmarked for national development projects. The government reserved the site of any projected railways, waterways, or airfields for future projects.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{2.3. Establishing the State and Communist Political Power-Unity}

The land reform movement in a short period of time established the political power of the communist state throughout every village in New China, collectively bringing China’s five-hundred-million agricultural citizens into the political process. Essentially, the land revolution in China’s villages provided the impetus for the Chinese Communist Party to insert a vibrant network of state sponsored social and political organizations throughout China’s villages. In place of the landlord class, a new set of individuals stepped into leadership positions throughout the countryside. These new groups of activists came from poor peasant backgrounds and were intimately tied to the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 12.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
new political structure.\textsuperscript{17} Organization provided the foundation for the construction of New China. Mao’s speech on the unity of the Chinese people encourages his fellow-country men to get organized, exclaiming they should “organize the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people in political, military, economic, cultural and other organizations and put an end to the disorganized state characterizing the old China, so that the great collective strength of the masses may be tapped both to support the People’s Government and the People’s Liberation Army and to build a new China.”\textsuperscript{18} Through participation in state sponsored organizations, individual Chinese collectively took part in a national experience.

The political connective sinew that bound rural China to the state developed from the top down. The first layer ran from the formal government, embodied by the highest members of the party, down to the military administrative councils which governed over the greater administrative regions. Below the national government and the military councils were the provincial governments and special administrative districts. The lowest level governments were the xian and the xiang, followed by local organizational bodies such as peasant associations, new democratic youth leagues, and women's associations.\textsuperscript{19}

In order to achieve China's sociopolitical goals the communist party created small work teams which traveled from village to village organizing the peasantry and elevating their

\textsuperscript{17} Meisner, \emph{Mao’s China and After}, 100.
\textsuperscript{19} The term xian is a shortened form of xian fu. This term literally translates to county government. The term xiang refers to a Chinese village.
political consciousness. If educated correctly, the cadres that comprised the work team ensured the peasants were organized into a peasant association.  

The lower level peasant representative bodies formed the primary organizational unit for conducting agrarian reform. Every village in the People’s Republic of China labored under the authority of a peasant association. These mass, voluntary, organizations served first and foremost to unite the peasantry. Unity among the masses was a precondition for the pursuit of revolutionary social reforms in accordance with the laws and decrees of the People’s Republic which reflected the mass line. The associations produced unity through education. The Party tasked each association with raising the political and cultural education of the peasantry in accordance with Mao's concept of a people's democracy.  

**2.4. Destroying the Landed Class-Fraternity**

The land reform movement was a mass process of social leveling. Poor peasants that possessed little or no land received plots of land, elevating the impoverished to middle peasant status. Rich peasants were left mostly to their own devices, so long as they no longer participated in the exploitation of other classes. Landlords had their land and surplus properties confiscated for redistribution. That being said, the peasant associations allocated landlords the same amount of land given to poor peasants during redistribution; this process economically lowered their status and they ceased to be

---


21 *Agrarian Reform Law*, 64.

22 Middle peasants possessed a wide variety of land dispositions. Some middle peasants owned land that they worked personally, although others often rented small portions of land. Middle peasants depended almost wholly on their own labor and only exploited others on a small scale if at all.
landlords.\textsuperscript{23} Socially, former landlords were stigmatized and disenfranchised within the peasant associations, but they could regain social respectability and the right to take part in the peasant associations through participation in agricultural production and campaigns.

The process of social leveling began with determining the class status of each and every Chinese citizen. The goal of this process was to identify who the land reform movement should provide for, and who the movement should take from. The hope was after redistribution all peasants would consider themselves to be at or near middle peasant status, with some exceptions. Determining class status in the countryside caused a great deal of commotion. Maurice Meisner explains that the classification of individuals in the countryside produced a "most unusual phenomena\textsuperscript{24}" as peasants began to socially and economically portray themselves as low as possible in order to maximize their gains and avoid being struggled against.

Participation determined the admission of landlords into China’s imagined community. Landlords, by participating in agricultural work, an act that many of this group had rarely if ever done, could reform through labor. Liu Shaoqi wrote that, “After undergoing long-term reform through labour, it is possible for landlords to become new men.”\textsuperscript{25} Becoming new men alleviated the social stigma of being a former landlord and was the only path to gaining voting rights and entry within peasant associations. An individual deemed a feudal element named Li Xuedang from Liu Ling village is an

\textsuperscript{23} Liu Shaoqi, "On the Agrarian Reform Law," 218.

\textsuperscript{24} Meisner, Mao's China and After, 97.

excellent example of a bad element trying to reform himself. A neighbor of Li Xuedang's, Mao Keye, described Li's experience

He looked after his fifty mu of land single-handed and in the end he was let into the East Chinese Red Higher Agricultural Co-operative as one of the last. He has no right to vote and no civic rights, but his economic rights are the same as everyone else's. He is still under surveillance. You see, he is the only real counter-revolutionary we have here in the village. If he should ever show that he works hard and has become a new person, he then he will get his civic rights back. But he hasn't shown any signs of that yet. Of course, his father owned many thousand mu here.²⁶

Letters sent between Liu Shaoqi and his seventh sister in May of 1950 highlights the process of social and economic leveling of the landlord class in Chinese society. The local peasant association determined that Liu’s seventh sister was indeed a landlord element. In response she sent letters to her brother, the influential Liu Shaoqi, asking for help dealing with the situation. Liu echoed what the peasant association already determined; his sister’s family had indeed “lived mainly by collecting rents.”²⁷ Since she was a landlord element she was economically responsible for repaying rents and bond money. The letters clearly articulate Liu’s sister’s displeasure with her shrinking social status and the growing authority of the peasant associations and work teams; she refers to them as the “small fellows’ association” or the “rascals’ team.”²⁸ Despite the antagonism between Liu seventh sister and the peasant association it was understood that she would in the future be a member of the community. After 1951 the younger Liu was given a plot of land from the peasant association and earned her place in the community through participation in agricultural work.

²⁸ Ibid, 8.
2.5. Mutual Aid among the Peasantry

The Land Reform movement spurred collective action among the peasantry. In order to achieve industrialization cooperative farming was needed to increase productivity. As a result, after the redistribution of land, collective labor became a defining feature of agrarian reform in China. Liu Ling village provides numerous examples of collective action in accordance with the land reform movement, producing multiple mutual aid groups.

Liu Ling village is located in rugged northern Shaanxi province, where the Communist had long held a base of support. The best way to travel to the village is through the major city of Xi’an, bypassing the massive tomb of the father of the Han Chinese people, Qin Shihuang.\(^{29}\) Southern Shaanxi, by comparison, is much more fertile than the north. But near Qin Shihuang’s tomb in central Shaanxi, the terrain begins to turn from green to the khaki color indicative of the increasingly high levels of loess deposited from the Gobi desert. The seasons are extreme in Shaanxi. Late spring and early summer are a time of sunshine and little rain, the unwavering heat coming from above and below as the dry cracking earth emanates the radiant warmth from the sun. The village is located to the west of Yan’an, two-thousand-five-hundred feet above sea level. For the people of Shaanxi and the villagers at Liu Ling the Communist Party had established its control even before Mao arrived in 1935. The Guomindang's assault in March of 1947 interrupted the authority of the Communist in Shaanxi for roughly one year.\(^{30}\) Like the rest of the country, Yan’an had to be liberated during the second phase of

the Chinese Civil War. After liberation and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the villagers at Yan’an began collective agricultural work under the Agrarian Reform Law of the People’s Republic of China. Under this law, the acts of deposing landlords and agrarian toil provided a sense of oneness with the greater nation.

After liberation, the villagers in Liu Ling began to form labor groups. A labor group was a small collection of individual farmers that owned their own land, but tilled the land collectively as a unit. Labor groups were voluntary organizations, on average, comprised of between six and twenty families. Within Liu Ling village there were three different work groups, the Liu Ling Village Labor Group, the Liu Ling Labor Brigade, and the Liu Ling Group for Vegetable Cultivation.

The experience of Zhang Zhongliang in Shaanxi provides an example of the destabilizing effects of war and the appeal of land redistribution. Zhang Zhongliang was born in Yulin, a prefectoral level city in the northern Shaanxi. As a young man, Zhang only attended school for one year at the age of nine. His father passed away when he was very young, but his mother remarried when he was twelve. Throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War Zhang and his family remained on their farm in Yulin, never seeing Japanese troops, but regularly seeing their planes. His family was not as fortunate during the Chinese Civil War. As Guomindang troops marched through Yulin after capturing Yan’an, the victorious armies slaughtered the Zhang family's pig and goat; in addition,

---

31 Labor groups were formed as an early precursor to agricultural cooperatives which were larger by comparison. By 1955, Agricultural cooperatives were the nascent beginnings of agricultural collectives, which abolished private ownership and established cooperative agricultural labor between networks of villages. For more information on agricultural collectivization in the People’s Republic of China refer to Maurice Meisner’s *Mao’s China and After*.
the nationalist commandeered the family’s donkey and two-hundred jin of corn. 33 Due to this economic set back the family made its way from Yulin to Yan’an. While in Yan’an after liberation, Zhang decided to relocate to Liu Ling and take part in the distribution of land there, according to his older cousin “there was a lot of land to be brought into cultivation at Liu Ling.” 34

Once in Liu Ling, Zhang joined the Liu Ling Farmer's Cooperative, developing a unifying consciousness in the process. Under this organization Zhang took part in agricultural workers that unleashed and better facilitated the collective energies of the village. This was done in accordance with the goals of the 1950 Agricultural Reform Law, which sought to establish a more efficient peasant labor system that would power New China to a heightened state of industrialization. Zhang’s explanation of the efforts of the organization confirmed that the organization was achieving the goals set forth by the agrarian reform law and the inadvertent goal of fostering a sense of community. The farmer’s cooperative made it possible to "employ greater labor resources, where these are needed. By this, one can make greater efforts and employ all one’s force on one given point, which is much more efficient. We were now able to carry out more jobs that required capital. Most importantly, the process of aiding in the collective agricultural movement elevated the political consciousness of its participants." 35 Zhang explains that as a result, “our consciousness increased" establishing and strengthening the bond which existed between Zhang and his fellow citizens and the state. 36

2.6. Conclusion

In summation, the agrarian reform campaign, as a result of the changes made by the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, altered the trajectory of the land reform movement and reflected the Communist Party's new reality as administrators of an emerging nation. Reform after the establishment of the People's Republic of China was, in essence, three fold. First the law transformed agrarian reform from a movement centered exclusively on managing class dynamics to a movement of national, not class salvation. Second, agrarian reform remained a powerful tool of social leveling. The campaign certainly did not produce an egalitarian society; differences in economic and social status continued to persist. Nonetheless, New China was far more equitable than its predecessor. Finally, by participating in the movement Chinese learned to identify with the state and with one another as fellow citizens of the People's Republic of China.
Chapter 3.

Resisting America and Constructing the Nation

The Resist America Campaign had two overarching purposes. On the one hand, it was designed to unite the Chinese people against what they understood as American imperialism in Korea. On the other hand, it also served to produce a lasting and enduring Chinese national identity. At its core, the United States was an object of New China’s gaze. This study argues, through popular and mass media, the government of the People’s Republic of China mobilized society in order to produce a unifying Chinese identity, in part, in contrast to the United States.

This chapter is organized along parallel tracts that highlight the Chinese views of an imperialist America and a revolutionary socialist self. Section one provides a brief introduction to the Korean War and the Resist America Campaign as the contextual backdrop for subsequent segments of a paper. Part two appraises the Chinese conceptual construction of an American identity as presented in Chinese popular media. This is followed by a discussion of the emergence of the New Chinese self formed in contrast to imperialist America. Finally, this chapter ends by examining the popular support for the Resist America Campaign.
The theoretical foundation utilized in this chapter is constructed from Edward Said's concept of imaginative geography. Said builds upon Claude Levi-Strauss's "science of the concrete," which asserts that the human mind requires order based upon discriminating between the arbitrary roles of an object in a given environment or society. Imaginative geography applies Strauss's concept to geographic space and the people or objects that inhabit it. The familiar is designated "our land," the unfamiliar "barbarian land." While these objects may seem to be objectively real, Said argues they possess only a fictional or constructed reality.¹ This concept lends itself to uncommon things such as foreigners or abnormal behavior. By applying imaginative geography to the formation of a national identity in the People’s Republic of China, I argue popular media and active participation in the Resist America Campaign created an imperialist other with which the Chinese used to define what they termed New China. New China is a translation of Xin Zhongguo, that specifically refers to a revolutionary China free from imperialism. New China asserted itself to be courageous, strong, righteous, and socialist, while at the same time the United States of America was conceived to be cowardly, weak, corrupt, and capitalist. The pith of this study rests upon Chinese popular media, such as post cards, short stories, pamphlets, and pictorials, because of their ability to permeate society and inform modes of thinking and action.

3.1. The Korean War

The Korean War and the Resist America Campaign were inseparable historical events. The timing and context of the war in Korea greatly affected the message and

impact of the Resist America Campaign. As the conflict unfolded the movement in China responded to the changes on the battlefield.

For the People's Republic of China, the outbreak of the Korean War occurred at an inopportune time, beginning just twelve months after the conclusion of twenty-two years of conflict. The Communist regime anticipated that the social, political, and economic recovery needed would last roughly three years. Yet, just eight months after the establishment of the new regime in October of 1949, conflict erupted across the Bohai Gulf on the Korean peninsula. At the time, the Chinese government was preoccupied with industrial recovery and "internal consolidation." Taking industry and national unity into account, it is safe to say that in the initial stages of the Korean War, the new Chinese government was neither involved nor prepared to enter the conflict.

Ultimately, for China the Korean War was a gamble that paid off, because success on the battlefield translated into success on the home front. In the initial stages of China’s involvement in the conflict, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army inflicted defeat after defeat on the United States' armed forces. As a result, the war provided unforeseen political benefits for the Chinese government. The Resist America Campaign emerged as a conduit of patriotic energy, attracting people to the Communist Party and its cause. The uptick in popular support was, in part, evident in the rapid expansion of Communist Party membership. Prior to 1949, the Chinese Communist Party possessed

---

4 Ibid, 70. The Majority of China's finest troops, veterans of the Chinese Civil War, were deployed along China's Southern Coast preparing for the coming invasion of Taiwan.
5 The official title of the movement in Chinese is *Kangmei Yuanchao Yundong*, or the Resist America and Aid Korea Campaign. In the interest of expediency, throughout the text I will refer to the Resist America Aid Korea Campaign as the Resist America Campaign.
2.7 million members, but by the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953, party membership had ballooned to over six-million members, in large part, due to mobilization movements like the Resist America Campaign.\(^6\)

In late 1950 and early 1951, the Resist America Campaign began in response to United States involvement in the Korean War and rapidly spread throughout the country. The Communist Party identified the promotion of anti-imperialist education throughout the country as a key priority. In October of 1950, just one month after the People's Volunteers entered the war, Mao Zedong issued an inner party circular proposing an increase in efforts to educate the People of China on United States imperialism, which was the foundation of the Resist America Campaign. Every individual in China was the object of the movement. By the end of 1950, in the areas of China where the campaign was already under way, it intensified. Places where the campaign lagged, the party strengthened the movement to completely engage every part of the country.\(^7\)

The defense of the homeland was a key theme of the campaign at the advent of China's involvement in the war. Undoubtedly, the fraternal bond between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea played a part in China entering the war, but the motivating factor behind the Chinese government’s decision to enter the war was the defense of China's territorial integrity. The border of China and Korea is the three hundred mile long Yalu River. As the American's raced north of the thirty-eighth parallel into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, incursions into Chinese airspace by the United States' air force grew increasingly common. Between


\(^7\) Ibid, 40.
August twenty-seventh and twenty-ninth, American warplanes crossed into Chinese airspace strafing locomotives, boats, and small villages, killing and injuring Chinese citizens.\(^8\) The Chinese media publicized images of bodies lying prone in the streets, which became the rallying cry for war. The Chinese government claimed, penetrations of Chinese airspace by the United States was a clear sign of American truculence and preparation for a full-scale invasion of China.\(^9\) Beijing believed the Americans designated Korea as the staging ground for the invasion of northeastern China.\(^10\) As a result, the defense of Korea became synonymous with the defense of the homeland. By the end of August of 1950 the impetus for war had been established, now the people of China needed to know their enemy.

3.2. **Distinguishing the Enemy**

The Korean War made it imperative for the Chinese people to distinguish between themselves and the enemy.\(^11\) This task was the primary goal of the Chinese government, which sought to influence how average Chinese citizens imagined the United States. The objective of the Resist America Campaign was to ignite Chinese patriotic sentiment while, at the same time, eliminating any fear or envy of the United States.\(^12\) The popular media associated with the campaign defined the United States as capitalistic, anti-democratic, rife with crime, and a nation of cowardly war criminals. The Chinese

---

\(^8\) Kwan Wen, Chang Lei, Mo Ying, Chow Wei, eds, *Kangmei yuanchao huace* (Resist America and Aid Korea Pictorial) (Beijing: People’s Art Publishing Association, 1951), 2-11. Referred to from now on as *Kangmei*


\(^10\) Ibid, 15.


leadership understood this type of education was essential in order to wage the "sharp struggle against imperialism" deemed necessary in order to assure the survival of the new state.\(^\text{13}\)

The Resist America Campaign began by presenting the United States as a nation that conflated democracy with capitalism. The new communist state challenged America’s reputation as a champion of democracy. According to Chinese media, the United States was an inherently antidemocratic nation where people "do not speak of democracy."\(^\text{14}\) For the Chinese, wealth determined an individual’s ability to vote in the American system, people who possessed little money or opposed the candidates handpicked by the capitalist overlords were barred from polling stations. As a result, most Americans at the lower end of the economic spectrum often decided to forgo attempting to vote. The Chinese media stressed however, those who tried were physically driven away from the polling stations, leaving only the voters to affirm the status quo of the capitalist class.\(^\text{15}\)

The Resist America Campaign presented the United States as the greatest expression of the failure of the capitalist state. Capitalism fueled the inequities of America, creating an economic entity defined by poverty and avarice. For China the United States was a country of economic extremes. For example, a popular Chinese illustration of America’s urban landscape showed skyscrapers exuding a palatial aura in stark contrast to the squalid ghettos that inundate the foreground. This disparity was described as "furende tiantang . . . qiongrende diyu," (a heaven for the rich and hell for

\(^{13}\) Mao Zedong, "Let us Unite and Distinguish Clearly Between Ourselves and the Enemy", 80.

\(^{14}\) Kwan Wen, Kangmei, 5.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
America's capitalist policies allowed for the greed of the capitalist class to flower at the expense of the masses. In the book, *Zhejiu shi Meiguo* (*This is America*), America's economic discrepancies remain sharp. In referring to the abundance of food in the United States, the author writes, "youxie dazi benjia qing yice keyao huaji wan meiyuan, keshi xuduo qiongren quelian heimianbao douchi bubao, youxie qiongrende haizi haishi zai lesili zhao dongxi chide." (Some capitalists and their guests spend ten thousand American dollars on one meal, but many poor people do not even have enough black bread to eat, some of the poor's children have to search through the garbage to find food.) The poor represented in this book appear as hapless individuals trapped in an economic and political system that perpetuates their grinding poverty, while their wealthy counterparts benefit financially from their plight.

The Resist America Campaign also targeted higher education in the United States, which was tied to notions of capitalist exploitation. The campaign portrayed the American university system as a network of capitalist institutions designed to further exploit the working class, domestically and abroad. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony for Chinese People's University, Liu Shaoqi recited his sentiments to the university's incoming class. In reference to education in the West, he stated, "their education is a capitalist education, their economy is a capitalist economy, their philosophy, views of life, morals and all state organizations are capitalistic and are exploiting the workers; thus their schools also serve this purpose, that is, capitalism to exploit the working labour, and

---

16 Xu Muzhi, *Zhejiu shi meiguo* (*This is America*) (Shanghai, Dadong Publishing House, 1951), 1.
17 Ibid, 2.
the universities just serve this very purpose.\textsuperscript{18} The campaign also highlighted the tendency of universities in the United States to only accept individuals from desirable social backgrounds; pointing out that African-Americans were banned from enrolling in most schools of higher learning.\textsuperscript{19} This fact was a key point in the case built against the United States in terms of its divisive race relations.

Sources of popular media in accordance with the Resist America Campaign highlighted the United States as a nation that advocated white racial superiority. Within the pages of Chinese popular media, white American's terrorized African-American's with impunity. Both the court system and the police, institution of state power, worked in favor of white citizens. The documents stress that, faced with overwhelming discrimination, African-Americans lived a life filled with humiliation and physical and economic suffering. Furthermore, the unmistakable image of the Klu Klux Klan became a staple in Chinese depictions of the United States. One poignant portrayal is of an African-American man hanged by his neck from a tree surrounded by five Klansmen. The nameless victim has been burned, beaten, and repeatedly shot, while his masked murderers celebrate their deeds.\textsuperscript{20} This type of imagery, a graphic depiction of white vigilantism, was grist for the Chinese media mill.

The Resist America Campaign made connections between the United States and crime at home and abroad. According to Chinese popular media sources, the United States was the world's leader in criminal activity, logging over fifteen million crimes a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Liu Shaoqi, "Speech at the Ceremonial Meeting for the School-Opening of Chinese People's University" in \textit{The Collected Works of Liu Shaoqi} (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1969), 235.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Zhang Kan, \textit{Kan, zhe jiu shi meiguo shenghuo fangshi} (Look, this is the American Way of Life) (Shanghai, Dadong Publishing House, 1950), 14.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Xu, \textit{Zhe jiu shi meiguo}, 30.
\end{itemize}
Internationally, American soldiers, like their domestic counterparts, were portrayed as agents of criminality. The pictorial titled, *Meijun zai Zhongguode baoxing* (The Atrocities of American Servicemen in China) depicts American soldiers after the conclusion of the Second World War committing various crimes against the Chinese people; which included assault, torture, robbery, rape, and murder. One striking example shows the rape of Chinese women in Hankou, China. In order to attract a sizeable group of women the American soldiers organized a dance party at the King Ming building in downtown Hankou. According to *Meijun zai Zhongguode baoxing*, at midnight the lights were shut off by the United States service men and the women were collectively raped.

Beyond being a criminal element, American soldiers at war were depicted as inept, cruel, and prone to surrender when faced with the slightest adversity. This message reinforced the belief that the United States armed forces could be defeated on the battlefield. Media reports asserted, unlike the Chinese fighting man, the strength of the American soldier came from his military material, but in the absence of material advantages, Chinese media portrayed U.S. soldiers as incompetent and cowardly. The comic *Meidi bibai* (American Imperialism will Surely Lose) provides an excellent example of American soldiers’ aforementioned incompetence. One popular illustration shows an American soldier balancing atop one leg on the hood of a Studebaker truck, peering through a spy glass yelling, "*Dongxi Nanbei shi zhanchang?*" (Where is the

---

21 Ibid, 21.
23 Pan Xixin, "Meidi bibai" (American Imperialism will Certainly Lose) in *Man Hua Ji* (Comic Collection) (Guangzhou: Xinhua shudian, 1951), 3. The literal translation of Dongxi Nanbei is East, West, South, North, but the idiomatic expression is used in order to convey confusion in regards to a sense of direction.
This American soldier was portrayed as a bungling idiot, but other American soldiers were illustrated as having a propensity to surrender when faced with trouble. For example, a Korean War postcard depicts nine U.S. military personnel encountering a lone Chinese soldier on a snowy battlefield. With their armored support destroyed, two of the American soldiers drop their weapons and equipment, throwing their hands upward to surrender. The other seven soldiers flee over the horizon away from the Chinese soldier.\textsuperscript{24} American cowardice in the face of enemies forced the United States to develop tactics to inflict casualties in devious ways. According to the Resist America Campaign, the American armed forces turned to Japan as a source of technical support.

Perhaps the most thought provoking representation of the United States, was the depiction of America as the logical continuation of Japanese aggression. Japan served as an imperialist point of reference for the Chinese that had survived the horrors of the Anti-Japanese War. For the millions of Chinese citizens who knew little about the United States this approach conflated the new enemy, America, with a familiar aggressor. As a result, the United States inherited the position Japan previously held as China's foremost imperialist enemy. The story of Zhang A Gen is a clear example of the transfer of denunciation from Japan to the United States. In the non-fiction story, \textit{Zhang A’gen kongsu}, (Zhang A’Gen Denounces) Zhang is forced to defend his home and his younger brother from Japanese soldiers. After successfully fighting off the Japanese, Zhang A Gen's peaceful life is shattered by news of American imperialism and its rearment of Japan. In the conclusion, Zhang and his younger brother Zhang Xiaohei stand on the

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Fandui Meidi wuzhuang Riben tupian} (Zhang A’Gen's Denouncement) (Oppose the Rearmament of Japan by the American Imperialist), 1.
stage at the local mobilization meeting denouncing the actions of the United States.

Zhang A Gen delivers a powerful rebuke of the United States, speaking under a banner emblazoned with the words, "Fandui Meiguowuzhuang Riben" (Resist the American Rearmament of Japan.) The denunciation of American imperialism's rearmament of Japan was the first link between the United States and Japan. This connection became even more pronounced in March of 1952.

That year biological weapons emerged as a powerful means with which to identify the United States. The memories of the atrocities committed by Japan's Unit 731, as well as other war crimes inflicted upon the Chinese people during the Second World War, were seared into New China’s collective memory. In 1952, Zhou Enlai, the Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, officially protested against the use of biological weapons by the United States of America during the Korean War. The specific charges leveled against the United States were the development and deployment of biological weapons, not only on the territory of Korea, as well as the use of biological weapons against civilians living in China's Dongbei region. The news of America's use of biological weapons reverberated throughout China and around the world. As a result, in 1952 the Resist America Campaign shifted its emphasis in describing the United States to portray the American Armed forces as war criminals without equal.

This facet of defining the United States began when strange occurrences and environmental anomalies materialized in Korea and Manchuria. In Liaoning province, when over two dozen Chinese citizens witnessed American F-86 and B-29 bombers

dropped mysterious payloads over Chinese villages. The modes of deploying these payloads varied. Some witnesses reported seeing a large red thermos shaped weapon or a bomb resembling an egg shell descending from American bombers at a slow rate of speed. Others reported no container at all, instead the plane released thousands of feathers in the bombers wake. At suspected impact sites villagers discovered little evidence resembling typical ordinance deployed by American bombers. What they did find were strange ecological anomalies, for example, insects congregating in seemingly unimaginable concentrations and exhibiting strange behavior. At one suspected impact site, Wang Yu-Tsai, a fifty-six year old villager discovered between one hundred to two hundred flies per square foot. Consequently, these ecological incongruities discovered throughout Manchuria in the wake of American violations of Chinese airspace spawned a number of scientific investigations. The insects and rodents, not destroyed by hygienic work teams deployed in the defense of China's citizens, were collected and tested for disease. It was quickly determined by an independent international investigative committee that the anomalies in Manchuria were indeed engineered biological weapons.

The deployment of biological weapons on civilians in Manchuria was a powerful source of evidence utilized by the Resist America Campaign to convey the heinous character of United States imperialism. Traveling science exhibits and newspaper articles presented damning evidence against the United States by rendering enemy microbes

---

27 Ibid, 417.
28 Ibid, 60.
visible to millions of Chinese. In March of 1952, the Chinese People’s Daily newspaper printed articles featuring the confessions of United States airmen to the crime of deploying biological weapons on Korean and Manchurian soil. The title of Lieutenant Jon Quinn’s confession was, “Wo ruhe beibi canjia Meiguo huaerjie fadongde xizhun zhanzheng.” (I was forced by Wallstreet to participate in America’s biological war) Quinn’s confession indicted his country and complimented the depictions of America presented by the Resist America Campaign. He confirmed that the American war effort was indeed the product of Wall Street’s unbridled avarice. Moreover, Lt. Quinn elevated the atrocities of the United States above even those of the Nazi’s. In reference to biological warfare, his confession reads, “This is a horrible crime against the people, even the German Nazi’s would not use it those people like Ilsa Koch who would make lamp shades out of human skin would not use it, but I used it for the U.S. imperialist warmongers of Wall street.” The confessions of American service men provided the most useful evidence for the Resist America Campaign. Chinese media had produced a source, from the United States, that confirmed what the campaign had already professed.

3.3. The New Chinese Self

The Resist America Campaign provided the foundation for the Chinese state to create a Chinese identity. The movement portrayed New China as diametrically opposed to the barbarity United States. Where the United States is perceived to be capitalist,

30 “Wo ruhe beibi canjia meiguo huaerjie fadongde xizhun zhanzheng” Renmin ribao (Chinese People’s Daily) Saturday, May 6th, 1952.
31 Report, 538.
corrupt, cowardly, and criminal, New China is presented as socialist, anti-imperialist, courageous, and just. This section highlights the Chinese conception of New China, as represented in the popular media produced by the Resist America campaign.

First and foremost, New China imagined itself to be socialist and anti-imperialist. Portrayals of New China in opposition to imperialism were a common motif in popular media and government documents. In the book, *Xin Zhongguode xin qixiang*, (New China’s New Spirit) a Chinese worker stands underneath the New Chinese flag waving fluidly above him. The flag and the worker exude strength and confidence in line with the new Chinese state. In the background stands a flamboyant figure wearing pinstriped pants and a blazer with “American imperialism” written along the side. The diminutive American figure struggles to maintain his balance under the new found industrial pride radiating from China's industrial worker. The caption at the bottom of the page reads, “Fensui diguo zhuyi yinmo, yong ziji liliang kefu yiqie kunnan” (Lets completely destroy the imperialist conspiracy, use your own power to solve any difficulties.) ³² The Chinese worker stands defiantly, in opposition to America’s imperialist ambitions, aiming one of his tools at the American figure that reads "self regeneration." Another page from the same book highlights New China’s emancipation from the grips of imperialism. In this short comic, American imperialism during the Republican period dominated China’s domestic economy by flooding China's farming markets with North American imports; however, after the communist government gained power things changed. ³³ The revolutionary Chinese government expelled imperialism from its shores, along with the American produce that inundated China's markets at the expense of domestically

---
³³ Ibid, 23.
produced goods. In the end, New China stands in favor of its peasants and workers, shattering the ties to and inroads the imperialist had established during the Republican period, ending their destabilizing economic exploitation.

The media depicted the United States as a nation of rife with internal racial and economic contradictions, in contrast, New China was viewed as a socially united country with its house in order.\(^{34}\) Allegedly, with the ascendance of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, exploitation of the working class and minorities was coming to an end in China. The working class and ethnic minorities in New China were represented as valuable members of the republic and equal citizens under law.\(^{35}\) In *Kangmei yuanchao huace*, (The Resist America Aid Korea Pictorial) Tibetan citizens living in Beijing are posited as active members of the nation. The caption conveys the Tibetan delegation's resolve to continue their support of the Resist America Campaign and China's expulsion of the American aggressor from the continent of Asia.\(^ {36}\) Unlike the renderings of the United States, China's system of law protected all of its citizens, assuring their fundamental rights to earn a living and educate themselves.

In New China, education emerged as antithetical to education in the United States. Its goal was to destroy the old mold brought to China by the United States and other Western powers during colonial penetration.\(^ {37}\) Liu Shaoqi stated in reference to


\(^{35}\) The first draft of the People’s Republic of China’s Constitution was promulgated in September of 1954. As a result, it has come to be referred to as the “1954 Constitution.” The 1954 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China goes to great lengths to guarantee equal rights to all of China’s ethnically diverse minorities, providing a degree of individual freedom and rural autonomy in minority regions. Currently, China recognizes fifty-six ethnic minorities.


New China’s education system, “Not only are we going to destroy old China, the semi-colonial semi-feudal China, but we are going to construct the economy, politics and culture of New China.” Thus, education in New China developed as the mirror opposite of education in the west. The People's University in Beijing is an excellent example of how Chinese's conceptions of the United States influenced the construction of China's institutions of higher learning. The departments at the People’s University were constructed to oppose Chinese notions of the capitalist education style of the United States and the West:

“There were also such departments in the old universities of the past as finance, trade, economy . . . but they were a trade, economy and law of the bourgeois-country style, whereas our country is a country of new democracy and is entering into socialism; thus our economy, factory management, etc. should not be in a capitalist style and should not copy the ways of management in the capitalist countries such as Britain and the United States.”

Essentially, New China created a socialist model of education based up on the needs of a socialist China. The capitalist system produced young adults that furthered the exploitation of the worker. In New China, the education system was conceived to be a system that produced students capable of supporting China's workers and the nation's push towards socialism.

Chinese soldiers were presented in contradistinction to the constructed American soldier. Unlike the imperialist aggressor, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army was adept on the field of battle. He defeated his enemy with relative ease, indicative of his high moral standing. Where enemy's will to resist wavered, Chinese morale remained at a number of notable institutions of higher learning in China. For example, Yenching University, Beijing Union Medical College, St. Johns University, and Lingnan University.

39 Ibid.
dependable high. Chinese military superiority is implied by this passage: "The American Aggressor troops equipped with modern weapons are nothing but paper tigers. Under the gallant attacks of the Chinese volunteers, their morale sinking lower every day. Whenever they engage in battle, they are bound to be defeated and taken captive in groups."[sic] Throughout popular media, passages like these constructed the image of an invincible Chinese army. Yet, beyond their military prowess, Chinese soldiers were portrayed as extremely well behaved. The People's Volunteers entered Korea under a strict code of ethics ordered by Mao Zedong. The volunteers were admonished to "consider Korea's cause as their own and the commanders and fighters must be instructed to cherish every hill, every river, every tree and every blade of grass in Korea and take not a single needle or a single thread from the Korean people." China's fighting man in Korea reportedly took this order to heart. Unlike American soldiers, who engaged in the "wholesale massacre" of Koreans on the Korean Peninsula, Chinese volunteers aided Koreans, not only on the battlefield, but also in production and agricultural harvests.  

Finally, the Resist America Campaign characterized New China as a modern nation possessing hygienic modernity, "its citizens hypervigilent, and physically involved in the nation." This meant the state actively touched the bodies of its citizens in order to improve national health. Fundamental health education was "carried out by every available means of instruction, by large meetings, by posters, picture books and wall-

40 Kwan, Kangmei, 71.  
41 Mao, "The Chinese People's Volunteers should cherish every hill, every river, every tree and every blade of grass in Korea" in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, vol 5., 44.  
42 Liu, Stories of the Chinese People's Volunteers, ii.  
43 Kwan, Kangmei, 79.  
44 Rogaski, Hygienic Modernity, 287.
newspapers, by the press, from the stage, and on the screen.™ Even this movement was characterized within the context of anti-Americanism. Health education posters stressed hygienic practices in order to resist American imperialism. One poster shows a squalid hand being hewn in two by a bayonet as it reaches out for a broken vile containing insects designed to spread disease. The caption at the bottom of the poster reads, “Resolutely cut off the bloody criminal hand of the American aggressor that spreads germs!”™ Another poster illustrates a small family receiving vaccinations from a women clad in hospital attire. A man stands in the foreground lifting up his sleeve exposing his muscled arm in anticipation of receiving his own vaccination. The caption for this poster reads, “Everyone must take precautions against epidemics to smash the germ warfare of American imperialism!”™ These posters encouraged each individual throughout China to resist American imperialism by improving their individual health, which was presented within the context of the health of the state, thus blurring the lines between the individual and the state.

3.4. Unity through Participation

The popular media produced by the Resist America Campaign, was well received and inspired millions of Chinese to participate with the goals of the new state. As a result, the Resist America Campaign produced a movement which commanded broad support amongst the masses, which included: soldiers, workers, students, and women. Based upon popular participation, during the formative years of the People’s Republic, the

---

45 Report, 52.
46 Stephan R. Landsberger and Marien Van Der Heijden, eds., Chinese Posters: The Ish-Landsberger Collections (Munich: Prestel, 2009), 42.
47 Ibid, 47.
Resist America Campaign was arguably the most important movement in China. Its call to action mobilized the masses across the Chinese mainland. From October of 1950 to March of 1951 alone, over three hundred cities across China held patriotic meetings and marches. This explosion of popular support brought millions of Chinese into contact with the state in a meaningful way. The shared participation in the state established profound unity throughout China, displaying the Chinese people’s internalization of their anti-American political identity.

The Chinese People’s Volunteers participated in the Resist America Campaign in the most direct way possible, combating imperialism on the battlefield. The volunteer army was created as a cover so that the United States would not attack the Chinese mainland by deflecting responsibility for the actions of the Chinese military in Korea. This armed force was comprised of soldiers drawn from the People’s Liberation Army, but college students and workers also participated in Korea in non-combat roles. Service in the People’s Volunteer Army began by taking an oath which called for all of the volunteers to devote all of their energies to the defense of the homeland. Once this oath was taken, the soldiers embarked for the battlefield, where hundreds of thousands gave their lives.

---

49 Ibid.
50 Mao, “Great Victories in the three Mass Movements” in *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol 5.*, 59-60. In this speech Mao Zedong argues that the country is more broadly united than ever as a result of the Resist America Campaign.
51 Despite the name People's Volunteer Army, service in the PVA was far from voluntary. In actuality, these soldiers were Chinese regulars from the People's Liberation Army summoned to fight with their unit in Korea.
53 Ibid.,
On the home front industry organized on a massive scale in support of the Resist America Campaign. In factories throughout China, industrial workers gathered to unanimously denounce the United States and its capitalist allies. Every ounce of industrial production was perceived to be a small victory in the fight to Resist America.\(^{54}\)

The elevation of labor heroes in support of the Resist America Campaign became a regular practice. Chao Kuok Yu, a labor hero at the number three machine factory in the city of Mudanjiang, issued a call for all industrial workers in Northeastern China to increase their production in the name of Resisting America. The competition was well received throughout the Northeastern provinces, reaching October’s production goals in a mere twenty-eight days.\(^{55}\) Another exemplary industrial worker, Lee Kuan-Ching, at the National Model Workers Representative Meeting explained, as he repaired damaged locomotives, “the more we repair the more we gain in strength for resisting America and assisting Korea.”\(^{56}\) This approach to industry was replicated at schools of all levels throughout China.

Along side industrial workers, students of all ages took part in the Resist America Campaign by organizing demonstrations against American imperialism. Millions of students took to the streets carrying *dazibao* (big character posters) denouncing the United States and professing their continued support in resistance to America. China's students in large numbers participated in anti-American marches, incorporating students of all ages and types; at rallies, young elementary school students were present, as well as foreign exchange students returning from universities in the United States. Many students

\(^{54}\) Kang mei yuan chao bao jia wei guo tu pian, 10.

\(^{55}\) Kwan Wen, Kangmei huace, 37.

\(^{56}\) Ibid, 38.
also delivered street lectures and produced propaganda posters for cities and villages across China. The cities of Wuchang and Hankou displayed pictures drawn by the Yu-de girls middle school. These anti-imperialists drawing were displayed on walls throughout the city for the Chinese people to view.

Lastly, women participated in the Resist America Campaign to the same extent as their male counterparts. Like men, women served as volunteers and actively sought to increase production in order to resist America. For example, women at the Xinxin factory took part in a patriotic production race in order to serve the war effort. Outside of the work place, women gathered in China’s major urban areas and villages, working tirelessly in order to produce cotton uniforms for the army. Other women actively took part in the defense of China's vulnerable cities in the North East. Women did so by joining the Urban Defense Corps. The women that joined this corp defended China's urban areas by patrolling China's streets, exposing themselves to danger while scanning the horizon in anticipation of American air raids.

3.5. Conclusion

The Resist America Campaign was a genuine national movement during the first decade of Communist governance. Its purpose was two-fold. First, the campaign united the Chinese people against what they understood as American imperialism in Korea. Secondly, the campaign produced a lasting and enduring Chinese national identity in contrast to the American imperialism being confronted in Korea. The movement was the product of both the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party. Countering

57 Ibid, 57.
58 Ibid, 60.
American imperialism closely linked individuals to the state in a meaningful way that engendered a burgeoning national identity.
Chapter 4.

Epilogue

The central aim of this study expands the discussion on mobilization campaigns into the discourse on nationalism. The historical processes that produced China’s first modern nation state, a phenomenon that had previously never existed in the Middle Kingdom in the first decade of the People's Republic has been largely ignored.\(^1\) Chinese citizens were genuinely excited after the proclamation of the People’s Republic in October of in 1949. The Chinese Communists had achieved the objectives of the revolution and formed a modern state that stood up to imperialists and restored China’s strength. For many peasants the Communist Party could do no wrong. Over the previous decades of struggle the Party built a base of support among the people, due in large part to the Party’s adherence to the mass line. Mobilization campaigns during the first decade of Communist rule transformed popular enthusiasm and support into a national identity.

The process of creating mobilization campaigns capable of promoting the formation of a nation state began during the 1920s. After the Guomindang removed communist members from its ranks, the Chinese Communists began their transformation into an organization centered in the countryside.

\(^1\) Middle Kingdom is a translation of the two characters, Zhong and Guo, that combine to make up the name China.
Once the Party was embedded in rural communities they initiated the processes of agrarian reform. Gradually under Mao’s leadership agrarian reform became a popular movement garnering a broad base of support. Mao understood unchecked class warfare often times alienated large swaths of the population, largely rich and middle peasants. This was a necessary realization, because it opened the door for land reform to function as a national movement instead of a class based movement after 1949. Without this process, through which the Party gained a broad base of support, the Communist could not have successfully prosecuted the war against the Guomindang, nor could the mobilization campaigns of the 1950s been used to foster a sense of national identity.

However, by 1957, Mao's policies became uncharacteristically quixotic. After the First Five Year Plan, Mao began a series of national campaigns that were increasingly problematic for China's half a billion citizens. This shift in Chinese politics marked the beginning of what Maurice Meisner terms the utopian period. This epoch in Chinese history began as a result of the bureaucratization of China. As the Communist Party strove to move the People's Republic towards socialism, the nation seemingly found itself further and further away from its goal. As bureaucracy grew China's revolutionary methods became increasingly outmoded and the state ballooned in size instead of steadily shrinking. In order to redress what Mao perceived to be the loss of China's revolutionary soul, he began implementing mobilization campaigns and policies to restore the basis of revolution, the two best examples being the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). These campaigns cost China tens of millions of lives and unimaginable social disruption.
Because campaigns were movements tied to Chinese nationalism, they paved the way for China’s utopian period. Unquestionably, for China the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution were disastrous. None the less, millions of Chinese participated with seemingly unwavering dedication. The determined support of the Chinese people while participating in the mobilization campaigns of this period can only be understood by analyzing campaigns within the context of nationalism. The campaigns of the early 1950s paved the way for the utopian excesses of the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. As a result, opposition to Mao's utopian period movements was tantamount to a rejection of the modern Chinese identity.

In 1958, Chinese agriculture went through a massive voluntary process of communization. Thousands of Chinese villages were organized into communes marking a new stage of economic development and the elimination of private land ownership. This process, which is inextricably tied to the beginning of the Great Leap Forward and the utopian period began spontaneously at the grass roots level, gaining momentum through the support of the Chinese government. The Chinese peasants celebrated the establishment of the People's Communes, beating drums and gongs, proclaiming the Commune as the "realization of a long-cherished dream."\(^1\) Communization was made possible by the campaigns of the early 1950s, which paved the way for the Utopian Period by fostering the creation of an imagined community that produced a Chinese nation.

Bibliography

Secondary Sources


Primary Sources


———. "On the Mass Movement for Rent and Interest Reduction." December 9, 1942.


———. "Communist Should Set an Example in the National War." October 1938.

———. "Unity and Victory." October 1938.


———."We Want to Build a New China." December 20, 1939.

———."Spread the Campaign to Reduce Rent, Increase Production and "Support the Government and Cherish the People in the Base Areas." October 1, 1943.


———."Serve the People." September 8, 1944.

———."The United Front in Cultural Work." October 30, 1944.

———."China's Two Possible Destinies." April 23, 1945.


———."Rent Reduction and Production are Two Important Matters for the Defence of the Liberated Areas. November 2, 1945.

———."Correct the 'Lef' Errors in Land Reform Propaganda." February 2, 1948.


———. "Take Mutual Aid and Cooperation in Agriculture as a Major Task." December 1, 1952.


———. "Solve the Problem of the 'Five Excesses.'" March 19, 1953.

———. "Our Great Victory in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea and Our Future Tasks." September 12, 1953.


———. "Rely on Party and League Members and Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants in


———. "In Commemoration of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen." November 12, 1956.

———. "Persevere in Plain Living and Hard Struggle, Maintain Close Ties with the Masses." March 1957.


———. "Formation and Work of Commission."

———."The Relevance of Japanese Bacterial Warfare in World War II."

———."The Kan-Nan Incident."

———."The K'uan-Tien Incident."

———."Testimonies of Captured Agent."

———."Testimonies of Captured Airmen."

———."Hygiene in New China."


——. "Unite with the Broad Masses to Advance Together." April 22, 1949.

Chinese Language Sources

Primary Sources

*Fandui meidi wuzhuang riben tupian.* (Resist America's Rearmament of Japan Post Cards)

*Kangmei yuanchao baojia weiguo tupian.* (Resist America Aid Korea Post Card Collection)

Shanghai: Da Dong Publishing House, 1951.


Wen Kwan, Chang Lei, Mo Ying, Chow Wei, eds, *Kangmei yuanchao huace.* (Resist America and Aid Korea Pictorial) Beijing: People's Art Publishing Association, 1951.

"Wo beipai canjia meiguo huaerjie," (I was forced by American Wallstreet.) *Renmin ribao,* May 6, 1952.

"Wo kandao le liangyang wenhua de duibi." (I saw two cultures contrast.) *Renmin ribao,* March 30, 1952.
"Wo ru he bei bi can jia meiguo hua er jie fa dong de xi zhun zhan zheng." (I was forced by Wallstreet to participate in Germ Warfare.) Renmin ribao (Chinese People’s Daily) Saturday, May 6th, 1952.

"Xizhun zhan buke hushi ye buzupa." (Bacteria Warfare should be acknowledge, but not feared.) Renmin ribao, March 1952.


Xin Pan Xi, "Meidi bibai." (American Imperialism will Certainly Lose!) in Manhuaji (Comic Collection) Guang Zhou: Xinhua shudian, 1951.

Zhang Kan, Zhejiu shi meiguo shenghuo fangshi. (Look, this is the American Way of Life) Guang Zhou: Da Dong, 1950.

Zhi Xu Mu, Zhejiu shi meiguo. (This is America) Shanghai, Da Dong Publishing House, 1951.

Secondary Sources

Xue Qi De. Ni buliao Jiede kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng. (You don't Know the Resist America Aid Korea War) Liaoning: Liaoninng People's Press, 2011.