

The Communists and Nationalists from 1921-1937

Modern Chinese History

Literature

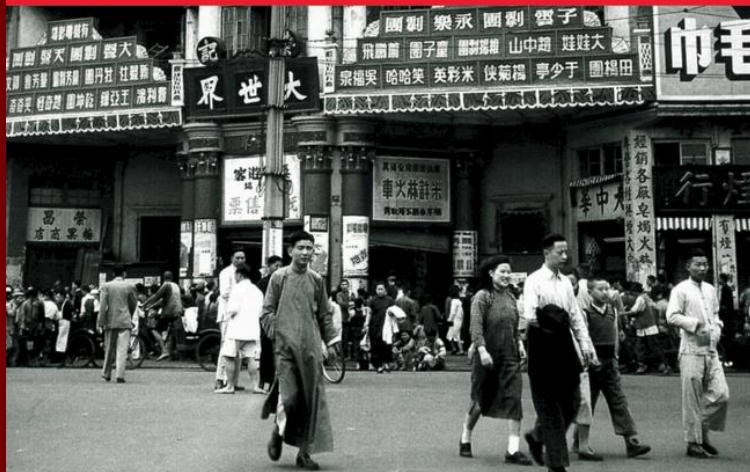
- Ven, Hans van de. *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Communist Party, 1920-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)
- Dikötter, Frank. *The Age of Openness: China Before Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008)



THE AGE OF OPENNESS

China before Mao

Frank Dikötter

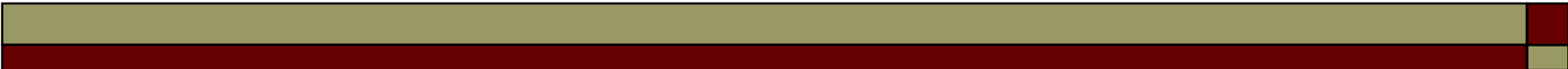


From Friend to Comrade

THE FOUNDING OF THE
CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY,
1920-1927

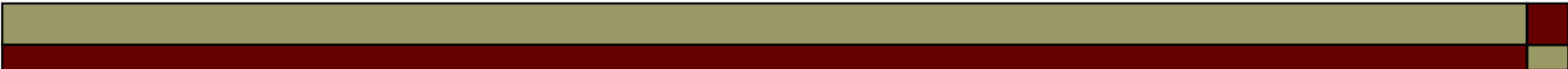


HANS J. VAN DE VEN



Chinese Communist Party

- ❑ Influenced by Bolshevik Revolution in 1917
- ❑ Founded in 1921 in Shanghai
- ❑ Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and Li Dazhao (1889-1927) among founding members
- ❑ Li Dazhao: Professor of Philosophy and librarian at Peking University, author of *The Victory of Bolshevism*
- ❑ Assistance from Third International (1920)



1st United Front, 1921-1927

- ❑ Proposed by International to develop the organization of both Communists and Nationalists
- ❑ Increase in party membership
- ❑ Membership in both parties possible
- ❑ Example: Mao Zedong → leader of the peasant Bureau within the Nationalist Party

Location of the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party Xintiandi Shanghai July 1921



Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), aka Jiang Jieshi

- Married to Song Meiling, Sun Yatsen's brother-in-law
- military academy at Whampoa (Huangpu), Canton
- Undertakes Northern Expedition (1926-1928)
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Jiangxi-Soviet

- ❑ November 7, 1931
- ❑ National Soviet People's Delegates Conference in Ruijin 瑞金, Jiangxi Province
- ❑ Founding of the "Chinese Soviet Republic" (Chinese: 中華蘇維埃共和國), existed until 1934
- ❑ Mao was Head of State and Prime Minister
- ❑ Own bank, currency, and tax bureau

The Long March, Oct. 1934-Dec. 1935

- From Jiangxi to Yan'an (Yenan)
- 150,000 set out, 15,000 complete it
- Mao becomes Chairman of the Communist Party
- Yan'an becomes new base area



Yan'an Period (1936-1948)



Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936)



- Born in Shaoxing, Zhejiang
- Real name: Zhou Shuren 周树人
- Traditional gentry family (grandfather appointed to Imperial Academy)

Early Life

- 19th cent.: China's identity crisis
- Fin de siècle melancholy affects Lu Xun's family
- 1893: grandfather imprisoned
- 1896: father died from alcohol and opium consumption
- 1898: Lu Xun turns his back on Confucian education system and studies Western subjects; Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nanjing
- 1899: School of Mines and Railways in Nanjing

Student years in Japan, 1902-1909

- Reads Western authors (Huxley, Dickens, Rider Haggard)
- 1902: graduates and leaves for Tokyo on scholarship; studies Japanese
- 1904: attends medical school in Sendai
- 1906: Lu Xun abandons medicine

Conversion to literature

Lu Xun saw picture of execution of Chinese:

"...every face was utterly, stupidly blank. The man tied up, the caption informed us, had been caught spying for the Russians and was about to be beheaded by the Japanese as a public example to the appreciative mob. ... I no longer believed in the overwhelming importance of medical science. However rude a nation was in physical health, if its people were intellectually feeble, they would never become anything than cannon fodder or gawping spectators, their loss to the world through illness no cause for regret. The first task was to change their spirit; and literature and the arts, I decided at the time, were the best means to this end. And so I reinvented myself as a crusader for cultural reform." (*Story of Ah Q*, p. xvii)

Conversion to literature, cont.

- 1907: attempt to launch new literary magazine, *New Life*
- 1908: "On the power of Mara poetry"; power of literary genius to awaken the nation
- 1909: Return to China; Lu Xun accepts a number of teaching posts in Zhejiang for the next 16 years
- Disillusionment with Republic and his own role as 'physician' of the Chinese soul

May 4th Movement (1919)

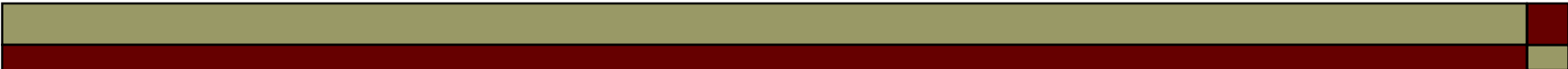
- Anti-imperialist demonstrations on 4th May 19
- New Youth (*Qing qingnian*) flagship magazine (founded 1916) by Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) and Hu Shi (1891-1962)
- “Science and Democracy”:
“We must be thoroughly aware of the incompatibility between Confucianism and the new belief, the new society, and the new state.”
(Chen Duxiu) → New Culture Movement



May 9th at Qinghua University



1919年5月9日，清华大学举行国耻纪念大会，会后，学生在操场焚烧日货。



Reform of Literary Style

“Down with the ornate, obsequious literature of the aristocrats – up with the plain expressive literature of the people Down with the stale, ostentatious literature of the classics; up with the fresh, sincere literature of realism! Down with the pedantic, obscure literature of the recluse; up with the clear, popular literature of society!”
(Chen Duxiu)



Changing Attitudes Toward Literature

Lu Xun 鲁迅 and the romantic view of literature as a vehicle
to disturb society out of its complacency

Lu Xun, “On the Power of Mara Poetry” (摩罗诗力说, 1908)

“Now survey China: where are the warriors of the spirit? Is there a genuine voice to lead us to goodness, beauty, and vigor? Is there a warm voice to deliver us from this barren winter? Barren homeland, without a Jeremiah to compose a final lamentation as a legacy to the world. Unborn perhaps, or murdered by the public, or both--thus China has become desolate . . . ” (in Denton 1996: 109)

Realist fiction: 25 Stories

- *Diary of a Madman* (1917); Lu Xun's first work of vernacular fiction; Gogol wrote story of the same name
- *Outcry* (*Na han* 呐喊, 1922, *Call to Arms*)
- *Hesitation* (*Pang huang* 彷徨, 1925, *Wandering*)
- *Old Stories Retold* (*Gu shi xin bian* 故事新编, 1935)
- Fiction as cultural medicine; “my subjects were often drawn from the unfortunates of this sick society” (Lu Xun, 1933)
- *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中国小说史略 (*Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, 1925)

Realist fiction

- ❑ Representation of national emergency
- ❑ Irony, parody, symbolic realism, melancholy; *The Real Story of Ah-Q*
- ❑ ‘crowd’: symbol of collective moral bankruptcy
- ❑ Paradox: realism’s aura of objectivity, the intellectual writer’s position of superiority, of participation in an elite literary tradition collide with sympathetic description of the suffering masses
- Lu Xun exposes this tension and the limitations of the realist manifesto;
- enlightenment becomes a paradox

The Real Story of Ah-Q

- Narrator describes idiocies of main protagonist, exposes all the weaknesses of the Chinese masses; at the end of the story, the narrator and reader are drawn into the crowd and become participants in the execution of Ah-Q → **‘literary voyeurism’; ‘ethics of reading and writing’**

Lu Xun and Marxism

- ❑ Lu Xun witnessed White Terror (1927) and was appalled by it
- ❑ Europeanized vernacular of the New Culture Movement came under critique
- ❑ Lu Xun criticizes Marxist converts as “posturing in revolutionary coffee houses” (Lovell, p. xxviii)

“During a great revolution, literature disappears and there is silence for ... all are so busy making revolution that there is no time to talk of literature... Some writers today use the common people ... and this has also been called people’s literature when actually it is nothing of the sort, for the people have not yet opened their mouths.” (*The Real Story of Ah-Q*, p. xxviii)

→ Divergent paths of literature and politics; Lu Xun ‘converts’ to Marxism in the 1930s

Lu Xun in the PRC

- ❑ Mao's verdict on Lu Xun: "Lu Xun was an absolute realist, always uncompromising, always determined ... an outstanding writer ... and a tough, excellent vanguard in the revolutionary ranks." (*The Real Story of Ah-Q*, p. xxxiii)
- ❑ "Head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children."
(Lu Xun, 1920)
- ❑ Lu Xun industry

Lu Xun in PRC

- ❑ Lu Xun controversial
- ❑ Mao remarked that he “either would have gone silent, or gone to prison”
- ❑ Individualistic pessimism rejected after 1949
- ❑ 2007: Lu Xun texts excised from textbooks (esp. 1926 essay on a female student who had been killed by government forces in peaceful demonstration)
- ❑ Zhu Wen (contemp. Writer) has called the Lu Xun Prize a “dressed-up pile of shit”
- ❑ Patriotism/nationalism coupled with disgust of own tradition