

Lesson 17

Questions for the Lesson/What you need to know in this lesson:

- 1) As a nascent party, how did CCP grow to become a prominent political party, surviving both internal faction as well as KMT's extermination campaigns?
- 2) What is the significance of Jiangxi Soviet? How did it contribute to CCP's survival and its development into a strong political party?
- 3) What is the significance of the Long March? How did it contribute to CCP's survival and its development into a strong political party?

IB Questions

The Chinese Communist Party between 1936-1945

1. Explain why the Jiangxi (Kiangsi) Soviet has acquired such significance in Chinese history. (N03, Q15)
2. To what extent did the experiences of the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March influence the development of the Chinese Communist Party? (N09 Q14)
3. How and why did the Chinese Communist Party survive between 1929 and 1937 despite serious threat to its existence? (N12)
4. Examine the significance of the Northern Expedition (1926-1927) and the Jiangsi Soviet (1928-1934) in the emergence of Mao Zedong as leader of the Chinese Communist Party by 1935. (M15)

Significance of the Long March

1. 'The Long March (1934-1935) was a retreat that changed the destiny of China.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? (M11, Q12)

Chinese Communist Party, 1928-1937

A. Overview

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), after their split with the KMT in 1927, had bifurcated into two distinct entities: the party's Central Politburo under the leadership of Moscow-trained Chinese Communists went underground in Shanghai, while Mao Tze-tung pursued an independent course in the countryside of Hunan and Kiangsi. The politburo followed the Comintern tactics of strikes, sabotage and uprisings in the cities, but Mao organized peasant support and developed Soviet areas far away from KMT control. Mao's unorthodox approach

placed him in the position of “opposition” vis-à-vis both Moscow and the CCP politburo’ yet of all the tactics used by the Communists, Mao’s eventually reaped the greatest success.

B. The Comintern and the CCP

The CCP revolutionary strategy was largely determined by Stalin several thousand miles away, and his orders were at times a product of fantasy and at times a result of his feud with Trotsky. After the KMT-CCP split, Stalin, for instance, felt that China was experiencing a high revolutionary tide which justified armed uprisings, seizure of power and establishment of the Soviets. Once Stalin triumphed over Trotsky, orders were given to the CCP to carry out armed insurrections.

With the support of a newly organized 15000 man peasant-worker army, a group of Communists staged a coup at Nanchang, Kiangsi on August in 1927. This Nanchang uprising, a brainchild of Stalin’s, however, failed.

At this time, a radical reshuffling of the CCP leadership was taking place. At an emergency meeting in Hankow, a Stalin protégé, Ch’u Ch’iu-pai took over as secretary general of the Central Politburo, a new organ which had superseded the Central Committee. Li Li-san another choice of Stalin’s, was put in charge of propaganda. Under the guidance of the new Comintern representative, Lominadze, these leaders accepted Moscow’s diagnosis that China was ripe for armed insurrections and creation of the Soviets.

C. Mao’s idea conflicted with that of the Pro-Soviet Leadership

Li Lisan was charged with the responsibility to complete the agrarian revolution, revive Communist power in the cities and prepare for insurrections. He was instructed to achieve these ends by radical demands. He soon met with strong opposition from those in the party who bore the actual responsibility for mobilizing peasants and organizing workers. He also fell back on the use of military force as a last resort to capture the cities from outside. Li was forced by Moscow to take a radical line for reasons of Russian state security; the Japanese threat from Manchuria and seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Nanjing caused problems for Russia.

However, Mao on his part had entered Hunan to foment popular resentments which culminated in the Autumn Harvest Uprising of Sept 1927. Under his inspiration and direction, the rebellious peasants destroyed sections of the Canton-Hankow Railway, seized control of a number of places in the province, and carried out “liquidation struggles” and land revolution. **This first uprising of Mao, however, fell far short of success. Under the attack of government troops, Mao was obliged to flee to Ching-kang-shan in the border area of Kiangsi and Hunan to regroup his forces. Unsympathetic to the peasant movement, Ch’u sponsored a resolution at the Nov meeting of the Central Politburo that a purely peasant uprising without the leadership and help of the working class cannot achieve conclusive victories. The failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising cost Mao his membership in the Politburo.**

Under the guidance of other representatives from Moscow other urban uprisings such as in Canton but all will fail one after another. Mao's activity in the countryside thus assumed importance. In Jan 1928, Chu Teh, who was earlier replaced by Ch'iu-pai, joined Mao at Ching-kang-shan and the Fourth Red army was formed. Chu was the commander and Mao was the "party" representative. **Here was the birth of the celebrated Chu-Mao leadership. In July they moved their headquarters to Juichin, Kiangsi, where a Soviet regime was established.** In Shensi, another Communist base was being created by Liu Chih-tan and Kao Kang. These two centers in the border areas operated outside the jurisdiction of the CCP Central Politburo.

At the CCP Sixth Party Congress in July 1928 – held in Moscow partly to avoid KMT raid and partly to coincide with the Comintern's International Congress which had been called to eliminate the Trotskyite influence, **Chu-Mao activities in the Kiangsi-Hunan hinterland were recognized as legitimate through not models for the Chinese Communist movement. Instead the Congress elected Hsian Chung-fa and Li Li-san as new leaders, with the former serving as secretary-general and the latter director of propaganda. The party headquarters remained underground in Shanghai.**

Of the two, Li was more lively and eloquent. **He emerged as the strong man of the party between June 1929 and Sept 1930. In Oct 1929 he was told by the Comintern that he should ready himself for the advent of a new revolutionary tide. Not long afterward, a large scale civil-war broke out in Central China in July 1930 and taking advantage Li fomented strikes and sabotage, sending the newly organized Red Army under P'eng Te-huai to attack Changsha, the capital of Hunan. The city was taken, but the success again was fleeting.** Within three days the government troops recovered Changsa and inflicted heavy losses on the rebels. As a result of this failure, the Li Li-san line was criticized and, as a victim of Stalin's failure in China, Li was sent to Moscow for recantation. Ch'u Ch'iu-pai was also severely condemned and was dropped from the CCP politburo.

The party leadership now fell to Wang Ming (Ch'en Shao-yu) and Po Ku (Ch'in Pang-hsien), who headed the "international wing" of the CCP consisting of twenty-eight returned students who had studied at Sun Yat-sen University at Moscow from 1926-1930. Returning home in early 1930, they became known as the "Twenty-eight Bolsheviks" and "China's Stalin's Section." They took over the Politburo in Jan 1931, with support of Mif, the Comintern representative.

D. Reasons for the Rise of the Rural Soviets

Background of Jiangxi Soviet

Mao's base in Jinggang Shan, was a mountain base about 35 miles in diameter. It was barren, and its grain production insufficient for the maintenance of an armed force of any size. Mao had arrived in Oct 1927 with a few hundred men. He joined with 120 resident bandits who were then subjected – though with less than perfect success – to the 'proletarian education', which Mao substituted for proletarian origins among his

troops. Zhu De and Peng Duhuai also brought his small force in the autumn. **From these beginnings the Red Army grew, and from these beginning the future Maoist leadership of the CCP was established.** Estimates of its strength in late 1928 vary from 10000 to 50000 but estimates of the number of rifles vary less: there were about 4000. **Eventually this force partly controlled six counties at its greatest extent, but the area fluctuated. Meanwhile a number of other small Communist-controlled areas sprang up elsewhere.**

(i) Mao's Independence

Operating outside the jurisdiction of the CCP central organization, Mao and Chu were relatively unaffected by the party squabble. They had developed an independent and comparatively unorthodox activity by organizing the peasants and creating Soviets in the hinterland of Kinagsi and Hunan. They had practiced guerrilla tactics to perfection and initiated a rather "egalitarian" land revolution by parcelling out the redistributed land to the rich and poor peasants alike. They had evolved a self-sufficient territorial base without relying on the help or guidance of the Comintern or the party leaders at Shanghai, with whom they maintained an attitude of "outward obedience and inward disobedience."

(ii) Tension within CCP: Party Centre VS Guerrilla Leaders

The CCP Central Politburo never really approved of Mao's activity, while Moscow merely tolerated it because all other CCP-led uprisings had failed. Mao's growing power and independence contrasted sharply with the state of the party central organization, which was plagued by unstable leadership, lack of financial support from the Soviet Union which itself was absorbed in economic reconstruction, and Nationalist persecution. The KMT raids had been so devastating that the Communist secret service chief in Hankow was arrested and forced to divulge names. This led to the capture and subsequent execution of the secretary-general Hsiang Chung-fa on June 1931. The party fortunes had fallen to a low ebb.

Sensing the desperation of the Politburo, Mao boldly invited its members to attend the First All-China Congress of the Soviets to be held in Juichin on Nov 1931. The Twenty-eight Bolsheviks attended the Congress but not with the intention of supporting Mao's movement but to chastise his unorthodox conduct. The Conference closed with a call for the proletarian leadership in agrarian reforms, the expansion of the Red Army, and the adoption of the regular warfare in place of guerrillaism. Starkly, the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks rejected the Maoist approach and intended to replace his machine.

However, at the Congress the Maoists completely dominated the scene. Having defeated the first two KMT campaigns, they were flushed with success and confidence. With their control of the majority votes, they easily outmanoeuvred the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. Mao was elected chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the All-China Soviet Government and retained his position as Chief Political Commissar of the First Front Red army. A number of former party leaders were absorbed into his government, while the Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks left in the cold during the distribution of offices. Only three of them, including Wang Ming who was

absent, were given places on the Central Executive Committee, while Po Ku was not appointed to anything.

In this power struggle, Mao was able to score an impressive victory and won increased recognition of his activity, not because of Soviet patronage but because of a very realistic strategy that he had evolved himself on the basis of 5 important elements: the peasant mass support, a party and government apparatus of his own, and independent military force, a secure territorial base far away from KMT control and self-sufficiency.

(iii) KMT's pursuit of CCP – CCP's need for a new base

The KMT extermination campaigns against the CCP had done the damage. The follies of the past had exposed so many active communists in the cities that KMT penetration of the network was easy; there were enough prisoners taken to ensure that through disillusionment, by bribery, by the taking of family hostages and if necessary by torture, the necessary information could be obtained. A leading participant reckoned that almost 40000 trade unionists died in violence and war from April 1927 onwards, 25000 in fighting and 15000 by execution. Communism in Chinese industry was finished. Due to such suppression by the KMT, by 1932, the Political Bureau of the communists could no longer operate from Shanghai, and moved to the Jiangxi Soviet.

(iv) Decline of Comintern Influence over CCP

With the rise of the importance of the rural Soviets and the decline of Communist influence in the cities, the influence of the Communist International on the Chinese Party declined sharply. Party this was due simply to lack of communication. Yet the remoteness of the Jiangxi Soviet is not a sufficient explanation for the sharp reduction of the Soviet influence. There was a withdrawal of Russian interest in China. Russian foreign policy was gradually moving from the encouragement of class conflict to a united front against fascism. The years 1931-1932 were years of transition, and of some uncertainty, in Moscow's China policy, so that the Chinese soviets were free to develop without haranguing from Moscow and systematic intrigue by Comintern agents within the party. **A new leading group gradually emerged, composed mainly of those who were identified with Mao's policies and the Jiangxi Soviet.** A scores of names emerged of men who were to dominate Chinese politics from the late thirties until the seventies.

E. Mao Zedong and the Jiangxi Soviet, 1931-1934 - The Significance Jiangxi Soviet (1931-1934)

(i) Rise of Mao and his ideas

Mao's year in Jinggang Shan laid the first foundations of his future political methods. Hitherto he had been only on the fringes of decision making. Now he had a territory of his own. True, his army was miniscule, half armed and hungry and its territory only a mountainside. But he was its king, and he used his authority from the beginning to set his stamp firmly on the fragment of the communist movement which he controlled.

Mao Zedong was not yet a member of the top echelons of the CCP, but he commanded the Jiangxi Soviet – at least most of the time. From late 1929 to late 1934 Mao built a “revolutionary base area” eventually covering over 30 counties and perhaps two million people in southwestern Jiangxi and western Fujian.

The Soviet faced continuous attacks from the Nationalist armies, and from within the Soviet Mao faced opposition from both CCP’s leadership and from local cadres. But through victories and defeats, **the Communists learned a great deal about peasant revolution. The main lessons can be summarized in four points.**

First an army as well trained and equipped as possible was necessary, though ultimately political rather than military factors were decisive. Second, a safe base area was necessary to convince peasants to take the risk of supporting the Communists and to provide resources for the army. Base area thus refers to not to a military camp but to farming country, though in remote inaccessible terrain. Third, poor peasants alone provided an insufficient base of support; since stable and long-term administration rested on the middle peasants as well, radical land redistribution policies were self-defeating. And fourth, peasant support and the economic success of the soviet therefore depended on moderate land reform that in turn rested on astute social analysis. The revolution of the base area was at heart a land revolution that dispossessed what the party defined as an exploiting class of landlords. It released energies sufficient to fend off attacks for five years and built up military and civilian bureaucracies.

In addition, the principles on which Mao had begun to work were that the army must be deeply involved in the political tasks of creating mass organizations, popular local government, and the political conditions for social change; that conversely, the mass organizations should be involved military tasks such as supply, intelligence, medical services, guarding the rear, and harassing the enemy units; and that the relations of the army with civilian population must be based on strictly enforced rules of honesty, courtesy and helpfulness. The corollary was that policy must be modified to ensure that the people would accept it and come to regard the Red Army as the military expression of their own aspirations. This was the formula which, long practised, greatly elaborated, and given a philosophical foundation, was eventually to carry Mao and the CCP to power.(Jack Gray)

(ii) Mao’s emergence as a leader of the communist

In Jiangxi Soviet, already Communists and communism existed. Local radicals were protected by the arrival of Mao’s forces, but they did not necessarily agree with all of Mao’s policies. Mao maintained a precarious personal dominance in the region until 1933. His Red Army combined guerrilla tactics with a base strategy. The base area provided the financial resources necessary for the army, first through confiscation of the property of the rich and later through regularized taxes. Meanwhile, assured of Communist protection against GMD and landlord reprisals, peasants joined the war on rural elites and in the process received something of a political education along with their new fields. Long pent up hatred were released. Once peasants committed themselves, there was no turning back. Recruitment of peasant boys into the army

followed, and the base's territory expanded. Four GMD annihilation campaigns were successfully repulsed.

However, the Fifth annihilation campaign destroyed the soviet that had not been able to expand much over the preceding few years. One problem was divided leadership. Mao was given political responsibility for the Jiangxi Soviet itself, but when the Central Committee moved to Ruijin after its underground existence in Shanghai proved untenable, Mao had to cooperate with the CCP superiors, themselves under pressures from the Comintern and Stalin. Mao's position was far from secure. Though the party reorganized his usefulness as an administrator, Mao lost his military positions and his authority had shrunk by the time of the Long March retreat in 1934. The top echelons of the CCP remained in the hands of urban intellectuals, many of whom were slow to understand the nuances of rural life.

(iii) Adoption of social-economic policies

Before the arrival of Mao, the policies essentially involved the counting of fields and the number of people in a township and giving every person an equal amount. Landlords and rich peasants were thus dispossessed, an often a violent process. This kind of radical land reform won the CCP much support, as it took from those who have more to help those who have less, but it created problems as well. **According to later CCP analysis of leftist mistakes, equal distribution hurt middle peasants, thus alienating a critical segment of rural society – one with more skills like literacy than poor peasants but with greater stake in the revolution than rich peasants. Middle peasants did not like losing their ancestral fields.**

Mao thus took the lead in moderating these early policies. Rich peasants will lose some of their lands but instead of being reassigned new plots, they were to retain a portion of their original fields. They were allowed to keep all of their businesses except usury and pawn-broking. Middle peasants were allowed to keep all their land, land they had already invested in time and resources in. Poor peasants and landless were to be given only land specifically confiscated from landlords and rich peasants and the fields belonging. **Mao emphasized that the goal was to let the broad masses of the peasants obtain through revolution the one thing that they strongly desired, the right to ownership of the land – in other words the CCP was not to encourage public ownership of the land.**

But when the CCP top leadership moved to the left again in 1931, against Mao's advice, they returned to radical land redistribution, denying landlords the right to any land whatsoever, giving rich peasants only poor land and affirming the goal of public ownership. This killed a certain amount of enthusiasm and productivity. But it was only through such blunders especially due to simplistic or strict class analysis such as classifying households as rich only because they rented out a few fields and some middle peasants as rich peasants only because their strong sons were just entering the productive years that the Party eventually learnt not to also confuse mere wealth with patters of exploitation. Understanding the classifications was central to the revolutionary process. Mao described the process of investigating landownership and other forms of exploitation in ways that influenced subsequent rural investigations through the 1950s.

(iv) The Mass Line

A realm of popular political participation was created that gave rise to a new local leadership. Elections held in 1931 reserved a disproportionate place for workers and poor and middle peasants. Another important target group of CCP cadres was village women. The 1931 marriage laws codified the right to choose one's spouse and the right to divorce, and prohibited polygamy, the sale of women into marriage, and child marriage. Women's associations were established and these brought more women into political participation. A quarter or more of city and township government delegates were often women. The energies of women, once freed, improved economic production. Women's ploughing and planting brigades were formed and the talent pool grew for administrative tasks, nursing and propaganda work. Some women even joined the army.

(v) Creation of the Red Army

The Red Army was perhaps the CCP's greatest single innovation within the traditions of communism. In China, an army was necessary to any base strategy because local participation had to be guaranteed security before they would participate in the revolution. Organized army forces were necessary to defeat local militia under the control of elites as well as to defend core areas within which the revolution – land reform – could proceed. The Red Army performed several other key functions as well: integrating disconnected base areas and spreading information and propaganda about the revolution; providing military training and advice to local activists, and socializing volunteers from among the peasantry, KMT armies and bandit gangs.

The Red Army based in the Jiangxi Soviet grew rapidly in the 1930s before shrinking again in the course of the Long March. Without the Red Army the CCP would not have survived. Unlike the previous revolutions of modern history, the Chinese revolution was built with the army as a key element from the beginning. Mao's insight was to synthesize separate political and military considerations into a unified concept of revolutionary war. In proclaiming that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" Mao Zedong was not conflating violence and power. **He understood that violence was necessary but far from sufficient to the exercise of power. He grasped that mass movements had to be supplemented by an organized military.** Yet Mao believed that the CCP, not the Red Army, must remain in charge of the gun. In so far as the CCP was creating a state, with cadres, schools, mass movements, and a new culture, then **the army would form one component of the state.** Mao also designed political training to give soldiers – increasingly peasant volunteers – both an understanding of the reasons they were fighting and a sense of discipline. The Commissar system was used not only to place trusted cadres among the troops, **but to provide the Party representatives required to countersign all military orders. There was no question that the army would be subservient to the Party.** It was this discipline that distinguished the Red Army from warlord and the KMT troops.

(vi) Mao's conflict with the pro-Soviet leadership continued

Meanwhile the old conflict continued in the new Jiangxi context. The centre persisted in demanding the rapid expansion of the Soviets and Red Army attacks on cities. Mao was forced into a series of offensive down the Gan River in Feb 1932. Zhou Enlai was the main spokesman for this policy and the policy failed and yet Zhou and internationalists, as the pro-Soviet leaders were now called, demanded attacks on cities. **Their aim was to join up the various bases in Jiangxi and Fujian, extend power to the towns, and from there once more attack Nanchang, to achieve a position from which they could attempt to seize the Yangzi cities.**

Several leaders who were actually in future to be closely associated with Mao concurred in criticizing his prudent strategy: For instance, internationalist demanded that the Soviet territory should be defended at its borders. With Nationalists attacks growing in strength this became a major issue. Mao's defensive method was based on 'luring the enemy in deep.' The Red Army was hugely outnumbered and had little artillery and no air cover. It could not ring the frontiers of the soviet area and wait for the enemy to attack, it had no choice but evasive, semi-guerrilla tactics. Mao raised these tactics to the strategic level. The Communists forces retreated, encouraging the enemy to move into unfamiliar and hostile territory. The Red Army would then move with great rapidity to concentrate against one enemy division. **The remarkable result was that during the first four of Chiang's Kai-shek's five encirclement campaigns the Red Army, though so heavily outnumbered overall, actually enjoyed superiority of numbers in every battle.** The key to such extraordinary success was military intelligence and the key to intelligence was the support of the population. Mao's strategy had a political foundation.

Although the achievement of a sufficient degree of popular support did not depend on agreement between the Party and the population on detailed policies, it did depend on the general thrust of policy and on its effects on the interests of various segment of the population. The basis of the appeal of the Communist party in the rural areas was the promise of land reform. This can be defined as the reform of the conditions on which land was held and worked and included questions of ownership, tenure, rents, taxes and debts.

(vii) Guerrilla Fighting Tactics

Mao systematized some of the rules of guerrilla fighting, though many of these simply reflected the traditions of rural resistance of bandit gangs and secret societies. In sum, soldiers needed flexibility, patience and a long term perspective. They were to wait for enemy mistakes, retreat when the enemy was strong and attack when it was weak, concentrate their numbers to surprise smaller enemy divisions and take advantage of the cooperation of local people and superior knowledge of the terrain to overcome the enemy that comes into the red areas.

The fundamental problem was never entirely solved, which was that guerrilla tactics required giving up territory when superior forces attacked, or even giving up territory as part of a luring deep strategy. Inevitably, the then, local peasants

and cadres were left vulnerable to the enemy and the Party lost prestige. There was a contradiction between the notion of a secure base area and guerrilla tactics. The end came in 1934. Chiang 750000 troops surrounded the Jiangxi Soviet in a blockhouse strategy. and attacked the Soviet area, with ample artillery and air cover. Their advance was slow and methodical and backed up by political consolidation CCP lost the battles as the circle and economic blockade tightened.

The question of whether to use Mao's people's war defence or a conventional of the defence of the borders of the Soviet area now became academic. But the brutal truth was is that the Red Army was given no choice. Chiang's forces refused to be lured in deep. They advanced yard by yard, imposing a strict blockade with barbed wire and blockhouses. The communist had no opportunity to use their superior mobility. From 10 to 12 April the decisive battle of the fifth encirclement campaign took place at Guanchang north of Ruijin. The Red Army was defeated. Thereafter the choice was between evacuation and annihilation.

On 19 Oct 1934 Communist forces broke out of a weak point in the GMD circle and began their Long March, which led the communist forces to a new refuge in the northwest.

Although the Jiangxi Soviet was lost, the CCP learned an important lesson; even this relatively large and successful base could not support an army capable of positional warfare. A bigger economic base was needed to resist the onslaught of a government capable of mobilizing resources from almost the entire nation.

Overall, at Jiangxi the communist had learnt how to mobilize the peasantry, promote revolutionary land reform and integrate an effective military machine with the revolution.

E. The Long March 1934 and the Tsunyi Conference

The KMT Fifth Campaign routed the enemy from their seven-year old base in Kiangsi. The Communist defeat was largely the result, from a military standpoint, of Li Te's positional warfare instead of Mao's test-proven guerrilla warfare. Throughout the first half of 1934 the Red Army suffered incalculable losses and by mid-year it was nearly crushed. Mao wanted the Red Army to break through the siege and split into small groups to fight guerrilla war, but the Revolutionary Military Council under the dominance of Li Te ordered the Red Army to break through the siege as a united front and not split into smaller guerrilla groups. The able-bodied were allowed to join the exodus, while the wounded and dependent were ordered to stay behind. On Oct 15, 1934 the Long March officially began with 85000 soldiers, 15000 government and party officials and 35 women who were wives of high leaders. A number of Maoists and ex-party leaders unacceptable to the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks were left behind to defend the base, including Ch'u Ch'iu-pai. On Nov 10, 1934, Juichin fell to the Nationalists.

Of the 90000 men who broke out of Jiangxi, only one in ten reached the new base in the north. The Long March is often described as an epic victory. An epic it was, but

to call it a victory is only wisdom after the event. In itself it was a disastrous retreat following a devastating defeat. The three main soviets had been rooted out; now nine out of 10 of the Red Army were killed or scattered.

Initially, a three-man Military Group composed of Li Te, Po Ku, and Chou En-Lai directed the Long March. Troop morale was very low and the heavy shelling of KMT forces drove some political and military leaders to become disillusioned with Li and Po's inept leadership.

At a Politburo meeting at Liping on Dec 8, 1934, party leaders decided to convene an enlarged Politburo Conference soon in order to review the military situation arising from the KMT Fifth Campaign and the Western (Long) March. Two trends became apparent at this time. First, the majority of Politburo members desired a change in leadership and second Mao's star was rising because he symbolized the correct line of opposition to Li and Po. On Jan 7, 1935, the Red Army broke into Tsunyi, the second largest city in Kweichow Province, and two days later the party centre moved in. After several days, an enlarged Politburo Conference convened. Those who participated were all powerful leaders in the Party and the Red Army, full and alternate members of the Politburo and the leading army corps commanders and political commissars. Mao delivered a blistering attack on the erroneous military leadership of Li and Po, accusing them of leftist adventurism, which Mao insisted was responsible for the defeat in the Fifth Campaign, the loss of the base area, and the near destruction of the Red Army.

Eventually it was decided that Li and Po had to go. With that Mao became member of the Politburo Standing Committee and an assistance to Chou En-lai in military affairs. In March a new three-man Military Group was formed, with Mao, Chou and Wang-t'ien (replaced Po Ku). Of the three, Wang was quite ill and Chou deferred to Mao, who now became first among equals. Thus in essence he was the real power. Soon with Chang's help, Mao absolute control over the military, which became the foundation of his power, one that he never relinquished.

The Tsunyi Conference did not give Mao a complete victory, but it was a giant step in his quest for supreme power. Yet even in his moment of triumph, Mao was not spared a challenge. The party elder, Chang Kuo-t'ao, did not attend the conference and refused to accept its decisions. He questioned the choice of northern Shensi as the terminus for the Long March and argued for moving south or west in the direction of Sikang while Mao and the majority of the Politburo and their troops moved towards northern Shensi, where Kao Kang and Liu Chih-tan had built up a Soviet base.

In Oct 1935, Mao group reached Wuch'ichen in Paoan County after an extremely difficult period of mountain-climbing and river-crossing. At the end of this epic 25000 li (6000 miles) Long March, Mao forces could count only 8000 survivors. Later, the arrival of other units under Ho Lung, Chang Kuo-t'ao and Chu Teh, along with the local communist units, swelled the ranks to 30000.

In Dec 1936, the CCP headquarters was moved to Yen-an; there Mao rebuilt the party and the army around himself and engaged in theoretical writings. He was now the defacto leader of Chinese Communism. Mao received two additional

acknowledgements of his authority in 1938: a Soviet encyclopedia recognized him as the leader of the CCP, and he was selected as the chairman of the preparatory committee for the convocation of the Seventh Party Congress, which was held in 1945. Then and only then was Mao's victory complete: he became the Chairman of the CCP Central Committee, the Politburo, the Secretariat and the Military Commission; furthermore, his Thought was accepted as the guiding principle of the Party.

In historical perspective, the Tsungyi Conference must be considered as a political meeting rather than a military putsch. Yet the presence of so many military leaders who were full or alternate Politburo members and army commanders lent great support to Mao's attack on Li's erroneous military strategy. In the strictest sense, this extended Politburo meeting was unprecedented because it was not held in conformity with the Party constitution or its regulations and by laws; nevertheless, it was a landmark in his history of the party and in Mao rise to the pinnacle of power.

Overall Significance of the Long March:

If the Long March, although a military defeat, was a great propaganda victory it was so only in the context of relentless Japanese pressure on China and the reluctance of Chiang to offer resistance until he had united the country. The Communists were on the point of elimination. The pursuit of the Long March had established Nanjing's power in central and western China. In 1936 the last revolt of the South had collapsed and Chiang's speeches on the question of Japan had assumed a new note of truculence. As far as resistance to Japan is concerned, his opponents were now beating at an already open door. The issue however was whether the Chinese should continue to fight Chinese. The Long march had dramatized the question.