

# **Zhang Wentian and The Academy of Marxism and Leninism**

**During the pre-Rectification Period, 1938-1941**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis on Zhang Wentian (1900-1976) and the Academy of Marxism and Leninism (1938-1941) in pre-Rectification Yan'an has two primary objectives. First, contrary to previous studies of Yan'an, which engaged in Mao's rise to power, this study examines the period from the perspective of another senior Party leader Zhang Wentian. This study seeks to explore Zhang's background, his political position at the Party, his relationship with Mao, and the ideological differences and compatibilities between him and Mao. It argues that Zhang was among Mao's supporters and that he shared with him many ideas. In spite of their collaboration, Zhang and Mao had some major ideological disagreements regarding the sinification of Marxism and Party history. Through the analysis of Zhang Wentian, this thesis is intended to help "rescue" CCP history from the Maoist narrative.

Second, this thesis explores diversity in pre-Rectification Yan'an through the study of the Academy of Marxism and Leninism where Zhang Wentian served as the principal. The examination of the Academy shows that the lecturers there held contending positions regarding the sinification of Marxism and the periodization of Chinese history, and that Party leaders of different political factions were able to lecture at the Academy. Before Mao's rise to supreme power in late 1941, Zhang, as the principal of the Academy, had the authority to shape the curriculum according to his approach to Marxism. In late 1941, however, with political power centralized in the hands of Mao, the Academy was transformed into the Central Research Institute, and its members were expected to conduct research according to Mao's approach. Consequently, diversity at the Academy disappeared with Zhang's diminished status.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study seeks to find a way to ‘rescue’ the history of the Chinese Community Party (CCP), particularly during the Yan’an Period (1937-1946), from the ‘Maoist’ narrative. It will attempt to look at the period from the perspective of another senior CCP leader other than Mao in pre-Rectification Yan’an: Zhang Wentian. The other purpose of this study is to examine pre-Rectification Yan’an, prior to Mao’s ascendance to the position of the Party’s supreme leader. During that period, Zhang and other leaders also tried to shape the communist movement in China according to their ideas. The Academy of Marxism and Leninism, which Zhang headed, and where divergent views with respect to the application of Marxism into China co-existed, is a case in this point.

Scholars who wrote about Yan’an mainly engaged with two central questions. Those who wrote before Mao’s death were preoccupied with the question of which policies in Yan’an allowed the CCP to grow and eventually win the Civil War. Those who wrote after the Cultural Revolution were primarily interested in the reasons for Mao’s rise to the status of the supreme leader of the CCP. The study of the Rectification (1942-1944) was usually their focus, as in this Campaign Mao was able to finally establish himself as the ultimate leader of the CCP.

Mark Selden (1971) singles out the *Yan’an Way* as the main reason for the CCP’s success. Selden applies Franz Schurmann’s ideas from *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* in order to explain Yan’an, arguing that the Yan’an period was about “rejecting domination by an administrative or technical elite operating through a centralized

bureaucracy, it emphasized popular participation, decentralization and community power” (Selden 1971, 210). According to Selden, this process of curbing the power of the elite was accomplished through “organizational and educational methods” rather than violent ones (Selden 1971, 190).

In *Yen'an's Shadow* [*Yan'an de Yingyin*] (1990), Chen Yongfa dismisses Selden's argument that Mao attained power primarily through peaceful means and describes Selden's work as a reflection of young students' romanticism. In his study of the Rectification and Rescue campaigns of 1942 to 1944, Chen argues that Mao supported Kang Sheng's inquisitional methods during the Rescue Campaign, and that these methods allowed Mao to attain ultimate power (Chen 1990, 2-3).

In addition to Selden and Chen, in *The Emergence of Maoism* (1980), Raymond Wylie argues that Mao gained his legitimacy through establishing himself as the Party's chief theoretician; Mao presented himself as the one who was able to 'sinify' Marxism, translating this doctrine to suit China's particularities. In this manner, Mao successfully defeated the group of “returned students” from the Soviet Union, whom he labeled as dogmatic Marxists. According to Wylie, one of the Party's leading intellectuals, Chen Boda, was Mao's main assistant in forging Mao's doctrine of communism, and the making of Mao's personality cult (Wylie 1980, 7, 66, 100, 269).

In 1993, many internal sources were translated by Tony Saich in his book *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*, which covers most of the history of the CCP

from its establishment in 1921 till the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In the introduction, Saich focuses on Mao's rise to power and the Rectification campaign. He points out that the documents from that period "reveal what a capable politician Mao was", successfully outmaneuvering his political rivals (Saich 1993a, xix). With respect to the Rectification, Saich argues that this campaign allowed Mao to establish his ideas as the Party's orthodoxy, while suppressing alternative discourses (Saich 1993a, xix-xxii).

In 1994, Saich combined his impeccable skills as a historian of the CCP with Apter's mastery of both modern and postmodern theories. The outcome of this cooperation, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (1994), is a book that furnishes us with an argument that is similar to that of Wylie, yet much more detailed and sophisticated. Apter and Saich attribute Mao's success to his ability to forge a unitary, logocentric discourse for the communist Party (Apter and Saich 1994, 4-5). In this logocentric cultural system, Yan'an was like a spectacle, a revolutionary simulacrum, and a "New Jerusalem", in which Mao was a revolutionary cosmocrat. This revolutionary discourse provided Mao with a symbolic capital through which he could establish his authority over the Party elite (Apter and Saich 1994, 7). Apter and Saich also view Yan'an as the "republic of learning", where the communists established many educational institutions to propagate Mao's works, which created an "exegetical bonding" of loyalty to Mao (Apter and Saich 1994, 263-264).

Unlike previous authors who discussed the importance of ideology and discourse in Mao's ascendance, in *How Did the Sun Rise over Yan'an? A History of the Rectification*

*Movement* [*Hong taiyang shi zenme shengqide? Yan'an zhangfeng yundong de lai long qu mai*] (2000), Gao Hua, a Mainland scholar, shows how Mao's political moves allowed him to become the supreme leader of the CCP. In this book, which is inspired by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Gao Hua, as an omniscient storyteller, provides an elaborate description of Mao's repertoire of political tricks and maneuvers that enabled him to defeat his rivals.

In a more recent book, *Marxist Philosophy in China: From Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong, 1923-1945* (2005), which revisits the emergence of Mao Zedong Thought, Nick Knight explores the Marxist philosophy as developed by Qu Qiubai, Li Da and Ai Siqi before the endorsement of Mao Zedong Thought as China's official version of Marxism in 1945. With respect to Yan'an, the author focuses on the collaboration between Mao and the philosopher, Ai Siqi, in the project of sinifying the Stalinist orthodoxy: the New Philosophy. Unlike prior studies, this book is sympathetic to Mao. Rather than elaborating on the means that allowed Mao to defeat his political rivals, this book furnishes us with a thorough analysis of the intellectual sources of Mao Zedong Thought, arguing that Mao's engagement in philosophy did not only emanate from political ambition, but also from a genuine intellectual interest. This book is important because it presents a fresh perspective on the Yan'an period, yet, like prior studies, it is Mao-centred.

Unlike previous studies, which primarily focused on Mao's rise and his vision of Chinese communism, this thesis examines the Yan'an period from the perspective of Zhang

Wentian. It seeks to explore the following questions: what was Zhang's vision of Marxism in China; what was the difference between his vision and that of Mao Zedong; and, how did Zhang implement his vision as the principal of the Academy of Marxism and Leninism.

Actually, Zhang's vision of Marxism shares much in common with Mao during the pre-Rectification Yan'an. Zhang agreed with Mao on many issues, and even supported Mao's leadership of the Party. Zhang sided with Mao on the issue of the United Front strategy in 1937 and 1938. Zhang was also aware of the need to sinify Marxism in order to make it accessible to the new Party cadres, as well as other Chinese audiences. The difference is that Zhang's approach to sinification was more conservative than that of Mao. While Mao emphasized China's "national form", Zhang sought to assert the primary position of foreign culture as well as Marxist doctrine in the "new Chinese culture" that the communists were trying to establish. Zhang supported Mao's leadership on the one hand; on the other hand, he was cautious to preserve a collective form of leadership so that he could maintain his own power within the Party. His disapproval of the emergence of Mao's personality cult created a serious tension between the two leaders on the eve of the Rectification Campaign.

The Academy of Marxism and Leninism, the highest institute of learning in Yan'an, reflected Zhang's conservative view of Marxism in relation to China's communism. It focused on the study of Marxist theory and classic texts, as well as the history of the Soviet Union and foreign culture. The program of studies also included lectures on

politics and Party work by leaders of the CCP. In the Academy, Zhang aspired to create an elite that was in his own image: both proficient in Marxist classics, but also in practical affairs and the conditions in China.

Apter and Saich considered Zhang Wentian, along with Ai Siqu, Kang Sheng and Chen Boda, as Mao's main assistants in the creation of a Maoist discourse (Apter and Saich 1994, 89). At that time, Zhang, as the head of the Department of the Cadre Education in Yan'an, was responsible for the design of the curriculum in the Party schools in Yan'an. The educational system created in Yan'an, as described by Wylie, "gave Mao the means to exercise a degree of ideological control over the Party that had never been possible before. It was this educational system that was to serve as the incubator for Mao's Rectification Movement" (Wylie 1980, 60). It was also argued by Apter and Saich that the educational institutions: "were the chief instruments through which Mao's discourse was transmitted, communicated, and taught" (Apter and Saich 1994, 224). This thesis does not attempt to refute these statements. Rather, it argues that the initial goals of Zhang were not necessarily to elevate Mao or forge the exegetical bonding between Mao and the students. Zhang interpreted Marxism in ways that did not always coincide with Mao's interpretation. Nonetheless, the educational infrastructure that Zhang established eventually facilitated the consolidation of Mao's power during the Rectification.

By studying the Academy, this thesis also shows that in the pre-Rectification period there was a divergence of views among the CCP elite with respect to the application of Marxist doctrine to China. Some of the lecturers at the Academy were Mao's close associates,

who promoted Mao and participated in the project of sinifying Marxism. Yet, others preferred to focus on classical Marxist texts, and their views were closer to those of Zhang Wentian. In *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*, Saich points out that pre-Rectification Yan'an was marked by pluralism, and the Party did not have a unitary discourse (Saich 1995, ixii). Apter and Saich also argue that before 1942 "Yan'an had a much more experimental atmosphere. There was greater freedom to try out new approaches (Apter and Saich 1994, 144)." This study of the Academy in pre-Rectification Yan'an expands on this theme to argue that there was a divergence of views among the lecturers at the Academy with respect to the issue of how to apply Marxism to China.

The existence of divergent views was a consequence of the lack of an authoritative, paramount Party leader. As this study shows, it was not until late 1941 when Mao managed to establish his authority over the Party's elite that he was able to impose his own ideas on the Academy. In late 1941, the Academy was renamed the Central Research Institute (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan*). Rather than study Marxist theory, the Central Research Institute was dedicated to the research of China's own situation. The agenda of the Institute was set in accordance with Mao's principle of "deriving truth from facts" and his vision of establishing a "new Chinese culture" based on China's 'national form'.

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 identifies primary and secondary sources for the thesis, delineating their political point of views as well as their limitations and 'biases'. Focusing on Zhang Wentian, chapter 2 provides information on Zhang's background and experience that helped shape his ideas, and also explains Zhang's

position within the Party and the overall institutional structure in Yan'an. Then, it moves to analyze Zhang's ideas, comparing them with those of Mao Zedong. To understand the divergent views inside the Academy, chapter 3 examines the backgrounds and thoughts of the main figures at the Academy with respect to the application of Marxism to China. Through the description of the everyday life at the Academy, this chapter explains how Zhang endeavored to realize his own approach to Marxism at the Academy and the political constraints for his aspiration. To conclude, chapter 4 summarizes some institutional changes since the conversion of the Academy to the Central Research Institute, which reflected Zhang's defeat and Mao's rise.

## Chapter 2: Sources

My primary sources from the Yan'an period and the majority of my secondary sources were generated by CCP members. As for the primary sources, some were written by Zhang and other members of the Academy. My secondary sources are mostly memoirs by former members of the Academy as well as a biographical account which follows the CCP's official line. The nature of the sources poses several challenges for those who study this period.

The articles I employ as primary sources were published in pre-Rectification Yan'an periodicals. The authors are Zhang Wentian, Mao Zedong and other intellectuals from the Academy. The periodicals which I primarily cite are *Jiefang* [Liberation] and *Zhongguo wenhua* [China Culture]. The main challenge in using these sources was to tease out Zhang's views and compare them with those of Mao. In two essays published in *Zhongguo wenhua* in 1940 discussing the essence of the 'new Chinese culture' that the CCP was trying to create, both leaders used very similar concepts, such as the sinification of Marxism, and a 'democratic', mass-based Chinese new culture. The differences between their positions might seem negligible. Only after reading Timothy Cheek and David Holm's discussions on "national", "new" and "old" forms (Cheek 1984; Holm 1991), I realized that there must be some differences that are significant in the fact that Mao uses the term "national form", whereas Zhang refers to "foreign forms".

My secondary Chinese sources were also challenging to analyze. These are collections of reminiscences published during the 1980s and early 1990s by former lecturers and

graduates from the Academy or later the Institute. The main collections are the *Yan'an zhongyang yanjiuyuan huiyilu* [Reminiscences of Yan'an Central Research Institute] (Wen, 1984), and the *Yan'an malie xueyuan huiyi* [Reminiscences of Yan'an's Academy of Marxism and Leninism] (Wu, 1991). Another source that I frequently cite is *Zhang Wentian zhuan* [Biography of Zhang Wentian] (Cheng, 1993). All of these sources follow the Party's official narrative regarding Yan'an. Those who wrote the reminiscences are old Party veterans, who were among the most influential people at the Party during the 1980s and early 1990s but who were in rather precarious positions. The Party's ideology was in a crisis, and leaders from younger generations started to implement economic and political reforms that would compromise the ideology for which the old generations had fought throughout their lives. In their memoirs, these cadres tried to resuscitate 'Yan'an spirit' in order to restore their symbolic power within the Party and the state. They also romanticized the revolutionary passion during Yan'an period, which was in stark contrast to the ideological disillusion in the 1980s and 1990s. The narrative of the memoirs was shaped by the authors' traumatic experiences of the Cultural Revolution. They nostalgically looked back at Yan'an period. Contrary to the violence and bitter factionalism of the last decade of Mao's reign, Yan'an was idealized as a period of harmony among the Party's elite with vibrant intra-Party democracy.

Zhang Wentian was remembered favorably as an effective and righteous leader, as well as one of the chief advocates of intra-Party democracy. In the Party's Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978, the successors of Mao approved of Zhang's role in pre-Rectification Yan'an, and eulogized him for his contribution to

propaganda and cadre education (Wu 1991, 34; Cheng 1993, 782). They also praised him for supporting Mao's leadership throughout the Yan'an period and for promoting intra-Party democracy. According to the sources used for this thesis, Zhang's views at the Academy were considered to be consistent with those of Mao. Zhang was remembered for his adherence to Party democracy not necessarily because of his role in Yan'an, but primarily because, in 1959, in Lushan, along with Peng Dehuai, he was among the few leaders who dared to criticize Mao for the excesses of the Great Leap Forward.

To complement the limitations of these secondary sources, this thesis also looks at the works of the Taiwan scholar, Chen Yungfa (1990), and the Mainland historian, Gao Hua (2000). While demystifying the official narrative that portrays Yan'an period as harmonious and democratic, their works show that there were significant frictions and tensions between Mao and Zhang. Even though they worked together, Mao was not entirely satisfied with Zhang's work at the Academy. Another essay by Zeng Yanxiu (1985), one of Zhang's assistants at the Academy, alludes to the tensions between Zhang and Mao. This essay was included in *Huiyi Zhang Wentian* [Remembering Zhang Wentian], with most of its collection following the official Party rhetoric. Zeng, however, instead of idealizing the Yan'an period, highlighted the difficulties and frustrations that Zhang faced at the Academy when collaborating with Mao. With respect to the issue of intra-Party democracy, this thesis shows that during the pre-Rectification Yan'an period, specifically before the Academy was converted to the Central Research Institute, the Party was far more democratic than in the Rectification period; Zhang, indeed, contributed significantly to this political environment. However, it is important to note

that “democracy” here refers to one in a Leninist, Bolshevik style, in which political debates within the party are encouraged merely for the purpose of eventually achieving ideological unity rather than pluralism.

In summary, it is challenging to reconstruct a narrative from Zhang Wentian’s perspective by relying on both the primary and secondary sources for the following reasons. First, in the primary sources, where Mao and Zhang agree on many issues and employ similar concepts, the differences between them appear to be minor. The authors of the secondary sources make deliberate efforts to dismiss the existence of any divergent opinions or tensions between Mao and Zhang. This essay provides an analysis of pre-Rectification Yan’an period from Zhang’s perspective, and the divergence between his view and that of Mao.

## **Chapter 3: Differences and Similarities between Zhang's and Mao's Approaches of Chinese Marxism**

### **3.1 Zhang Wentian's Background**

An examination of Zhang Wentian's background is important for our understanding of why his ideas and academy policies diverged from those of Mao. Zhang's international background profoundly shaped his conservative version of sinification. He had rich experience as a Party leader, which taught him that theory should be applicable to China's real problems and accessible to the masses. A significant part of Zhang's political life was spent in bitter factional struggles, which made it desirable for him to strive for a leadership based on consensus.

Few leaders in the communist Party had international background as rich as Zhang Wentian. Born in 1900 in Jiangsu province, Zhang spent a few months in Japan studying Japanese language in 1920, before he moved to San Francisco where he lived from 1922 to 1924 (Kampen 2000, 22-23). From 1925-1927, Zhang studied at Sun Yatsen University in Moscow, which was established by the Soviet government for intense training of leading cadres from both the CCP and the *Guomindang* (Cheng 1993, 95; Sheng 1971, 61). Courses offered there included Russian language, history (notably of the Soviet, Chinese and Western revolutions), philosophy, political economy, economic geography, Leninism and military science (Sheng 1971, 61-64). As a member of the Translation Bureau there, Zhang took part in the translation of Marxist classics from Russian to Chinese (Sheng 1971, 56-58; Cheng 1993, 96; Hu 1980b, 266).

Later in 1928, Zhang was enrolled in the Red Professors' Institute, which was the highest academic institution in the Soviet Union (Cheng 1993, 103; Fox 1997, 133). Trained in Chinese history in the Red Professors' Institute, he also lectured at Sun Yatsen University in Moscow while working on the translation of *The Civil War in France* by Karl Marx. He was also a fellow researcher at the Research Institute for Chinese Issues, which was a supplementary institution of Sun Yatsen University (Cheng 1993, 104-105; Sheng 1971, 53-54). Such international training gave Zhang unique insight to Marxist classics, which later was reflected in the curriculum at the Academy in Yan'an.

After he received his education in the Soviet Union, Zhang served as a senior CCP leader between 1931 and 1935. In early 1931, he returned to Shanghai and headed the Party's Department of Propaganda. Along with Wang Ming, Bo Gu and Zhou Enlai, he was one of the most senior Party leaders (Cheng 1993, 131). In 1933, he moved to the Chinese Soviet Republic whose center was located in Ruijin, Jiangxi and served as a member of the Political Bureau. After his return from the Soviet Union, Zhang's closest allies were Wang Ming and Bo Gu. However, at the Zunyi Conference of January 1935, Zhang sided with Mao against Bo Gu and was appointed to the position of the Party's chief administrative officer (Wang 2002b, 413-415).

Between 1925 and 1935, as both a student and Party leader, Zhang went through bitter internecine struggles. While he was studying at Sun Yatsen University in 1925 and 1926, the CCP branch in Moscow kept strict control of the Chinese students. As a member of the branch, Zhang was observant of the Party regulations until the summer of 1926 when

he allied with other students to revolt against the branch (Sheng 1971, 111-112; Cheng 1993, 97-98). He joined those who denounced the supporters of Trotsky, who was expelled by Stalin from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in late 1927 (Sheng 1971, 206-209; Cheng 1993, 102). In 1930, Zhang, along with Wang Ming and Bo Gu, attacked the CCP leader Li Lisan for his militancy and labeled him as making leftist errors (Cheng 1993, 110-113; Sheng 1971, 228-238). In 1933 and 1934, Zhang criticized Mao's recommendation to abolish the CCP's previous classification of many households in Jiangxi as landlord households, which, according to Zhang, was rightist opportunism (Gao 2000, 57-58). From this we can clearly see that prior to Yan'an, Zhang had a rich experience of fierce political struggles. In Yan'an, however, Zhang acted differently, refraining from making public criticism of other political rivals.

One explanation for his changed approach to politics might be that he considered political struggles as undermining Party unity. According to Wu Liangping and Zeng Yanxiu, Zhang would try to make sure that all different opinions were expressed whenever he presided over Party meetings and that the central Party made decisions based on consensus<sup>1</sup> (Zeng 1985, 98-99; Wu 1992, 376). With Zhang as one of the most senior leaders, the pre-Rectification Yan'an period was marked by cooperation among the leaders with little open factional struggles. It was not until Mao came into power that Zhang's authority was undermined and fierce political struggles resurged.

### **3.2 Zhang's Political Activities in the Party in pre-Rectification Yan'an Period**

Zhang's policies of promoting intra-Party democracy and collective leadership were a consequence not only of his bitter past experience, but also of political necessity. During the pre-Rectification period, there lacked a paramount leader within the CCP that had full authority over the Party. In order to run the Party properly, several senior leaders shared power together and sometimes had to compromise with each other to arrive at consensus.

After Zunyi Conference in January 1935, Zhang and Mao Zedong shared the Party's leadership; Zhang being the Party's chief administrative officer handling the Party's daily affairs, and Mao in charge of military affairs (Kampen 2000, 75-76; Teiwes and Sun 1995, 341; Gao 2000, 90-91). While Zhang was officially the highest-ranked Party leader before the Rectification, it was Mao that was the most dominant person in the Party (Teiwes and Sun 1995; Cheng 1993, 427-428). Yet, in spite of his power, Mao had to rely on Zhang's support to constrain other political rivals. According to Teiwes and Cheng Zhongyuan, who was Zhang's biographer, Mao's main incentive to align with Zhang was that Zhang "was highly disinterested in ultimate power" (Cheng 1993, 427-428; Teiwes and Sun 1995, 341-342). On the part of Zhang, as argued by Gao Hua, he collaborated with Mao because of his concern about the Party's future. The weakness in Zhang's personality was another factor that led to his alliance with Mao, according to Gao. However, in spite of his personality, Zhang was resolved to remain at his leadership position once he achieved it (Gao 2000, 90-91). The evidence of collaboration between Zhang and Mao, which is presented throughout this essay, shows that Zhang assisted Mao to attain power without the intention of challenging Mao's authority.

Nevertheless, rather than being Mao's devoted loyalist, Zhang was able to challenge some of Mao's initiatives during the pre-Rectification period. In 1937, Mao supported Liu Shaoqi's criticism of the performance of the Party leadership between 1927 and 1937 as leftist errors. As Zhang was among the leadership back then, he refuted Liu's criticism. Because of Zhang's objection, Mao had to withdraw his support of Liu, since he needed Zhang as his ally (Gao 2000, 95-96; Teiwes and Sun 1995, 341; Kampen 2000, 100-103). There was another incident in which Zhang succeeded in challenging Mao, as recorded by Gao Hua. In 1940, Mao was to carry out a cadre inspection campaign (*shencha*) among young intellectuals in Yan'an, in which the number of "secret agents" had been decided even before the campaign started. However, he was unable to do that because both Zhang and Chen Yun, the head of the Department of Organization, who advocated a liberal policy toward the intellectuals, opposed Mao's proposed campaign (Gao 2000, 459).

In spite of the disagreements between Mao and Zhang, throughout most of the pre-Rectification period, Mao allied with Zhang to consolidate his leadership position. In Zunyi Conference, Mao and Zhang worked together to remove from power Bo Gu and Li De<sup>2</sup>, who was the Comintern representative. Later, when Zhang Guotao challenged Mao's authority, Zhang assisted Mao in denouncing Zhang Guotao's actions as illegitimate (Apter and Saich 1994, 42; Wu 1991, 102). In July 1937, the Anti-Japanese War broke out and Zhang supported Mao's position to limit alliance with the *Guomindang*. Such a stance was in opposition to that of Wang Ming, Bo Gu, and Zhou

Enlai who advocated close military and political cooperation with the *Guomindang* (Teiwes and Sun 1995, 344). Since December 1937, Mao and Zhang had been in the Party's Secretariat, which also included Wang Ming, Chen Yun and Kang Sheng who at that time were not allied with Mao (Teiwes and Sun 1995, 342-344; Kampen 2000, 90). In early 1939 when Mao was nominated by the Comintern to be the CCP leader, the management of the Party's regular affairs was gradually transferred from Zhang to Mao (Feng and Li 2000, 25-26). Mao was not in complete control of the Party's leadership, though. Members of the Party's Secretariat remained the same until the Rectification, which kept Mao's power in check (Teiwes and Sun 1995, 342-344; Kampen 2000, 90). Moreover, back then there were sixteen members in the Central Party's Political Bureau established in January 1941, and not all of them were Mao loyalists (Wang 1995, 426, 482, 549). Thus, Mao had to rely on Zhang to maintain power, which made Zhang an important figure in Yan'an period.

During this period, Zhang was in charge of the Party's propaganda and cadre education, thus had considerable influence in the realm of ideology. As the head of the Department of Propaganda and the Department of Cadre Education, he was responsible for the design of teaching materials and the appointment of personnel in the thirty-one cadre schools established in Yan'an during this period (Wang 1992, 207-208; Apter and Saich 1994, 237-242, 335-336). As the head of the Academy of Marxism and Leninism, where the Party's young intelligentsia was educated, Zhang had the power to shape the Party's understanding of Marxism.

Throughout the pre-Rectification period, Zhang had his own small “kingdom” in Lanjiaping at the outskirts of Yan’an, where the Party’s Secretariat, the Department of Propaganda, and the Academy were located (Cheng 1993, 432, 444). In May 1940, Zhang and the Secretariat moved to Yangjialing, where Mao lived, in order to work closely with him (Cheng 1993, 428; Wu 1985, 126).

As the chief editor of the theoretical journals *Jiefang* [*Liberation*] and *Gongchan dangren* [*The Communist*] (Wang 1995, 481-484), Zhang had significant influence over the Party’s ideology, advocating a conservative application of Marxism to China. Despite ideological differences, Zhang’s periodicals promoted Mao as the Party’s head. But, the articles in these periodicals did not always represent Zhang’s position; sometimes various writers presented conflicting views, reflecting the ideological divergence in pre-Rectification Yan’an period.

Since Zhang was the editor of *Jiefang* (Cheng 1993, 428), a public CCP periodical of political theory with the official objectives to “establish national peace, strive for democratic rights, and conduct a war against Japan” (Cao 2001, 13), an examination of this periodical might attest to a collaboration between Zhang and Mao. Twenty-four essays by Zhang were published in *Jiefang*, which also included Mao Zedong’s famous essays *On Protracted War*, *Discussing a New Stage*, and *On New Democracy* (Cao 2001, 13). In one of his *Jiefang* editorials in 1940, Zhang made it clear that one of the objectives for the periodical was to “frequently publish great essays by the people’s leader – Mao Zedong who enjoys worldwide respect” (Cao 2001, 13). But, this was pointed out only as

the fifth objective of the periodical. The fourth one was to introduce the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. In addition, even though the editorial highly recommended Mao Zedong, it also mentioned the importance of including articles by other senior leaders such as Wang Ming, Bo Gu and Zhou Enlai, who were not always Mao's staunchest supporters (*Jiefang* 1940, 2). Mao publicly praised the work of the periodical. Yet, in spite of this mutual recognition between Mao and Zhang in *Jiefang*, there was some tension between them. As shown in the following sections, I argue that Zhang disagreed with some of Mao's suggestions in his essay *On New Democracy*, as expressed in his essay *The New Culture Movement Since the Anti-Japanese War and its Future Tasks* published in *Jiefang* (Cao 2001, 13). In addition, many essays that promoted a more classic-based version of Marxism were included in *Jiefang* by Zhang, which probably had upset Mao (Cao 2001, 221). Very likely, Zhang was offended by Mao's critical view of some senior Party leaders' performance from 1931 to 1935. Mao's criticism could be found in the first issue of *Gongchandangren* [*The Communist*] in October 1939 (Mao and Schram 1992c, 252), the periodical which was intended to disseminate the directives from the Party center (Cao 2001, 14).

In addition to his editorial work, he was also dedicated to disseminating China's recent history in official Party narrative among Party cadres. In 1937, Zhang Wentian edited the textbook *Zhongguo xiandai geming yundong shi* [*The History of China's Modern Revolutions*] on modern history of China for Party cadres, as well as laypersons. In order to compile this book, Zhang established a "Society for the Study of the History of Chinese Revolution", whose members included Liu Yalou, Zhang Aiping, Yang Lanshi

and Mo Wenhua. Zhu De also participated in some of its activities. Each member of the Society contributed a chapter to be edited by Zhang (Cheng 1993, 449-450). Written in a simple and accessible language, the edited book became the standard textbook for the study of modern Chinese history in schools in Yan'an and circulated elsewhere as well.

*Zhongguo xiandai geming yundong shi* presents China's modern history in the official CCP narrative. For example, the Taiping Rebellion from 1851 to 1864 was portrayed as the beginning of China's revolutionary history. In the book, this peasant revolt was perceived as a consequence of the influence of colonialism and capitalism, which destabilized China's feudal system (Zhang 1939, 3-5). The book also discussed other political movements that resulted from the disintegration of the feudal order. It suggested that at present the imperialist Japan was the main enemy, the resistance of which required cooperation with the *Guomindang*. In this way, Zhang managed to justify the alliance of the CCP with the *Guomindang* in the Anti-Japanese War (Zhang 1939, 277).

In the book, Zhang shared similar views with Mao Zedong. For example, like Mao, Zhang emphasized that the CCP should rely not only on the workers but also peasants and petit bourgeoisie (Zhang 1939, 143-275). In 1927, Jiang Jieshi launched an unexpected attack to eliminate CCP members, most of who drew support from workers. Both Zhang and Mao believed that the CCP should learn from this attack the lesson that they should also ally with people from other classes (Zhang 1939, 143-275). Regarding military strategies, Zhang's view was close to that of Mao. According to Zhang, China was divided among warlords and Japanese imperialists; therefore, he suggested that the

CCP should take over territories where the power of those warlords and imperialists was absent and establish guerrilla bases there. According to one scholar, Zhang's insight could be traced in Mao's essay *On the Problem of War and Strategy* (Li 2000, 401). Besides, Zhang tried to avoid possible conflicts with Mao regarding Party history. While describing China's history up to 1927, the book Zhang edited did not touch on the history from 1927 to 1937 on the ground that Zhang and Mao had disagreement regarding the performance of senior leaders. By not discussing this issue, Zhang refrained from having a conflict with Mao.

The above analysis of Zhang Wentian's political activities shows that Zhang was one of the most influential politicians in pre-Rectification Yan'an period. While occupying several important positions, Zhang was able to disseminate Marxist doctrine and make Chinese history in the official Party narrative readily available to the Party members. Despite some ideological disagreements with Mao, Zhang helped Mao to establish his status as the Party's highest leader.

### **3.3 A Comparison between Zhang Wentian and Mao Zedong**

Cold War historiography tends to portray the history of the CCP between 1931 to 1945 as an ideological two-line struggle between Mao Zedong and the "returned students", or "28 Bolsheviks", most notably Wang Ming, Bo Gu and Zhang Wentian (Sheng 1971; Wylie 1980). According to this historiography there was a serious ideological dissention between these two groups regarding the sinification of Marxism: while the Maoist faction argued that in this process the original body of Marxist doctrine would be "creatively

developed”, the returned students contended that “existing Marxist doctrine would be distorted or even destroyed” (Wylie 1980, 95). Post Cold-War scholarship, such as Teiwes and Sun (1995), or Kampen (2000), presents us with a more complicated picture, arguing that the group of ‘returned students’ from the Soviet Union was not homogenous, with some of them, like Zhang Wentian and Wang Jiaxiang, supporting Mao’s leadership of the Party, while others such as Wang Ming and Bo Gu did not. Such a view that Zhang supported Mao’s leadership was also shared by Gao Hua (2000), who nevertheless further pointed out that like most of the “returned students”, Zhang was also reluctant to accept Mao’s vision of sinifying the Marxist doctrine.

The comparison between pre-Rectification writings of Mao and Zhang Wentian reveals that their ideas with respect to the development of the communist movement in China were not necessarily antagonistic. In 1937 and late 1938, the circumstances of the Anti-Japanese War, and the need to recruit the masses of Chinese people to the communist cause made both leaders change their positions, adjusting their ideological convictions to the new situations. In 1937, both leaders held similar positions with respect to the Party policy in the Anti-Japanese war, supporting a limited cooperation with the *Guomindang* in the United Front against Japan. In 1938, both realized that in order to expand the CCP’s base of popular support, the CCP must introduce a more sinified version of Marxism. In 1940, Zhang and Mao declared that in order to fight against the Japanese, the CCP must create a ‘new culture’ that would be both mass-based and scientific.

This section also compares Mao's famous essay *On New Democracy* and Zhang's *Kangzhan yilai zhonghua minzu de xin wenhua yundong yu jinhou renwu* [*The New Culture Movement Since the Anti-Japanese War and its Future Tasks*], both of which were delivered initially as public speeches and then published in *Zhongguo wenhua* respectively in February and April 1940 (Cao 2001, 14). These two essays reveal many points of agreement between them. The difference between them, however, is that Mao's departure from orthodox Marxism had been more radical than that of Zhang.

With respect to the United Front, both Mao and Zhang shared very similar perspective. Both of them thought that even though the CCP should cooperate with the *Guomindang* in the struggle against the Japanese, they should maintain their organizational and military independence. They opposed Wang Ming, Zhou Enlai and Bo Gu who advocated closer cooperation with the *Guomindang* (Teiwes and Sun 1995, 343-344; Kampen 2000, 88-91; Apter and Saich 1994, 57-58). Both Zhang and Mao wrote about the CCP's war strategies. In Sept 1937, Zhang Wentian wrote *Lun kangri minzu geming zhanzheng de tejiu xing* [*On the Protracted Nature of the National Revolutionary Anti-Japanese War*]. In May 1938, Mao delivered his famous speech *On Protracted War*. A comparison between the two essays shows some similarities. Like Zhang, Mao used the term "protracted war" to describe the nature of the Anti-Japanese War. Zhang explained that this war was going to be long-lasting because even though Japan was stronger than China, China had the advantage of vast population as well as international support. To Japan's detriment, Zhang pointed out that the Chinese were united in their resistance, whereas in Japan the war had a rather narrow basis of support (Zhang 1990, 355). In his speech *On*

*Protracted War*, Mao provided an almost identical argument (Mao and Schram 1992b, 335). It is suspected that Zhang's essay had significant influence on Mao's famous speech (Cao 2001, 13).

In 1938, prior and during to the CCP's Sixth Plenum, both Mao and Zhang pointed out the need to sinify Marxist theory in different rhetoric. Zhang wrote that "the Marxist principle and methodology are of international character, but since we do our organizational work in China, we must strictly take into account China's politics, economy, culture, national habits, morals characteristic." "What we need is international content and national form. We need to sinify our organizational work; otherwise we are not members of the Chinese Communist Party" (Zhang 1990, 453). In an earlier speech in April 1938, Zhang also made a very similar pronouncement. He argued that one of the tasks of the CCP is to "take into account China's tradition and characteristics, reshape and develop them, so that they would meet the requirements of China's revolution" (Zhang 1990, 430). Even though these remarks do not directly refer to the sinification of Marxism they seem to coincide with Mao's speech in the Sixth Plenum.

Mao also stated in the Sixth Plenum that the sinification of Marxism—the application of Marxist doctrine into China—should be done according to China's national form<sup>3</sup>. Yet, unlike Zhang, Mao was quite critical of the current practices in the Party, arguing that "We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models; there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes; dogmatism must be laid to rest" (Holm 1991, 50; Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 261). This dissatisfaction with the Party's approach to Marxism

later led to its radical alteration by Mao during the Rectification, which was resisted by Zhang. In 1938, however, both Mao and Zhang agreed upon the need to sinify Marxism in order to make it compatible with China's current conditions and accessible to the vast majority of the Chinese people. In spite of his criticism of the Party's approach to Marxism, with Zhang, Mao emphasized the significance of studying the Marxist classics (Mao and Takeuchi 1972b, 259-260).

The comparison between Mao's celebrated essay *On New Democracy*, and Zhang's *Kangzhan yilai zhonghua minzu de xin wenhua yundong yu jinhou renwu* [*The New Culture Movement Since the Anti-Japanese War and its Future Tasks*] reveals that even though Zhang and Mao shared similar ideas, they also had some disagreements regarding the application of Marxist theory to China, the integration of foreign culture, and the Party's policy towards the masses. In his essay, Mao outlined the insufficiencies of the traditional Chinese culture and argued for a new culture that would facilitate the resistance against the Japanese. His project was to create a "new democratic" culture that would be supported by the masses for China's gradual transition to socialism. Zhang Wentian, who was responsible for the Party's education and propaganda, supported Mao's notion of a mass-based "new culture". Both Mao and Zhang agreed that intellectuals should play a crucial role in disseminating the proposed new culture.

Both Mao and Zhang defined the primary characteristics of the new culture that the communists should strive to develop. Like Mao who insisted that a "new democratic culture" should be mass-based, scientific and national (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 192),

Zhang also believed that a “new culture” should be national, democratic, scientific and mass-based (Zhang 1940, 4). The fact that Zhang mentioned democracy explicitly does not indicate that Zhang was more democratic. After all, the wording of “new democratic culture” used by Mao already includes the concept of democracy. Zhang, who employed the term ‘new culture’, was yet to state explicitly the democratic nature of the advocated new culture.

Mao and Zhang’s definition of democracy were quite similar. Mao believed that a democratic culture is “the masses of proletarians leading an anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist culture”. He also held that the “new culture” is democratic because it serves the needs of workers and peasants, who are the majority of China’s population (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 192). Similarly, Zhang defined democratic culture as anti-imperialist, anti-feudalist and anti-tyranny, and suggested that it should be motivated by the desires for democratic freedom, democratic politics, democratic life and democratic working-style (Zhang 1940, 7). This notion of democracy does not differ much from that of Mao. Both leaders aspired to create an inclusive culture that would enable the Party to mobilize the masses for the war against the Japanese.

Zhang’s understanding of intra-Party democracy, as it appears in the essay, is quite identical to Mao’s previous statements regarding this issue. Zhang claimed that the Party should “organize various cultural, research and study groups, and advocate freedom of research, freedom of thought, freedom of discussion in an active, lively and democratic manner” (Zhang 1940, 14). Zhang also stated that “socialism should not be afraid of

freedom of discussion and freedom of criticism”, as these are the crucial premises for its development (Zhang 1940, 9). In 1938, Mao made similar comments with regard to intra-Party democracy. Mao argued that Party cadres should “dare to ask questions, express views, and criticize shortcomings with respect to the Party’s leading organs and cadres” (Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 254). Mao contended that this intra-Party democracy is necessary for maintaining a positive spirit among the Party members. These statements obviously show that Zhang’s position regarding intra-Party democracy was quite similar to Mao’s.

However, Mao departed from his position regarding intra-Party democracy on the eve of the Rectification in late 1941. Zhang’s justification for intra-Party democracy seems to be revealing. It is possible that Zhang’s statement about the need for freedom of discussion is related to his suspicion of Mao’s attempt to impose his own interpretation of Marxism on the Party. The fact that Mao left out any discussion of intra-Party democracy might also indicate his departure from his earlier position in 1938.

With respect to the sinification of Marxism, both Mao and Zhang endorsed this project and maintained similar views about the integration of Western culture in China. They opposed the notion of wholesale Westernization, arguing that China should incorporate the positive things within Western culture (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 201-202; Zhang 1940, 7). Their attitudes towards traditional Chinese culture had evolved, as reflected in these two essays in 1940. Prior to 1938, both Mao and Zhang did not agree with Chen Boda who held Chinese culture in high esteem (Wylie 1980, 76, 79-84). In late 1938,

however, Mao joined Chen to applaud Chinese culture and history (Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 260-261). In 1940, Mao reiterated this position by emphasizing that there were excellent things in traditional Chinese culture, and that the 'new culture' should be developed out of the traditional one (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 203). In his essay in 1940, Zhang also embraced Chen Boda's position by proposing that the Chinese should be proud of their cultural heritage and that the new culture should not completely repudiate the traditional one; rather, it should strive to enhance the traditional culture (Zhang 1940, 6).

In spite of these similarities, Mao and Zhang had different concerns with respect to the sinification of Marxism and the development of a new culture. Zhang argued that the sinification of foreign culture is "not about making it China-centered, but making the best components of foreign culture to accommodate to the needs of the Chinese people in the Anti-Japanese War and the project of nation building. By applying the most advanced scientific theory and methodology to the study of China's situations, the new culture is expected to resolve China's most practical issues" (Zhang 1940, 8). With the belief that "socialism is the most revolutionary and scientific doctrine", he contended that in the Chinese new cultural movement socialism should stand at the very front, and "play a leading role of a vanguard" (Zhang 1940, 8). Zhang also stated that one of China's problems was the shallow and weak foundation of Western culture that was introduced into China not long ago (Zhang 1940, 13). These pronouncements indicate that even though Zhang supported the sinification of Marxism, he was concerned that the socialist aspects might be missed in Mao's interpretation of Marxism.

In contrast, Mao Zedong had different concerns. He explained that although the propagation of Marxist theory was crucial for a mass-based socialist revolution, currently “the essence of the people’s culture is not socialist, but new democratic because it is the culture of the masses fighting against imperialism and feudalism” (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 202). This shows that unlike Zhang who stressed the importance of socialism, Mao believed that nationalism and mass culture were of primary importance. Writing about the Marxist doctrine, Mao argued that its application should “aim at the national form...we should definitely not subjectively and formulaically apply it. Formulaic Marxists only make a joke out of Marxist theory and the Chinese revolution, and there is no room for them in the ranks of the Chinese revolution” (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 202; Mao and Schram 1992c, 368). In talking about formulaic Marxists Mao implicitly criticized Zhang Wentian and other CCP members who preferred a conservative version of sinification.

The differences between Mao and Zhang could also be seen in their discussion of “national form”, “new” and “old forms”. The issue of “forms” was a cause for debate among communist intellectuals during the 1930s. Qu Qiubai advocated old, native, Chinese “forms” to popularize new and foreign contents among the masses, whereas Zhou Yang claimed that the employment of the ‘old forms’ should be an expedient means to approach the masses with the main objective to raise their cultural level through the introduction of foreign forms (Cheek 1984, 25-30; Goldman 1967, 15-17; Holm 1990, 33-37). First in 1938 and then in his speech *On New Democracy* in 1940, Mao talked

about the need to sinify Marxism according to China's "national form" (Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 261). Following Mao's speeches, the debate regarding "forms" continued and its primary protagonists, Zhou Yang and Chen Boda, whose position was close to Qu Qiubai, used the rhetoric of "national form" to promote their own views regarding "new" and "old" forms (Holm 1990, 52-57, 62-66; Wylie 1980, 76).

Mao's position regarding the "national form" was closer to Chen Boda than to Zhou Yang (Holm 1991, 50, 52, 56). In 1938, Mao proclaimed that foreign models "should be replaced with a fresh and lively Chinese style and Chinese manner pleasing to the ear and to the eye of the Chinese common people". He also warned that internationalist content should not be separated from national form (Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 261; Holm 1991, 50). In another passage, Mao also wrote that "Marxism in national form is Marxism applied to China's real environment of struggle" (Mao and Takeuchi 1971b, 261). In "On New Democracy", Mao made similar remarks again that "the "national form" and the "new democratic content" are the new culture" (Mao and Takeuchi 1971c, 202). These words indicate that Mao's position regarding the question of forms was primarily informed by the need to have immediate access to the masses. The question of raising their cultural level was not of central importance.

In his discussion of "forms", Zhang Wentian adopted a position different from Mao's. In his essay in 1940, Zhang did not use the term "national form". He wrote that "the new content of a new culture has to have new forms; as the new content of the new culture is being created, so are the new forms. The new culture should use ("*liyong*") some old

forms in order to express a new content. Yet the old forms should go through considerable transformation. Only then would the old forms be appropriate to express new content. To cite Lu Xun, Zhang argued that “in search of new forms, we should first advance the old forms. This adoption (“*caiqu*”) [of the old forms] is the beginning of the new form, and the transformation of the old one” (Zhang 1940, 10).

In addition, Zhang advocated that “foreign forms” should be employed and that the ‘new culture’ should raise the cultural level of the masses (Zhang 1940, 9-10), the views of which were supported by Zhou Yang in the early 1930s (Holm 1991, 35). Moreover, Zhang, in his discussion of “old forms”, chose the verb “use” (“*liyong*”), which in Chinese has the connotation of cynical manipulation (Holm 1991, 52). Such a choice of word may indicate that like Zhou, Zhang was dissatisfied with the reliance on old forms in order to promote new content. Zhang’s reference to the iconoclast May Fourth writer, Lu Xun, was revealing of his position. Highly critical of Chinese traditional culture, Lu Xun was concerned that its old forms would pervert new content (Cheek 1984, 28). For Lu Xun, the “adoption” of old forms should be an expedient means to approach the masses. The fact that Zhang left out the rhetoric of “national form” in his later discussion seems to serve as an indication of his dissatisfaction and concerns regarding the “nationalization” of Marxism. In contrast to Mao, Zhang was not an enthusiastic supporter of the “national form”.

In addition to the differences regarding the application of Marxist theory to China, Mao and Zhang had conflicting views over the Party’s history. Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi

were critical of senior Party leaders' performance back in 1927 and 1937, and tried to officially classify it as "leftist errors". Zhang, who was one of the senior leaders between 1931 and 1935, opposed Mao and Liu's classification (Teiwes and Sun 1995, 341; Kampen 2000, 100-103; Gao 2000, 93-95, 200-201). In 1939, as the head of a special committee responsible for the preparation of materials on the Party's history, Zhang was in a position to frustrate the Maoist faction's efforts to revise Party history (Wylie 1980, 117). It was not until December 1941 that Mao was able to officially establish his own version of the Party's history with the publication of *Since the Sixth Party Congress-Secret Documents* (Saich 1995, 309-310; Kampen 2000, 100). The controversy over the Party's history reflected not merely ideological differences, but also power dynamics among Party leaders. If the performance of Zhang and other leaders had been officially labeled by the Party as wrong, then Mao would have been able to undermine their authority.

To summarize, both Mao and Zhang were practical leaders who constantly adjusted their ideology to the changing political circumstances. The two leaders believed that in order to gain the hearts and minds of the Chinese people, the CCP would have to introduce a Marxist ideology in a manner that enabled the Party to mobilize patriotic sentiments among the Chinese. The main point of divergence between Mao and Zhang was that Mao put more emphasis on the "national form" of the proposed new Chinese culture, whereas Zhang sought to maintain the centrality of "foreign forms". Another source of contention between Mao and Zhang was Mao's attempt to establish his own version of the Party's history as the Party's official history. Even though there were ideological differences

between Mao and Zhang, different views were tolerated in Yan'an by both leaders, which could be exemplified by the Academy of Marxism and Leninism where Zhang served as the principal.

## **Chapter 4: Diversity within The Academy of Marxism and Leninism**

### **Regarding the Application of Marxism to China**

When Zhang Wentian was the principal at the Academy of Marxism and Leninism, diverse views flourished at the Academy. For example, Mao Zedong lectured on the *New Democracy* and on *Protracted War* (Cheng 1993, 439). Mao's chief rival at the Party, Wang Ming, lectured on the Fourth Plenary Session of the Party's Sixth Central Committee in 1931, where Wang Ming became the Party's dominant leader. Zhang Wentian taught about *Ten Years of the Soviet Movement 1927- 1937* (Wu 1991, 123). Zhou Enlai, even though he held different opinions with respect to the United Front strategy from Mao and Zhang, lectured on the United Front Policy (Wu 1991, 220). Furthermore, Chen Yun was the instructor of a lecture series on the establishment of the Party. Liu Shaoqi, Deng Fa and other leaders also taught there (Wu 1991, 91-92, 107, 118, 133, 200). In that manner, students at the Academy were exposed to a variety of opinions regarding the Party's policy and ideology

In addition to these leaders who lectured at the Academy, the composition of the permanent lecturers at the Academy also reflected diversity. Even though most of these lecturers were educated abroad, they did not necessarily share the same views. It may be discerned that roughly two separate intellectual groups existed at the Academy. One of them, which included Wang Xuewen and Wu Liangping advocated a conservative approach to the application of Marxism to Chinese situations; they sought to follow an orthodox or doctrinaire view of Marxism. Some of these lecturers were previously among the founders of the League of Left-Wing Writers, an intellectual inheritor of the

iconoclastic May Fourth Movement, which was in favor of cosmopolitan Chinese culture (Holm 1991, 30-33). Their position was closer to that of Zhang Wentian than to that of Mao. In contrast to this group, the other group strongly advocated the sinification of Marxism. Unlike the former, some intellectuals from this group were leaders of the New Enlightenment Movement in 1936 and 1937 that resisted the League of Left-wing Writers' hostility toward traditional Chinese culture (Wylie 1980, 28-36; Schwarcz 1986, 222-230). Among the members of this group were Chen Boda, Ai Siqi and Yang Song. They held a position consistent with that of Mao. In addition to these two intellectual groups, there were contending views within the Academy's Department of History with respect to the periodization of ancient Chinese history. Despite some of these disagreements, the intellectuals at the Academy collaborated with each other, as well as with Zhang Wentian and Mao Zedong, in the project of translating Marxist doctrine to be suitable for China.

#### **4.1 Political Stances Close to Zhang Wentian**

Wang Xuewen, the deputy principal of the Academy, was among the most important lecturers to focus on the study of classical Marxist texts. Wang had lived in Japan from 1910 to 1927 as a student of Marxist political economy and, later, became a professor. After his return from Japan, Wang was among the founders of the League of Left-Wing Writers (Liu and Zhu 2002, 209-212; Wu 1992, 291). At the Academy Wang taught political economy with the Soviet scholar Leontiev's book, *Political Economy* (Wu 1991, 124). His lectures were found by the students to be purely theoretical without any reference to China's conditions (Wu 1991, 128). Wang's writings in the Yan'an

periodical, *Zhongguo wenhua* (*China Culture*) seem to be disconnected with the situation in China. Wang discussed the differences between the proletariat and the capitalist approaches to political economy without saying anything about China and its particularities (Wang 1940, 35-41). While engaging in the discussion of theoretical matters with Mao, Wang was perceived by Mao to have a rather dogmatic attitude (Gao 2000, 198).

Another lecturer who also had an orthodox approach to Marxism was Wu Liangping, who considered Zhang Wentian to be his mentor and maintained a close relationship with him. Like Zhang, Wu also studied at Sun Yatsen University from 1925 to 1929 in Moscow, where he cooperated with Zhang to translate *The French Civil War* by Marx (Liu and Zhu 2002, 120). He also translated *Anti-Düring* by Engles (Liu and Zhu 2002, 124). After returning from Moscow in 1929, Wu co-founded the League of Left-Wing Writers along with Wang Xuewen (Wu 1992, 289).

His linkages with the League of Left-Wing Writers and close relationship with Zhang did not preclude him from cooperating with Mao Zedong. After he joined the Ruijin Soviet in 1932, Wu became the head of the Department of Economics and assisted Mao in devising an economic plan for the Soviet. Wu was proud to claim that his translation of *Anti-Düring* was thought highly of by Mao (Wu 1992, 321, 327). In 1937, he acted as an interpreter for Edgar Snow, the journalist, who interviewed Mao (Liu and Zhu 2002, 128). Wu Liangping also revealed that in Yan'an he was asked by Mao to review the drafts of Mao's essays *On Practice* and *On Contradiction* (Wu 1992, 315). As an executive editor

for *Jiefang*, he also edited Mao's several other essays such as *On Protracted War* and *On a New Stage* (Liu and Zhu 2002, 129).

Even though he worked with Mao, Wu's interpretation of Marxism was close to that of his mentor, Zhang Wentian, rather than to Mao's. In 1938, Wu collaborated with Ai Siqu to write the textbook *Kexue lishi guan jiaocheng* [*A Course in Scientific Historical Perspective*] for cadres. Emphasizing that history and society should be understood from a materialist point of view, this book was intended to refute the idealist point of view. It argued that human society had its scientific laws and only through the knowledge of these laws could one act properly (Wu and Ai 1941, 4-5, 10-11). Focusing on the discussion of Marxist theory, it touched on the current conditions in China and the Anti-Japanese War (Wu and Ai 1941, 1-2), but only briefly.

In May 1940, Wu also published another book *Lun minzhu geming* (*On Democratic Revolution*) (Liu and Zhu 2002, 131). Similarly to Mao's ideas as expressed in his essay *On New Democracy*, Wu also discussed China's transition to socialism where the proletariat should collaborate with other classes (Wu 1946, 2). Whereas Mao emphasized that preceding socialism there was the stage of "new democracy" in which the CCP was the representative of the masses in governing the country, Wu discussed a bourgeois form of democracy before socialism was realized. Wu also defined a "new type of people's democracy" as "New Democracy" (Wu 1946, 464). In spite of his reference to Mao's concept, however, throughout the book Wu adhered to an orthodox conceptualization of

social development in which a bourgeois democracy precedes socialism. His main arguments were supported by considerable discussion of foreign revolutions.

Also, unlike Mao whose primary concerns were with China's conditions, Wu constantly cited Lenin to situate a process for social development in other contexts. He only briefly mentioned that because of China's own particularities, Lenin's ideas should be critically applied to the analysis of China. Thus, it seems reasonable to suspect that he had an orthodox approach to the application of Marxism in China. Such suspicion might be further confirmed by Mao's dissatisfaction with Wu Liangping's articles published before the Rectification in *Liberation Daily*, which included substantial quotations from Marx and Lenin (Gao 2000, 368). To redeem himself and regain the favor of Mao, during the Rectification campaign Wu wrote an article in *Liberation Daily* in March 1942 to attack dogmatism (Liu and Zhu 2002, 132-133), which was widely studied by Party members, thus sparing him of criticism during the Campaign.

Another member from the Academy who did not follow Mao's line was Wang Shiwei. Wang was highly critical of the Maoist project of sinifying Marxism. In one article published in *Zhongguo wenhua*, he attacked one of Mao's close associates Chen Boda for his advocacy of the "national form" (Wylie 1980, 149-151; Min 1987, 327). According to Chen, the communists should employ old forms of Chinese culture in order to transmit new content. To criticize such an approach to Chinese culture, Wang wrote that ballads in old forms played by Yan'an musical troupes were traditionally sung in whorehouses by sing-song girls. Wang called these ballads 'poisonous rubbish', arguing that with them

“the ‘new content’ was submerged by the ‘old forms” (Holm 1991, 73). Even though this essay was a revised version in which some of the critique toward Chen Boda was modified (Cheek 1984, 28-29), Chen, his fellow at the Academy, found it offensive (Dai 1994, xxi, 34).

#### **4.2 Political Stances Close to Mao Zedong**

As the head of the Department of History and Translation and Compilation, Chen became a rival of Wang Shiwei because of his staunch support of sinification in Yan'an. Having studied at Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow from 1927 to 1930 (Klein and Clark 1971a, 122; Wylie 1980, 11-12; Wang 2002b, 706), Chen was one of the leading figures in the “New Enlightenment Movement” in 1936 and 1937 (Schwarcz 1986, 222-230; Wylie 1980, 28-36; Chen 2005, 39-45). This movement started as a reaction to the May Fourth Movement in 1919 that rejected traditional Chinese culture. It also aimed as a response to the League of Left-Wing Writers who followed the May Fourth spirit (Holm 1991, 30-31, Gao 2000, 197). While re-evaluating Chinese tradition, members in this movement believed that the integration of Marxism and Chinese culture would facilitate the propagation of Marxism in China (Wylie 1980, 28-36).

In spite of the fact that it was Zhang Wentian that introduced Chen to the Academy and later to Mao (Ye 1993, 124-125), Chen had close intellectual affinity with Mao, rather than Zhang. According to Raymond Wylie, Chen's essays had tremendous influence on Mao's ideas. In Chen's article published on July 23, 1938, he discussed the need to sinify Marxism, and criticized those who dogmatically applied it. He contended that Marxism

should be applied to China in accordance with the national form. According to Wylie, this essay had profound influence on Mao's concepts of sinification and the national form, which were first proposed in October 1938 (Wylie 1980, 85). Its discussion of new culture in which old forms were employed in order to promote new content was another source of inspiration for Mao's proposition of "new democratic culture" that would be the foundation of the New Democracy (Wylie 1980, 87-88). Because of such intellectual compatibility, it was no wonder that Chen was later chosen by Mao as his secretary (Wang 2002b, 707).

In addition to Chen Boda, another lecturer who had close affinity with Mao was Ai Siqu. From 1927 to 1931, Ai studied Marxist philosophy and Russian Language in Japan. After he returned to China, he embraced the emerging Soviet philosophical orthodoxy of Mitin's New Philosophy and published works on this philosophy (Knight 2005, 96-97). One of his most important works was *Dazhong zhexue* [*Philosophy for the Masses*] (1936), which explained materialism and refuted the idealist point of view (Fogel 1987, 41-44). This book introduced sophisticated Marxist philosophical concepts such as dialectical materialism to laypersons through reference to objects of everyday life (Knight 2005, 94; Fogel 1987, 63-64). In 1936 and 1937, along with Chen Boda, Ai Siqu played an important role in the New Enlightenment Movement by writing in favor of popularization of mass culture (Fogel 1987, 62). By 1937 when he arrived in Yan'an, he had been one of the most influential philosophers in China and later became the head of the Department of Philosophy in the Academy.

While in the Academy, Ai Siqi worked closely with Mao Zedong, who was impressed by Ai's abilities as a communicator and his organizational skills. Interested in the study of Marxist philosophy, Mao was looking for a way to connect this philosophy to the circumstances in China. Ai's capacity to communicate philosophy with the masses through his writings appealed enormously to Mao (Fogel 1987, 62; Knight 2005, 94). Ai was also willing to assist Mao in his attempt to establish himself as the Party's primary theorist without the intention of claiming credit for himself (Fogel 1987, 64). Another quality of Ai that was appealing to Mao was his dedication to organizing an association in early 1938 for the study of the New Philosophy (Knight 2005, 106). In a sense, Ai was instrumental to Mao. Their close cooperation, however, did not negate the fact that there were disagreements regarding the philosophical views of Marxism. According to Gao Hua, while he appreciated Ai Siqi's popularization of Marxism, Mao also found his interpretation inflexible and his "conceptual tools as soviet dogmatism" (Gao 2000, 199).

Yang Song, who was another lecturer at the Academy, did not have the chance to work closely with Mao like Ai did, even though he agreed with most of Mao's ideas. From 1927 to 1931, Yang studied at Sun Yatsen University in Moscow (Hu 1980a, 179). In 1938, he moved to Yan'an and worked with Zhang Wentian as the head of the secretariat at the Department of Propaganda (Hu 1980a, 190). Even though he worked closely with Zhang in the same department, his understanding of Marxism was quite similar to Mao Zedong, rather than Zhang's. According to Raymond Wylie, Yang could be considered as one of the "proto-Maoist" intellectuals in Yan'an (Wylie 1980, 88), which was echoed in Nick Knight's comments that a "tendency to further Mao into the foreground" could be

discerned in Yang's writings (Knight 2005, 210). In one of his articles published in *Zhongguo wenhua* in July 1940, Yang frequently cited Mao (Yang 1940, 9). Yang agreed with Mao on the concept of New Democracy and the need to apply of Marxism according to "China's national form". Moreover, with Mao, Yang was critical of rigid application of Marxist doctrine. For example, he argued that the study of the *Capital* by heart was insufficient. One must also know about China's economic development. He dismissed the Marxist economists for their "malady of separating between theory and reality" (Yang 1940, 9). His blunt critique regarding dogmatism seemed to have a counterpart in Mao's speech *Reform our Study* in 1941. Nevertheless, the relationship between Mao and Yang got sour at the Rectification campaign, when Yang, as the editor of *Liberation Daily*, disapproved of Mao's attempt to monopolize political power. According to Gao Hua, it led to Yang's premature death in 1942 due to the enormous psychological pressure from Mao (Gao 2000, 370-372).

#### **4.3 Diverse Views Within the Academy of Marxism and Leninism**

##### **Regarding the Periodization of Chinese History**

In addition to diverse views regarding the application of Marxism to China, some of the members of the Academy differed from each other in relation to the periodization of Chinese history. One of the central figures in this debate around how to divide different historical periods was Fan Wenlan, who became the head of the Department of History in early 1940 (Dong 2004, 102). At that time, the Department was asked by Mao to write a concise book of Chinese history (Dong 2004, 122). Thus, Fan and a team of other historians worked on the first volume *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* [*A Concise General*

*History of China*], which was completed in May 1941. It covered Chinese history before Han dynasty. The second volume, covering the history from Han up to late eighteenth century, was published at the end of that year. It was not until 1946 when they were able to finish the third volume.

In fact, the preparation of the book was accompanied by the debate regarding how to periodize Chinese history (Dirlik 1978, 180-228; Brook 1999, 33-35), which could be traced back to 1930 when Guo Moruo proposed an understanding of Chinese history in five stages, namely, primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism<sup>4</sup> (Brook 1999, 134-135). Guo argued that slavery arose in Western Zhou Dynasty and feudalism in Qin Dynasty (Dirlik 1978, 187-188). Such an argument was supported by Yang Shaoyi and Yi Da (Yi 1940; Min 1987, 327), who were members of the Department of History at the Academy. Yang even tried to convince Chen Boda, the head of the History Department and his successor Fan Wenlan that Guo's thesis was correct. Yet, his efforts were in vain (Wen 1984, 70) because Chen and Fan were in favor of another prominent Chinese historian, Lu Zhenyu, who argued that slavery could be traced back to as early as Shang Dynasty and feudalism to Western Zhou Dynasty (Wen 1984, 70). Eventually, Fan, as the editor of *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian*, decided to incorporate Lu's classification into this book.

In discussing the resolution of this debate, we should take into consideration Mao's position regarding the issue of periodization, and his relationship with Fan Wenlan. In an essay from December 1939, Mao had already endorsed Lu's position. He stated that the

transition from slavery to feudalism took place during the Zhou Dynasty (Mao and Schram 1992c, 281). According to the reminiscence of a former member of the Department of history, during his debate in 1940 with Yang Shaoyi, Fan supported Lu's position, and Mao's agreement with Lu further strengthened Fan's rejection of Yang's view (Wen 1984, 71). Fan's determination to side with Mao in this debate might be related not only to Mao's political status in the Party, but also to his close relationship with Fan. When Fan came to Yan'an, Mao endeavored to approach Fan. Mao invited Fan to his residence, attended some of Fan's lectures, and also sent him notes that praised his scholarship (Sun and Li 2003, 297-298).

The above examination of the main lecturers at the Academy attests to the existence of diversity before the Rectification campaign in Yan'an. Some of the intellectuals, who had close affinity with Mao, advocated the sinification of Marxism, and considered that focusing on the Marxist classics was dogmatic. Others, whose views were close to that of Zhang, suggested a conservative version of sinification, emphasizing a doctrinaire application of Marxism. Within the Department of History there were other competing views regarding how to classify Chinese history. Students at the Academy were exposed to a diversity of opinions regarding policies and Party history from leaders that lectured there. We can see that in spite of the divergence of political positions at the Academy, most of them were able to work together without explicit manifestation of frictions except for Chen Boda and Wang Shiwei. This political atmosphere of diversity could be attributed to the inclusive leadership style of Zhang Wentian, as well as to the fact that the Party had not yet had an authoritative leader who could impose his will on the Party.

#### **4.4 Challenges Zhang Wentian Faced as the Principal of the Academy of Marxism and Leninism**

The political situation that Mao had not yet attained ultimate power allowed Zhang the authority to shape the curriculum at the Academy according to his conservative approach to the application of Marxism to China. The core of the program was the study of Marxist theory as well as foreign culture. This program reflected Zhang's belief that theory should be related to practice, as it included lectures on China's current conditions. In this Academy, Zhang was trying to create a Party intelligentsia that was proficient in Marxist classics and foreign culture. Due to limited resources and some political constraints, however, Zhang's efforts were met with several challenges.

At the Academy, Zhang aspired to provide training to familiarize students with Marxist theory and foreign culture. In a document regarding cadre education issued by the Party Center, which is said to reflect Zhang's position (Wu 1991, 34), it is stated that students of higher level schools should be encouraged to read the original works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (Wu 1991, 40). Modeled after the curriculum at Sun Yat-sen University, courses offered at the Academy included recent Chinese history, political economy, Marxism, philosophy, Western Revolutions, Russian language, and the establishment of the CCP. For these courses students were required to read *The Capital* by Marx, *Political Economy* by Leontiev, *Concise Reader of the History of the (Bolshevik) CPSU*, *The Great French Revolution 1789-1793* by Kropotkin, *Two Types of Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, *Imperialism* and *Left-Wing Communism: an*

*Infantile Disorder* by Lenin, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Engels, *Introduction to Leninism* by Stalin and his essay on dialectical and historical materialism (Wu 1991, 14-15, 124; Apter and Saich 1994, 157). In order to introduce these texts in Chinese, Zhang set up the Department of Translation and Compilation in the Academy, which was the first Party organ specializing in translation (Dai 1994, 86-87, 185-187). Books available in the Academy's library included not only the works of Marx and Engels, but also those of Shakespeare, Balzac, Stendal and Hugo, which gave students some access to Western literature (Wu 1991, 136, 138, 140, 221).

The studies at the Academy covered theoretical works as well as practical issues regarding politics and Party policies. Lectures were delivered at the Academy by senior leaders regarding practical political issues, for example, Mao Zedong on the New Democracy, Deng Fa on security work, Wang Ming on the Fourth Plenary Session of the Party's Sixth Central Committee in 1931, Li Fuchun on economic policy, Wang Shoudao on agrarian policies (Wu 1991, 123), Peng Zhen on the Anti-Japanese War, the CCP War strategy, Zhou Enlai on the United Front (Wu 1991, 220), Zhang Hao on the Labor Movement, and Wang Heshou on Party underground work behind enemy lines (Wu 1991, 199-200). Moreover, the guideline for the work of the Department of Cadre Education, which was headed by Zhang Wentian, pointed out that the Department was responsible for the compilation of reading materials concerning actual affairs (Wu 1991, 25). The guideline also specified that the Party should hold small group meetings twice a week to discuss the Party's periodical *Gongchangdanren* (Wu 1991, 32-33). While the study of

Marxist classics remained the core of the program, these lectures were a significant part of the curriculum.

However, there were several challenges facing Zhang in providing adequate training for prospective Party intelligentsia. Initially, one third of the students at the Academy were cadres who participated in the Long March, with another third being cadres from areas under the *Guomindang* control. The rest were young intellectuals who joined the Party when the Anti-Japanese war broke out in 1937 and they had to pass the entrance exam in order to be admitted into the Academy (Zeng 1985, 132-133; Wu 1984, 15). Since cadres were admitted without having to pass any exams, they had various levels of education. Therefore, lecturers had to accommodate this disparity in education (Wu 1984, 147).

Another major problem in the training of Party members was due to limited resources. Even though there were books available at the library by Marx and other authors, the number was minimal (Zeng 1985, 135). Furthermore, the teaching of foreign languages was hampered by the fact that few were competent to teach. Even though Zhang was able to convince Shi Zhe, who studied and worked in the Soviet Union from 1925 to 1938 and who later served as Mao's interpreter, to teach Russian at the Academy (Shi 1991; Shi 1992), a significant number of students dropped out of the classes (Wu 1991, 61). This might be due to the fact that students were discouraged from learning Russian due to the inadequacy of teaching resources (Wu 1991, 61).

Another challenge for Zhang was the number of political meetings that students were required to attend by the Party. It was recorded that Zhang managed to reduce the excessive amount of mandatory political meetings so that studies would not be interrupted (Li 2000, 387). He specified that students should spend eight hours per day on reading and should minimize extracurricular activities (Wu 1991, 34, 40). As recalled by one of his students, however, every week students had to attend the Party's small group meetings and self-examination (*jiantao*) meetings. Zhang, who had expected the students to dedicate more time to study, was upset by the fact that he was unable to cancel all of these political meetings (Zeng 1985, 134-135).

These political challenges in shaping the program of study according to Zhang's approach became tougher in late 1941. Before 1941, in spite of his dominant status within the Party as well as his close relationships with Chen Boda, Ai Siqu and Fan Wenlan, Mao was not able to impose his political ideas on Zhang and other intellectuals at the Academy. Later when power became centralized in the hands of Mao, he succeeded in turning the Academy into the Central Research Institute, and all of its members were thus expected to follow Mao's interpretation of Marxism. Since his approach to Marxism was not approved by Mao, Zhang was no longer able to propagate his political views and run the Institute in the same manner as in the Academy.

## **Chapter 5: The Academy Becomes an Institute**

### **5.1 The Disappearing of Diversity within the Institute**

In the spring of 1941 when Mao started to establish his authority over the Party, Zhang was no longer able to run the Academy according to his own agenda. It was Mao and his followers that controlled the research work at this institution. Rather than to study Marxist doctrine, the Institute was aimed at the training of researchers who would understand the actual conditions in current China. Research work at the Institute now had to be conducted according to Mao's principle of "seeking truth from facts". As the successor to the Academy, the Institute became rather intolerant of diverse political views, the main reason of which was that Zhang Wentian was losing his power within the Party.

Until the spring of 1941 Zhang was an important political asset for Mao, who had to rely on Zhang in order to limit the power of Wang Ming, Mao's main rival in the CCP.

During the Anti-Japanese war, Wang Ming adopted a strategy of close cooperation with the *Guomindang*, who later turned out to be against the CCP by attacking its New Fourth Army in Anhui in early 1941. Such a plot by the *Guomindang* was a heavy blow for Wang and severely damaged his position within the Party (Kampen 2000, 100; Gao 2000, 266). With Wang's damaged position, Mao considered Zhang Wentian as a major obstacle to his rise to power, thus started to alienate himself from Zhang so that he could take control of the Party's ideology (Gao 2000, 195).

Zhang was the main opponent to the Maoist narrative of Party history. By 1941, Wang Ming had already pointed out that the Party leadership made mistakes in 1933 and 1934.

By admitting these mistakes, Wang Ming embraced Mao's position regarding the Party's history (Gao 2000, 201). In September 1941, in order to stifle Zhang's opposition to his version of Party history, Mao gave a speech at the Politburo meeting to discuss the mistakes of the CCP leaders in the past. At the meeting, it was also decided that a special committee be set up with Mao as the head to resolve issues regarding Party history. In December that year, *Since the Sixth Party Congress-Secret Party Documents* was published by this committee, which reaffirmed the correctness of Mao's line and the mistakes of other leaders (Kampen 2000, 102-103).

Meanwhile, in order to minimize Zhang's influence over the Party's ideology and cadre education, Mao began to attack the programs of study in cadre schools as organized by Zhang in Yan'an. In May 1941, Mao delivered a speech *Reform our Study* to criticize people within the Party who were ignorant of Chinese history, or in Mao's words, who "are left with only Greek and foreign tales" (Mao and Schram 1992c, 749). Mao also directly criticized those Party members who received overseas education but who could "only parrot a stock of undigested foreign things". For Mao, those Party members "function as gramophones but forget their responsibility to create something new" (Mao and Schram 1992c, 749). Mao considered it a "malady" that "has infected the Party" (Mao and Schram 1992c, 749). He also mocked cadre schools in Yan'an as places where "seventeen and eighteen year old babies are taught to nibble on the *Capital* and *Anti-Düring*" (Mao and Schram 1992c, 749). Mao's critique of the cadre schools kept Zhang from directing cadre education and the curriculum at the Academy according to his own agenda.

In July 1941, the name of the Academy was changed to the Research Institute of Marxism and Leninism. In August that year, the guideline on *Decisions regarding Survey and Research* was issued by the Party to require that the study of Marxist doctrine should be situated within Chinese context (Wen 1984, 7). In order to highlight the role of the research of China's contemporary issues, the component of Marxism-Leninism was later dropped from the name of the Institute. Consequently, the name of the previous Academy became the Central Research Institute (Wen 1984, 10-11).

Meanwhile, new departments were created to engage in research closely related to China's particular conditions, which was what Mao had suggested. These new departments included Chinese Politics, Chinese Economy, Chinese History, Chinese Cultural Thought, Chinese Art and Literature, Chinese Education and Chinese Journalism (Wen 1984, 6-7), with each having a research plan in accordance with Mao's vision (Wen 1984, 265-291). While the Department of Politics researched on China's political systems and thoughts (Wen 1984, 265-266), the Department of Chinese Economics focused on the economic conditions under the control of CCP, the *Guomindang* and the Japanese (Wen 1984, 267-268). Researchers at the Department of Education focused on various education systems within China, such as those set up by the Japanese puppet regime, the *Guomindang*, the warlords, and the Communist Shaan-Gan-Ning government. They also researched on approaches to education in China, such as those from Tao Xingzhi, James Yen and Liang Shuming (Wen 1984, 270-277). No longer the center to teach Marxist

classics, the Institute was turned into the research base to produce knowledge at the service of the Party's new orthodoxy - Mao Zedong Thought.

In the Central Research Institute the personnel also changed. Wang Xuewen, Wu Liangping and Yang Song left. It is said that they had to leave due to their heavy workload, rather than being removed from their positions (Zeng 1985, 136). In May 1940, Wang Xuewen, who lived and studied in Japan for many years, was recruited to the position of the head of the Enemy Work Department (Gao 2000, 313). In May 1941, Yang Song became the general editor of *Liberation Daily*. The workload there did not allow him to spend time lecturing in the Academy (Hu 1980a, 191). As for Wu Liangping, the work as the deputy-editor for *Jiefang* (Liu and Zhu 2002, 129-130), together with other translation assignments, prevented him from taking up teaching responsibilities at the Academy. Such personnel changes led to the recruitment of Mao loyalists such as Li Weihan, Lu Dingyi and Zhang Ruxin, which gave Mao the opportunity to consolidate his power within the Institute.

Li Weihan, one of Mao's supporters, was drafted as the head of the departments of Journalism and Education and the deputy director of the Institute. Born in Hunan, he had known Mao since 1917 (Hu 1980c, 3) and was introduced to the CCP by Mao in 1922 (Hu 1980c, 9). Having studied in Moscow from 1931 to 1932, Li came back to China and at the Zunyi Conference he supported Mao, thus gaining Mao's trust (Hu 1980c, 17, Gao 2000, 521). Even though he worked with Zhang Wentian as the editor for *Gongchandangren* and the deputy at the Department of Propaganda (Hu 1980c, 4,9, 17;

Gao 2000, 520-523; Wang 2002a, 81-88), he was not particularly close to Zhang. According to Gao Hua, Li was sent to the Department of Propaganda by Mao so as to report back to Mao about Zhang's work (Gao 2000, 314). During the Rectification Campaign, Li played a significant role in leading the Campaign at the Institute to denounce Wang Shiwei (Dai 1994, 103; Gao 2000, 521).

Together with Li Weihang, Lu Dingyi also worked at the Department of Education. From 1929 to 1930, Lu studied in Moscow (Wang 2002b, 653) and later worked as an editor in the Ruijin Soviet. From 1935 to 1940, he held several propaganda positions at the Red Army (Wang 2002b, 654-655). Early in the Rectification Campaign, Lu showed staunch support of Mao by citing Mao frequently in his articles to reiterate Mao's declared goals of eradicating dogmatism and subjectivism (Lu 1942a; 1942b). Like Mao, Lu was also critical of Yang Song, who was the editor of *Liberation Daily*. In August 1942, he was appointed the editor by Mao to replace Yang Song (Gao 2000, 371). *Liberation Daily* thus became a tool for Mao to accurately convey his political views as well as an avenue to circulate local and national news, rather than international ones (Gao 2000, 372-375).

Another supporter of Mao that joined the Institute was Zhang Ruxin, who became the head of the Department of Chinese Politics. From 1926 to 1929, he studied at Sun Yatsen University in Moscow (Liu and Zhu 2002, 289) and wrote five books on Marxism-Leninism and dialectical materialism from 1929 to 1931 (Liu and Zhu 2002, 292-293). He later taught at the Anti-Japanese University in Yan'an, where he met Mao who was impressed with his work (Liu and Zhu 2002, 296-297). In March 1941, Zhang Ruxin

wrote an article in *Gongchandangren* to introduce the term of “Mao Zedong Thought”, recommending the works of Mao as “the best expression of the sinification of Marxism” (Liu and Zhu 2002, 298-299). In another article *Move Forward under the Banner of Comrade Mao Zedong* in March 1941, he considered Mao’s essays “exceptionally brilliant and creative Marxist writings” (Liu and Zhu 2002, 299-301; Zhang 1941).

Other Mao loyalists such as Fan Wenlan and Ai Siqu remained in the Institute. Fan Wenlan became the head of the Department of Chinese History, which was expanded from eight to eighteen members. Among the new arrivals was Lu Zhenyu (Wen 1984, 73), one of the famous historians that participated in the debate regarding the periodization of Chinese history in the 1930s. He argued that slavery started in Shang Dynasty, a position that was endorsed by Fan Wenlan in *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* (Dirlik 1978, 187-188, Brook 1999, 134-135). This expanded team of researchers completed the writing of the second volume of *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* at the end of 1941. Invited by Mao, they also compiled *Zhongguo guowen xuan* [*A Selection of Chinese National Literature*], an abridged volume of classical Chinese literature catering to readers at medium cultural level (Wen 1984, 75).

Ai Siqu, the former head of the Department of Philosophy at the Academy, was then the head of the Department of Chinese Cultural Thought at the Institute. His team of researchers was expanded. Used to being the only lecturer of philosophy at the Academy, Ai had seventeen new researchers at the Institute (Wen 1984, 53). As requested by Mao, they worked on the publication of *Sixiang fangfalun* [*On the Methodology of Thought*], a

book including extracts from the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The passages selected for this collection were to deliver Mao's message of relating theory to facts, which served to justify Mao's agenda (Wen 1984, 45-47). Published in February 1942 (Wen 1984, 44-45), this was the book prescribed by the Party to be read during the Rectification Campaign (Fogel 1987, 63, Knight 2005, 107).

In short, Mao loyalists played significant roles during the Rectification campaign in disseminating Mao's idea and eliminating dissident opinions among the Party elite. All of them actively participated in the denunciation of Wang Shiwei, who was highly critical of Mao for taking advantage of his political position for personal interests. Wang also complained about the lack of democracy within the Institute (Dai 1994, xxii). Such a complaint offended Mao's supporter Li Weiham, who organized a forum in late May and early June 1942 to discuss the political mistakes by Wang Shiwei (Dai 1994, 43).

Together with Li, Fan Wenlan and Ai Siqi also dismissed Wang as a Trotskyite and "reactionary within the Party" (Dai 1994, 102, 105, 113). In early June, Zhang Ruxin also wrote an article to publicly label Wang Shiwei as a Trotskyite (Dai 1994, 32). Such a political backlash against Wang Shiwei marked an era that diverse views were no longer tolerated, with Mao's supporters occupying key positions within the Institute.

## **5.2 Zhang Wentian at the Institute**

When political attacks on Wang Shiwei were launched by Mao's supporters in the summer of 1942, Zhang Wentian, who had been an avid advocate for diversity within the Academy, had already been away from Yan'an for several months. He was blatantly

mocked in Mao's speech *Reform Our Study* for his approach to education at the Academy. In late 1941, he was also often scolded by Mao, who categorized him as a dogmatic (Gao 2000, 267; Shi 1991, 176). Because of the enormous pressure from Mao, his position was quite precarious. Even though he remained the Institute's principal, Zhang could no longer run it according to his principles for fear of offending Mao. In early 1942 he had to leave Yan'an in order to avoid being further attacked.

In addition to pressure from Mao, Zhang's political position was also undermined by some institutional changes initiated by Mao. Zhang's authority as the chief editor of *Jiefang* and *gongchandangren* was constrained by the establishment of editorial boards in March 1941 within these two periodicals (Wang 1995, 484). Some of the board members within both periodicals were Mao loyalists: Hu Qiaomu and Chen Boda in *Jiefang*, and Li Weihan and Li Fuchun in *gongchandangren* (Wang 1995, 551-552). Furthermore, Zhang's power over the direction of cadre education was curtailed by Mao, who from the spring of 1941 claimed the power to veto all the documents drafted by Zhang regarding cadre education (Gao 2000, 266).

The Central Office of Research and Survey established in July 1941 further reduced Zhang's authority. Its declared objective was to research China's domestic political, social, cultural, economic and military conditions, which overlapped with those of the Institute (Feng and Li 2000, 59). The Office also included the departments of Chinese Politics and Chinese Political Economy (Wang 1995, 549-550), which researched the same issues that were the concerns of their counterparts at the Institute. Furthermore, the

Department of Translation, which was so dear to Zhang, was integrated into the Office (Dai 1994, 187). As the Party's paramount leader, Mao was the director of the Office, which had surely become more important than the Institute headed by Zhang (Feng and Li 2000, 52-53). Such institutional arrangements significantly compromised Zhang's status as both one of the senior Party members and the nominal principal at the Institute, which was a major hurdle to his political career.

In January 1942, Zhang left Yan'an to conduct a rural survey with the excuse that he should follow Mao's dictum of seeking truth from facts. His principal's position was filled by Li Weihan. There is no evidence that Zhang left Yan'an as a protest or in order to avoid rectification. Considering the following circumstances I, nevertheless, assume that this was the case. Zhang Wentian realized that under the Rectification Campaign he would no longer be able to influence cadre education and Party theory. He would have to either follow Mao's dictates or relinquish his senior leadership position. Since the Rectification campaign looked for targets for attack, Zhang's disagreement with Mao on many issues and his resistance to the personality cult could have made him a major target. Zhang expected that the Rectification would end everything he built while he was the Party's chief administrative officer and the Principal of the Academy - a leadership based on broad consensus, intra-Party democracy, and divergence of ideas with respect to Marxist doctrine.

Since the Rectification campaign started in March 1942, there has been little research work done by the Institute (Wen 1984, 43, 60). In early 1942, the Institute was harshly

criticized by Mao, who called it a “camp of dogmatism”. Mao and his secretary, Hu Qiaomu, also publicly denounced the “red professors” there (Gao 2000, 313-316). In May 1943, the Institute was closed with some departments being transferred to the Central Party School.

In March 1943, Zhang returned to Yan’an from the rural survey. No longer one of the Party’s Secretariat, he remained to be a member of the Central Committee Political Bureau. According to his biographer, Zhang’s workload was light, and his life was “relaxed and happy. In his leisure time he played chess and grew strawberries, tomatoes, etc.” (Cheng 1993, 497) Like demoted scholar-officials of imperial China, Zhang might have been able to find happiness in small things, yet that might have been only a partial consolation for the loss of political power.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This study of the Academy of Marxism and Leninism from 1938 to 1941 and of its successor, the Central Research Institute sheds some light on the political dynamics before the Rectification campaign in Yan'an. Prior to Mao's rise to become CCP's paramount leader, divergent views with respect to Marxism existed within the Party.

Before the campaign, some intellectuals such as Ai Siqi and Chen Boda supported Mao's approach to Marxism but not all of those at the Academy. Even though some prominent intellectuals such as Wang Xuewen, Wu Liangping, and Wang Shiwei disagreed with Mao's political views, at least they were tolerated. Differing views regarding the periodization of Chinese history also existed within the Academy and opponents of the thesis endorsed by Mao were not discriminated against. The inclusion of external lecturers at the Academy also reflected the existence of diversity in that period. Some of Mao's political rivals lectured there and introduced different views to the students. With his close relationships with Chen Boda, Ai Siqi and Fan Wenlan, Mao was able to exert considerable influence over the intellectual life at the Academy. He, nonetheless, could not entirely control it.

In the summer of 1941 when Mao managed to defeat his main contenders for power at the Party; he was then also able to impose his will on the Academy. Consequently, this school was transformed from an Academy, in which diverse opinions were exchanged and debated, into an Institute for conducting research and producing knowledge in accordance with Mao's vision of putting the study of the conditions in China at the center of the Institute's work. This Institute did not carry out much research work, though. In

early 1942, all of the members were preoccupied by the study of Rectification documents, which practically eliminated alternative thinking among the intellectuals at the Institute.

Such centralization on Mao's approach is in stark contrast with an inclusive atmosphere when Zhang Wentian was the principal of the Academy and the Party's chief administrative officer before the Rectification campaign. Having experienced bitter Party struggles in the Bolshevik style, Zhang was cautious to avoid them. He tried to achieve Party unity through consensus and compromise. These efforts by him enabled the existence of divergence inside the Academy. In examining Zhang's vision of Marxism, this thesis shows that Zhang and Mao agreed on several ideas such as "New Culture" based on the masses and the need to sinify Marxism. He agreed with Mao that Marxist doctrine should be related to practical issues. However, Zhang's agenda of 'sinification' was conservative. Whereas Mao argued for the "national form" in the new culture, Zhang emphasized the importance of studying Marxist doctrine and of integrating foreign "new forms" into the new Chinese culture. Both leaders also disagreed on the performance of some senior Party members from 1927 to 1937. Zhang opposed Mao's attempt to establish that his line had always been correct and others were wrong. Zhang was among the main opponents to the emergence of Mao's personality cult.

This study of the Academy attempts to understand the history of Yan'an from Zhang's perspective rather than that of Mao. One of the main challenges in doing so is that the CCP has written its history in a Maoist narrative and tried to discount other narratives. In his book *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the Evolution of the Chinese Communist*

*Leadership*, Thomas Kampen gives an account of the rise of Zhou Enlai to prominence. As argued by Kampen, in 1945 in order to pledge complete allegiance to Mao Zedong, Zhou publicly admitted his mistakes in the past that were thus omitted in the Party's official narrative (Kampen 2000, 121-123). Such experience of Zhou Enlai was similar to that of Zhang Wentian in the sense that Zhang's name was not associated with incorrect policies in CCP's official discourse (Kampen 2000, 112-113). If more sources and internal documents related to Zhang from the pre-Rectification period become accessible to the public, we might be able to further "rescue" CCP history from the Maoist narrative.

## Notes

1. Both Zeng Yanxiu and Wu Liangping comment that Mao mocked Zhang for that, calling him a 'gentelman', (*mingjun*).
2. Li De's original German name was Otto Braun. But, since the Chinese sources use the Chinese name Li De, other English sources also refer to him in that name.
3. The question of the essence of the 'national form' had been a source of controversy among Party leaders and intellectuals in Yan'an. I will elaborate on this very soon in the essay, as I discuss Mao and Zhang's divergent views with respect to 'forms' in 1940.
4. During the early 1920s and 1930s, Soviet scholars debated the validity of Marx's notion of the "Asiatic Mode of Production" with to the analysis of Chinese history. This concept embodied the difference in their understanding of the conditions in China and Europe. While Europe had progressed from slavery to feudalism and then to capitalism, China, throughout the entire imperial period remained, maintained the same political and economic structure, where the state dominated society, forestalling advancement (Dirlik 1978, 192-193, Fogel 1988, 57-61). Chinese communists disliked this conceptualization of China and tried to describe it according to universalistic schemes of development, in which China be portrayed as equal to Europe. Guo Moruo in 1930 was the first to propose the five-stage development scheme for Chinese history.

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